

Visuteach Short Comprehension Passage

The flat was usually neat, but not today. The carpets were rolled up, dust sheets were tucked round the furniture, and rubbish of all kinds was lying about on the bare boards. The flat was to be let for six months.

“Mum, sit down and rest. You are dead beat.”

Mrs Hampden was kneeling by an open trunk, into which she was packing a pile of children’s clothes. Betty pulled her mother from her knees, forced her into a big chair and then sat down beside her.

“Yes,” said her mother, “I think I have just about run out of energy. But we have nearly finished and we must all try to get a good night’s rest before our early start.”

“But, what if I will not be able to stand it?”

“Betty, grandfather is my father – my very own father – and you have to stay with him. You and I are so alike, Betty: both foolish spitfires. I often wonder if I could have handled things better in the past. Grandfather objected to me marrying your father because Father was a man of little means. Grandfather warned me what would happen and told me I could never return to the family home.”

“That’s abominable!”

“Don’t, darling. You’re not helping me. I did marry Father, and then my miserable pride came in. For eighteen years I have never written to your grandfather, and he has never written to me. Father and I managed to keep every trouble to ourselves until the visit to the doctor. The doctor said that Father was overstraining his nerves by his double work, and that unless he had a complete change for six months, and a voyage around the world, he was in the greatest danger of a serious breakdown. I decided that Father’s health was more important to us all than my foolish pride, and so I wrote to your grandfather and asked him for money to help us pay the expenses. Grandfather has kindly offered to look after you and your brothers and sisters while your father and I try to restore your father’s health.

Passage adapted from *The Children of Trafalgar Square* by Theodora Wilson Wilson.