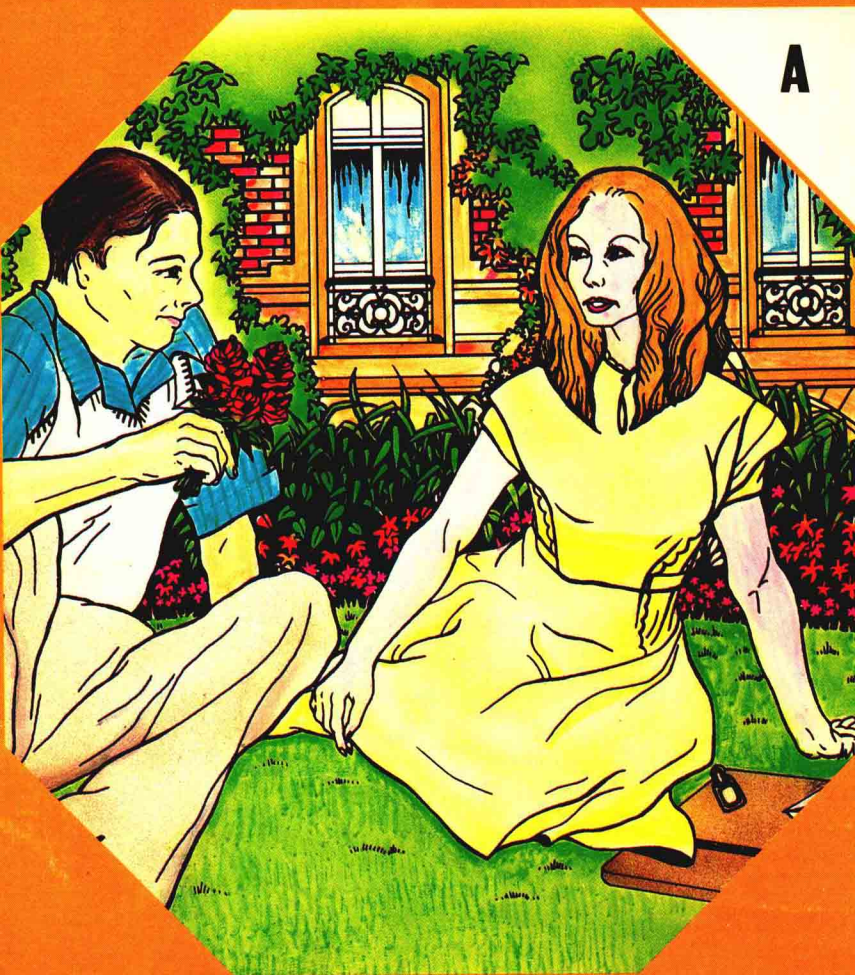


VENUS IN AN ENGLISH GARDEN

Marianne Cook

A



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HODDER AND STOUGHTON
LONDON SYDNEY AUCKLAND TORONTO

Hodder Graded Readers
General Editor: E Frank Candlin

Venus in an English Garden—Grade A Elementary
Illustrated by Tina Murray

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Preface

The first consideration in planning this collection of graded Readers has been—readability. If students are to be encouraged to widen their command of the language by extensive silent reading, then they must enjoy what they are invited to read. Because the age, interests and cultural background of students differ so widely, the range of topics of these Readers covers a broad field.

Structural grading in the successive stages has been controlled, though not rigidly, so that the Readers can be used in conjunction with any of the standard English courses. Lexical grading and the density of new words have also received careful attention, but the overall aim has been that general widening of a command of the language on which all more active communicative skills so much depend.

It is hoped that teachers will find the Readers useful for consolidating work done in class and that students will read them with interest and enjoyment.

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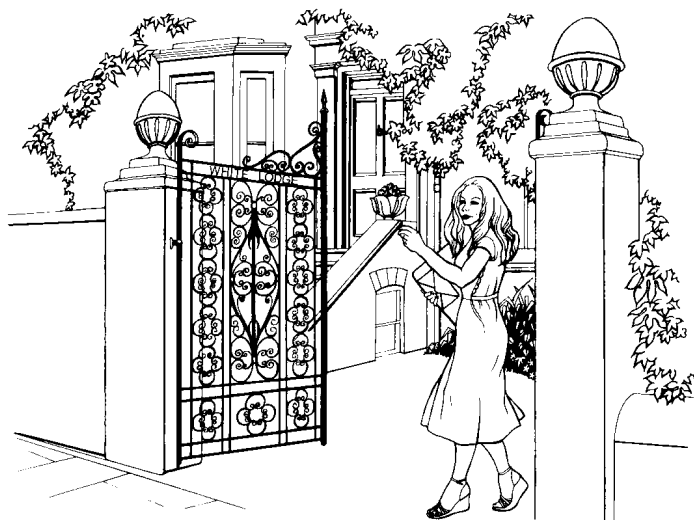
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Chapter One

Jenny Carter stopped in front of the big iron gates and got out of her car. She read the name on the gates. It was 'White Lodge'. She took a letter out of her bag and looked at it. The letter was from Robert Woodford. "Good," she thought. "This is the right house. This is Robert Woodford's house."



Jenny is a pretty girl. She works in London for a big newspaper. Its name is the *Chronicle*. In her work she meets many famous people. She often goes and talks to them in their homes. She asks them a lot of questions, and then she writes about them for the newspaper. She doesn't get a lot of money for her work, but she enjoys it very much.

Jenny went to 'White Lodge' in 1976. She was 21 years

old then, and Robert Woodford was 70. 'White Lodge' is in Charmouth, a small town by the sea in Dorset, about 170 miles from London.

Jenny left London early and drove all the morning. She took some bread and cheese and apples with her. At 12 o'clock she stopped and sat under a tree and ate them. She was very hungry and they were good. Then she got into the car and drove to the town. She got to Charmouth at about 2 o'clock and found 'White Lodge' at the end of a long street.

Robert Woodford was a famous artist and he painted many beautiful pictures. People knew his pictures but they didn't know much about him. "I'm going to tell people all about him," Jenny thought.

'White Lodge' is an old house with a pretty garden and a wall all round it. The house is in many of Woodford's pictures. He often painted it. Jenny opened the gates and went in. She walked across the grass and up to the door. The door was black. "I know Woodford's pictures," she thought. "In his pictures the door is brown."

The door was open. Jenny looked inside. The house was very quiet. "Hello!" she shouted. "Mr Woodford? Are you there?"

A woman hurried out of one of the rooms near the door. "Ssh . . . please," she said. "Mr Woodford is in bed. He's an old man. He sleeps in the afternoon."

"I'm so sorry," said Jenny. "I didn't know. I'm Jenny Carter from the *Chronicle*. I'm going to write about Mr Woodford for the newspaper. He knows about me. I have his letter here. But perhaps I'm early."

"Yes, you are early," answered the woman. "But Mr Woodford always comes downstairs at three o'clock and he often goes into the garden. It's a warm afternoon. Sit in the garden, Miss Carter, please."

It was a nice garden. The woman went inside and Jenny sat down on the grass. She opened her bag and took out a book. She read a little, but it was a very warm afternoon,

and it wasn't a very good book. She closed the book and looked round the garden at the trees and flowers. "Robert Woodford . . ." she thought. "Now what questions am I going to ask him? And when is he going to come? I'm *so* hot!"

Then she saw the man.

Chapter Two

The man was young and good-looking. He walked into the garden and Jenny saw him through the trees. He carried some flowers. Then he saw Jenny. He waved to her. "Hello!" he said and he came across the grass to her.

Jenny looked at the flowers. "Who is going to have those flowers?" she asked. "They are beautiful."

"They were for me," said the man. "I'm working inside the house today, and I got these flowers for my room. But please have them. They are blue and your eyes are blue. Your eyes are beautiful and the flowers are beautiful too. Take them, please." And he gave the flowers to Jenny.

"Oh!" said Jenny. "Thank you, thank you very much. How nice!"

The man sat down on the grass by Jenny. "Are you going to tell me your name?" he asked her.

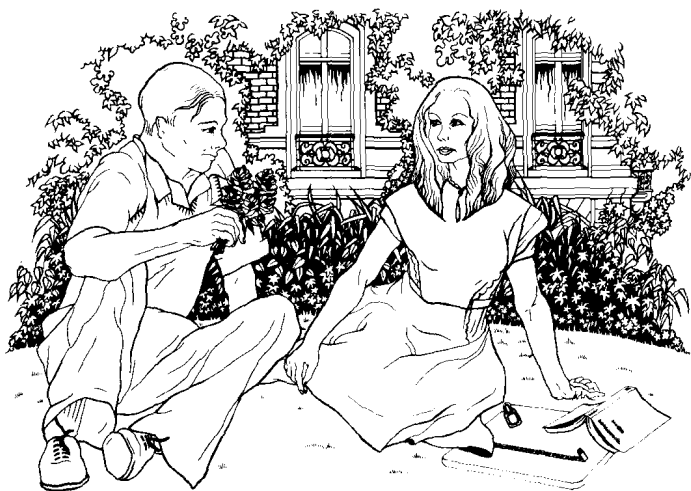
"Yes," said Jenny. "My name is . . ." But the young man stopped her.

"No, don't tell me!" he said.

"Why not?" asked Jenny.

"I'm going to tell *you*," he said.

"But you don't know me or my name," said Jenny.



“Oh yes I do,” said the man. “Your name is Venus and you came from the sea.”

“No, I didn’t. I came from London in my car!” Jenny said and laughed.

“You’re Venus,” he said again. “You’re Venus and you came to me from the sea. I’m right. The Italian painter, Botticelli, painted you in 1485. His picture of you is famous. In his picture you are coming from the sea. You’re beautiful.”

“I’m not,” said Jenny.

“You *are* beautiful, and I’m going to paint you. The name of my picture is going to be ‘Venus in an English Garden’. In my picture you’re going to sit here, in the garden, in front of the house. You’re going to have some blue flowers in your hand.”

“Who are you?” asked Jenny. “Are you an artist? This isn’t your house. Do you live here?”

“Yes, I live here, and yes, I’m going to be an artist,” the man said. “I work every day. I paint many pictures. My

pictures aren't very good now, but one day I'm going to paint very good pictures."

"Robert Woodford is this man's teacher," Jenny thought. "This young man lives at 'White Lodge' with Mr Woodford, and Mr Woodford teaches him."

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Botticelli!" he said and he laughed. "I'm the English Botticelli! But I'm sorry. I'm not being very polite. It's a hot afternoon. Come into the house. Have a cup of tea with me."

They stood up. The man took Jenny's hand and they walked to the door. Jenny stopped.

"What's the matter?" asked the man.

"The door . . ." said Jenny. "The door to the house is brown."

"Yes," said the man. "The door was always brown."

"No," said Jenny. "I came here at 2 o'clock. I stood here and I spoke to the woman. The door was black then."

"A woman?" said the man. "There isn't a woman at 'White Lodge', and the door is brown. Come inside. You aren't well. It's very hot in the garden."

"The door *was* black," Jenny thought. "I know. I'm not wrong." She looked round. The young man wasn't there. The young man wasn't there and the flowers weren't there. "Did he take them into the house with him?" she thought.

Then Jenny looked at the door. It was black.

Chapter Three

Jenny stood by the door and closed her eyes. "Where am I?" she thought. "What is happening to me?"

"Are you all right, Miss?" Jenny opened her eyes. It was the woman.

"There is a woman!" she thought. "Good!" Then she asked, "Please . . . Who was that man? There was a young man in the garden. He went into the house. Who was he?"

"Young man?" said the woman. "There isn't a young man at 'White Lodge'. Only Mr Woodford and I live here."

"Doesn't Mr Woodford teach the young man? Isn't he the young man's teacher?" asked Jenny.

"No, Mr Woodford doesn't teach now. He's very old. There isn't a young man in the house."

"The young man doesn't know about the woman, and the woman doesn't know about the young man," Jenny thought. "He took some flowers into the house," she said.

"I didn't see him or his flowers," said the woman.

"Then who is he? And where is he now?" asked Jenny.

The woman thought, and then she said, "Perhaps it was young Alan. He works for Mr Woodford. He works in the garden. He lives in the town and he comes here on Tuesdays and Thursdays."

"Is Alan tall with black hair?" Jenny asked.

The woman shook her head. "No," she said, "he hasn't got black hair, and he isn't very tall. Alan's only a boy. He's only 15 years old."

"It wasn't Alan," Jenny said.

"No," said the woman. "It wasn't Alan. Today's Wednesday. Alan doesn't come on Wednesdays."

"Then who was it?" Jenny asked.

"I don't know. I'm sorry," said the woman. "Perhaps you were wrong about the man. Perhaps you were asleep. It's very hot in the garden this afternoon. Perhaps you slept and you had a dream. You saw this strange young man in your dream. That's the answer."

"It wasn't a dream. I wasn't asleep," said Jenny. "It happened. I saw him. He *was* here and he gave me some flowers."

"You talk about this man, but where is he now? You talk about these flowers, but where are they now?" said the woman.

"Tell me one thing, please," said Jenny. "The door of the house . . . Was the door always black?"

"No," said the woman. "It was brown. Young Alan painted it black in 1975."

"He painted it black in 1975?" said Jenny.

"Yes, he did the work and Mr Woodford gave him some money. He bought some records with the money. He's a good boy. He painted the door well."

"That door was brown *this afternoon*. I saw it," Jenny said.

"It's black now. You had a dream," said the woman.

"It *wasn't* a dream!" Jenny said. "Look!"

On the grass by the door there was a small blue flower.

Chapter Four

Jenny looked at the flower and then at the woman. "That flower fell out of my hand," she said. "The young man gave me a lot of flowers and that one fell onto the grass."

The woman shook her head. "I don't know . . ." she

began, but then she saw Mr Woodford. "Mr Woodford's coming downstairs," she said.

"Oh, yes," said Jenny. "And I'm not going to write about that strange young man," she thought. "My newspaper doesn't want that. I'm going to forget about him. I'm going to write about Robert Woodford."

Robert Woodford came out of the house. He was slow and careful. He didn't walk fast. He was an old man. The woman hurried to him and took his arm. "Be careful!" she said. "Don't fall!"

"I'm all right, Mrs Simpson," he said. "I'm not going to fall."

"This is Miss Carter," said Mrs Simpson.

"How do you do, Miss Carter?" said Woodford.

"How do you do, Mr Woodford?" said Jenny. She shook hands with him.

"I'm sorry," he said. "I was asleep at 2 o'clock. Mrs Simpson, please bring my garden chair outside for me." Mrs Simpson went into the house. "Mrs Simpson cleans the house and cooks for me," said Woodford to Jenny. "She's a good woman. Sometimes I am angry with her. She's always telling me, 'Be careful! Be careful!' But she's a good woman."

Mrs Simpson came out of the house. She carried a white chair. She put the chair on the grass and Woodford sat down. "Thank you," he said. "Now bring a chair for Miss Carter."

"No, thank you," said Jenny. "I'm going to sit on the grass. It's nice on the grass."

"You're young!" Woodford said and laughed. "I was young once, too. I always sat on the grass, not on a chair. Chairs are for old people."

"I'm going to make some tea," said Mrs Simpson.

"Good!" said Woodford. "Bring some tea, please. A cup of tea is nice on a hot afternoon."

Mrs Simpson went inside.

"Now, what are you going to ask me?" Woodford said.

“What are you going to write about me in your newspaper? What are you going to tell people?”

“I’m going to tell people all about you,” Jenny said.

“Oh! And how much am *I* going to tell you?” Woodford said and laughed. Then he said, “Please don’t forget one thing, Miss Carter . . .”

“Jenny, please. My name is Jenny.”

“All right, Jenny. Don’t forget one thing. Artists don’t talk well about their work, you know. Artists don’t like words. Artists think in pictures, not in words. They paint; they don’t talk. Their pictures speak for them. Do you know my pictures, Jenny?”

“I know some of your pictures,” Jenny answered. “I like them. They’re very beautiful.”

“A pretty girl likes my pictures!” Woodford said. “How nice! That makes me very happy.”

“Your house is in many of your pictures,” Jenny said.

“Yes,” said Woodford. “I like my little white house very much. I came here in 1931. I was 25 years old then. I saw the house and I liked it. I liked Charmouth too. I always liked the sea. I often painted pictures of the sea. So I bought the house. It did not cost a lot of money in 1931.”

“It *is* a pretty house,” Jenny said. “But please, tell me about *you*. Why do you paint pictures? Why are you an artist?”

“I don’t know. Why do you write for the *Chronicle*? You don’t write only for the money.”

“No,” said Jenny. “I don’t get very much money, but I enjoy my work.”

“And I enjoy my work too. I don’t paint only for the money. That’s a good thing! Artists don’t often get a lot of money. Van Gogh sold only one picture. I’ve sold many pictures, but I don’t paint for the money. I enjoy my work. That’s my answer to your question,” Woodford said. “Now come inside and see some pictures. I don’t sell them all. I like some of my pictures very much, and I don’t sell those!”