

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

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# Miss Pym Disposes

Josephine Tey

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## About the Book

Leys Physical Training College was famous for its excellent discipline, and Miss Lucy Pym was pleased and flattered to be invited to give a psychology lecture there. But she had to admit that the health and vibrant beauty of the students made her feel just a little inadequate.

Then there was a nasty accident - and suddenly Miss Pym was forced to apply her agile intellect to the unpleasant fact that among all those impressively healthy bodies, someone had a very sick mind ...

## About the Author

**Josephine Tey** is one of the best known and best loved of all crime writers. She began to write full-time after the successful publication of her first novel, *The Man in the Queue* (1929), which introduced Inspector Grant of Scotland Yard. In 1937 she returned to crime writing with *A Shilling for Candles*, but it wasn't until after the Second World War that the majority of her novels were published. Josephine Tey died in 1952, leaving her entire estate to the National Trust.

*Also by Josephine Tey*

The Man in the Queue

A Shilling for Candles

To Love and Be Wise

Brat Farrar

The Daughter of Time

The Singing Sands

# Miss Pym Disposes

Josephine Tey



arrow books

A BELL clanged. Brazen, insistent, maddening.

Through the quiet corridors came the din of it, making hideous the peace of the morning. From each of the yawning windows of the little quadrangle the noise poured out on to the still, sunlit garden where the grass was grey yet with dew.

Little Miss Pym stirred, opened one doubtful grey eye, and reached blindly for her watch. There was no watch. She opened the other eye. There seemed to be no bedside table either. No, of course not; now she remembered. There *was* no bedside table; as she had found last night. Her watch had had of necessity to be put under her pillow. She fumbled for it. Good heavens, what a row that bell was making! Obscene. There seemed to be no watch under the pillow. But it must be there! She lifted the pillow bodily, revealing only one small sheer-linen handkerchief in a saucy pattern of blue-and-white. She dropped the pillow and peered down between the bed and the wall. Yes, there was something that looked like a watch. By lying flat on her front and inserting an arm she could just reach it. Carefully she brought it up, lightly caught between the tips of first and second fingers. If she dropped it now she would have to get out of bed and crawl under for it. She turned on her back with a sigh of relief, holding the watch triumphantly above her.

Half-past five, said the watch.

*Half-past five!*

Miss Pym stopped breathing and stared in unbelieving fascination. No, really, did any college, however physical

and hearty, begin the day at *half-past five*! Anything was possible, of course, in a community which had use for neither bedside tables nor bedside lamps, but—half-past five! She put the watch to her small pink ear. It ticked faithfully. She squinted round her pillow at the garden which was visible from the window behind her bed. Yes, it certainly was early; the world had that unmoving just-an-apparition look of early morning. Well, well!

Henrietta had said last night, standing large and majestic in the doorway: 'Sleep well. The students enjoyed your lecture, my dear. I shall see you in the morning'; but had not seen fit to mention half-past-five bells.

Oh, well. It wasn't her funeral, thank goodness. Once upon a time she too had lived a life regulated by bells, but that was long ago. Nearly twenty years ago. When a bell rang in Miss Pym's life now it was because she had put a delicately varnished finger-tip on the bell-push. As the clamour died into a complaining whimper and then into silence, she turned over to face the wall, burrowing happily into her pillow. Not her funeral. Dew on the grass, and all that, was for youth: shining resplendent youth; and they could have it. She was having another two hours' sleep.

Very childlike she looked with her round pink face, her neat little button of a nose, and her brown hair rolled in flat invisible-pinned curls all over her head. They had cost her a spiritual struggle last night, those curls. She had been very tired after the train journey, and meeting Henrietta again, and the lecture; and her weaker self had pointed out that she would in all probability be leaving after lunch on the morrow, that her permanent wave was only two months old, and that her hair might very well be left unpinned for one night. But, partly to spite her weaker self with whom she waged a constant and bitter war, partly so that she might do Henrietta justice, she had seen to it that fourteen pins

were pressed to their nightly duty. She was remembering her strong-mindedness now (it helped to cancel out any twinge of conscience about her self-indulgence this morning) and marvelling at the survival of that desire to live up to Henrietta. At school, she, the little fourth-form rabbit, had admired the sixth-form Henrietta extravagantly. Henrietta was the born Head Girl. Her talent lay exclusively in seeing that other people employed theirs. That was why, although she had left school to train in secretarial work, she was now Principal of a college of physical culture; a subject of which she knew nothing at all. She had forgotten all about Lucy Pym, just as Lucy had forgotten about her, until Miss Pym had written The Book.

That is how Lucy herself thought of it. The Book.

She was still a little surprised about The Book herself. Her mission in life had been to teach schoolgirls to speak French. But after four years of that her remaining parent had died, leaving her two hundred and fifty pounds a year, and Lucy had dried her eyes with one hand and given in her resignation with the other. The Headmistress had pointed out with envy and all uncharitableness that investments were variable things, and that two hundred and fifty didn't leave much margin for a civilised and cultured existence such as people in Lucy's position were expected to live. But Lucy had resigned all the same, and had taken a very civilised and cultured flat far enough from Camden Town to be nearly Regent's Park. She provided the necessary margin by giving French lessons now and then when gas bills were imminent, and spent all her spare time reading books on psychology.

She read her first book on psychology out of curiosity, because it seemed to her an interesting sort of thing; and she read all the rest to see if they were just as silly. By the time she had read thirty-seven books on the subject, she had evolved ideas of her own on psychology; at variance, of

course, with all thirty-seven volumes read to date. In fact, the thirty-seven volumes seemed to her so idiotic and made her so angry that she sat down there and then and wrote reams of refutation. Since one cannot talk about psychology in anything but jargon, there being no English for most of it, the reams of refutation read very learnedly indeed. Not that that would have impressed anyone if Miss Pym had not used the back of a discarded sheet (her typing was not very professional) on which to write:

Dear Mr Stallard,

I should be *so* grateful if you would not use your wireless after eleven at night. I find it *so* distracting.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Pym

Mr Stallard, whom she did not know (his name was on the card outside his door on the floor below), arrived in person that evening. He was holding her letter open in his hand, which seemed to Lucy very grim indeed, and she swallowed several times before she could make any coherent sound at all. But Mr Stallard wasn't angry about the wireless. He was a publishers' reader, it seemed, and was interested in what she had unconsciously sent him on the back of the paper.

Now in normal times a publisher would have rung for brandy at the mere suggestion of publishing a book on psychology. But the previous year the British public had shaken the publishing world by tiring suddenly of fiction, and developing an interest in abstruse subjects, such as the distance of Sirius from the earth, and the inward meaning of primitive dances in Bechuanaland. Publishers were falling over themselves, therefore, in their effort to supply this strange new thirst for knowledge, and Miss Pym found herself welcomed with open arms. That is to say, she was

taken to lunch by the senior partner, and given an agreement to sign. This alone was a piece of luck, but Providence so ordained it that not only had the British public tired of fiction, but the intellectuals had tired of Freud and Company. They were longing for Some New Thing. And Lucy proved to be it. So Lucy woke one morning to find herself not only famous, but a best-seller. She was so shocked that she went out and had three cups of black coffee and sat in the Park looking straight in front of her for the rest of the morning.

She had been a best-seller for several months, and had become quite used to lecturing on 'her subject' to learned societies, when Henrietta's letter had come; reminding her of their schooldays together and asking her to come and stay for a while and address the students. Lucy was a little wearied of addressing people, and the image of Henrietta had grown dim with the years. She was about to write a polite refusal, when she remembered the day on which the fourth form had discovered her christened name to be Laetitia; a shame that Lucy had spent her life concealing. The fourth form had excelled themselves, and Lucy had been wondering whether her mother would mind very much about her suicide, and deciding that anyhow she had brought it on herself by giving her daughter such a highfalutin name. And then Henrietta had waded into the humorists, literally and metaphorically. Her blistering comment had withered humour at the root, so that the word Laetitia had never been heard again, and Lucy had gone home and enjoyed jam roly-poly instead of throwing herself in the river. Lucy sat in her civilised and cultured living-room, and felt the old passionate gratitude to Henrietta run over her in waves. She wrote and said that she would be delighted to stay a night with Henrietta (her native caution was not entirely obliterated by her

gratitude) and would with pleasure talk on psychology to her students.

The pleasure had been considerable, she thought, pushing up a hump of sheet to shut out the full brilliance of the daylight. Quite the nicest audience she had ever had. Rows of shining heads, making the bare lecture-room look like a garden. And good hearty applause. After weeks of the polite pattering of learned societies it was pleasant to hear the percussion of hollowed palm on hollowed palm. And their questions had been quite intelligent. Somehow, although psychology was a subject on their timetable, as shown in the common-room, she had not expected intellectual appreciation from young women who presumably spent their days doing things with their muscles. Only a few, of course, had asked questions; so there was still a chance that the rest were morons.

Oh well, tonight she would sleep in her own charming bed, and all this would seem like a dream. Henrietta had pressed her to stay for some days, and for a little she had toyed with the idea. But supper had shaken her. Beans and milk pudding seemed an uninspired sort of meal for a summer evening. Very sustaining and nourishing and all that, she didn't doubt. But not a meal one wanted to repeat. The staff table, Henrietta had said, always had the same food that the students had; and Lucy had hoped that that remark didn't mean that she had looked doubtfully upon the beans. She had tried to look very bright and pleased about the beans; but perhaps it hadn't been a success.

'Tommy! Tom-*mee*! Oh, Tommy, darling, waken up. I'm *desperate*!'

Miss Pym shot into wakefulness. The despairing cries seemed to be in her room. Then she realised that the second window of her room gave on to the courtyard; that the courtyard was small, and conversation from room to room through the gaping windows a natural method of

communication. She lay trying to quiet her thumping heart, peering down over the folds of sheet to where, beyond the hump of her toes, the foreshortened oblong of the window framed a small piece of distant wall. But her bed lay in the angle of the room, one window to her right in the wall behind her, and the courtyard window to her left beyond the foot of her bed, and all that was visible from her pillow through the tall thin strip of brightness was half of an open window far down the courtyard.

*'Tom-mee! Tom-mee!'*

A dark head appeared in the window Miss Pym could see.

'For God's sake, someone,' said the head, 'throw something at Thomas and stop Dakers' row.'

'Oh, Greengage, darling, you *are* an unsympathetic beast. I've bust my suspender, and I don't know *what* to do. And Tommy took my *only* safety-pin yesterday to pick the winkles with at Tuppence-ha'penny's party. She simply *must* let me have it back before—*Tommy! Oh, Tommy!*'

'Hey, shut up, will you,' said a new voice, in a lowered tone, and there was a pause. A pause, Lucy felt, full of sign language.

'And what does all that semaphoring mean?' asked the dark head.

'Shut up, I tell you. *She's* there!' This in desperate *sotto voce*.

'Who is?'

'The Pym woman.'

'What *rubbish*, darling'—it was the Dakers voice again, high and unsubdued; the happy voice of a world's darling—'she's sleeping in the front of the house with the rest of the mighty. *Do* you think *she* would have a spare safety-pin if I was to ask her?'

'She looks zip-fastener to me,' a new voice said.

'Oh, will you be quiet! I tell you, she's in Bentley's room!'

There was a real silence this time. Lucy saw the dark head turn sharply towards her window.

'How do you know?' someone asked.

'Jolly told me last night when she was giving me late supper.' Miss Joliffe was the housekeeper, Lucy remembered, and appreciated the nickname for so grim a piece of humanity.

'Gawd's truth!' said the 'zip-fastener' voice, with feeling.

Into the silence came a bell. The same urgent clamour that had wakened them. The dark head disappeared at the first sound of it, and Dakers' voice above the row could be heard wailing her desperation like a lost thing. Social gaffes were relegated to their proper unimportance, as the business of the day overwhelmed them. A great wave of sound rose up to meet the sound of the bell. Doors were banged, feet drummed in the corridor, voices called, someone remembered that Thomas was still asleep, and a tattoo was beaten on her locked door when objects flung at her from surrounding windows had failed to waken her, and then there was the sound of running feet on the gravel path that crossed the courtyard grass. And gradually there were more feet on the gravel and fewer on the stairs, and the babble of voices swelled to a climax and faded. When the noises had grown faint with distance or died into lecture-room silence, a single pair of feet pattered in flight across the gravel, a voice saying: 'Damn, damn, damn, damn, damn—' at each footfall. The Thomas who slept, apparently.

Miss Pym felt sympathetic to the unknown Thomas. Bed was a charming place at any time, but if one was so sleepy that neither riotous bell-ringing nor the wails of a colleague made any impression, then getting up must be torture.

Welsh, too, probably. All Thomases were Welsh. Celts hated getting up. Poor Thomas. Poor, poor Thomas. She would like to find poor Thomas a job where she would never have to get up before afternoon.

Sleep ran over her in waves, drawing her deeper and deeper under. She wondered if 'looking zip-fastener' was a compliment. Being a safety-pin person couldn't be thought exactly admirable, so perhaps—

She fell asleep.

SHE was being beaten with knouts by two six-foot Cossacks because she persisted in using the old-fashioned safety-pin when progress decreed a zip-fastener, and the blood had begun to trickle down her back when she woke to the fact that the only thing that was being assaulted was her hearing. The bell was ringing again. She said something that was neither civilised nor cultured, and sat up. No, definitely, not a minute after lunch would she stay. There was a 2.41 from Larborough, and on that 2.41 she would be; her good-byes said, her duty to friendship done, and her soul filled with the beatitude of escape. She would treat herself to a half-pound box of chocolates on the station platform as a sort of outward congratulation. It would show on the bathroom scales at the end of the week, but who cared?

The thought of the scales reminded her of the civilised and cultured necessity of having a bath. Henrietta had been sorry about its being so far to the staff bathrooms; she had been sorry altogether to put a guest into the student block, but Fröken Gustavsen's mother from Sweden was occupying the only staff guest-room, and was going to stay for some weeks until she had seen and criticised the result of her daughter's work when the annual Demonstration would take place at the beginning of the month. Lucy doubted very much whether her bump of locality—a hollow according to her friends—was good enough to take her back to that bathroom. It would be awful to go prowling along those bright empty corridors, arriving perhaps at lecture-rooms unawares. And still more awful to ask in a

crowded corridor of up-since-dawners where one could perform one's belated ablutions.

Lucy's mind always worked like that. It wasn't sufficient for it to visualise one horror: it must visualise the opposite one too. She sat so long considering the rival horrors, and enjoying the sensation of doing nothing, that still another bell rang and still another wave of drumming feet and calling voices rose up and swamped the quiet of the morning. Lucy looked at her watch. It was half-past seven.

She had just decided to be uncivilised and uncultured and 'go in her mook' as her daily woman called it—after all, what was this immersion in water but a modern fad, and if Charles the Second could afford to smell a little high, who was she, a mere commoner, to girn at missing a bath?—when there was a knock on her door. Rescue was at hand. Oh, joy, oh, glory, her marooned condition was at an end.

'Come in,' she called in the glad tones of a Crusoe welcoming a landing party. Of course Henrietta would come to say good-morning. How silly of her not to have thought of that. She was still at heart the little rabbit who didn't expect Henrietta to bother about her. Really, she must cultivate a habit of mind more suitable to a Celebrity. Perhaps if she were to do her hair differently, or say over something twenty times a day after the manner of Coué—'Come in!'

But it was not Henrietta. It was a goddess.

A goddess with golden hair, a bright blue linen tunic, sea-blue eyes, and the most enviable pair of legs. Lucy always noticed other women's legs, her own being a sad disappointment to her.

'Oh, I'm sorry,' said the goddess. 'I forgot that you might not be up. In college we keep such odd hours.'

Lucy thought that it was nice of this heavenly being to take the blame for her sloth.

'I do apologise for interrupting your dressing.' The blue eye came to rest on a mule which was lying in the middle of the floor, and stayed there as if fascinated. It was a pale blue satin mule; very feminine, very thriftless, very feathery. A most undeniable piece of nonsense.

'I'm afraid it *is* rather silly,' Lucy said.

'If you only knew, Miss Pym, what it is to see an object that is not strictly utilitarian!' And then, as if recalled to her business by the very temptation of straying from it: 'My name is Nash. I'm the Head Senior. And I came to say that the Senior students would be very honoured if you would come to tea with them tomorrow. On Sundays we take our tea out into the garden. It is a Senior privilege. And it really is very pleasant out there on a summer afternoon, and we really are looking forward to having you.' She smiled with eager benevolence on Miss Pym.

Lucy explained that she would not be there tomorrow; that she was departing this afternoon.

'Oh, no!' protested the Nash girl; and the genuine feeling in her tone caused Lucy a rush of warmth to the heart. 'No, Miss Pym, you mustn't! You really mustn't. You have no idea what a godsend you are to us. It's so seldom that anyone—anyone interesting comes to stay. This place is rather like a convent. We are all so hard-worked that we have no time to think of an outside world; and this is the last term for us Seniors, and everything is very grim and claustrophobic—Final Exams, and the Demonstration, and being found posts, and what not—and we are all feeling like death, and our last scrap of sense of proportion is gone. And then *you* come, a piece of the outside, a civilised being —' She paused; half laughing, half serious. 'You *can't* desert us.'

'But you have an outside lecturer *every* Friday,' Lucy pointed out. It was the first time in her life she had been a

godsend to anyone, and she was determined to take the assertion with a grain of salt. She didn't at all like the gratified feeling that was sniffing round the edge of her emotions.

Miss Nash explained with clarity, point, and no small bitterness that the last three lecturers had been: an octogenarian on Assyrian inscriptions, a Czech on Central Europe, and a bonesetter on scoliosis.

'What is scoliosis?' asked Lucy.

'Curvature of the spine. And if you think that any of them brought sweetness and light into the College atmosphere, you are wrong. These lectures are supposed to keep us in touch with the world, but if I must be both frank and indiscreet'—she was obviously enjoying being both—'the frock you wore last night did us more good than all the lectures we have ever heard.'

Lucy had spent a really shocking sum on that garment when first her book became a best-seller, and it still remained her favourite; she had worn it to impress Henrietta. The gratified feeling came a little nearer.

But not near enough to destroy her common sense. She could still remember the beans. And the lack of bedside lamps. And the lack of any bells to summon service. And the everlasting bells that rang to summon others. No, on the 2.41 from Larborough she would be, though every student of the Leys Physical Training College lay down in her path and wept aloud. She murmured something about engagements—leaving it to be inferred that her diary bulged with pressing and desirable appointments—and suggested that Miss Nash might, meanwhile, direct her to the Staff bathrooms. 'I didn't want to go prowling through the corridors, and I couldn't find a bell to ring.'

Miss Nash, having sympathised with her about the lack of service—'Eliza really should have remembered that there

are no bells in the rooms here and come to call you; she's the Staff housemaid'—suggested that, if Miss Pym didn't mind using the students' baths, they were much nearer. 'They are cubicles, of course; I mean, they have walls only part of the way; and the floor is a sort of greenish concrete where the staff have turquoise mosaic with a tasteful design in dolphins, but the water is the same.'

Miss Pym was delighted to use the students' bathroom, and as she gathered her bathing things together the unoccupied half of her mind was busy with Miss Nash's lack of any student-like reverence for the Staff. It reminded her of something. And presently she remembered what it reminded her of. Mary Barharrow. The rest of Mary Barharrow's form had been meek and admiring young labourers in the field of irregular French verbs, but Mary Barharrow, though diligent and amiable, had treated her French mistress as an equal; and that was because Mary Barharrow's father was 'nearly a millionaire'. Miss Pym concluded that in the 'outside'—strange how one already used Klondyke terms about College—Miss Nash, who had so markedly Mary Barharrow's charming air of social ease and equality, had also a father very like Mary Barharrow's. She was to learn later that it was the first thing that anyone remarked on when Nash's name was mentioned. 'Pamela Nash's people are very rich, you know. They have a butler.' They never failed to mention the butler. To the daughters of struggling doctors, lawyers, dentists, business men and farmers, he was as exotic as a negro slave.

'Shouldn't you be at some class or other?' asked Miss Pym, as the quietness of the sunlit corridors proclaimed an absorption elsewhere. 'I take it that if you are wakened at half-past five you work before breakfast.'

'Oh, yes. In the summer we have two periods before breakfast, one active and one passive. Tennis practice and kinesiology, or something like that.'

‘What is kin—whatever-it-is?’

‘Kinesiology?’ Miss Nash considered for a moment the best way of imparting knowledge to the ignorant, and then spoke in imaginary quotation. ‘I take down a jug with a handle from a high shelf; describe the muscle-work involved.’ And as Miss Pym’s nod showed that she had understood: ‘But in winter we get up like anyone else at half-past seven. As for this particular period, it is normally used for taking outside certificates—Public Health, and Red Cross, and what not. But since we have finished with these we are allowed to use it as a prep. hour for our final exams, which begin next week. We have very little prep. time so we are glad of it.’

‘Aren’t you free after tea, or thereabouts?’

Miss Nash looked amused. ‘Oh, no. There is afternoon clinic from four o’clock till six; outside patients, you know. Everything from flat feet to broken thighs. And from half-past six to eight there is dancing. Ballet, not folk. We have folk in the morning; it ranks as exercise, not art. And supper doesn’t finish much before half-past eight, so we are very sleepy before we begin our prep. and it is usually a fight between our sleepiness and our ignorance.’

As they turned into the long corridor leading to the stairs, they overtook a small scuttling figure clutching under one arm the head and thorax of a skeleton and the pelvis and legs under the other arm.

‘What are you doing with George, Morris?’ asked Miss Nash as they drew level.

‘Oh, *please* don’t stop me, Beau,’ panted the startled Junior, hitching her grotesque burden more firmly on to her right hip and continuing to scuttle in front of them, ‘and *please* forget that you saw me. I mean that you saw George. I meant to waken early and put him back in the lecture room before the half-past five bell went, but I just slept.’

'Have you been up all night with George?'

'No, only till about two. I——'

'And how did you manage about lights?'

'I pinned my travelling rug over the window, of course,' said the Junior, in the testy tones of one explaining the obvious.

'A nice atmosphere on a June evening!'

'It was hellish,' said Miss Morris, simply. 'But it really *is* the only way I can swot up my insertions, so *please*, Beau, just forget that you saw me. I'll get him back before the Staff come down to breakfast.'

'You'll never do it, you know. You're bound to meet someone or other.'

'Oh, please don't discourage me. I'm terrified enough now. And I really don't know if I can remember how to hook up his middle.' She preceded them down the stairs, and disappeared into the front of the house.

'Positively Through-the-Looking-Glass,' commented Miss Pym, watching her go. 'I always thought insertion was something to do with needlework.'

'Insertions? They're the exact place on a bone where a muscle is attached to it. It's much easier to do it with the skeleton in front of you, than with just a book. That is why Morris abducted George.' She expelled a breath of indulgent laughter. 'Very enterprising of her. I stole odd bones from the drawers in the lecture room when I was a Junior, but I never thought of taking George. It's the dreadful cloud that hangs over a Junior's life, you know. Final Anatomy. It really *is* a Final. You're supposed to know all about the body before you begin practising on it, so Final Anatomy is a Junior exam, not a Senior one like the other finals. The bathrooms are along here. When I was a Junior the long grass at the edge of the cricket field was simply stiff on Sundays with hidden Juniors hugging their

Gray. It is strictly forbidden to take books out of College, and on Sundays we are supposed to go all social and go out to tea, or to church, or to the country. But no Junior in the summer term ever did anything on a Sunday except find a quiet spot for herself and Gray. It was quite a business getting Gray out of College. Do you know Gray? About the size of those old family bibles that rested on the parlour table. There was actually a rumour once that half the girls at Leys were pregnant, but it turned out that it was only the odd silhouette that everyone made with Gray stuffed up the front of their Sunday bests.'

Miss Nash stooped to the taps and sent a roar of water rushing into the bath. 'When everyone in College baths three or four times a day, in the matter of minutes, you have to have a Niagara of a tap,' she explained above the row. 'I'm afraid you are going to be very late for breakfast.' And as Miss Pym looked dismayed and oddly small-girlish at the prospect: 'Let me bring up something for you on a tray. No, it won't be any trouble, I'd love to do it. There isn't any need for a guest to appear at eight o'clock breakfast, anyhow. You'd much better have it in peace in your room.' She paused with her hand on the door. 'And do change your mind about staying. It really would give us pleasure. More pleasure than you can imagine.'

She smiled and was gone.

Lucy lay in the warm soft water and thought happily of her breakfast. How pleasant not to have to make conversation among all those chattering voices. How imaginative and kind of that charming girl to carry a tray to her. Perhaps after all it would be nice to spend a day or two among these young——

She nearly leaped from her bath as a bell began its maniacal yelling not a dozen yards from where she lay. That settled it. She sat up and soaped herself. Not a minute later than the 2.41 from Larborough, not one minute later.

As the bell—presumably a five-minute warning before the gong at eight o'clock—died into silence, there was a wild rush in the corridor, the two doors to her left were flung open, and as the water cascaded into the baths a high familiar voice was heard shrieking: 'Oh, darling, I'm going to be *so* late for breakfast, but I'm in a *muck sweat*, my dear. I know I should have sat down quietly and done the composition of plasma, of which I know *absolutely noth*-ing, my dear, and Final Phys. is on Tuesday. But it *is* such a lovely morning—— Now what *have* I done with my *soap*?'

Lucy's jaw slowly dropped as it was borne in upon her that in a community which began the day at half-past five and ended it at eight in the evening, there were still individuals who had the vitality to work themselves into a muck sweat when they need not.

'Oh, Donnie, *darling*, I've left my soap behind. Do throw me over yours!'

'You'll have to wait till I've soaped myself,' said a placid voice that was in marked contrast to Dakers' high emphasis.

'Well, my angel, *do* be *quick*. I've been late twice this week, and Miss Hodge looked *distinctly odd* the last time. I say, Donnie, you *couldn't* by any chance take my "adipose" patient at twelve o'clock clinic, could you?'

'No, I couldn't.'

'She really isn't so heavy as she looks, you know. You have only to——'

'I have a patient of my own.'

'Yes, but only the little boy with the ankle. Lucas could take him along with her "tortis colli" girl——'

'No.'

'No, I was afraid you wouldn't. Oh, dear, I don't know *when* I'm going to do that plasma. As for the coats of the

stomach, they simply *baffle* me, my dear. I don't really believe there are four, anyhow. It's just a conspiracy. Miss Lux says look at tripe, but I don't see that tripe proves anything.'

'Soap coming up.'

'Oh, *thank* you, darling. You've saved my life. What a nice *smell*, my dear. *Very* expensive.' In the momentary silence of soaping she became aware that the bath on her right was occupied. 'Who is next door, Donnie?'

'Don't know. Gage, probably.'

'Is that you, Greengage?'

'No,' said Lucy, startled, 'it's Miss Pym.' And hoped it wasn't as prim as it sounded.

'No, but really, who is it?'

'Miss Pym.'

'It's a very good imitation, whoever you are.'

'It's Littlejohn,' suggested the placid voice. 'She does imitations.'

'Is it you, John?'

Miss Pym fell back on a defeated silence.

There was the hurr-oosh of a body lifted suddenly from the water, the spat of a wet foot placed firmly on the edge of the bath, eight wet finger-tips appeared on the edge of the partition, and a face peered over it. It was a long pale face, like an amiable pony's, with the straight fair hair above it screwed up into a knob with a hasty hairpin. An oddly endearing face. Even in that crowded moment, Lucy understood suddenly how Dakers had managed to reach her final term at Leys without being knocked on the head by exasperated colleagues.

First horror, then a wild flush together with a dawning amusement, invaded the face above the partition. It disappeared abruptly. A despairing wail rose from beyond.