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## Coffee Klatsch

by Sandra Banks

“Have you heard about Sylvia?”, Sam said. “She has had a stroke and is in hospital. No-one knows if she will live.” She said this almost triumphantly and looked eagerly at her companions.

The girls had decided to meet at the coffeeshop towards the end of the Cliffe and once there they installed themselves in a table facing the window, throwing their coats and scarves over the back of their chairs.

Her friends, Amy and Jane, continued stirring their coffees and said nothing. Amy, who was only too pleased to have been invited was shrinking back into her chair awkwardly. Jane finally said, “That’s a shame. I wonder how John is coping”.

Sam responded quickly, “We all know that John has given up and rarely leaves the house. He can hardly walk any more. I don’t know who is visiting her.”

“I will speak to John this afternoon. Where did they take her? Brighton General?” Jane knew Sam always had to be first with the news. She understood that there was no real malice behind her words.

Sam nodded, a little crestfallen at how her news had been received but soon recovered her poise. “You know this is the second stroke and they do say the second stroke kills you and she has put on so much weight!

Jane could not deny this, but offered a soft response, “It is really difficult when people do not help themselves. Doctors must be fed up with people who don’t follow instructions. I am sure there would be less pressure on the NHS if we all ate and exercised as we should”.

Sam looked at Amy, who had not yet said a word. Amy flushed, squirmed a little in her chair and said "I really don't know what we can do."

Sam, annoyed, answered aggressively, "Rubbish! It for her to take care of herself and for John to help her, but he never stands up to her on anything. I don't know how he puts up with her."

That was too much for her companions. This was not a good start to a comfortable chat. Jane thought it over and decided it was not worth fighting over, particularly as Sam was right. Jane found to her surprise that she was angry with Amy. You can't come out for coffee and back off the conversation.

Bang! Bang! Bang! Firecrackers in the road outside, pink smoke drifting around, surrounded by an enthusiastic crowd. The girls looked at each other. How glorious! Who was there? How long would the police take to come? Or would they stay away? It was after all November!