

*Thus for a moment, BARBARA and HELEN stand face-to-face, with their arms extended, almost like ballroom dancers. HELEN, realising this similarity, suddenly grabs BARBARA by the waist and whirls her across the room.*

HELEN Hey, come on – let's dance!

BARBARA (*protesting but laughing*) Stop it, Helen, stop it.

HELEN (*singing*) "Shall we dance, pom pom pom pom – Shall we dance deedle-ee-dle" – come on.

BARBARA (*laughing*) Oh, Helen, you are a fool.

HELEN Do you ever go dancing? I never go dancing. I used to love dancing when I was a girl.

BARBARA Where could you dance round here?

HELEN We could organise something. Why not? We could have dances in the afternoon. What are they called? Tea dances. We could have tea dances in Cranley Drive.

BARBARA Who'd come?

HELEN Lots of people, I bet.

BARBARA All the men are at work.

HELEN Okay, so we could ask some of the boys from school.

BARBARA They're a bit young.

HELEN Who cares? They're a good-looking bunch.

BARBARA Some of them.

HELEN That guy Julie likes – he's really good-looking.

BARBARA You mean Malcolm Granger?

HELEN Don't you think he's good-looking?

BARBARA He's completely irresponsible. Have you seen the way he races around on that motorbike of his? He'll get himself killed one of these days.

HELEN If you're worried, tell her.

BARBARA I can't.

HELEN Why not?

BARBARA She thinks I worry about everything.

HELEN She's right, you do.

BARBARA I try not to.

HELEN It's your nature, you can't help it – she knows that, I know that, we all know that. (*She squeezes BARBARA's hand comfortingly.*) Now, listen, here's what to do if you're worried: you tell her she's too young to go riding about on motorcycles.

BARBARA I've told her that already.

HELEN Then she won't. She's a good girl. She'll do what you say.

BARBARA, *unconvinced*, says nothing. HELEN *grins*.

You know something? Malcolm Granger has a beautiful body. I saw him at the pool last summer. Beautiful! Maybe I should lure him round to the house when Peter goes to one of his antiquarian book sales. What do you think? Shall I introduce him to the more sophisticated charms of an older woman?

BARBARA *does not respond; she is preoccupied with her anxieties about JULIE.*

BARBARA I wish you'd say something to her.

HELEN Say what?

BARBARA About going on the motorbike.

HELEN *looks at BARBARA.*

HELEN You really are worried.

BARBARA Yes, I am.

HELEN What can I say?

BARBARA She'd listen to you.

HELEN What about Bob? Why doesn't he talk to her?

BARBARA You know what Bob's like. She can't do a thing wrong as far as he's concerned. (*brief pause*) Please. There's no one else I can ask... Please.

HELEN *hesitates.*

HELEN Okay.

BARBARA (*relieved*) Would you?

HELEN Okay, if it'll make you any happier.

BARBARA Well, it would.

HELEN Okay.

BARBARA Thanks. I hate asking.

HELEN Don't be silly. (*deliberately changing the mood*) It's beautiful, this dress – really beautiful. You're such a clever girl, Barbara. You do so many things real good. You've got golden hands.

BARBARA What a funny thing to say.

HELEN Well, it's true.

JULIE *opens the front door; she's wearing a raincoat, scarf, and gloves over her school uniform; she carries a satchel.*

JULIE (*calling*) Mum!

BARBARA (*calling*) In here, Julie. (*whispering to HELEN*) Don't tell her I asked you to say anything.

HELEN Of course I won't. Don't worry.

JULIE *enters the sitting room and kisses BARBARA.*

JULIE Hello, Mum. Hello, Auntie Helen.

HELEN Hi, Julie, sweetheart.

BARBARA How was choir practice?