MISS MABEL JENKINS

Miss Mabel Jenkins lived in a beautiful Regency Grade Two listed property in the village of Dumpling in the English countryside. The white painted three storied house was fronted by an elegant columned portico and had a long stable block behind it and extensive gardened grounds.

Now Miss Jenkins had a problem. Her mother had recently died, and her stepfather, a cantankerous old man, had been left in her care. She could not bear the thought of living with him. “He’ll drive me mad,” she said to herself, “Whatever shall I do?” And then the most amazing thought popped into her mind. “I shall change my beautiful home into a care centre for affluent people. I’ll keep the top story for myself and use the lower two floors and the stable block for the care centre and then old Joe will be cared for and I need never see him again!”

Mabel was an energetic woman of forty. She was attractive with brown hair and eyes. She had never worked and so employed the executor of her mother’s estate to oversee

the business side of her property as she put her plans into action. First, she emptied the third floor of all the tables, chairs and sofas only leaving the ornate high four poster bed, its hangings, the window curtains which overlooked the Park, the side tables and lamps and paintings. The tables, chair and sofas became the furniture in the entrance hall. She added Persian rugs, bowls of roses, current glossy magazines and daily newspapers. She surveyed the finished room with satisfaction. “I’m sure the residents will enjoy this as an added little sitting room, or a room to relax in after a walk in the park,” she said to herself. The ground floor, just beyond the entrance hall became the residents’ lounge and library. It had large windows with views over the garden. Tea, coffee and cakes were served all day. The room was furnished in typical casual but luxurious country style. Mabel went to Sotheby’s and asked for help in choosing paintings and small sculptures for the lounge and other rooms. She did not like modern art and knew her residents would not either. The first floor became the dining room with part of it becoming the kitchen. Mabel chose everything in the dining room down to the last tiny

individual silver salt cellars with their tiny spoons. All this cost a fortune, but she could afford it and thought of it as “a wise investment” for residents would pay a huge monthly amount for living there and of course for all the staff required to run it. A lift was installed to reach the second floor on which were the residents’ suites. No one could reach Mabel’s suite which occupied the whole of the third floor. It was really like a large, luxurious house, and she loved it. If visitors or staff wanted to see her, they pressed a button at the lift door and she opened it for them. Her head of operations was Sir Ralph, recently retired from being head of a bank and a great and trusted friend of hers.

Converting the stable block into luxurious suites took over a year. Like the suites in the Manor House, they were all different and personalized. Mabel took care over which of the residents were placed in the House or Stable block. There were only thirty-five suites, some occupied by two people. First on the list was old Joe placed as far away from Mabel as possible in the Stable Block. Second were the twins, Phoebe and Jane in the Manor house. Third was

Colonel James in the house, fourth was Mrs Smith in the House, fifth was Miss Peabody in the Stable Block, as were Mr Justice, a retired lawyer in sixth place and Miss Penelope Hart, a young woman of thirty-five in a wheelchair, and sixth was Mr Paul Peters, a retired engineer was seventh. Mrs Jenifer Peabody was eighth in the House. She was a widow with three children and several grandchildren who often visited her or took her out to lunch at country restaurants. Her suite was filled with pictures of her family.

Mabel was tired. She had been trying to place residents where they would be happy. On their application forms, they had listed their interests. She wrote them on her embossed note paper inviting them to tea and to view their suites. The Manor House would be open in two months.

The remaining nine residents were Mrs Clare Silvester, a widow with no family, Mr Jeremy Smart, a well-known author, Miss Jane Judge, a lawyer, Miss Cecily Abercrombie, the twins Mr Paul and Patrick Pennyfeather who had

married identical twin girls and had an extensive family, Doctor Anthony Adams and Mrs Suzzette Enfield, a widow with a large family whose pictures filled all the rooms of her suite.

Mabel had been very busy hiring staff. She had retained her cleaners, gardeners and cooks. She interviewed ten of the best applicants for the post of Chief Matron and appointed Matron Jeannete Dwight to this position. “I will leave you to appoint the Matron and Carers,” she said. “The residents all want the doctors who have cared for them for years.”

The great day had arrived at last! Mabel was dressed in a new blue silk dress with matching high heeled shoes. She was chatting to the Mayor of Dumpling. “You have certainly put Dumpling on the map, Mabel,” he said. “I must really congratulate you on your wonderful achievement. Where did you put Joe?” “In the stable block,” she replied with a smile, “as far away from me as possible!” He laughed. “A good idea!” A Rolls Royce drew up at the entrance and Mrs

Enfield and her two daughters got out. Mabel went to meet them with a warm smile. “Welcome to your new home, Mrs Enfield,” she said. “I am sure you will be very happy here, meeting new friends and enjoying all the pleasures we have to offer. May I introduce you to an old friend of mine – Sir John James, the Mayor of Dumpling?” After a few pleasantries, she called Mrs Enfield’s carer, Jenny, who escorted her and her two daughters to Mrs Enfield’s suite.

The arrival of the other thirty-four residents had been meticulously planned by Sir Ralph, and everybody was relaxed and happy for lunch at one pm.

Mabel, not wanting to meet Joe on a daily basis, seldom went into the public areas. However, she had to welcome him, and so, after lunch she knocked on his door. “Hello Mabel,” he said. I hear you have welcomed everybody except me.” “Yes, I do apologize,” she said, “but it was lunch time, and we were already running late.” “Come in,” he said opening the door. “Look at all these things you have

brought from your mother's house. I want them removed immediately and then you must take me to all the best places to buy furniture, paintings and other things that I like. I am starting a new life here." Mabel was annoyed, offended and angry, but she did not show it. Her darling sweet mother had married this cantankerous old man, cared for him lovingly even though he had abused her by not speaking to her for days on end and even striking her in fits of temper. "We will go tomorrow morning, and I shall send the staff to pack up all mother's things and put them in my suite." "Good," he said. "Let yourself out I need a rest."

It was Sunday morning, a lovely spring day. The park was a golden mass of daffodils 'dancing in the breeze.' Mabel was dressed for church in a summery silk dress, high heels and a small straw hat. She carried her favourite blue ostrich skin handbag. The Anglican church of St Peter's was a short walk from the Manor House. She set off via the Stable Blocks and knocked on old Joe's door. "Hello," he said. "I can see you are on your way to church, and no, I'm not going – a bunch of self-righteous hypocrites!" And he slammed

the door in her face. “Well,” said Mabel to herself, I suppose I must continue to pray for him although I certainly don’t feel like it!”

Mabel was pleased and proud of what she had achieved. The Manor House was a great success and already had a long list of people hoping to make the Manor House their home. While most residents entered in good health, over time they needed additional or full-time care in the Assisted Living or Dementia Wards in beautiful suites Mabel built at the end of the property. Mrs Smith-Jones, a sweet old lady, cried, “Forgive me God,” over and over again. Matron said, “I have reduced her medication on her doctor’s advice.” “I’ll ask Father Benedict to speak to her.” He came and tenderly took her hand in his. “Mrs Smith-Jones,” he said, “God has forgiven you because you have asked him. And she stopped shouting. In the morning, she died, entering ‘one of the mansions prepared by my Father for you”.

It was a cloudy, rather cool day at the Manor House. But, as it was not windy, many residents were sitting in the central area of the park, chatting about their plans for tomorrow, when suddenly a small biplane appeared turning in circles high above them as it tried to land. It landed, nose down, with a tremendous crash. "Quick!" yelled Colonel James. "We must get the pilot out before it bursts into flames!" Mister Mark Spencer rushed to help. He was a tall and burly man and together they easily pulled him out and laid him on the grass some distance from the plane. "Where's Lily?" he asked. "No one was in the plane with you." answered Colonel James looking at the plane now on fire. "Yes, she was!" exclaimed the pilot. And suddenly there she was – a tall, long haired Afghan bitch. "Come here, Lily," the pilot cried. "The Countess will be so happy to see her darling Lily!"

Jack lived in the Dementia Suites. Unlike those less afflicted, he had forgotten everything, even who he was, his past life and his family who took turns to visit him every day and listen kindly to the rubbish he repeated over and over.

The staff felt very sorry for them and wondered why they bothered to come.

Mabel was a devout Christian. She had been Christened and Confirmed in St Peter's Anglican Church in the village of Dumpling. The Church was large and benefitted from the influx of residents from the Manor House. Mabel served as one of St Peter's Board of Councillors. She introduced many residents to Father Benedict when he came to discuss church business with her, and they went to church and those who had never read the Bible or heard the Gospel preached, became active Christians.

Joe sent his valet with a note to Mabel. It was early before breakfast. She opened the envelope curiously and read: "Dear Mabel I have had a terrible nightmare. Please come and see me immediately!" Mabel walked briskly along the glass covered walkway linking the Stable Suites to the Manor House. Joe was standing at the open front door waiting for her. "Thank you for coming so quickly, Mabel," he

said as he led the way into his sitting room. “As I wrote to you, I had the most terrifying nightmare. I dreamt that Heaven was surrounded by a high impassable gate with only one entrance. The Apostle Peter was standing holding the only key to Heaven’s Gate. I asked him to let me in, but he said ‘No! Only citizens live here!’ ‘What on earth does he mean?” Mabel replied, “Quite simply, he means that only people who have believed that Jesus Christ is the only Son of God and have confessed their sins can enter Heaven and live there with him for ever.” Joe sat silently for several minutes, and then he said, “I want to be a Christian. I am ashamed and sorry for all my sins – how I cheated in my business dealings, how I cheated and hurt your mother – my kind, patient and loving wife and how rude and hurtful I have been to you, Mabel.” Mabel took his hand and tenderly kissed it. “Let’s tell Jesus.” she said. And there was joy in Heaven over one sinner that repented.