

Phrasal Verbs

AND IDIOMS IN CONTEXT



SUITABLE FOR LEVELS B2-C1

Jacqueline Melvin

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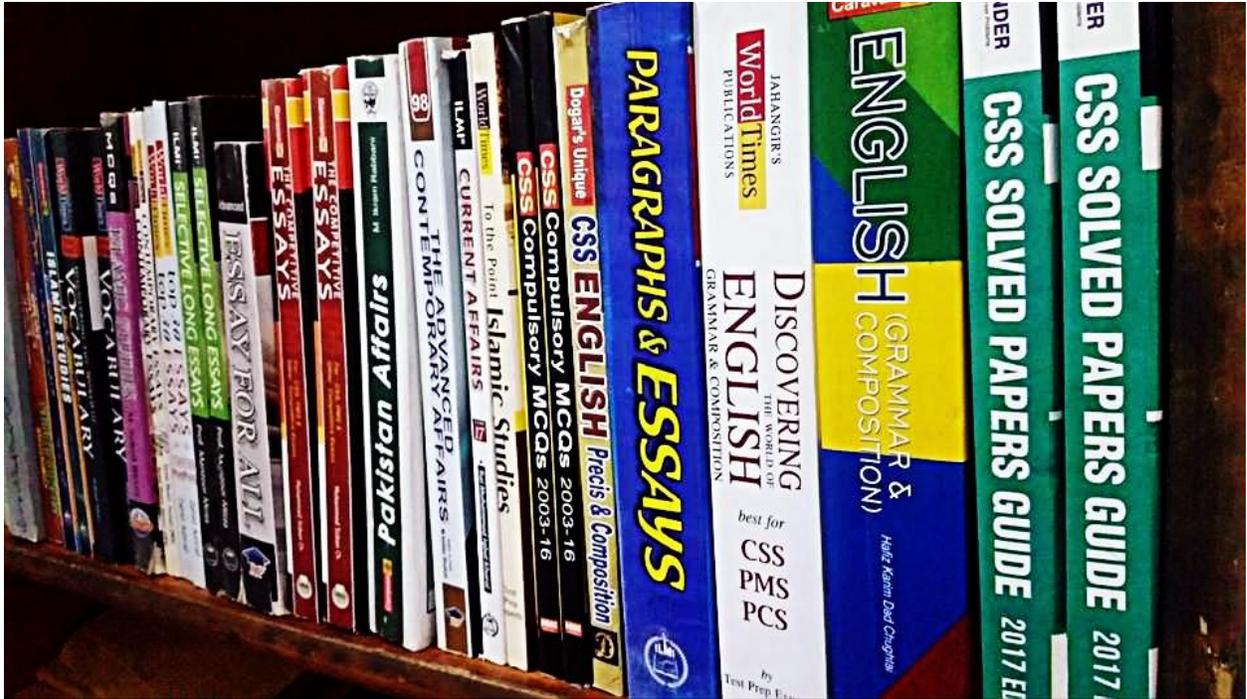
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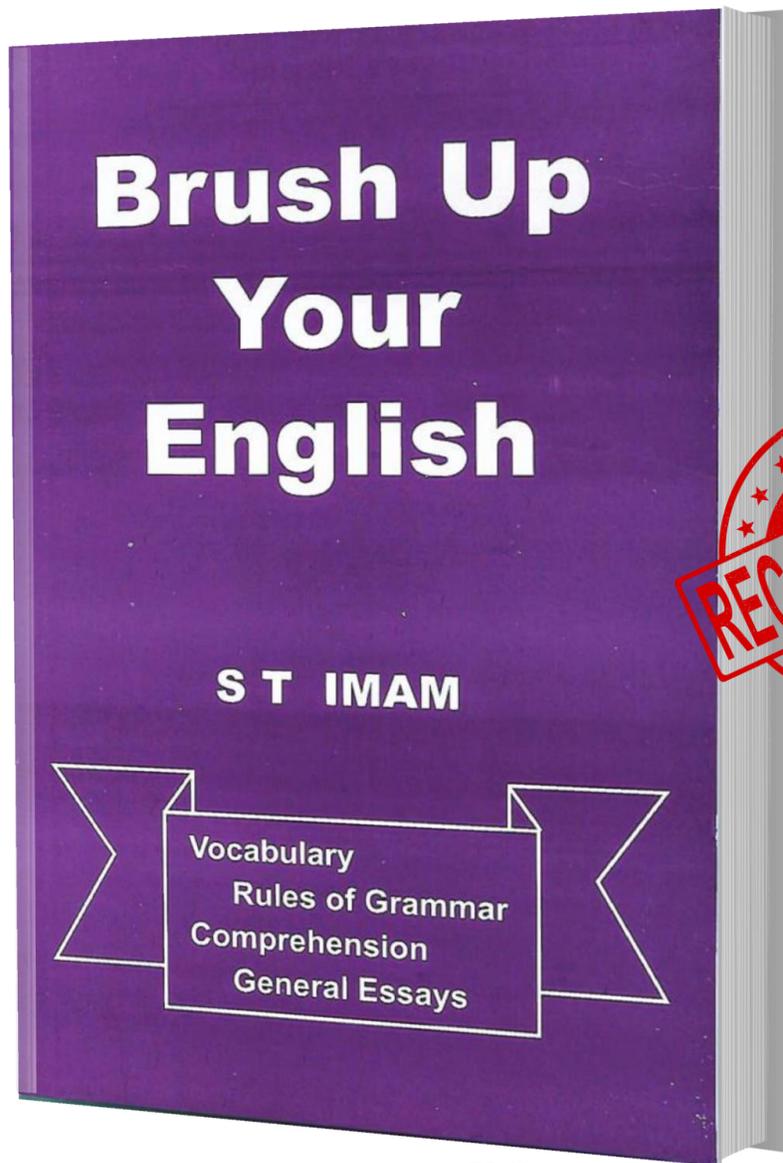
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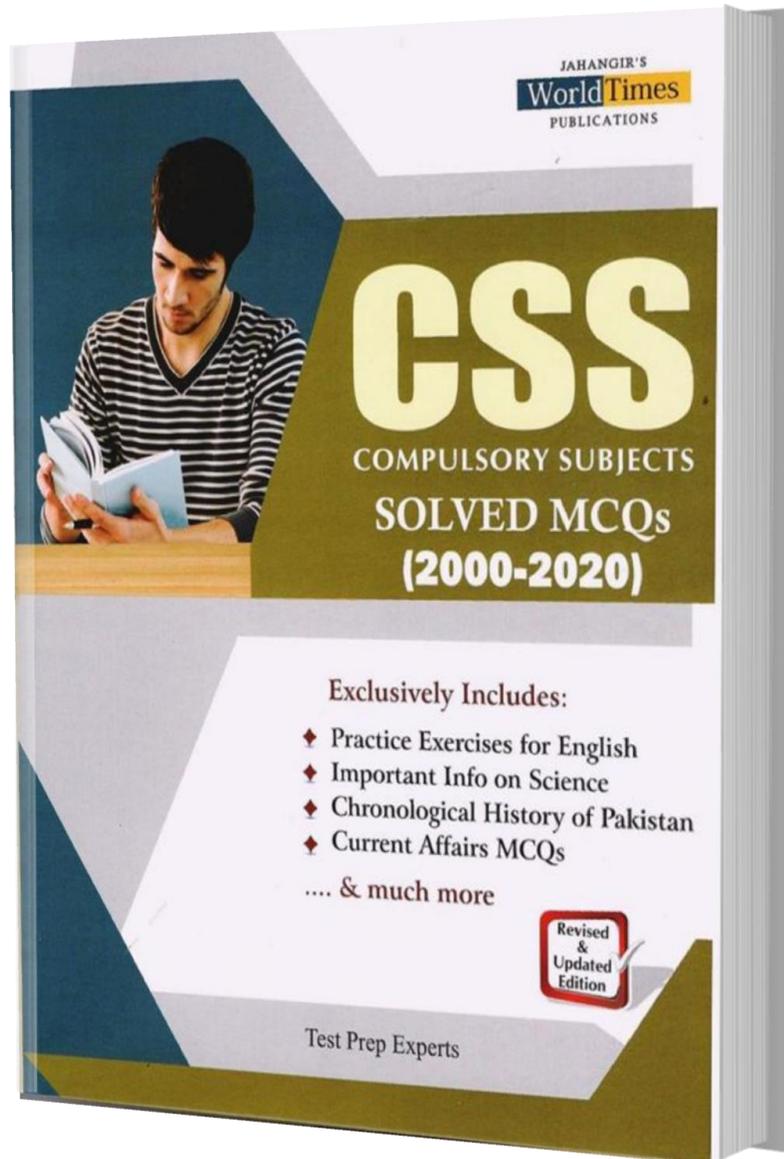
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Phrasal Verbs and Idioms in Context

Suitable for levels B2-C1

PHRASAL VERBS AND IDIOMS IN CONTEXT

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, businesses, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any similarities to events, locales, or persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental and should be recognised as such.

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ISBN: 9781719939867

English as a foreign language

Suitable for late intermediate to advanced learners of English

Join Mark on his life changing journey while learning hundreds of phrasal verbs and idioms along the way.

As well as changing his own life, Mark inadvertently changes the lives of several people – each with a story to tell - each linked by destiny.

How to use this book

Phrasal verbs are in *italics* while idioms and idiomatic phrases are underlined. Several stressed words are also in *italics*.

Each chapter is followed by two glossaries, one for phrasal verbs and one for idioms. The meaning of each phrasal verb is determined according to its context in the story although many have different meanings in other contexts.

Several of the more common phrasal verbs are recycled throughout the book.

This book is based on standard British English

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Mark

MARK MILROY HAD FORGOTTEN TO SET the alarm clock the night before when he'd *rolled in half cut* from his friend Joe's engagement party. Now he had *slept in* and, once again, he'd be late for work.

Oh he shouldn't have *overdone* it with the drink he thought as he rushed to the toilet to *spew up*. He should have learned his lesson by now. But it was always a case of '*never again until the next time*' with Mark.

It was the third time this month he'd *woken up* with the most horrendous of hangovers and he'd vowed never to touch *the bottle* again. He'd sworn to himself that he was going to *give up drinking once and for all*. It wasn't his fault he told himself. It *just was not his fault* if other people invited him to parties and pubs and put temptation right in front of his face. He could have ordered some lemonade or a glass of fruit juice but hey, there was no fun in drinking soft drinks. He liked *the hard stuff* plus the boys would just laugh in his face and call him a *sissy* or a *pansy* if he were to be seen with a glass of lemonade or the likes in his hand.

Mark had been known as the local hard man since the age of thirteen and hard men *do not drink* lemonade. He'd also been the leader of the "LYT", Liverpool young team, all throughout his teens and early twenties. He'd always been a born leader and people had always *looked up to him*. He had a reputation to *live up to*.

He had a look in the mirror and didn't like what he saw. His face was a purplish colour and the tip of his nose was deep purple tinged with red thread veins – *a tell-tale sign* of a hardened drinker he thought alarmingly to himself.

He'd always been such a handsome lad with those *rough and ready* good looks. All the girls had *swooned over* him at school fighting for his attention.

The lifestyle he led was beginning to *take its toll on him*. He *was on the verge of losing* what Mother Nature had so generously bestowed him with. If he didn't *pull up his socks* pretty quickly, those good looks would soon be gone.

Of late he'd noticed that quite a few of his mates were beginning to *thin on top*. He should *thank his lucky stars* that he still had a decent head of hair on him – a thick mop of wavy blonde locks. His bright blue eyes were not so bright this morning. They were puffy and blood shot. He didn't look like, or

feel like, for that matter, the healthiest of human beings.

He *headed for* the kitchen and *put* the kettle *on*. A strong cup of good old British brew might do the trick and get him back on the mend.

As he sat sipping the tea with two teabags in it for good measure, his mind *went back* to June of the year before when his wife Katrina had *walked out on* him just nine months after they'd tied the knot. He'd pleaded with her not to go and had told her for the umpteenth time that he'd *lay off* the booze. But it had been to no avail. His pleading had fallen on deaf ears. She'd already made up her mind and nothing or no-one was going to stand in her way. She'd reached the end of her tether with her so-called husband.

With a suitcase in one hand and their pooch on his lead in the other, she *walked out* of the door, *and out of his life*, never to be seen again.

Rumour had it that her father had *set her up* in business in a recruitment agency in London. In fact, not long after her departure, Mark received notification from a solicitor in the capital informing him that she'd filed for divorce on the grounds of irretrievable break down due to his continual drunkenness. Had it been his own fault? He remembered only too well how many chances she'd given him to *smarten up* and get his act together. Only now, several months down the line was he beginning to *get over* the break up.

He looked up at the kitchen clock. He was going to have to get a move on. He was due at the factory at 9 o' clock and it was now *going on* 8.45 a.m. He risked getting sacked if he didn't get there on time. He'd already been given two oral warnings for his late time-keeping and the next one would be a written one and then after that he'd be out the door.

Anyway, did it really matter if he got the sack? Maybe they'd be doing him a favour. For quite some time now he'd been thinking of reinventing himself but he still hadn't thought about how.

For Gawd's sake! He was twenty nine going on thirty and he'd been in that margarine factory since the day after his sixteenth birthday. Where the heck was his life going? A written warning is something he did not need in his life right now. It would go against him if ever he needed a reference for another job – but what other job? He had no qualifications to his name. Not even an O' grade. He'd never been one for studying. Plus it had been the norm when he was sixteen to *get out of* school as soon as possible and find a job to pay your way. He'd never been encouraged to *stay on* and get some kind of qualification. Ma and pa had had too many children to think about to focus their attention on any one of them. He was the fifth of eight children. They

had all left school as soon as it had been legally possible.

Nowadays more and more people were going to university and getting degrees and doing masters' courses but that had not been the status quo back then. Here he was, on the threshold of thirty with no direction in his life. Maybe if he *got away* from it all he would also *get away* from his nights of *boozing it up* in pubs and clubs with what few mates he had left to go on the piss with.

Most of them had recently got married and hardly ever had time for the boys' nights out. He didn't even enjoy going out anymore. Maybe he'd had too much of it. Too much of anything and boredom *sets in*.

He remembered a time when he'd lived for those kinds of nights out. He definitely needed a turning point in his life – a new direction. After all, he told himself, they do say that 'a change is as good as a rest'.

He looked up at the kitchen clock once again. It was nearly 9 o' clock and he still felt sick. His headache was getting worse and his head was spinning. Maybe he should phone in sick. No, he couldn't do that. They all knew he'd been to Joe's engagement party the night before. They'd know he had a hangover and hangovers were not classified as valid reasons not to go to work. They were of your own making.

He *got up* and went to the bathroom where he splashed his face with cold water for several minutes before *throwing on* some clothes and *heading on out*. He'd go to the factory, late or not, and face the music. If they *pulled him in*, he'd hand in his notice. Now was the time to start thinking about the future. He couldn't see himself still working in that factory at the age of 65. Gawd! What a damn waste of a life that would be.

Once outside he got on his motorbike and *revved it up*. He *shot off* down the street and after about twenty minutes he was at the factory gates. He *clocked in* at 9.38 a.m. hoping the supervisor wasn't around to notice his tardiness although he knew it would *show up* on the computer system. At least the process of being *pulled in* to HR for a lecture and the dreaded written warning would be delayed. He just could not be arsed with it. Not today. His head was still spinning and he felt sick again.

He greeted his colleagues before going to his locker to get the white coat and hat – a mandatory uniform to wear in the factory. His colleague Tom, who'd worked alongside him for the past ten years, gestured to him that Mrs O' Sullivan the floor supervisor hadn't yet arrived. Good, good, he thought. He was not in the mood to listen to her ranting.

Mark's job was to mix the oils for the margarine mixture. Today just the mere smell of those oils was enough to make him feel sick. And sick he was. Luckily he managed to get to the nearest toilet before *throwing up*.

He was taken to the factory infirmary where the doctor *signed him off* for three days.

'Go home and get plenty of rest,' said Doctor Finlay. 'Make sure you drink plenty of water with lemon in it and try to eat fresh fruit and vegetables. Don't touch alcohol and *do not* eat fried food. You need to go easy on that stomach of yours – you know, detoxify your system.'

Doctor Finlay advised Mark not to ride home on his motorbike.

'You could have a terrible accident in the state you're in. Leave it parked in the factory car park.'

A taxi was called to take him home. He spent the rest of the day in bed thinking about the drastic changes needed to his life.

That night he felt a bit better. Ma *popped round* with a few lemons and some oranges and apples and a pot of homemade vegetable soup.

'It time you got a grip,' she said.

'I know ma, I know.'

'You're not a baby anymore,' she proceeded to tell him.

Ma lived two streets away. She was now nearly seventy years old. She looked tired and *worn out* after having *brought up* eight children on a tight budget but now they'd all left home and were living their own lives.

Ma had a particular fondness for Mark whom she'd always dubbed her blue-eyed golden boy. She knew deep down that Mark was a real softie and not the hard man he *made out* to be in and around Liverpool. Her golden boy had a heart of gold.

Mark suddenly felt he was a letdown to ma and once again vowed to himself that he would change his ways.

Next day a thought struck him. He could go to live in Spain or Greece or maybe Italy. He liked the idea of living in the sun. Here it was always raining. He had £5000 savings he'd *stashed away* for a rainy day. Well this *was* a rainy day. His health, and the good looks he was beginning to lose, depended on how he conducted his life from now on. It was now or never; he was still twenty nine years old. This kind of move he could not make at forty.

What about his flat? It was a small pad that he'd bought seven years earlier at a knock-down price. It had once been the property of the council. He'd paid rent to them for three years prior to the moment they'd decided to *sell off*

all the flats in his street. He'd *put down* a five grand deposit and *taken out* a ten-year mortgage so he still owed the building society three years' mortgage repayments on it which were pretty low at £300 a month.

An idea struck him. He could *rent it out*. Maybe he could get £450 a month for it. The rent would pay the mortgage and he'd have some money *left over* to go towards renting a new pad abroad. That way he'd always have a home to *come back* to should the need arise. Ma and pa could collect the rent for him or it could be sent to his bank via direct debit.

He suddenly felt better. He found himself dancing around the house singing, 'I'm leaving on a jet plane, don't know when I'll be back again.'

He'd go back to the factory for two weeks. Do the decent thing and hand in two weeks' notice. That was one of the clauses written in the company contract. He'd get some extra cash as well. How much was it? One week for every year of labour. He'd been there for thirteen years so that would be thirteen weekly wages added at the end. Yes, he'd have enough money to tide him over until he found a job abroad.

He'd been to Spain – Majorca, Tenerife and Ibiza. He'd also been to Greece to the Island of Crete. He quite fancied the idea of Italy.

In and around Liverpool there were plenty of fish and chip shops – all owned by Italians. He often wondered what the heck they were doing in Liverpool when they *came from* the land of "o sole mio". He'd once posed the question to Mario from the fish and chip shop down the road.

Mario spoke broken English with a thick marked Italian accent. Mario had replied. 'Italy good for one month in beautiful hotel. We go there in luxury hotel. Live in Italy – difficult life. We work here we make lotsa money and have good life. Better for us one month of luxury in the Bella Italia than twelve months of struggle to pay bills. We happy eleven months here and one month in our land.'

There was always a magic in the air in Mario's fish and chip shop. People queued right out onto the street and often Mario would be heard shouting at the top of his voice in Italian to his two sisters who worked there with him. Mark and his friends would try to guess what they were saying.

Mark's mind *came back* to the now. He remembered that one of his sister's friends had gone out to Italy about five years before as an au pair. She'd come back after a year and said she'd loved it, especially the weather and the food, but was back home as she'd missed her friends and family. She'd been in Milan and her only task had been to take a couple of children to school,

tidy their rooms and speak to them in English. She'd had a room and board and a small monthly allowance in return.

He wondered if he would miss ma and pa and his brothers and sisters and his mates. He could always *come back* if he did. Hey, there was internet. He could connect to them via Skype.

Well his mind was made up. It was definitely Italy he was going to go to; first things first. He'd book the flight and that way there would be no *turning back*. He would search the net for accommodation and then see what jobs were available. Maybe he could be a tourist guide in Florence, Milan or Rome or even Naples. He'd get to meet all sorts of people. It would be a far cry from seeing the same faces he'd been looking at in the factory for the past thirteen years.

First he looked on internet to see what the going rate was for flats rented in his area. Some were going for £700 but had three bedrooms. Yes, £450 would be the right price. He placed his advert on an internet website.

Delightful one bedroom flat. Double glazing/ gas central heating throughout and a modern kitchen and bathroom. £450 pcm (per calendar month)

For further details please contact Mark on 0777 3737337

Next he booked a cheap flight for the end of the month. It was a one-way ticket to Rome. News spread around Liverpool about the hard man Mark going abroad. Some of his mates tried to *talk him out of* going. He was having none of that. Their only fear really was to lose their drinking partner.

Ma said it would be good for him to see a bit of the world before he got too old. Pa said nothing. He was a man of few words and rarely stated his opinion. His sister Jane, who he was closest to, was crying.

'I'm not exactly going to the moon,' he said. 'I'll only be two hours away by plane. You can come out to visit me once I get myself sorted out.'

His other sister Maggie thought it was a brilliant idea. She had seen her brother going right downhill since the breakup of his marriage or rather, since he got married or worst still, since he had laid eyes on that Katrina he'd *ended up* marrying. Maggie had had no time for that Katrina. A snooty nosed, spoilt, arrogant good for nothing bitch who she blamed for the depression her

brother had *gone through*. Anyway, Maggie thought it was the best thing for Mark to *get out of* Liverpool and have a change of scenery for a while. His brother Peter said they'd all be out to visit him the next time Liverpool was playing at the Olympic Stadium in Rome.

'Yes that would be nice,' joked his eldest brother Johnny. 'At least we won't have to pay a fortune to stay in a hotel. Mark can *put us all up* in his penthouse suite.'

His other brother Kevin, who ran a boarding house in Bournemouth with his wife Lindsay, rang him and said that perhaps he should come down to Bournemouth for a break before taking such drastic measures.

His nieces and nephews loved telling their friends that they had an Italian uncle. He hadn't even set foot on Italian soil yet and they were referring to him as their Italian uncle. Gawd! kids did let their imaginations run away with them.

His colleagues in the factory were saddened that Mark was leaving. Even HR were sad and Mrs Hopkins, the head of personnel, joked that she'd cancel those late-time keeping warnings and give him a clean slate were he to decide he wanted to stay.

He'd miss them all. They were like a second family. But he had to keep on reminding himself that it was a dead end job. It was the road to nowhere and he'd been on that road for a third of his life.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Bring up (children) – raise from childhood to adulthood

Clock in – register one's arrival at a workplace

Come back – return to where you are at the moment of speaking

Come from – originate from

Get away – escape

Go back – return to where you were previously

Go through – to experience something, usually an unpleasant ordeal

Get to (do something) – have the opportunity

Get out of – leave/escape from

Get over – recover

Get up – move from a sitting position to a standing position

Give up – quit/stop

Go off – (for an alarm) begin to ring/to sound

Go on – (it was going on nine) approaching 9 o' clock

Go for – sell for

Go through – experience

Head for – begin to go towards/go in the direction of

Lay off (the booze) – not drink alcohol anymore

Left over – remained

Let down – disappoint (let someone down)

Live up to – be able to satisfy the expectations others have of you

Look up to – admire and respect

Make out (to be) – if you make out to be someone, you portray yourself as someone who you really are not

Pop round – pay a quick visit to someone from a nearby location

Pull in – request to go to a superior's office to explain yourself for something you did or didn't do that was wrong

Put on (put the kettle on) – put on the stove and heat up.

Put (someone) up – invite or permit someone to sleep at your house for a period of time

Rent out – give for an established period of time in exchange for money

Rev up – powerfully accelerate a motorbike or a scooter

Roll in – arrive, usually when a person rolls in, he/she arrives home very late and often not in a very good state (colloquialism)

Sell off – divest of assets by selling at a reduced price

Set in – to begin to take roots

Set (someone) up (in business) – arrange and provide the means for someone to start a business

Shoot off – go away at top speed

Sign (someone) off – if the doctor signs you off, he writes an official note to

say you won't be fit for work for a certain period of time

Sleep in – oversleep/sleep for longer than you intended

Smarten up – change one's ways for the better

Spew up – vomit (English colloquialism)

Stash away – put in a safe place until needed

Stay on – (at school) continue/remain and finish your studies

Swoon over (someone) – to show excessive feelings of delight and adoration when in a certain person's company to the point of deliration

Take out – (a mortgage/an insurance policy/a loan) initiate proceedings to enter into an agreement by filling in the necessary documents. Usually a contract

Talk (someone) out of (doing something) – persuade someone not to do something

Throw on (some clothes) – hurriedly put on

Throw up – vomit

Tide you over – cover for a period of time

Turn back – ('there was no turning back') return in the direction one came from/abandon a course of action

Wake up – finish sleeping

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon someone usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A change is as good as a rest – a change is as relaxing and refreshing as a rest is

A dead end job – a job with no future prospects

A let down – a disappointment

A rainy day – a period in life of financial hardship

A turning point – a moment of significant, beneficial change

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to 'when all is said and done'. It reinforces and supports what was said before

At the top of (one's) voice – shout very loudly, as loud as one's voice can reach

Back then – in that moment in the past

Be a far cry from – be completely different in a positive way

Be of (one's) own making – refers to a negative situation caused by oneself

Be on the mend – in the recovery phase of an illness or ailment

Be on the verge of (doing something) – to be about to do something/be close to doing something

Be out the door – lose one's job/be sacked

Be the norm – be the normal thing to do/the trend

Booze it up – drink a lot of alcohol (colloquialism)

Can/could not be arsed with it – to have no desire whatsoever for something (colloquial English)

Change (one's) ways – change oneself for the better

Do the trick – be the solution

Down the line – at a later moment/a time in the future

Face the music – face expected unpleasant consequences of one's actions

Fall on deaf ears – not be heard

First things first – to prioritise the most important things and get them done before starting on anything else

For good measure – in addition in order to achieve a more successful outcome

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

Get a move on – go faster/hurry

Get (one's) act together – change one's ways for the better

Get back on the mend – recover from an illness/return to a previous state of good health

Get out of school – leave school

Get (oneself) sorted out – arrange to solve one's problems or suchlike

Get the sack/get sacked – lose one’s job for a wrongdoing

Go downhill – deteriorate

Go easy on (something) – be careful not to exaggerate

Go on the piss – go out and get drunk (colloquial English)

Half cut – quite drunk (colloquial English)

Hand in (one’s) **notice** – resign from one’s place of work

Have no time for (someone) – have no interest whatsoever due to a strong dislike or a total lack of respect for someone

Have none of that – not accept/used in the progressive form-I’m having none of that/I was having none of that

In return – in exchange of

Knock-down price – greatly reduced price/ a real bargain

Lay eyes on – see someone or something usually for the first time

Let your imagination run away with you – lose control of your imagination and begin to fantasise

Make up (one’s) **mind** – decide

Made up (his mind was made up) – he had decided

Never again until the next time – this expression is used jokingly a lot by native speakers of English when they have drunk too much alcohol and feel awful. They really want to say ‘never again’ but they know that there will be a ‘next time’ as when they feel better they tend to forget how bad they really felt so they drink again.

Night out – a night of enjoyment away from home in the company of friends

Once and for all – finally and conclusively

Overdo – exaggerate

Pad – (it was a small pad) a very small house (English colloquialism)

Pansy – a male with feminine traits

Pay (one’s) **way** – pay for your own expenses

Phone in sick – telephone your place of work to inform them that you are sick will be absent

Pooch – dog

Pull up (one's) socks – make improvements to one's behaviour

Put down a deposit – secure a sale by advancing a sum of money to block it

Reach the end of (one's) tether – be tired and fed up

Rumour has it/rumour had it – this means that this is what people are saying but it is not sure whether or not it is true

Rough and ready good looks – unrefined beauty

Sissy – the same as 'pansy', a male with feminine traits

Stand in (someone's) way – obstruct/hinder, try to prevent someone from doing something or making progress

Take its toll on (someone) – to have bad effects especially on one's health

Take measures – (take drastic measures) engage in a course of action

Tell tale sign/s – signs that reveal something

Thank (one's) lucky stars – be grateful

The break up – the separation/the end of a romantic relationship (the noun deriving from the phrasal verb 'to break up')

The now – the present

The going rate – the market value

The hard stuff – spirits such as vodka, gin, whiskey etc., (colloquial English)

The road to nowhere – continue without making any progress whatsoever

The status quo – the current situation

Thin on top – begin to lose hair from the top part of one's head

Tie the knot – get married

To no avail – without success

Worn out – exhausted

Karen

Karen McPherson was becoming increasingly anxious as each day *went by*. The flat she had *taken on* was proving to be much more expensive than she'd initially thought. The man at the estate agency had failed to mention the extortionate condominium expenses and so had the landlord. She had enquired of them at the time but had been told they were '*una stupidaggine*' (a silly amount).

The rent was more than she could realistically afford but it was less than the market value considering how spacious the flat was.

It comprised of two large spacious bedrooms, a living room, a very big kitchen, a bathroom and two anti-rooms and a large hallway. What she liked most about it though was the large garden with a high wall and hedge all the way round it. Nobody could see in so she would have her privacy.

She knew she could have *held out* a bit and found a smaller place to live but this had been the most ideal for her large sheepdog and two cats. She could have stayed on at her *now ex* boyfriend's place for a month or two more but she'd reached the end of her tether with him and above all, his interfering old busybody of a mother. Karen had been left with no choice but to *get out* if she wished to preserve her sanity and keep her dignity intact.

It hadn't been easy to find a flat. She'd phoned at least fifty but as soon as they learned about her pets, she'd been told in no uncertain terms that animals were not welcome. That's when she decided to put things into the hands of an estate agent. The man in the agency had been very kind and had told her he knew of a very nice man who was renting a large garden flat at a reasonable price and he was sure he'd agree to her *moving in* with her precious pets. And so it was; the agent had been right. The landlord was very pleasant indeed and said that he loved animals and that it was human beings that scared him more than anything else in life.

Now after eighteen months and having *used up* all her savings, panic was *setting in*. She could not *fall back on* the rent payments.

Gawd! She was working her fingers to the bone to pay for it all. Every weekend was being spent, sometimes into the small hours of the morning, doing translations from Italian to English. She was also working five evenings for four hours in a row in a language school and doing private lessons during the day but still she was having difficulty in making ends

meet. She realised she could no longer *go on* like this. She could move to a smaller place but the thought of living in a one-room flat was enough to make her shudder. She'd always been used to lots of space. Well if she didn't take action pretty quickly she could soon find herself under a bridge.

She knew what she had to do. She would have to sub-let one of the rooms or she may *end up* dying of hunger. She'd been economizing on food for far too long now – scouring the supermarkets for special offers or fifty per cent discounted food that was hitting its sell-by date. She dreamed of the day she could buy what she wanted to eat and not what was on offer. Her days of scrimping and scraping would be over.

It might not be easy to find a flat-mate; not everyone was a pet lover. She would advertise for an Italian girl she thought. Italian girls were less prone to rolling in drunk with a bunch of friends at the weekend than English or Americans were. She could not be bothered with that kind of disturbance in her life. And so it was, she placed an ad on two internet websites.

English language teacher renting large spacious room to working Italian girl. Monthly rent of 330 euros includes electricity, condominium, heating in winter, telephone and internet. Animal lovers only as two cats and a dog are permanent residents in the flat.

She'd require a two-month deposit. That would get her back on her feet financially.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be prone to – have the tendency/predisposition/inclined to

End up –be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Fall back on – default on payments due/go into arrears

Get out – escape

Go by – pass

Go on – continue

Hold out – wait to see if a better opportunity arises

Move in – start living in a place

Roll in – arrive, usually when a person rolls in, he/she arrives home very late and often not in a very good state (colloquialism)

Set in – usually refers to something not very pleasant which starts and continues to develop

Take on – undertake something requiring responsibility

Use up – consume/use until there is none left

Glossary – idioms and expressions

Get back on (one's) feet – to be in good health or a good financial state again after a bad period

In a row – one after the other/consecutively

In no uncertain terms – if you tell someone something in no uncertain terms, you state it clearly, without mincing your words, and that you mean what you say. The double negative in this phrase serves to fortify the meaning

Make ends meet – to struggle to make one's money last from one salary until the next. Barely have enough money to survive.

Put things in the hands of (someone) – give a task to a third party to carry out/execute for you

Reach the end of (one's) tether – reach a point where you are so tired and fed up that you can no longer carry on (continue)/lose all patience with someone or something

Scrimp and scrape – to spend money only on the bare essentials due to serious financial difficulty

Take action – begin to do something about a situation

The small hours of the morning – very late, until about two or three in the morning

Work (one's) fingers to the bone – work extremely hard

Giancarlo

Giancarlo had been working in the auditing company for just over a month and was enjoying his job more than he could possibly have imagined. He was also making rapid progress. He'd been assigned various tasks and had been asked to *take on* an important project with a thirty-day deadline.

'Do you *feel up to* the task?' his boss Mr Spampinato had asked.

'Of course I do,' Giancarlo had replied. 'I've always loved a really good challenge.'

'Here you are then. Bring me the final results in thirty days' time.'

'Okay Mr Spampinato. I won't *let you down*. Even if I have to work night and day, I'll make sure I meet the deadline.'

Three days later there was a knock on Mr Spampinato's door.

'*Come in*', he called.

Mr Spampinato was a large, burly, good natured Sicilian man.

'Here's the project Mr Spampinato.'

'Bring it to me once it's completed,' was his reply.

'I've already completed it.'

'You can't have. It's impossible. I only gave it to you a few days ago.'

'Nothing's impossible when you put your mind to it Mr Spampinato.'

'Ok, leave it with me and I'll call you once I've *gone over it*.'

Mr Spampinato, as good natured as he was, was not at all happy. To complete such a large project in such a short space of time could only mean one thing – shoddy work. He sat back in his large padded swirling chair and *read it through*.

'How on earth had he been able to complete it so quickly – *and* to such perfection?' The boy was a genius. He *went over it* again. He recognized that this was a boy worth his weight in gold; someone who would be of great value to the company.

Giancarlo was promoted and given a salary increase. Mr Spampinato could not risk this young man *being snapped up* by another employer.

Word got round the auditing company. Giancarlo became a bit of a hero and was *lapping up* all the attention.

He had the attention of all the girls but there was one in particular. Her name was Gianna. He'd seen Gianna in the passing and couldn't help but notice her beauty and elegance.

She was tall, slim and there was something in the way she moved. She dressed with such feminine elegance. She reminded him of Isabella Rossellina in her younger days.

Now everywhere he turned she seemed to be there.

Gianna hadn't failed to notice Giancarlo. He was tall in height and excessively lean making him appear to be considerably taller than he actually was. His eyes were small and bead-like with an air of intelligence and determination as he peered over his glasses to observe anyone who entered his office. His prominent chin and eagle shaped nose gave the impression of a sharp minded person – in short, as a whole he was quite a fascinating character. Gianna observed his crisp white shirts – never without cuff-links – something not so common nowadays.

Of late, Gianna had been day-dreaming about how wonderful it would be to have a boyfriend who had some goals in life. And when word got round about his promotion and how much of a genius he was, that's when Gianna had the idea – to make him hers. He soon became the object of her affection.

Gianna was doing an internship and would be working in the company for another ten weeks then what would happen to her? She cringed at the mere thought of going back to her small town close to Naples. Of course she missed her mamma and papa but she was happy in Rome especially now that she was far away from Sergio. She felt safe and didn't have to keep looking over her shoulder every time she left the house. Giancarlo was everything that Sergio wasn't.

She needed a real man in her life. Someone who could protect her like papa had always done; someone like Giancarlo – a provider, a man with some substance.

Sergio was a layabout who did nothing all day every day. He was angry, aggressive and dangerous. She shuddered when she thought back to that awful day when he'd attacked her so viciously.

Papa had never approved of the slob Sergio and would be ever so proud of his daughter were she to introduce him to a real man like Giancarlo.

So that was that. Gianna started to make herself look even more attractive than what she was. The dresses got shorter and she'd *turn up* for work wearing lipstick and eye make-up to highlight her beautiful green eyes.

Giancarlo had tried to put her to the back of his mind. After all, he had a girlfriend back in his hometown. They'd been together for seven years and she'd be joining him in Rome in the not too distant future. She'd struck it

lucky when one of the teaching positions she'd *applied for* had *come up*.

As the days *went by* Giancarlo was becoming even more drawn to Gianna than ever. She'd look him in the eye with that "come on" look that sent him into a mad frenzy.

Soon he was visualizing her in his arms kissing him passionately. At night lying in bed he'd flush with excitement and pleasurable tingles would ripple through his whole body at the mere thought of her.

It wasn't long before they were going for lunch together. It was blissful to be in each other's company and they got on like a house on fire. Things progressed pretty quickly and soon the inevitable happened. They found themselves in each others' arms kissing with a burning passion. It was as though they'd been made for each other. Gawd! She was full of sex appeal. It oozed out of every pore of her body.

It was almost coincidental that they were from neighbouring towns on the outskirts of Naples. Was this a destiny thing? He was thankful that they didn't come from the same town. That would have made a complicated situation even more complicated. But then again, had they come from the same town he'd have already met her long before now.

Gianna knew nothing about Maria. Giancarlo hadn't had the guts to even mention her name. He had absolutely no wish to jeopardize this passionate relationship he had with Gianna.

He was due to go back to his hometown that weekend but was unable to *tear himself away from* the beautiful Gianna. He remained in Rome. It was a weekend of absolute bliss.

They strolled hand in hand around the historic centre and had their photograph taken at one of the fountains in the stupendous Piazza Navona and threw some coins in the spectacular Trevi fountain. They kissed to the sound of its gushing waters and stopped only to admire the triumphant example of Baroque art.

Back in Giancarlo's hometown Maria was in a panic. Wasn't Giancarlo supposed to be coming down for the weekend? She tried to phone him but his mobile *was switched off*. She sent messages and only after four hours did he reply. The message said: Tired, too much work. See you soon.

Next morning Maria *got up* and made her way to the house next door. She rang Giancarlo's parents' doorbell and his father Roberto answered the door.

"*Buon giorno*" - good morning Roberto. Has Giancarlo been in touch by chance?'

‘Yes he has as a matter of fact. He phoned to say he’s too tired to travel down this weekend.’

‘Did he mention coming next weekend?’

‘He didn’t say but I suppose he *will* be coming.’

Maria thought about catching a train to Rome but her parents *talked her out of* it.

‘There’s no point in going yet. Don’t try to suffocate the boy,’ her father said. ‘He’s only been gone for two months and he *did* come down to visit two weekends ago. If the boy’s tired then let him rest. Anyway you’ll be joining him in three weeks time so try to have a bit of patience. You’ll *chase him away at this rate*.’

On Sunday night Giancarlo lay in bed, his mind in a turmoil. He’d spent the most fantastic weekend with Gianna. What the hell was he going to do about Maria? She’d be joining him in Rome at the end of the month. He’d selfishly half hoped she wouldn’t get any of the jobs she’d applied for but she’d been lucky and had been accepted for a teaching position shortly after she’d applied. She’d called him excitedly on the phone and he’d tried his best to sound happy for her.

What was he to do? Should he finish with her before she arrived? Where would she stay when she arrived in Rome? The plan had been that he’d find a flat and she’d join him. He couldn’t *not* let her stay. Both their families would intervene. He could imagine her father’s disappointment in him as he sought an explanation.

He felt he was no longer *in love* with her. ‘*To love*’ and ‘*to be in love*’ were two entirely different things. Maria was an intelligent level headed sweet girl. She’d always been there for him through thick and thin and was also very pretty with her luscious long dark hair, dark skin and hazel eyes. Everyone had told him how lucky he was to have such a girl.

Would leaving Maria for Gianna be the right thing to do? Would he live to regret it? They’d shared seven years of their lives. They’d been together since they were eighteen years of age but had known each other since they were children.

His life was completely disrupted. His mind went back to the year before when it’d been so very nice and orderly.

He visualised Maria shouting and screaming.

‘You can’t leave me Giancarlo. We love each other.’

He shuddered. How devastated she would be to *find out* about Gianna, or maybe it would be better if she never *found out* although she would eventually as there would come a time when they'd meet face to face in the town. He couldn't *not* visit his parents ever again. Maria's family would ask questions that he'd find extremely difficult to answer. What a mess he was in. What a goddam mess!

He desperately needed advice. He didn't know who to turn to. That night he put a message up on a blog post. He needed help to decide what to do. He felt torn between both girls. He created a nickname. The blog post read:



Tornbetweentwolovers-3 hours ago

I've been in a steady relationship for seven years but recently *fell for* a girl who I am head over heels with. Should I leave my current girlfriend for the new girl? The whole thing is doing my head in. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

He waited and waited and then after an hour or so the replies started coming in. He read them all carefully and was more confused than ever.



Anonymous -5 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If you decide to *split up with* your girlfriend, you should do so because your relationship has *come to* its natural end. Do not leave her just because you've met someone else.



Lovelesslarry -4 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If you *do* decide to *embark on* a new relationship, you should stay single for a period of time to *get over* your current girlfriend before starting a new relationship. Aren't you jumping the gun a bit? You haven't known this girl long enough to really know her.



Stanley 4 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

You need to see this from your girlfriend's point of view. If I were her I would want to know the truth. It's not fair to *string her along*. Maybe you have just got so used to being with each other, you know, feeling comfortable with each other like a pair of old slippers. If you have such deep feelings for another girl then it means you are not in love with your girlfriend.



Doyoubelieveinlifeafterlove-3 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If you *do* decide to stay with your girlfriend then you must cut all ties with the other girl. It's your choice. At the end of the day nobody but yourself can decide what to do.



Fromrussiawithlove-3 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If I were your girlfriend I'd rather get dumped than *cheated on*. Do what you have to do but do not two-time. It'll just screw your head up.



Allforoneandoneforall-2 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

Good luck.



Listentoyourheart-2 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

Follow your heart.



Betruetoyourself-1 min ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

It happens all the time. It's just human nature. Just don't *act on it*.



Mrheartbreaker-1 min ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

It's a decision only you and you alone can make. But in my opinion, don't be afraid to end things with your current girl and pursue the new one if that is what truly feels right. There's no easy, perfect solution to this situation. Just don't *cheat on* the girl who has been loyal and faithful to you for seven years. That wouldn't *be fair on her*.



Nobodyseverhappy -30 seconds ago

The grass is always greener on the other side.



The great pretender -10 seconds ago

Go for it.

It sounds to me that the only reason you haven't told your current girlfriend is because you feel like you owe her something for *sticking around* for seven years.

She isn't your wife. You don't have children and nowhere did you talk about how great she is. Sounds to me like you'd regret *passing up* this opportunity.



ThatwhatIcallove – 1 second ago

Be honest with your girlfriend. I'm sure she'll understand. Whatever you do don't try to sail two boats at once or you'll drown.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Act on (something) – carry out/put into effect/do

Be snapped up – be quickly taken

Be switched off – have the flow of energy, needed to make a device function, deactivated

Break up (with someone) – end a relationship, usually a romantic one or a business partner

Chase (something or someone) **away** – forcefully cause to go/leave

Cheat on (somebody) – to be unfaithful in a husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend relationship

Come in – enter

Come to – reach

Come up – become available/arise/materialise

Embark on (something) – begin something that is new to you, something exciting such as a journey, a project or a new relationship

Fall for – be attracted to or infatuated with

Feel up to (something) – feel adequately prepared and with the will to do something

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Get over – overcome a difficult moment

Get up – leave the bed or stand up from a sitting position

Go by – pass

Go over – (the project) examine

Lap up – to very happily accept praise, attention, admiration and adoration/smugly accept attention

Let (someone) down – disappoint

Read (something) through – examine by reading

Split up with (someone) – end a relationship

Stick around – remain/stay

String (someone) along – to use a person for one's own gain and mislead him/her into thinking you have serious intentions

Switch off – interrupt the flow of energy needed to make a device function

Take on – (an important project) undertake something a task/duty involving responsibility

Talk (someone) out of (something) – persuade someone not to do something

Tear (oneself) away from (something or someone) – reluctantly leave a place or person or stop doing something which you strongly desire to continue doing

Turn up – appear/arrive

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A come on look – a gaze exhibiting sexual desire

A layabout – a lazy person who does nothing all day every day

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

At the end of the day – ultimately, in the end after everything is taken into consideration

At this rate – if things continue the way they are/if you continue with what you are doing

Be fair on (someone) – do a justly act to someone

Be head over heels – be deeply in love with

Be worth (one's) weight in gold – to be of extreme value

But then again – this has a similar meaning to 'if you really think about it' and is used as an afterthought

Cut all ties with (someone) – stop all relations with/have no more contact

Do (one's) head in – cause to go crazy or to really annoy (colloquial English)

Get dumped – be abandoned (colloquial English)

Get on like a house on fire – have a great relationship

Go for it – grab the opportunity while you can without hesitating

Have the guts – have the courage

How on earth? – used to emphasise shock or surprise

Jump the gun – do something before the time is right/act prematurely

Just over – a little bit more than

Make (one's) way – go or come from one place *to* another or to one place *from* another place

Meet the deadline – finish a job by a pre-established time

Pass up (an opportunity) – allow an opportunity to slip away

Point of view – opinion

Put (one's) mind to (something) – apply oneself to something with great determination and concentration

Put (someone or something) **to the back of (one's) mind** – not to think about someone or something anymore

Sail two boats at once – try to balance two equations at the same time

Screw (one's) head up – cause to become crazy

See (someone) **in the passing** – casually and fleetingly see a person when going from A to B and B to A

Shoddy work – work done badly

That was that/that is that – end of discussion/decision made

The grass is always greener on the other side – other situations or other people's lives usually appear to be better than our own

There's no point – it's useless, it's a waste of time

Through thick and thin – through good times and bad times

Two time – have a romantic relationship with two people at the same time. A person who two times is known as 'a two timer.'

Maria

Maria had been in Rome for just ten days when she left her boyfriend's flat to go to live in a rented room.

Desperation had forced her to do what she hadn't wanted to. Now she was living in an area not so far from Giancarlo's place hoping he would beg her to *go back* and tell her that it had all been one huge mistake. Her dreams had been shattered not long after she'd joined him in Rome to start a new life together.

An English girl had placed an ad on a website seeking an Italian flat-mate who loved cats and dogs. Maria had seen the ad and noticed that the room was not too expensive and that everything was included. She'd lied when she said she loved cats. Really she was a bit scared of them. She hadn't lied though when she said she loved dogs.

She tried her best to act as if nothing was wrong the day she went to view the room. She *put on* a huge smile and introduced herself and was as friendly as friendly could be. She forced herself to pat the two cats, to make it look as though she *did indeed* love cats, and played a bit with the dog. The dog was lovely. He was big and cuddly and very friendly and playful and the room, she loved it. It had a French window leading out onto a large garden and was all peach coloured and bright and sunny. She liked the English girl too and thought she could *put up with* someone else's pets seeing the room was such a bargain compared to the cost of the other rooms she'd seen advertised in the area. They'd all wanted a whole lot more not to mention the additional expenses which were not included. And there were about three or four others to share with. Here there was only the English girl so that meant the bathroom would not be occupied night and day and there'd be plenty of space in the fridge to organise her foodstuffs. She also thought it would be a good way to practise her English instead of paying for costly private lessons. She'd already *forked out* a small fortune in the past, or rather, her parents had.

Her mother and father were not rich people and had made a lot of sacrifices to invest in their daughter's future. Now it seemed those sacrifices were beginning to *pay off* since Maria had been one of the lucky ones to land a good job, as a teacher in a primary school, with quite a good salary and a permanent contract – not so easy to *come by* in Italy nowadays.

It was Saturday morning when she moved her belongings into the new

place. As she sat in the kitchen drinking coffee and getting to know her new flatmate she felt tears *welling up* in her eyes.

She was *thinking back* to that morning when her boyfriend Giancarlo had done nothing at all to stop her from going. She'd imagined him on his knees begging her to stay – but no. He'd been as cold as ice. He was just not the same person she'd spent all those years of her life with.

They'd been *going out* for seven years when Giancarlo found a job in Rome. They'd been together since they were eighteen years of age. Their families lived next door to each other in the "*paese*" – town. Both of them had *applied for* jobs in Rome now that they'd completed their studies and obtained university degrees. Now they could begin to build something concrete together. They'd talked about marriage and how many children they would have once they got their degrees and found jobs. That dream had seemingly come true when Giancarlo got his first job in an auditing company and left their hometown for Rome.

Maria was to follow him a few months later. Her boyfriend had found a lovely flat and – at the time – couldn't wait for Maria to join him. They'd been so excited about their future together now that their days of studying had come to an end. It was to be a new beginning.

But something had changed along the way and after Maria *moved into* the flat Giancarlo had rented for them, he became distant with her.

Maria had done everything possible to capture his attention. She'd even gone out and bought new clothes, got her hair done and started to wear eye make-up to enhance her already beautiful hazel eyes.

Nothing worked.

He'd become more and more distant as the days *went by*. Maria was heart-broken. Upon doing some investigations she soon learned that he'd become a bit of a hero at the company where he worked. He'd been given a project to do with a one-month deadline to complete it. It was easy peasy for him. He had the project all ready to *hand in* to his boss just three days later. Apparently the boss could not believe it. It'd been done to perfection in record time.

Word got round and all the young girls who were doing internships in the company soon *flocked around* him and it had all gone to his head. He was young, handsome and intelligent – typical marriage material for anyone in pursuit of a husband.

He'd never had any other girlfriend before Maria.

One thing Maria hadn't *found out* during her investigations was the relationship he'd formed with the elegant Gianna.

The Scottish girl Karen all of a sudden interrupted Maria's thoughts.

'Is everything alright?'

Maria started to cry. She desperately needed a shoulder to cry on. She *blurted out* the whole story.

Karen's advice was that under no circumstances was she to contact him.

'Don't be tempted to send him text messages,' was what Karen told her. 'Heed my advice. I've been there, done that and bought the t-shirt.'

'He told me he needed some breathing space and time alone to think about his life,' sobbed Maria.

Karen knew from experience that when a man said he needed breathing space and time alone to think about his life it was synonymous with 'it's *over* between us'.

'Don't worry,' said Karen. 'With your pretty face soon you'll have all the guys in Rome *queuing up*.

Karen knew that in a moment like this nobody wanted another guy. The only one who could put things right was the one who had caused the grief in the first place.

Karen noticed that as the days *went by* Maria was becoming more and more restless. She wasn't sleeping at night. Why wasn't Giancarlo phoning her she'd thought over and over again? Really she'd left *him* and come to live here convinced he'd come to his senses and be right down *to talk her into going back* to him. It wasn't to be.

Maria *broke down*.

'How could he just throw away seven years of our life together? How could he be so cruel and heartless?'

Karen had seen this kind of thing happen over and over again. Life came with no guarantees.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Apply for – formally request in writing

Be over – be finished

Blurt out – suddenly open one's mouth and reveal something usually due to not being able to control one's emotions

Break down – become upset and start sobbing and crying

Come by – (not so easy to come by) difficult to find or acquire

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or become aware of

Flock around – gather (like sheep around the shepherd) – in fact the collective name for sheep is ‘a flock of sheep’.

Fork out – pay, usually grudgingly

Go back – return

Go by – pass

Go on – pass (as the days went on – as the days passed)

Go out – frequent someone as boyfriend and girlfriend

Hand in – give by hand

Move in (to) – start living in a place

Pay off – eventually have rewards

Put on (a huge smile) – feign/fake a smile

Put up with – tolerate

Queue up – form a line in a queue

Talk (someone) into (something) – persuade and manage to convince someone to do something

Think back – recall a past moment or event

Well up – fill with liquid, in this case the liquid is tears

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A shoulder to cry on – emotional support when a person is in distress

Come to an end – terminate/reach an end

Come to (one’s) senses – finally begin to reason

Get to know – to begin to know on a deeper level

Go to (one’s) head – become intoxicated by praise and success

I’ve been there, done that and bought the t-shirt – a cliché (an overused English expression) to be completely familiar with a situation having experienced it first hand

In the first place – to begin with/from the onset

Over and over again – repeatedly

Evening classes

‘Tell you what Maria. Why don’t you come on down to the evening classes and distract yourself?’

‘What evening classes?’

‘The ones I teach down near Termini station. You won’t need to pay anything. I will speak to the woman who runs the school and ask if my new flat mate can *sit through* the lessons. I’ll explain that you’re going through a bad patch and need some kind of distraction. It’ll be good therapy for you to be in amongst people instead of sitting here crying your eyes out night in and night out hoping that sooner or later he’ll call you to say he’s made a big mistake. You won’t be coming as a ‘real student’ but as a friend of mine who needs to *get out of* the house for a bit.’

After a while Karen managed to *talk* Maria *into* joining her at the evening classes.

Signora Dora Berlucci, who ran the school, said it would be okay as long as Maria did not take away the students’ valuable lesson time especially their “TT”, (talking time). What, with ten students in a lesson that lasted 60 minutes there wasn’t much talking time per student as it was without someone else *taking it up*. After all, these students were paying good money for their English course.

Student satisfaction was extremely important to Signora Berlucci. She never stopped reminding the teachers that they weren’t to forget “SS”, student satisfaction.

‘Don’t worry Signora Berlucci,’ said Karen. ‘She will be an asset to the class. She can help the weaker students in the pair-work activities. She’s got a sound understanding of English. You can *look upon her as* an unpaid classroom assistant.’

Signora Berlucci was really quite a nice woman underneath that strict look she had about her. She was in her late fifties, was quite plump and was always to be seen dripping in cheap costume jewellery. She wore bright colours that often clashed. She didn’t have any dress sense at all. Her hair was dyed bright orange and tied up in a bun. She wore dangling ear-rings that almost reached down to her shoulders. But Dora Berlucci had one thing in her favour; she was an excellent sales person. She seemed to be able to sell English language courses to any student who came into the school even if

they were just there to make enquiries. She had them *sign up for* courses before you could say Jack Flash. She was the type of person who could *talk* an Eskimo *into* buying a fridge.

That evening Maria attended the evening class with Karen and the next and the next again. She felt refreshed. Everyone in the class was so very nice. She felt so useful. The students liked her presence and she had a great deal of knowledge to share with them. After all, she had attended numerous English courses in her lifetime and not only, she was a qualified teacher, maybe not of English, but still.

On the fourth night just as Karen and Maria were about to say goodbye to the students, Signora Berlucci called them over to introduce them to a new “teacher” she was about to employ for the conversation classes. His name was Mark and he was from Liverpool.

Mark was glad to have found a bit of company. He told them he’d only been in Rome for four days and had been *wandering about* on his own feeling pretty lonely. He’d just been to a nearby Irish pub in the hope they’d *take him on*, even if it were only for a couple of nights a week. ‘Anything was better than nothing,’ he added. The pub owner had told him that for the time being they didn’t need any more bar staff but would keep him in mind if anything were to *come up*.

Mark already knew that working in a pub was not the ideal setting for someone like himself who was planning on going teetotal but it would have been a start to earning some cash. The less he *dipped into* what money he had, the better.

Mark had been foolish in many aspects of his life but not with money. He’d *grown up* in a family where money had been tight and every penny had to be *accounted for*. What, with ten mouths to feed ma and pa had had no money for luxuries. Holidays had been completely out of the question. They’d only ever been on the occasional day trip to Blackpool. Those trips, which had been few and far between, had felt like a lottery win for the whole family. His upbringing had made him aware of the true value of money and that it was *not* to be wasted although he hated to admit to himself that he had ‘*drunk*’ quite a bit of his money down at the local pub over the years. That didn’t count he tried to justify to himself. That was “enjoyment” money and a man needed to let himself go every once in a while.

‘Anyway,’ Mark added, ‘an American guy who works in the Irish pub said that someone had mentioned that they might need teachers in this English

language school. I've never taught in my life but I'm willing to give anything a go. As the saying goes 'God loves a trier'. I spent 13 years working in a margarine factory in Liverpool so this will be a completely new line of work for me.'

Mark had no idea about grammar except that an adjective was a describing word that described a noun and a verb was a doing word and a noun was a naming word. How could he ever forget? His primary school teacher had rammed it down his throat for years.

Signora Berlucci gave him a grammar book to take home and study. He thought there was a mistake in the book when he read about the "present perfect". 'Shouldn't that be the perfect present? You know the ideal gift.' Karen and Maria couldn't stop laughing. There was some logic in what he had just said. After all, *perfect* was an adjective so why was it after the noun? Another absurdity of English.

Dora Berlucci said he could have one elementary class and that he was to begin by teaching them the present tense, whatever that was, thought Mark. He'd have to consult the grammar book when he *got back* to the hotel.

He'd booked a room in a small, cheap, seedy hotel, in the vicinity of Termini station which he'd found on a last-minute, low-cost website prior to leaving Liverpool. He was going to be staying there for two weeks until he found a small flat at an affordable price. He'd managed to get the room at the super low cost of 12 euros per night. The American he'd met in the Irish pub had told him that the San Giovanni area was quite a popular location among the English speaking community. Maybe Karen or that gorgeous Italian girl Maria could point him in the right direction.

Later on when he mentioned it to Karen she said it was a pretty pricey place to live and that many of the English community over at San Giovanni shared with other people.

Mark had one thing in his favour – his excellent creativity skills. Karen helped him with the grammar explanations while his ideas about the lessons seemed to just appear out of thin air. Maria started to laugh and joke again. She was having a whale of a time down at the language school and also with helping Mark with his future lessons. Mark was a big hit with the students. They loved his Liverpudlian dry sense of humour. He was ever so quick witted.

Mark loved being around Maria and vice versa. Maria told Karen that

although she still couldn't stop thinking about Giancarlo, being in Mark's bright and merry company was of tremendous help. She hadn't failed to notice how good looking he was either. Without the booze and the monotonous days shut in the margarine factory, Mark felt he was beginning to look more like that good-looker he'd once been. When he looked at himself in the mirror, a face with a healthy glow stared back at him instead of that purplish coloured complexion he'd had when in Liverpool. 'Mmm,' thought Mark, *'things were beginning to look up.'*

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Account for – justify

Come up – arise

Dip into – use money from an amount that you've put aside/saved

Get back to (a place) – return to a place where you previously were

Get out of – leave, escape from

Grow up – grow from a baby to an adult

Look upon (someone) **as** – consider as

Sit through (something) – be there to observe without participating

Sign up for (something) – enrol or subscribe

Take on/take (someone) **on** – hire someone to work for you

Take up – occupy time or space

Talk (someone) **into** (something) – persuade someone to do something

Wander about/around – aimlessly walk around with no particular destination

Glossary – idioms and expressions

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Appear out of thin air – suddenly appear from nowhere

As it is – in the present condition/circumstances, the way things stand at present /as it was = the past of 'as it is'

Be a big hit – be very popular

Be few and far between – occur on rare occasions

Be out of the question – unthinkable/to be too ridiculous to even consider

Be quick-witted – have an excellent sense of humour and be able to reply in an intelligent and funny way without having to think too much

Before you can/could say Jack Flash – an English expression which means to do something very quickly/superfast

Cry (one's) eyes out – cry so much that one feels his/her eyes may come out

Every once in a while – occasionally/occurring infrequently

For the time being – for now, for the present, used to say that although a condition or situation is the way it is now, it could change in the future

Give anything a go – try anything

Go teetotal – quit drinking alcohol for good (forever)

Go through a bad patch – be in the midst of a difficult situation/be experiencing hard times

God loves a trier – God loves a person who makes an attempt to do something to help his/her situation in life, this phrase probably derives from the biblical phrase “God helps those who help themselves.”

Have a whale of a time – to thoroughly enjoy oneself

Keep (someone) in mind – to consider someone in the future if a situation such as a job arises

Let (oneself) go – relax and enjoy oneself to the full

Night in and night out – every night and all night

Point (someone) in the right direction – give indications which will lead to a successful outcome

Pretty pricey – rather expensive

Ram into – if you ram something into someone you force the person to accept an idea by continuously repeating it until it enters into his/her head

Tell you what – this expression introduces a suggestion or an offer

Things were beginning to look up – if things are beginning to look up, it means that things are starting to go in your favour

Dora Bellucci

Dora Bellucci sat with her head in her hands in the tiny office of the small language school she ran. She'd just had a meeting with her accountant.

'You're only just managing to keep your head above water. 'You'll have to do something pretty quickly to up your profits or in less than six months the school will go down like a sinking ship.'

Dora had done everything imaginable to cut costs and increase profits. She'd even *resorted to* employing "teachers" who weren't real teachers. English people who had just "stepped off" the plane so to speak – those desperate to find work. This was one way of cutting costs. They were only too happy to accept the paltry rate of 8 euros an hour which she paid cash in hand. Qualified teachers requested almost triple that amount as well as wanting to go through the books which was even more money for Dora to *fork out* on taxes and what not.

She'd been really lucky to find that girl Karen from Inverness. She was the only qualified teacher she had in the school *and* she was someone she could rely on blindfolded. She'd never once been absent from a lesson. Even that time she'd fractured her heel bone she'd still *hobbled in* to the school in plaster cast. She'd understood the difficulties Dora was *going through* and had even prepared "pre-made" easy to follow lesson plans with clear explanations for those "teachers" who were not really teachers. She'd prepared at least fifty lesson plans filed according to level, and every now and again she'd arrive with more to add to the big red folder Dora kept on the top shelf of her tiny office. Dora had been so grateful but Karen had just smiled and said - 'don't worry Dora. One day I will put them all together and make a book out of them and hopefully it will become a bestseller and put an end to all my financial worries. That way I will have killed two birds with one stone; *helped you out* and made a million for myself.'

She'd *gone on to* tell Dora that sooner or later everyone's boat comes in. Dora was still waiting for hers to come in or maybe it had all those years ago when she'd married Luigi.

She thought back to the pain he'd *put her through*. She was still not *over* him even though four years had now *gone by*. She'd been so sure that theirs was a happy marriage.

One week before what she called "the discovery" he'd even stood up and

given a speech to the congregation of the church they'd attended for over twenty years. She could remember his exact words as he preached about the importance of the holy sacrament of marriage and how it was a union between man and woman and how no other man *or woman* should come between a married couple. The congregation had applauded.

The members of the church group had always thought that Dora and Luigi were the shining example of how a marriage made in heaven should be.

Throughout their married life Luigi had never called her Dora. It had always been "*mia principessa*", my princess. He'd even taken her to London for a romantic weekend a week before the "discovery". How could she ever have suspected that he'd been living a double life for the past four years? It was only when he started to call her Dora, and not "my princess" that an alarm bell *went off* in her head.

He'd been living with a twenty five year old Bulgarian girl he'd met on an "exchange your views on different paintings blog". He'd *joined in* the discussion and soon love poems were flying back and forth between them. Worse was to come. They had two children under the age of three. He'd been living with them *and* Dora at the same time. When he'd told her he was away on business, he'd, in actual fact, been with "her".

To add insult to injury he'd moved them into a rented flat two streets away from where he, Dora and their son Mario lived. Dora had made the "discovery" after Mario's girlfriend Francesca had seen Luigi at the lake with "her" and the two babies. Dora had insisted that Francesca must have made a mistake.

'Maybe it was a man who looked like Luigi.'

Francesca had told her it had definitely been Luigi as she had spoken to him face to face. She'd asked him whose babies they were. He could not deny they weren't his as his "girlfriend" would not have taken it well.

'Plus,' said Francesca, 'the one who was about three years old had the same curly hair as him and the same glint in her eyes.'

Dora had felt her whole world come tumbling down upon her. She'd felt she was going to faint. Her son Mario had made her sit down.

'Mum,' he'd said. 'I'm finished with him. I don't want to ever call him dad again. He's disgusting.'

Dora couldn't understand where she'd gone wrong. She'd always been a good wife and mother and an excellent housekeeper and homemaker. Not only, she was also a fantastic cook and Luigi had always had the best of food.

It had always been said that the way to a man's heart was through his stomach. Dora had definitely not gone wrong on that one.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be over (someone or something) – to be completely recovered from a bad experience caused by a person or a situation

Come up – arise

Fork out – pay, usually against one's will (colloquial English)

Go by – pass

Go off – ring/sound (for an alarm)

Go through – experience something, usually an unpleasant ordeal

Help (someone) **out** – provide assistance to make another person's task become easier

Hobble in – enter a place walking with a limp

Put (someone) **through** (something) – cause a person to experience an unpleasant situation

Glossary – idioms and expressions

And what not – any other things

Be the shining example – be an exemplified example to others by your excellent conduct

Cash in hand – pay in cash to avoid payment of tax and contributions

Every now and again – occasionally

Go down like a sinking ship – go bankrupt

Go on to do – subsequently do something

Go through the books – be legally registered on the payroll as an employee of a company

Keep (one's) **head above water** – manage to survive

Kill two birds with one stone – accomplish two tasks at the same time, thus saving oneself time

Put an end to (something) – cause to finish

One's boat comes in – when one's share of good luck in life arrives

Resort to (doing) (something) – do something only when all else fails

To add insult to injury – to do or say something to hurt a person even further than what one has already done

Up the profits – increase profits

Sergio

Sergio Esposito was known throughout his tiny town, on the outskirts of Naples, for his violent outbursts. He'd never been able to control his temper for as far back as anyone could remember.

Recently he'd *beaten up* his ex girlfriend Gianna in a fit of jealous rage all because she'd rejected his attempts to *bully her into* changing the way she dressed.

He seethed at the way other guys *eyed her up* and thought it would all end if she were to stop wearing those skimpy little dresses she was always to be seen parading around in. Not only, he'd even tried to stop her from seeing the friends she'd known most of her life.

'If you loved me you'd spend all your time with me,' is what he'd told her on numerous occasions.

This had led to non-stop arguments and it didn't take long for the relationship to go right downhill, just months after they first met.

After the beating Gianna hadn't wanted to report him but her father Mr De Longo, a respectable lawyer of excellent repute, had eventually made his daughter come to her senses.

'You can't condone this kind of behaviour,' said Mr De Longo. 'Who the heck does he think he is? He's nothing but an insecure manipulating fool. This is the kind of guy you need to avoid like the plague; run from him – in the opposite direction without ever looking back. No second chances. For goodness sake girl! You're only twenty four years of age. You have your whole life ahead of you. Don't waste one more second of your time even thinking about this good for nothing. Yes, you'll have to kiss quite a few frogs before you find your prince but it's time to kiss *this one* goodbye – right out of your life. No turning back – no regrets. Is that clear?'

'I know papa. I know. I *have* left him. How was I to know he would follow me around and then viciously attack me?' Gianna burst into tears again. She was still shaken and filled with terror thinking back to that moment. She could still see that demonic look in his eyes as he beat her black and blue. How could the boy she'd loved and shared such tender moments with *turn into* such a fiend? She turned to her father.

'Papa I'm afraid to report him. You never know what he might do. He may seek his revenge.'

‘Not if I have anything to do with it my girl,’ said Mr De Longo. ‘He’s a twenty five year old immature twat. He doesn’t scare me. I’ve been in contact with some of the most hardened criminals in my time and the majority are nothing but cowards. Now let’s get down to the hospital shall we and then *get off to* the police station. I can assure you he’s not going to *get away with* using violence on *my* daughter. Make no mistake about it.’

Gianna loved her father very dearly and eventually agreed to go with him and her mother to the hospital and then on to the police station to give a statement.

‘That way he’ll learn his lesson once and for all. If not, who knows who his next victim might be - *if she lives to tell the tale*,’ added Elsa De Longo, Gianna’s mother.

The doctor at the hospital said that Gianna had had a lucky escape.

‘If you ask me, he’s nothing but one of the many sociopaths poisoning our society,’ said Doctor De Vito.

‘A couple of weeks and she’ll be on the mend, though she will be traumatized for quite some time. It’s not something a young lady, or anyone for that matter, can easily *get over*. Keep her away from this piece of vermin. No contact whatsoever and make sure you *do* report him. Don’t let her *talk you out of it*, which is usually the case with victims of such cowardly bullying acts.’

Next the De Longos *headed for* the police station.

Mr De Longo gave a statement then showed the sergeant the hospital report *and* his daughter’s bruises.

‘All this because my daughter loves to wear feminine clothes,’ said Mr De Longo. ‘Completely normal for a girl of her age wouldn’t you say? That piece of scum is a public danger if you ask me.’

Esposito was summoned down to the station where he at first denied having anything to do with the bruises Gianna bore on her slender body. Upon questioning, his alibi didn’t hold.

‘Could you tell me of your whereabouts last Tuesday evening?’ asked the sergeant.

‘I was in Via Corso.’

‘For what reason?’

‘I was in the snooker hall with a couple of friends.’

‘And what were you doing in the snooker hall?’

‘Playing snooker – what else do people do in a snooker hall?’

‘None of your lip boy. Give me the names of those friends.’

Esposito stuttered and stammered and eventually came out with two names; Giovanni and Peppe.

‘And their surnames?’

Esposito had a “momentary memory lapse” and was unable to recall the surnames of his friends.

Sergeant Corvini typed out Esposito’s statement and proceeded to pay a visit to the snooker hall.

At first the proprietor, Mr Danese, said that he could not recall who had been in his snooker hall the previous Tuesday evening at around 6 p.m.

‘Well I suppose you won’t mind *handing over* the CCTV footage sir,’ said the sergeant.

‘I think the cameras were *switched off* that evening sir.’

‘You *think* or you *know for sure*?’

‘I think.’

‘You *do* know I can issue a warrant for the seizure of the CCTV system if you refuse to allow me access to the data.’

Mr Danese reluctantly *handed over* the footage.

Back at the station the sergeant and two of his men examined it closely. There were no signs of either Esposito or his friends in or around the snooker hall at that time or anytime between 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. for that matter.

Esposito had blatantly lied to the police and would later be charged with attempting to distort the course of justice.

Next the sergeant headed on down to the library. Gianna had reported being dragged by the hair and *bundled into* Esposito’s car as she left the library on the evening of the beating.

The librarian gave a statement.

‘I heard a scream and when I went to the window I saw a girl, who’d been here moments before, being shoved into a car.’

‘Can you describe the girl and the person, or should I say the beast, who hauled her away in his car?’

‘I’ve seen the girl here quite often. She sits over in that corner studying whenever she comes here. I have her name registered on the computer system if you want but anyway, she is tall and slim with short dark hair and almond shaped eyes. I saw her right in front of me here in the library moments before she left.’

‘And the one who pushed her into the car?’

The librarian knew who the boy was but she also knew he was not the most recommendable of people so she didn't *let on* to the sergeant out of fear of retaliation although she did give an approximate description of him.

'Yes. He was around about the same age as the girl. She looked about twentyish and so did he. He was a few inches taller than she was with short dark curly hair and dark skin.'

'Do you remember what they were wearing?'

'The girl *had on* a beautiful short floral dress and cream coloured shoes. She reminded me of Isabella Rosellini in her younger years.'

'And the boy, or should I say the beast?'

'He *had on* a bright turquoise shirt with the sleeves rolled up and both his arms were covered in tattoos.'

'What else can you remember?'

'That's all.'

'What about the car?'

'Sorry. I don't remember the make or the colour of the car.'

'Why didn't you call the police?'

'I thought it was just the usual lover's tiff.'

'Okay Madam. Thank you.'

The sergeant was *heading out of* the library when the librarian called him back.

'Sergeant, I hope nothing terrible has happened to that lovely young girl.'

'Don't worry. She's still alive and kicking but the next time you see anything like this, call the station and report it. Don't take it as lightly as you did this time. Somebody's life could depend on your swift actions.'

'Yes, of course Sergeant.'

Rina Rossi knew she should have reported the incident but she was afraid to get involved in such matters. She suddenly felt afraid in case she had "talked too much". After all, she was in that library all day every day and often on her own. She had no wish to live in fear of being on the receiving end of some madman's revenge.

Her father Gabriele had *rammed it in to* her to always mind her own business and never to get involved. He knew only too well of the consequences of such actions. His own father Peppino had been shot dead after giving a testimony when Gabriele was just fourteen years old. Rina had never met her grandfather but had seen the pain in her father's eyes each time he'd spoken about him.

Esposito had driven Gianna to a quiet spot and after hurling her with verbal abuse had proceeded to violently attack her. He'd told her that any mention of the incident to anyone and she'd be dead.

'How dare she think she could just dump him and report him is what Esposito told his friends down at the local bar where they all *hung out*. They'd agreed with him. They never went against a word he said; they knew better.

Not long after the reporting came the stalking. Everywhere Gianna went, Esposito would be *lurking about* watching her with that menacing look about him. She'd received threatening text messages demanding that she drop the charges against him.

Once again Gianna's father *stepped in*. He suggested they get a restraining order against Esposito. Gianna was afraid but after some persuasion, she reluctantly went to the local courtroom with her father.

After *filling out* several forms they filed the order. The hearing was set for two weeks later.

After having examined the evidence *set before* him, Mr Justice Berlini had no hesitation whatsoever but to enforce the order.

If Esposito were to be seen anywhere within ninety metres of Gianna or the De longo's home, he would be *picked up* by the police and remanded in custody. He'd then have a criminal record which would be registered with the Ministry of the Internal. This would go against him in all aspects of his life including applying for jobs at home or abroad. It was in his own interests not to breach the order.

But the restraining order filed against him had only served to fuel Esposito's anger.

Gianna was advised to change her phone number and withdraw from all social media.

Her father obtained a new number for his daughter and registered it in his own name. 'Don't send the new number to anyone just yet,' said Mr De Longo. 'Let's wait a bit. We don't want him *bullying anyone into giving him it*, do we?'

Mr De Longo contacted Esposito's parents and arranged a meeting. They *turned out* to be an extremely nice couple. He'd imagined two low-life monsters. How could such a lovely couple have produced such scum?

He was surprised to see they were quite elderly. Their son was twenty five

but they appeared to be in their late sixties, possibly early seventies. Sergio Esposito looked nothing like his parents. Maybe they'd adopted him. That would *account for* their being as different as chalk and cheese.

This wasn't the first time the Espositos had apologized profoundly for their son's behaviour or rather, misbehaviour and they knew it wouldn't be the last. Mrs Esposito was mortified for the umpteenth time in her life. How could her son have *beaten up* the lovely Gianna? They'd met her on several occasions and had hoped she would be the one to tame their Sergio. He'd been chirpy and cheerful the first few months after meeting her but they'd noticed that his good mood had been short-lived. It wouldn't be long before his dominant nature *took over*.

'We'll give him a good talking to when he gets home tonight', Giuseppina Esposito promised Gianna's father.

Mr Esposito was not getting any younger. That son of theirs had caused them years of nothing but stress and strife.

Giuseppina thought back to the day they'd wheeled their newborn baby over the threshold into their home all dressed in his new blue baby clothes and looking so sweet and innocent.

She and her husband had been married for fifteen years when Sergio made his entrance to the world. They'd lost all hope of ever having a family and had devoted most of their time to their two darling Persian cats. Then by some kind of miracle she'd fallen pregnant. They were over the moon. Now at times they wished their "miracle" had never happened.

Giuseppina's younger sister Iva had been pregnant at the same time. The boys were born two months apart. First came Iva's son then Giuseppina's. The sisters were in their glory.

Although the sisters lived in different towns, the boys had shared a large part of their childhood. Iva and Giuseppina would spend all summer together with the boys at a little beach house they'd rent each year and their husbands would join them at weekends. They'd also get together at Christmas and Easter. As the boys *grew up*, it was clear to see they were as different as night and day. Iva's son was much calmer than Giuseppina's. He did all his homework without having to be told to do so. Sergio on the other hand couldn't be bothered with homework. Giuseppina had found herself constantly *nagging at* him to study but it all went in one ear and out the other. She was wasting her breath. She often hoped her nephew's calm nature would *rub off on* his cousin but it wasn't to be.

Mr Esposito had noticed early on that their son had begun to portray the same character traits of his deceased grandfather, that is, Mr Esposito's own father. At the age of two he would *smash* his toy cars *up* in a frenzied fit of violent rage if he didn't get his own way.

His wife would mollycoddle their toddler and become very irate anytime her husband tried to punish him.

'He's only a baby Angelo. He's too young to understand so please don't smack him like that.'

'The boy needs to be disciplined or we'll *end up* with a monster on our hands.'

'He'll *grow out of it* sooner or later.' Giuseppina had replied on many occasions - but Sergio *did not* grow out of it. Instead he just got worse as the years *went by*.

They argued a lot on how to and how not to *bring up* their only child. Angelo blamed his wife for being too soft on their son. She blamed him for being too harsh.

He *grew up* spoilt by his mother who showered him with attention and catered to his every need. She was at his beck and call as he twisted her right round his little finger.

Angelo Esposito was an observer. He'd always closely studied his son as he *grew up*. Again he couldn't help thinking that it was like looking at his own father reincarnated. He walked like him. He talked like him. He had the same angry outbursts as he had had and he lacked interest in doing anything concrete, just like Angelo's own father had.

History seemed to be repeating itself. Gawd! What had he done to deserve this twice over in his life.

Sergio also had his grandfather's charismatic side to him and when it suited him he was able to wrap anyone he met around his little finger. What's more, he'd also inherited his grandfather's good looks which would prove to be a misfortune for any female who were to cross his path in years to come. This was to be Gianna's downfall. At times he seemed such a sweet looking boy who looked like butter wouldn't melt in his mouth

Mr Esposito remembered only too well the suffering and pain his father Tonino had caused him and his six brothers not to mention his poor mother who had, for years on end, *put up with* his violent nature and abusive tongue. They'd lived in poverty while their father drank what little money they had on wine down at the local bar where he spent most of his time playing cards

with his cronies.

He'd come home in a foul mood and the abusive behaviour would start all over again. Day in, day out, week in, week out, month in, month out, and year in, year out. Angelo had vowed that he'd never be like his father. Never in a million years.

So when he met the lovely calm natured Giuseppina, he knew that his life would be one of peace and harmony. Two years after they first met, he got to work on building his own home. He proposed to his lovely girlfriend and she accepted. Not long after they held the wedding ceremony in St. Antonio's church in the town square. For the first time in years Angelo had a happy, peaceful life – that was until that boy of theirs hit his teens. Yes they'd only just managed to handle him as a boy but now they had a fully grown man on their hands and it was becoming too much for them.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Account for – explain/give a reason for

Beat (someone) up – physically attack causing injury

Bring up (a child) – raise from childhood to adulthood

Bully (someone) into doing (something) – use bullying methods to force a person to do something

Bundle (someone) into (something) – push someone into something as though he/she were a large package

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Eye (someone) up – slowly observe a person from head to toe to make a judgment, usually implies sexual interest

Get over (something or someone) – recover from

Go by – pass

Grow out of (something) – not do something anymore because one has reached a certain level of maturity

Grow up – grow from a baby to an adult

Hand over – a demand to surrender something to someone

Hang out – pass time in a particular place usually with friends

Have on – to be wearing

Head for – go in the direction of

Head on out – start to go out

Let on – reveal information/disclose/admit that you know something

Lurk about – remain in wait in a concealed place such as the shadows or behind a bush to ambush a person when the moment is right

Nag at (someone) – to complain in an irritating way, usually to obtain what you want

Pick up – fetch from a place

Ram into – if you ram something into someone you force the person to accept an idea by continuously repeating it until it enters into his/her head

Rub off on (someone) – be mentally transferred to someone by constant contact

Smash up – angrily break into pieces

Step in – to take control of a situation

Switch off – interrupt the flow of energy needed to make a device function

Take over – take control of

Talk (someone) out of (something) – persuade someone not to do something

Turn into – transform

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A lover's tiff – a silly argument between lovers

A lucky escape – to narrowly avoid danger

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Alive and kicking – alive and well

As different as chalk and cheese – complete opposites/having no similarities

Avoid like the plague – avoid at all costs

Be at (someone's) beck and call – always ready to obey and attend to the

needs of someone like some kind of servant

Be in (one's) glory – be extremely happy and excited about something

Be not getting any younger – advancing in one's years, becoming much older

Be on the mend – recovering from an illness or injury

Be on the receiving end – to have unpleasantness directed at you

Be over the moon – be overcome by happiness and delight

Be short-lived – to be short-lasting/not last for long

Cater to a person's every need – provide a person with everything they ask for to the point of overindulgence

Come to (one's) senses – finally begin to reason

Cross (one's) path – encounter by chance

Drop the charges (against someone) – withdraw an official accusation of a crime or an offence committed against you

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

Get (one's) own way – succeed in making others allow you to do/have what you want/cause others to succumb to your wishes

Give (someone) a good talking to – to sternly speak to someone in order to make the person understand that his/her actions are completely unacceptable

Go downhill – deteriorate

Go in one ear and out the other – quickly forget due to paying little or no attention to what is being said

If you ask me – if you want my opinion

Live to tell the tale – this is a common expression used when a person is in a dangerous situation and is able to survive it to tell it to others

Look like butter wouldn't melt in (one's) mouth – used to describe someone who appears innocent on the surface but in actual fact is devious and cunning under the facade

Make no mistake about it – this expression is used to emphasise that what you are saying is completely true and there is absolutely no doubt about it,

often used as a warning

None of your lip – an invitation to a person to decline from answering in such a disrespectful manner

Once and for all – for the final time, irrefutably

Quite some time – a rather long period of time

Remand in custody – kept in prison pending a trial at the courthouse

Twist/wrap (someone) right round (one's) little finger – use charm to gain complete control over a person to make them do whatever you want them to do

Gianna goes to Rome

Much to Mr and Mrs De Longo's relief, just six weeks after the attack, their daughter Gianna was accepted for an internship in an auditing company in Rome.

'We don't think it'll be a good idea if that Sergio knows anything about your whereabouts,' said Ernesto De Longo.

Gianna's parents knew that Sergio was still ranting and raving and hoped that in their daughter's absence he'd soon calm down. Mrs De Longo had seen too many horror programmes on TV where young girls had been murdered by their controlling, mindless boyfriends.

In Gianna's grandmother's day it had been considered a crime of passion. Nowadays it was known for what it really was – cold-blooded murder and the penalty was a life sentence. Gianna's parents were relieved to know their daughter would be out of harm's way.

They very gladly accompanied their only daughter to a flat in the north of Rome. Mr De Longo had been in touch with the landlord who'd told him that she'd be sharing with two other girls who were in Rome studying at university. One of the girls came from Milan and the other was from Abruzzi. 'Good,' he thought. 'It's better if none of them are from around this area. You never know. It's a small world and I wouldn't want any of them to happen to know Sergio Esposito and mention that a girl called Gianna shared the flat. Esposito was violent but not stupid. He would put two and two together and come up with four. Mr De Longo was not prepared to take any risks whatsoever – none at all.

Their daughter would be staying in Rome for three months until she'd completed her internship at the auditing company. Hopefully by the time she came back, the low life Sergio would have moved on with his life. They'd miss Gianna but the fact she'd be far away from the menacing Sergio would more than *make up for it*.

Gianna was told to inform her friends that she would be going to work in Milan. That would put the scum-bag Sergio right off track should he decide to go looking for her, thought Mr De Longo to himself.

Glossary – phrasal verbs and expressions

Make up for – compensate

Out of harm's way –away from danger

Put (someone) off track – misinform so as to cause a person look in another direction

Put two and two together and come up with four – be able to understand a situation

Rant and rave – speak angrily and wildly about something –this idiomatic phrase is generally used with a negative connotation.

Maria breaks her heart

Karen had just *got up* to go to the bathroom. It was two o' clock in the morning and she could hear the sound of stifled sobs coming from Maria's room. This wasn't the first time she'd heard her sobbing in the middle of the night and she sincerely hoped it would be the last. She knew that Maria was finding it difficult to come to terms with Giancarlo being out of her life. Who wouldn't after dedicating seven of life's precious years to a man? Karen knew all too well what Maria was *going through*. She'd been through the same situation herself and it hadn't been easy. She remembered how everyone had told her that time is the great healer. She hadn't thought so at the time but now looking back they'd *all* been right. It had taken Karen months of pain before she began to feel even remotely herself again.

Yes, many people had told Karen only what they thought she wanted to hear. 'You'll get back together,' they'd said. Maybe they'd just said this to *shut her up*. People nowadays had little time and patience to listen to other people's problems – probably because they had enough of their own to *deal with*.

The next day was Saturday. Karen was sitting at the breakfast table sipping her early morning cup of lemon tea when Maria walked in. Her slit-like eyes made it obvious she'd been crying.

'Did you have a good night's sleep Maria?'

'Not really.'

Maria began to cry.

'I miss Giancarlo so much Karen. He hasn't been in touch since I came to live here. I've sent him a number of text messages but he replies hours later – and in monosyllables. He never asks me how I am or how I'm getting on in my teaching job. It's as if I don't exist anymore – as though I'm a complete stranger and not the girl he spent seven years of his life with.'

'Maria it will take time to flush this Giancarlo right out of your system. If it's any consolation to you, there are people all over the planet *going through* exactly what you're *going through* right in this very moment. I know you don't want to hear this right now but I'm not going to tell you what everyone told me when I *split up* with my ex; that is, that he'll *be back*. The average person just tells you what they think you want to hear. The truth of the matter is, do you really want him back? If he can just love you and leave you at a

moment's notice then he's definitely not worth wasting anymore of your time on. You're twenty four, not fifty four. Think about how many boys out there would give their eye teeth to be with a girl like you. For all you know he could have another girl. Men do not like to be alone. Most of them leave women only when they are sure they have someone else to go to otherwise they stay in a relationship and just *plod along* until another female takes their fancy and then off they fly like a bird freed from its cage.'

'Don't say that,' cried Maria. 'He can't have someone else. He has always loved only me and me alone.'

'I hope for your sake that I'm wrong but I wouldn't *bank on it*. I'm just telling you the honest truth without beating about the bush.'

'He didn't leave me,' cried Maria. 'I was the one who left him and maybe I shouldn't have. Maybe I should have stayed and maybe we would still be together.'

'Maria, you need to face facts. He forced you out the door with his bad behaviour. Just like my ex did with me. Did he come begging to get you back? No he didn't. He just let you go. If a man truly loves a woman he would do nothing at all to jeopardize the relationship.'

'Until he came to Rome everything was going well for us. We'd planned our future together and had even talked about marriage and how many children we would have.'

'Yes Maria until he discovered a whole new world that he didn't want you to be part of. You need to open your eyes to the truth of the matter. I don't want to be cruel but sometimes you have to be cruel to be kind and I'm telling you this for your own good. I will get straight to the point.

You have two options. Not three or four or five.

Option number one - 'you can curl up in a ball in bed all day crying and feeling sorry for yourself until depression *sets in*, or you can take option two - get yourself dressed up to the nines, *put on* a bit of makeup and walk out the door with your head held high and think to yourself 'I don't deserve this kind of treatment. He's not worth the tears I've shed for him.

It's your choice. Remember you either sink or swim in life.'

Just then a message came through on Karen's mobile.

'It's from Mark. Maria get your glad rags on. We're going to meet him for a chinwag down at the Irish pub in a couple of hours. We can have a pub lunch and a good old Irish coffee - just what you need to get you back on track.'

Down at the pub Maria felt much better. It had been good to talk to Karen that morning about how she was feeling.

Mark always made her laugh with his Liverpudlian wit. He told her one of his many puns.

‘Do you know Maria my mother was crying because I told her I didn’t love her anymore?’

‘Why did you tell her that,’ asked Maria.

‘Hang on a tick Maria. I haven’t finished. I then told her I didn’t love her *any less* so I couldn’t see why she was crying. Do you get it? Any more/any less. ‘I don’t love you any more mum but I don’t love you any less so what’s the problem?’

‘Ah yes Mark, now I get it. You are so funny.’

He then told her another pun.

‘My brother asked me on the phone if I had *picked up* any Italian yet. I told him I still haven’t had the chance ‘coz I’m always with my girlfriend.’

Maria didn’t understand this one.

‘Well, said Mark. ‘*Pick up any Italian*’ means to begin to acquire some of the Italian language which is what my brother intended, but it can also mean to meet a girl you like (in this case an Italian one) and take her home with you for a romantic romp. ‘A pun’ is a play on words and English people use them all the time. Because they have double meanings, English people jokingly pretend to misunderstand leading to some hilarious consequences.

‘I didn’t know you had a girlfriend Mark,’ said an astonished-looking Maria.

‘No I don’t. I was just using it as an example to illustrate the pun.’

Maria found herself sighing with relief and she wondered why.

Mark was pleasantly surprised that she’d asked him. Did this mean he *stood a chance* with her? He hoped so. She was beautiful and he loved her Italian accent when she spoke English. He visualised himself taking her back to Liverpool to introduce her to his family. His mates down at the pub would be green with envy to see him walking in with such a beautiful dark haired, dark skinned Italian girl. She was so refined compared to that snooty, sarcastic, and pretentious ex wife of his. He had not lost in love with that snoot. He now realised he had made a lucky escape the day that bitch *walked out on* him. Now he was a free agent with a free heart, ready and willing to give it to a girl who deserved it.

He’d never mentioned his ex wife either to Karen or Maria. If he stood any

chance with Maria it could all go down the drain if she *found out* he was a divorced man, well a nearly divorced man. The divorce—as of yet—was still to be finalised.

Gawd! Maria was from the south of Italy and he'd heard somewhere that the families had high standards for their daughters' future husbands. If they were to *find out* he'd been married, or was still married, for that matter, they might intervene and try to *put a stop to* the relationship. It would be better if he didn't mention his ex for the time being. He was falling in love with Maria and he didn't want anything to ruin any chance he might have with her.

Maybe one day in the near future he'd confide in Karen to see what she thought about the matter.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be back – return

Bank on (something) – count on

Deal with – to handle/manage/take action/give the necessary treatment to someone or something

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Get up – leave one's bed especially after sleeping and waking up

Go through – experience

Plod along – move forward slowly and aimlessly without any specific direction in mind, achieving nothing worthwhile in the **Put on** (make up) – apply

Set in – when an unpleasant situation 'sets in' it takes root and more than likely remains for a period of time

Shut up – an impolite way of saying 'keep quiet'. An invitation to someone to be silent

Shut (someone) **up** – silence a person

Split up – end a relationship

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A free agent – have no ties/no commitments

As of yet – until now

Be in touch – make contact with someone

Beat about the bush – reach the point without giving many unnecessary details

Chinwag – a gossiping chat (British colloquialism)

Come to terms with (something) – learn to accept a situation and move on

Dressed up to the nines – dress in beautiful clothes

For all you know – this phrase carries a very specific hypothetical meaning ... ‘for all you know’ he may have another girl’/there is the possibility that he has another girlfriend

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

For the time being – for now, for the present, used to say that although a condition or situation is the way it is now, it could change in the future

For your sake – for your benefit

Get back on track – revert to a previous more favourable position

Get it – understand

Get (one’s) glad rags on – put on some nice clothes (English colloquialism)

Get straight to the point – address the main issue without giving unnecessary details; an emphatic way of saying ‘get to the point’

Give (one’s) eye teeth for (something or someone) – do anything possible to have something or someone

Go down the drain – disappear/be wasted

Hang on a tick – wait a second

Make a lucky escape – succeed in avoiding a bad situation/ narrowly escape danger or an unpleasant situation

Put a stop to (something) – cause something to end/prevent something from continuing

Sink or swim – fail or succeed, depending on one’s own efforts

Stand a chance – have a possibility

Take (one's) fancy – begin to like

Giuseppina has an idea

Giuseppina could take no more of seeing her son *moping about* the house doing nothing all day long. His ex girlfriend Gianna had disappeared off the scene. Word had got round that she was working in Milan.

Sergio had no way of contacting her. She'd gone – leaving no forwarding address and had even changed her phone number. For a week or two he'd been like a wild beast and the Espositos were beside themselves with anxiety.

'I just wish he'd find a job to keep himself occupied, 'Mr Esposito said to his wife.

They'd suggested he *turn* the garage, where Mr Esposito parked his car, *into* a vehicle workshop. Mr Esposito could park his car at the rear of the house. There was plenty of space there.

Sergio had always been good at *taking* things *apart* and *putting them back together*. He'd done it with all the bicycles his parents had bought him over the years.

He'd repaired so many of his friends' scooters and motorbikes.

He'd always had them back on the road in a jiffy. He'd also repaired his father's car on quite a good few occasions. He had a knack for knowing what was wrong with an engine just by *switching* it *on* and listening to it running for a few moments.

It would be great if he could earn a bit of cash instead of asking his parents for handouts all the time.

Giuseppina thought about how lucky her sister Iva had been with her son. She'd never had to tell him to do his homework when he was at school. He'd just done it automatically. He'd passed all his exams with flying colours and had got an honours degree in Engineering.

Now he had a good job Rome and was off their hands. They'd never had a days' worry with their boy.

Giuseppina suddenly had an idea. She turned to her husband who was reading the morning newspaper.

'Angelo, maybe a break away from here would do Sergio the world of good. Iva mentioned that Giancarlo has his own flat in Rome. What do you think about seeing if Giancarlo will *put him up* for a week or two to get Gianna out of his system? After all, they were the best of friends as youngsters. They spent every summer and Christmas together.'

Mr Esposito looked up from his newspaper. He couldn't really recall them being the best of friends. Sergio had picked a fight with his cousin on many an occasion.

He scratched his head while thinking for a moment or two. 'Yes it would be a good idea for Sergio to get a change of scenery for a bit, but isn't Giancarlo's girlfriend Maria staying there with him? You know what they say, 'two's company, three's a crowd.'

'Iva said he's *split up* with Maria but she's hoping they'll get back together.'

'He's *broken up* with that lovely girl? Is he crazy or what? Where is she now?'

'Seemingly she *moved out* of his flat not long after arriving in Rome and went to share a flat with an English teacher. Iva is hoping that Giancarlo will sooner or later see sense and realise he has made a huge mistake. Maria is such a lovely girl. He's crazy to leave her like that although he's adamant that she left him. As you know, Maria's mother lives next door to Iva and she mentioned that Maria told her he'd forced her out the door with his coldness and total disinterest in her.'

'He'd better see sense soon before someone else *snaps her up* and then it'll be too late in the day for him. Maria's a very pretty girl with her head screwed on the right way. I just wish our Sergio had a girl like that to keep him on the straight and narrow.'

'He did,' Giuseppina reminded him. 'He had Gianna, but as usual, he destroys everything he touches with his own hands. Let me just phone Iva and see what she thinks.'

Giuseppina *picked up* the receiver and dialled her sister's number.

'Hello Iva.'

'Hi Giuseppina. What a coincidence. I was just about to call you. Is everything alright?'

Giuseppina proceeded to explain to Iva what she'd just discussed with her husband. 'You know Iva what they say, 'a change is as good as a rest' and maybe if our Sergio *gets away from* here for a couple of weeks it will do him the world of good. He can always come back.'

Mr Esposito was listening to his wife's conversation with her sister. He felt a bit ashamed of himself for thinking that it wouldn't be a bad thing if their son *didn't come back*. It would be a weight off their shoulders if that son of theirs were to find a job in the capital just like his cousin had done. But then

again, his cousin had excellent qualifications – something to offer the job market. What did Sergio have? He hadn't even sat his exams. Well he was good with motors and engines, although he had no formal training, but anyway maybe he could work as a mechanic in Rome away from here and away from the memory of Gianna. Gianna's mother and father would be so relieved to know he was out of the way.

Iva deep down wasn't sure if it would be a good idea. Gianluca worked long hours in the auditing company and was exhausted in the evenings. Where would he find the time to keep his cousin entertained? It would be okay for a couple of days but not anything more than that. Not only, the two boys were as different as chalk and cheese; they had nothing in common at all. She had no wish to hurt Giuseppina's feelings. She knew only too well the anguish her nephew *put her sister through*.

'Okay Giuseppina. Give me a day or two and I'll get back to you. I'll speak to Giancarlo about it the next time he calls and see what he says but I'm not promising you anything.'

'Thanks so much Iva, that's awfully good of you, speak to you soon, bye.'

She *put the phone down* and turned to her husband.

'She'll let me know in a matter of days. Don't say a word to Sergio until we're one hundred per cent sure. We don't want him to think he's being rejected by his own cousin, do we?'

'We'll also need to see if Sergio agrees to going. If Giancarlo agrees to *put him up* for a bit then I'll drive him up to Rome myself,' replied her husband. 'Make sure he actually goes.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Break up (with someone) – end a relationship, usually a romantic one or a business partner

Come back – return

Get away from (a place) – move away from/escape from

Get back to (someone) – resume contact

Mope about – stay at home doing nothing in particular due to being fed up and unhappy

Move out of (a place) – stop living in a place and go to live somewhere else

Pick up (the receiver) – lift the handset of the phone

Put (something) **back together** – reassemble

Put (the phone) **down** – this has double meaning, end a telephone call or place the telephone on a surface

Put (someone) **through** (something) – cause a person to experience an unpleasant situation

Put (someone) **up** – give hospitality/allow, invite to stay at one's home for given period of time

Snap (someone or something) **up** – immediately and eagerly grab someone or something you want because he/she/it is exactly what you are looking for or what you need

Split up – separate/leave, end a relationship. This is synonymous with 'break up'.

Switch on – activate the flow of energy to an electrical or electronic device by turning a knob or pushing a button

Take (something) **apart** – disassemble

Turn into – transform

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A change is as good as a rest – this commonly used English expression compares any kind of change in one's life to that of having a rest. A rest is beneficial therefore after a rest we feel good. After a change in our life we feel just as good.

A good few – several

After all – adds reinforcement and support to what was said before by giving an additional reason

All day long – from the morning until the night

As different as chalk and cheese – having no similarities whatsoever

Be a weight off (one's) shoulders – not be a burden anymore

Be beside (oneself) – be extremely worried and anxious

Be off (one's) hands – to no longer be responsible for

Be out of the way – to not be present anymore

But then again – this has a similar meaning to ‘if you really think about it’ and is used as an afterthought

Can/could take no more of (something or someone) – no longer tolerate/not tolerate anymore

Do (someone) the world of good – be extremely good for and beneficial to a person

Get back together again – reconcile after having ended a relationship

Have a knack for (something) – have a natural talent/an in-built ability

Have (one’s) head on (one’s) shoulders – a sensible person who is capable of making the right decisions in life

In a jiffy – very soon

Pass exams with flying colours – pass without any difficulty obtaining high marks

Pick a fight with (someone) – intentionally provoke someone in order to start a fight

See sense – begin to reason

The straight and narrow – live a life of good conduct and high moral standards

Too late in the day – far too late

Two’s company, three’s a crowd – an English proverb which is used to say that two people are relaxed and enjoying private time together but a third person would be seen as a kind of intruder making them unable to enjoy this private time – this expression is used a lot in a romantic setting.

Mark's new flat

It wasn't long before Mark found a small, one-room flat close to the underground at Piazza Re Di Roma. 'Brilliant,' he thought. 'I won't have to share.'

Sharing a flat was one thing Mark did not want to *resort to*. He'd been so used to living by himself for quite some time.

The flat comprised of a large room with a kitchen corner, a bed settee, a foldaway table with four foldaway matching chairs, and a couple of shelves on the wall. Those shelves would come in handy for the English grammar books Dora had given him to study. He would also put his collection of teaching material – he'd got from Karen – in the folders up there on one of the shelves.

There was a built-in wardrobe in the small entrance-hall and a small bathroom with a shower.

He'd noticed there was no bath so that was a bit of a disappointment. Back home in Liverpool he'd been so used to lying soaking in the bath for over an hour at a time – *topping up* the bathwater with more hot water when it had begun to get cold. He would even lie under water to see how long he could stay there without coming up for breath. His record for holding his breath was, at present, two minutes and twenty three seconds. He wouldn't be able to do that anymore. He'd sure miss his little bath-time games. He'd even been able to hear his neighbours' conversations while submerged in the bathwater. It was as though he developed a supernatural sense of hearing each time he ventured underwater. His ears seemed to come to life as he *listened in on* all the MacCaully family's conversations.

He knew everything about their private lives. They'd be mortified if they knew what he knew about them.

Sometimes he'd thought what an awful pity it was that they weren't famous or he could have made a bob or two selling a story or two, or even three for that matter, to one of Britain's tabloid newspapers.

He'd even overheard Mrs MacCaully threatening to file for divorce if her husband saw that "other woman" again. This had been a bit of a consolation for Mark at a time when he was *going through* his own divorce. The MacCaully's *were not* the perfect couple they had always *made out to be*. They were the classic couple who kept up appearances.

He may not have a bath now but at least it was his own pad and he wouldn't have to *put up with* other people invading his privacy. After all, you can't have everything in life he told himself. He liked the small balcony leading off the room. From there he could see and hear the hustle and bustle of life in the big city. He could even see the underground stop from the balcony. Brilliant! It was only four stops to get to the school. He'd counted them when coming to view the flat. He could be down at the school in a quarter of an hour, including the few minutes it would take him to get from his house down to the underground platform, the three minute wait in case he'd just missed a train, five minutes to reach Termini station and another five minute walk to get to the school. Brill! It was all *working out* for the best. 'Viva Italia,' he said happily to himself. He'd now see if Dora would up his working hours. He'd make himself available day and night. It certainly was a far cry though from the penthouse suite his brother Johnny had visualised him to be living in.

It was a modest rent of 550 euros per month which included the condominium bills. He had 150 pounds to put towards it from what he had left over from the rent money he was getting for his own flat back home. He'd been lucky to find a tenant just before leaving for Italy. That would *bring* the rent *down* to less than 400 euros. *Things were definitely looking up* for him he thought happily.

He liked the fact that it had independent heating so he could keep tabs on his heating bill. Karen had warned him against *moving into* a place like her own with centralised heating throughout the whole building. She'd told him that you had to pay your share whether you used it or not. No way was Mark going to waste money on such an absurdity. This centralised heating thing for the whole building was totally unheard of back home in England. Each home had its own heating disconnected from everyone else's. Gawd! It would lead to so many fights. He imagined his neighbours out in the street fighting like cats and dogs because one of them had used too much heating and the others were having to foot the bill. No way would this heating system be approved of back home. No way. And if one of the hard men came home drunk from the pub and met a neighbour who'd used too much heating, there could be a stabbing. He imagined the day after's front page headlines in the Liverpool Chronicle.

"Drunken man goes on a frenzied attack killing neighbour for overusing the central heating".

He looked at the bidet and wondered if he would ever use the thing. Bidets were unheard of in England. People had baths to clean their bits and bobs. And that washbasin was huge compared to the ones in England. Was it really necessary to have such a huge washbasin *taking up* so much space in this tiny bathroom? After all, you only used it to wash your hands and face and brush your teeth and if you were male, to have a shave.

One good thing though was that he had a mixer tap where the flow of hot and cold water *came out* of the one spout. He'd be able to control the water temperature. Back home he'd had to *put up with* two separate taps; one for hot water, where the water came out boiling and nearly burnt the hands off you, and the other for cold, where the water *gushed out* freezing leaving you with half frozen fingers. He remembered only too well how he'd burnt his hands on many an occasion, flipping them from left to right that time the plug went missing – never to be seen again. He'd had to *end up* blocking the plug hole with a small sponge until he finished the business of washing his hands and face. He'd even *called in* a plumber friend to see if he could change the two taps to just one but was told that it wasn't possible given the fact that the hot and cold water came from two separate pipes and how it would involve a great deal of work at a great expense to *change over* to just one source of water supply.

'It's better just to leave things the way they are,' is what Bill the plumber had told him that day.

Now his thoughts turned to the small housewarming party he was going to be organising. The flat was too small to host too many people, but then again, he didn't really know "too many people" to invite.

He'd invite Karen, Maria and *why not* Signora Dora. Yes. She'd been good enough to give him work and get him started here in Rome. He liked Signora Dora though of late he couldn't help but notice a troubled look to her eyes.

Maybe they would *find out* what was wrong with her if they got her away from the working environment. Yes he'd have a "get together" with just the four of them. He'd cook something nice for them all.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Bring (something) down – reduce in price

Call in (someone) – request a home visit from a specialist in a certain field

Change over – make a transition from one system to another

Come out – exit

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Gush out (for liquids) – pour out at top speed

Looking up (things were looking up) – if things are looking up, it means they are showing signs of improvement

Listen in on – intentionally listen to the conversations of others without their knowledge

Make out to be (someone) – give the impression to others that you are someone you are not

Move into – to go to live in a place

Put up with (someone or something) – tolerate

Resort to – do something you have no wish to do but have no option

Take up (space or time) – occupy

Top up – add to

Work out – resolve

Glossary – idioms and expression

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to ‘when all is said and done’. It reinforces and supports what was said before

Come in handy – be useful

Be a far cry from something – to be entirely different

But then again – this has a similar meaning to ‘if you really think about it’ and is used as an afterthought

Foot the bill – have to pay especially for something you do not wish to pay for

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category is as relevant as the one previously mentioned – in the context – one, two *or even three* for that matter. In the statement *three* becomes as relevant as one and two.

Hustle and bustle – noise and activity

Keep tabs on (someone or something) – closely monitor/keep under

observation

Keep up appearances – make things in one's life look good even when they are not

Make a bob or two – earn some money

A bob – among many other meanings – is another word for a 'shilling' and a shilling was part of the old British currency before Britain went decimal in 1970. A shilling was worth twelve old pennies. In February of 1970, British people found themselves with new money which had decreased in value. An old penny changed to 'new pence' and the shilling coin was replaced with a new 'shilling' coin which was only worth five pence as opposed to the old 'twelve pennies'.

Pad – house or flat (English colloquialism)

Giancarlo receives a phone call

Giancarlo paced up and down the living room floor. He'd just been on the phone to his mother who'd asked if he could *put* his cousin Sergio *up* for a short period of time.

Gawd! She really had put him in the soup. How the heck could he refuse without causing bad feelings in the family?

It wasn't the best of times for him to have guests. He only had a few more weeks left with Gianna before her internship came to an end. How on earth would he be able to invite her back to the flat in the evenings or at the weekend? God alone only knew.

Yes he could still see her in the evenings but in the presence of his cousin – hardly a romantic setting; there was also the added fact that it was not exactly the best time to break the news to his family about his new relationship so soon after the breakup with Maria.

Nobody in his family must know about Gianna – at least not yet. They wouldn't understand – they never did. There was also the fact that he'd already caused enough grief to Maria without adding to it. No way did he ever want her to *find out* she'd been replaced by another girl. That would be something she would never be able to bear.

He knew from experience that Sergio could not be trusted to keep a secret. He'd *blurt it out* to Aunt Giuseppina and she in turn wouldn't fail to inform her sister who would then open her big mouth to Maria's mother. After all, they were next door neighbours and spent a great deal of their time gossiping about this that and the next thing.

Giancarlo had become a bit of a snob now that he was a qualified engineer and had received promotion so soon after joining the company. He felt a bit ashamed of having a cousin like Sergio who'd done nothing with his life. Sergio was the black sheep of the family and not exactly the type of person he'd like to introduce to his new girlfriend. Gianna came from a family of excellent repute and she might even *go off* Giancarlo if she were to meet Sergio. Yes, sooner or later she'd meet him if she were to become Giancarlo's wife but it would be better if she met all the "normal" family members first. He wouldn't want her to start painting them all with the same brush before actually meeting them.

Sergio had never ventured out of his town in twenty five years, except for

the summer holidays they'd spent together as children at a nearby beach. Why the hell did he want to leave now – of all times?

Iva had told her son that his cousin needed a break to *get over* a girl who'd broken his heart.

'You're both in the same boat,' she'd said to Giancarlo. 'Each of you is *going through* a breakup so you can console one other. Sergio needs to know he is not the only one on the planet to find himself alone again. He needs a change of scenery for a bit.'

Giancarlo thought and thought and thought about it. He'd been put in an awkward situation and he could see no way out.

'Okay,' he told his mother. 'Let me *sleep on it*. I'll *get back to you* in the morning.'

Next morning he *woke up*, had a shower, got dressed and sat down to a strong cup of coffee. He then made a phone call.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Blurt (something) out – open one's mouth and quickly say something without thinking/often something that should not be said

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Get back to (someone) – resume contact

Get over – recover from an unpleasant situation or from an illness

Go off (someone or something) – feel nauseated towards/take a sudden dislike to a person or thing

Go through – experience an unpleasant situation

Put (someone) up – give bed and board to a person in one's home for a period of time

Sleep on (something) – not make a decision until you've had a good night's sleep in order to wake up in the morning refreshed with a clearer idea

Wake up – finish sleeping

Glossary – idioms and expressions

After all – adds emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to 'when all is said and done'. It reinforces and supports what was said before

Be in the same boat – to be in the same or similar unpleasant situation as someone else

Break the news (to someone) – inform someone of something, usually something surprising or shocking

Come to an end – finish/reach termination

For a bit – for a short period

Just about – roughly/more or less

Not see a/any way out – not be able to think of a solution to a problem

Of all times – used to say that something has occurred at the worst time possible

Pace up and down – walk backwards and forwards in an agitated manner

Paint (someone) with the same brush – unfairly judge someone to be the same as another person – this idiomatic expression carries a negative connotation

Put (someone) in the soup – create a difficult or awkward situation for someone

See no way out – be unable to think of a solution

This that and the next thing – unspecified unimportant topics

Mark's housewarming

Mark *woke up in good spirits*. Spaghetti Bolognese was on the menu for his guests that evening. This was Mark's specialty. He'd cooked it hundreds of times back home in Liverpool. Now he was going to put his cuisine skills to work. Karen and Maria were coming and so was Signora Dora. They'd have a nice little happy evening together.

Gawd! Wasn't he so glad to be seeing Maria again? He fancied her like mad. She was on an entirely different level to that Katrina he'd married. He wondered in what state of mind he'd been in at the time to even contemplate marrying such a hard, callous bitch. Now with hindsight he realised what a lucky escape he'd made that day she *walked out on him*.

His thoughts *came back* to the present. He was so glad they'd managed to *talk Dora into* coming. She hadn't wanted to come at first but had eventually agreed when Karen reminded her of one of the idioms taught to the students earlier that day.

'Dora, all work and no play makes Jack a very dull boy,' she'd said. Dora had thought about it for a bit then agreed to join them.

During the meal he'd talk to Dora about giving him these extra hours work at the school.

Later on Mark headed on out to do some food shopping. First he *stopped off* at the butcher's to buy some minced beef for the Bolognese sauce and then he made his way to the supermarket. He strolled up and down the aisle wheeling the supermarket trolley and *eyeing up* the food on display. Once he had everything he needed he *headed for* the checkout.

Once back at the flat he *got down to* getting things ready for his housewarming. Everything had to be well organised. He took out the chopping board and then opened the cutlery drawer and took out a sharp knife. He then *chopped up* the onions and tossed them into a saucepan with a dash of olive oil. Next he added the minced beef and stirred it in with the onions using a large wooden spoon. Once the beef was browned he tossed in the tomatoes, added some salt and put the lid on. He *turned down* the gas and left the sauce to simmer for three quarters of an hour, *taking the lid back off from time to time* to give it a good stir. Ten minutes before the sauce was ready, he threw in some chopped mushrooms. This was his little additional ingredient he was famed for adding.

He then took out the grater and grated a small mountain of parmesan cheese. Great! There was nothing like the real McCoy he thought as he grated away at the block of parmigiano reggiano. Back home in Liverpool he'd had to *put up with* those bags of already grated stuff that smelled like smelly socks that had been worn for a week or so without being washed.

It had been a long time since he last made trifle so he had a quick look on the internet to see if he could find a hassle-free recipe.

That afternoon he cleaned the flat and then lay back on his bed settee to relax in front of the TV for a couple of hours though he didn't understand much as it was all in Italian.

His guests would be arriving at eight so about an hour before, he got to work on setting the table.

Maria and Karen were the first to arrive carrying a couple of plants they'd bought for Mark from the florist's at the end of the street.

'Hi Mark, we've brought you a couple of plants.'

'Thanks a lot but really, you shouldn't have. Hey, they're really nice. No one's ever bought me a plant before. Let's put them out on the balcony shall we? I don't want them to die off in here through lack of fresh air.'

Next Mark *showed them around*.

'It's a delightful little place Mark,' said Karen. 'And it's within easy reach to the centre.'

'Oh you are so lucky Mark,' Maria said. 'It's small but it has everything you need and to be so close to the underground is a huge plus.'

A very apologetic Signora Dora *turned up* twenty minutes later.

'Oh I'm so terribly sorry I'm late but I couldn't find a parking space.'

'Not to worry. You know what they say; better late than never.'

'Yes, of course,' replied Dora who proceeded to take a bottle of red wine out of her bag.

'Here's a little something to *go with* the meal.'

'Brilliant, thanks a lot Dora,' smiled Mark.

Mark opened the cutlery drawer and *rummaged around* looking for a corkscrew.

'We're in luck,' he said. 'The landlord has thought of just about everything.'

Mark hadn't touched a drop of alcohol since he'd left Liverpool. It wouldn't be polite not to taste the wine Dora had so kindly given him. Well a few drops wouldn't do him any harm; after all, he wasn't exactly an alcoholic

where one drop of the stuff would put him on the road to ruin. Yes he'd been a heavy drinker but *definitely not* an alcoholic.

He uncorked the bottle and poured some wine into the glasses.

'Cheers.' said Karen 'and lots of luck in your new flat Mark and cheers to you Maria that you'll find happiness with or without Giancarlo.' Karen then turned to Dora. 'Cheers Dora that the English school will go from good to better.'

Mark wondered who the heck this Giancarlo was. He must be an ex boyfriend he thought jealously.

Dora's smile vanished from her face.

'Is everything alright Dora?' asked Mark.

'Well to be honest with you all, the school is not going as well as you think it is.'

'What do you mean Dora? You've got quite a lot of students.'

'Yes I know Mark, but my accountant informed me that I'm just managing to pay my overheads with a small margin left over. He reckons that within six months the school will go under if I don't *come up with* a way of upping the profits.

'Oh Dora, that's awful,' exclaimed Mark thinking to himself that his plans to ask for more work would now be up in the air.

'We'll have to *come up with* some kind of plan,' said Karen. 'You love your little school Dora and so do we. You can't just *sit back* and let all your hard work and dedication go up in smoke.'

'I've thought of just about everything and I can see no way out,' replied Dora. 'The school really *took off* when it first opened. That was thanks to my brother. He has an acquaintance – a big shot in a company in Milan – who owed him a favour or two. He was able to get me a two-year contract for in-company language courses in their Rome subsidiary also because I could provide highly targeted sector-courses. I had ten specialised teachers out there teaching all day every day. There were no overheads and no classroom space needed so that *turned out* to be a huge saving. When the contract came to an end my brother was promised that new courses would be *starting up* soon after. That was over a year ago and there still seems to be no sign whatsoever of this happening. They keep *putting it off*. They say they've *run into* some administrative issues. That contract was what got the school up and running and kept it on an even keel.'

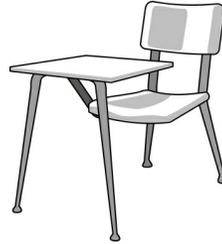
Karen had an idea.

‘Dora, you could save so much classroom space by getting those space-saving chairs with flaps on them instead of having desks which *take up* so much space. You’d be able to have larger classes. More students means more money.’

‘I’d never really thought about that,’ replied Dora. ‘That *is* a good idea Karen though I wonder how much they’d *set me back*.’

‘We could have a look on internet and maybe find a good deal.’

‘That sounds excellent Karen. Thanks for this suggestion.’



a space-saving desk and chair

‘You could also start some early morning and late night courses Dora?’ Mark suggested. ‘The school is open from ten in the morning ‘til eight thirty in the evening. You could have an extra two classes in the morning; one from eight o’ clock until nine o’clock and another from nine o’clock until ten o’clock. That would be an extra twenty students, that is, if we can find enough students to fill the classes. In fact you could have an extra sixty students given that you have three classrooms in the school. And in the evenings you could have another three classes from half past eight until half past nine. I’m sure there are many people who work all day and don’t manage to find the time to attend daytime language courses.’

‘That sounds like a good idea Mark, but I’m already in the school enough hours as it is. Any more hours and I would *end up* having a breakdown.’

‘If you trust me enough Dora I could open the school early in the morning and do two of the classes and one of the late evening classes as well. I can get to the school in just fifteen minutes. You could come in at ten and go home at eight like you’re already doing. That way you wouldn’t *tire yourself out* too much.’

‘Seeing that I’m already here in the evening I could *stay on* and do one of the extra evening classes,’ said Karen. ‘You’ve got four other teachers who I’m sure would be more than willing to do the other classes. Everyone could do with a bit of extra work. You can’t *give up* Dora. Not now after investing over three years of hard work.’

‘We’d need to find new students pretty quickly. It takes time to get the

right level of students for each class. It's not just something that can magically happen overnight,' said Dora. 'It takes quite a bit of planning and good organisation.'

'Hey Dora, what about if I were to go down and stand outside Termini station and *hand out* flyers,' Mark said. 'There are thousands of people coming and going from the train station and underground all day long.'

'Yes Mark,' said Dora 'but there is one problem when it comes to *handing out* flyers. Most people just *screw them up* into balls and *chuck* them away. For every one hundred flyers we'd be lucky to recruit one student. Statistics have proven this.'

'But they are the most cost effective type of advertising Dora.'

Mark continued. 'How about if I were to get a brightly coloured eye-catching t-shirt made – with the school advertised on it along with its phone number? Maybe bright red or something with white writing. People would see at a glance what the flyers *were all about*. I could even get the Union Jack printed on it. That would certainly draw attention.'

'Great idea,' said Maria. 'I could come with you when I'm free. You could maybe offer something free. Not many people *turn down* free offers.'

'Yes,' said Karen. That *does* sound like a really great idea. Maybe we could organise ten hours of free conversation, or something like that, to the lucky winner. Participants would be new subscribers to the courses. We could have a draw, with the students present, and pull out the winner.'

Karen had another idea. 'Why don't we get a whole batch of level tests printed out to *hand out* along with the flyers? Let's say a grammar and reading test that they could do at home and the listening and speaking test they would have to come down to the school to do. That would be a good way to get their interest up and at the same time *lure them into* the school.'

'Who would do all those free hours,' *chimed in* Dora.'

'I would,' said Mark. 'Don't forget I've got plenty of time on my hands and I live so close to the school now – just four underground stops away so I can get here in a jiffy. You could also have Saturday morning classes. Think about how many people would be interested. You've got nothing to lose Dora and everything to gain. Let's give it a try.'

Dora finally agreed to put the plan into action with the help of what she now called "her three guardian angels".

'Mark, get the pasta ready. I'm starving,' said Karen. 'It's almost nine thirty. We've been chatting away for over an hour.'

‘Yes,’ added Maria. ‘My stomach’s rumbling. I haven’t eaten a thing since breakfast time.’

‘Don’t worry,’ said Mark. ‘The sauce is ready and the parmesan cheese is grated. I just have to toss the spaghetti into the pot.’

The pot was already filled with water and sitting on the stove. Mark lit the gas and threw in the spaghetti.

‘No Mark,’ exclaimed Dora in horror. ‘You must wait until the water boils. *Never ever* put pasta in cold water.’

Mark had never thought about this. Back home in Liverpool he’d always put the pasta directly into the cold water.

‘Really,’ he replied. ‘I didn’t know that.’

‘Yes,’ Maria added. ‘Always wait until the water boils.’

‘I would never have thought. It’s true what they say. You learn something new every day,’ he replied.

Mark *heated up* the Bolognese sauce and took the grated parmesan cheese out of the fridge. He’d also bought some cooked turkey slices and Russian salad so he wouldn’t have to waste time cooking the second course. The trifle was in a dish in the fridge. He’d found an extremely simple recipe on the web.

They all sat eating the pasta. ‘What do you think of my cuisine skills,’ asked Mark.

‘They’re very good,’ said Dora, ‘but the spaghetti is a bit overcooked. Here in Italy we eat our pasta “*al dente*” – to the bite. So if you want my advice, next time cook it according to the instructions on the packet and taste it from time to time to make sure it doesn’t go soggy. And remember to wait until the water boils before adding the pasta. This could *account for* the sogginess.’

‘Thank you ma’am, I will do, I will.’

They all enjoyed the meal, despite the spaghetti being rather soggy, but they especially liked the trifle. It’s quite similar to the Italian “*tiramisu*,” said Maria.

‘Yes it is as a matter of fact,’ added Dora.

At eleven o’clock the girls and Dora said their goodbyes to Mark and thanked him for such a wonderful evening. Dora offered to give them a lift home but Karen wouldn’t hear of it. ‘You live on the opposite side of town Dora so please don’t *put yourself out* for us. We can get the underground to the last stop and then catch a bus. We’ll be home in next to no time. Thanks

anyway for offering.'

Dora was quite thankful they hadn't accepted. She didn't feel comfortable driving at night and it would have meant quite a round trip. She'd only offered out of politeness.

Mark *cleared up* the table and put the dishes in the sink. He'd wash them in the morning. It was time to get a good night's sleep. He went to bed tired but happy. He *went over* Maria's words in his head. Had she really said she'd help him *give out* the flyers? Yes she had. It wasn't a figment of his imagination. She'd definitely said it. But she *had* added, 'if I have time.' He knew she worked in the primary school until four and spent a couple of evenings down at the English school. Maybe one of these days they could arrange to meet early evening and *hand out* the flyers and level tests. It would be nice for them to spend some time together alone for a bit to get to know each other on a deeper level, and why not, maybe exchange their first kiss.

Maria could go more into detail about the courses for those who did not speak much English. Mark only knew a few phrases in Italian. He carried his phrasebook everywhere he went but it just wasn't enough. He'd have to start learning the language properly. Maybe the time had come to enrol on an Italian language course, he thought to himself.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Account for – explain/justify

Be (all) about – concerning

Chime in – interject a conversation to express one's opinion

Chop up – cut into small pieces

Chuck away – discard of (colloquialism)

Clear up – remove things and make tidy

Come back – return

Come to an end – reach termination

Come up with – find a way/think of a solution

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Eye up – slowly look from top to bottom and then from bottom to top

Get down to – start to do something that requires attention

Give out – distribute

Give up – renounce/quit

Go over – carefully think about something

Go under – go bankrupt/when a business fails

Go with (something) – complement

Hand out – distribute by hand

Head for – go in the direction of

Heat up – make hot

Lure (somebody) **in** – use something as bait to tempt a person to go somewhere or do something

Put (something) **off** – postpone/change for a later date

Put (oneself) **out** – inconvenience oneself

Put up with – tolerate

Rummage around – to search chaotically for something amongst other objects by moving and turning everything over and leaving an untidy mess in the process of doing so.

Run into (difficulties) – unexpectedly encounter

Scrunch up – compress and crumple into a ball

Set (someone) **back** – cost (colloquialism)

Show (someone) **around** – when a person doesn't know a place and is seeing it for the first time, 'show around' means that you lead the person around the different parts so he/she can see it all, you act rather like a guide

Sit back – watch a bad situation and do nothing about it

Start up – to undertake a business venture/make an activity become operational

Stop off – visit and stay briefly at a place

Take off¹ – remove

Take off² – make sudden progress

Take up – occupy space or time

Talk (someone) into (doing something) – persuade someone to do something

Tire out – become/make exhausted

Turn down – lower (the volume)

Turn down – refuse/decline

Turn out (to be) – reveal to be

Turn up – arrive/appear

Wake up – finish sleeping

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon someone usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A big shot – an important, influential person

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to ‘when all is said and done’. It reinforces and supports what was said before

All day long – from the morning until the evening

All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy – an expression used when someone works all the time and never does anything enjoyable such as going out for an evening with friends. ‘Dull’ in this context means ‘uninteresting’.

Along with – together with

As a matter of fact – used to give emphasis, similar in meaning to ‘actually’/to be honest with you

Be in good spirits – be happy and cheerful/in a good mood

Could do with (something) – be in need of/have the desire for

Fancy someone (like mad) – be really attracted to

From time to time – occasionally/at regular intervals

Get to know – to begin to know a person on a deeper level

Have time on (one’s) hands – have a period of time with nothing to do

In next to no time – almost immediately/very quickly

Get to work on (something) – initiate (similar to the above expression ‘get down to’)

Give a lift to (someone) – accompany from A to B by car or other means of transport

Go soggy – become horribly soft, usually for pasta that is overcooked or biscuits and cereal that have been exposed to the air for some time

Go up in smoke – evaporate into nothing

In a jiffy – very soon

Keep (something) on an even keel – keep stability/maintain balance/keep control of

Make a lucky escape – succeed in avoiding a bad situation/ narrowly escape danger or an unpleasant situation

Make (one's) way to a place – begin to go in the direction of

No way out – see no solution to a problem

Not hear of (something) – not permit

Thanks a lot but you shouldn't have – English people usually say this when someone gives them a gift

The real McCoy – the genuine thing

Up and running – in operation

Up in the air – end with no solution

With hindsight – be able to understand a situation only at a later moment

Sergio goes to Rome

Sergio's father ran him to Rome. He and his wife had told him before leaving that it wouldn't be a good idea for him to outstay his welcome at his cousin's house. Iva had told her sister that Giancarlo needed his privacy after a long tiring day at the office. She knew only too well that the boys would *end up* arguing. Giancarlo kept everything neat and tidy and Sergio was as untidy as anyone could be. She blamed her sister for that. She'd never allowed the boy to do anything in the house – not even wash a cup. But still, she *was* her sister and Sergio *was* her nephew and she had to try to help. That's when she decided to *pick up* the telephone and call her son.

On the way to Rome Mr Esposito spoke to their son about the dos and don'ts while staying at his cousin's.

'If you find you would like to stay in Rome and look for a job, then it would be better if you found a room in a flat with other young people of your age. Try not to stay at Giancarlo's place for more than a week. He's got a very demanding job so can only have guests on a short-term basis. I've transferred five thousand euros into your bank account to get you started but find a job as soon as you can or the money will soon *run out*. If you don't like Rome then you can always *come back* home anytime you like. The door will always be open for you my son.'

'Yes,' added his mother, 'our home will always be your home.'

Mr Esposito thought he heard a tremor in his son's voice as he said, 'thanks papa.' Maybe deep down the boy had inherited a tiny bit of his mother's side of the family. He only hoped that being away from his parents would make the boy *grow up* and become a responsible human being.

Sergio was close to tears. This was the first time he'd be away from his parents for any length of time. Only now did he begin to realise how kind they really were. His father had transferred his savings to Sergio's bank account. He decided he'd try to use as little of the money as possible.

It was early evening when they arrived at Giancarlo's flat. He opened the door and greeted them all with a hug. He loved his aunt and uncle and deep down he really *was fond* of his cousin. They'd spent a lot of their childhood together. None of them had any brothers or sisters so as children they'd often pretended to be brothers.

He'd told Gianna that he had relatives staying for a week and so he'd only be able to see her at work.

'I'm sorry Gianna,' he said 'but it's my dear aunt and uncle and I wouldn't want you to meet them before meeting my parents,' he lied. He didn't mention that it was his cousin Sergio who'd be staying with him. Gianna wouldn't understand why the three of them could not go out together.

Gianna was sorry that they would not be together in the evenings but respected his wishes. If her own aunt and uncle were to visit her in Rome then she'd have to *put* Giancarlo *aside* for a bit.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be fond of (someone) – feel affection towards someone

Come back – return

End up –be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Grow up – become a responsible and mature person/to not act in a childish manner anymore

Pick up (the phone) – lift the phone to make a call or to answer a call

Put (someone) **aside** – put on reserve until a later date

Run out (of something) – finish a supply of something

Run (someone) **to a place** – drive a person to somewhere/accompany/take a in a vehicle from a departure point to a destination

Glossary – idioms and expressions

Dos and don'ts – a list of things that one should adhere to and another list of things that one should not adhere to. In short, what a person should do and what he/she shouldn't do in any given situation

Outstay (one's) **welcome** – not be welcome anymore because you've stayed as a guest at someone's place for too long

Handing out the flyers

A few days after the housewarming Mark and Dora ordered twenty thousand flyers along with the red t-shirt that Mark was going to be wearing down at the station. The shop that did the flyers also did t-shirts. You could get anything you wanted printed on them. Dora *handed over* a piece of paper with the school's name, address and phone number on it. Mark told the boy to put a picture of the Union Jack above the writing on both the back and front of the t-shirt. The boy showed Mark an array of different t-shirts and he chose the one that would *stand out* the most; a large bright red one.

A couple of days later Mark *picked up* the flyers and t-shirt from the shop and took them to the school.

Jenny, one of the other teachers who worked for Dora, had compiled the level tests and printed out hundreds of copies.

Next morning Mark arrived to collect the flyers and level tests. He had his suitcase on wheels with him.

'Great,' said Dora. 'I was wondering how you were going to manage to carry all those flyers and level tests down to the station.'

'Give me about a thousand for today Dora.'

'It'll take you all day to *hand out* a thousand flyers.'

'Well I'll stay down at the station for as long as it takes. I'm in no hurry - just as long as you don't have to *close down* the school.'

Mark's first day outside Termini station went really well. He *had on* the bright red t-shirt and started his duty of trying to recruit students. It was eight o'clock in the morning and many of the people coming and going were in a hurry to get to work. Some of them thanked him and hurriedly *scrunched up* the flyer and put it into their pocket. He was happy to see a couple of people taking a photo of him. He assumed that they must be photographing the t-shirt with the school's details on it for later use, although they could quite easily have asked for a flyer.

Quite a few people stopped to talk to him. Mark said, 'only English please, I don't understand Italian.' Some spoke English quite well while others struggled to string a sentence together.

'You need to do the English course,' he told those ones. 'You really need to improve on just the basics.'

A few of them enquired of the cost and the duration. 'Nine euros per hour

in a group of ten,' he told them. 'The courses last six months and you can pay in three payments, or if you pay upfront you get a discount of ten per cent. So roughly, the course *works out* at two hundred and twenty euros for an hour a week, or four hundred and twenty if you *opt for* the two hours a week. I'd recommend doing two hours a week though; one hour is not sufficient if you want to make steady and speedy progress.'

Some people stopped to ask Mark where he was from. Even the occasional tourist stopped to have a chat. An American couple wanted their photograph taken with him. They said they loved the English and that bright red t-shirt he *had on* with the Union Jack on it was really cool. They called a Japanese tourist over to take a photo of the three of them.

'It's always a good idea to ask a Japanese to take a photo,' drawled the American man who had introduced himself as Bob from Texas. 'They are great photographers. If you've noticed, they always have high tech cameras hanging round their necks.'

After six hours Mark had *handed out* all of the one thousand flyers. He *went back* to the school and a smiling Dora gave him some wonderful news. She'd already started to receive some phone calls. A few people wanted to come in the next day to do the oral and listening part of the test. They'd already completed the grammar and reading. One of the other teachers, Julie from Manchester, said she'd take care of the speaking test and Jenny, the teacher from Wales, would do the listenings.

Maria was true to her word and arranged to meet Mark to *hand out* another one thousand flyers. They decided to stand above the underground at Piazza Della Repubblica, one stop after Termini. They were going to be *handing out* the flyers until eight thirty that evening. Mark said they should try to find one thousand people in two and a half hours. Maria thought it was unlikely because time would be *taken up* talking to a number of them.

They'd only been *handing out* the flyers for about half an hour when Mark noticed a boy approaching the entrance to the underground. He had his gaze steadily fixed on Maria. Then as Maria looked in his direction she called out, 'Sergio, I don't believe it.'

'Maria! Of all people! Imagine seeing you here.' He ran over and they kissed each other on the cheek and hugged. They spoke in Italian so Mark was completely lost and had no idea what was *going on*. After chatting for about ten minutes Maria handed him one of the flyers. She didn't give him a level test. He'd said it was a waste of time because he already knew his level.

‘Below zero,’ he told her.

‘I can’t believe it,’ Maria said to Mark. ‘That was my boyfriend’s cousin. I didn’t even know he was in Rome. What a real coincidence meeting him here. It really is a small world.’

‘Did you say your boyfriend’s cousin?’

‘Yes, well my ex boyfriend.’

Mark breathed a sigh of relief.

‘He said he’ll *sign up for* one of the new courses once the levels and timetables have been *sorted out*.’

Maria was happy she’d managed to persuade Sergio to enrol on the English course. He’d told her he was looking for a job in the city centre as a barman or a waiter in a restaurant but unfortunately for him most of them wanted someone who spoke English.

He’d been at his cousin’s house for a week but had now found a room in a flat in the Piazza Bologna area. He expressed his sympathy for Maria’s break up with Giancarlo and added that he was *going through* exactly what she was so he could relate to her in that aspect.

‘Giancarlo lives on the outskirts and it doesn’t feel as if I’m in Rome stuck out there,’ he’d told Maria.’ Plus the fact we don’t *get on*. He’s a perfectionist. He got quite stroppy with me ‘coz I left an empty glass on his kitchen table. ‘Wash it and put it away where you got it from,’ is what he told me.

‘I can’t be arsed with his perfectionism. I want to be able to leave things lying around whenever I want without someone breaking my balls all the time. I don’t want to *fall out with him* and I would have had I stayed a day longer.’

Maria would later try to fish for information when, or if, Sergio joined the course. She’d see if Giancarlo had mentioned anything about her.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Close down – permanently cease business/not operate anymore

Fall out with (someone) – no longer talk to a person due to having had a disagreement

Get on – have a good relationship

Go back – return

Go on – happen, he had no idea what was going on/he had no idea what was happening

Go through – experience, usually an unpleasant situation

Hand out – distribute by giving with the hands

Hand over – give

Have on – be wearing

Opt for – choose

Pick up – fetch from a place

Scrunch up – compress and crumple into a ball-like shape

Sign up for – subscribe/enrol

Sort out – organize

Stand out – be conspicuous/be very noticeable

Take up – occupy space or time

Work out – calculate (an equation in the given context)

Glossary – idioms and expressions

Along with – together with

Be arsed with – be bothered with-I can't be arsed with, I can't be bothered with (British colloquialism)

Break (one's) balls – to really annoy someone (colloquialism)

Of all people – used in exclamation when a person you least expect appears, or does something or says something or is something etc.

Pay up front – pay in advance, prior to getting a service

The new courses

Mark and Maria had managed to *hand out* the twenty thousand flyers in just under ten days. Soon the new courses would begin. Dora had been inundated with phone calls and people were still bringing in their completed level tests and making appointments to do the oral and listening part of the test. Dora was thinking how wonderful it would be if she had a bigger place with more classrooms so she could expand her business. That really would be the icing on the cake. Maybe one day.

Not long after the new courses were all up and running, Dora received word from her brother that at long last the in-company courses would soon be starting and that they'd be forwarding her the new two-year contract. She thanked her lucky stars for the day Mark had walked into the school looking for a job. He'd brought nothing but good fortune with him. Now she'd have to get down to the business of recruiting more teachers. She went back to her computer and placed an ad on a website.

Glossary – phrasal verbs, idioms and expressions

At long last – finally, an expression which is used after a long wait

Be up and running – fully in operation

Get down to – start to do something that requires attention

Hand out – distribute by hand

Just under – a little less than

Thank (one's) lucky stars – to be extremely grateful

The icing on the cake – an additional good thing to a situation that is already very good

A helping hand

Mark phoned home from time to time to speak to ma and pa. Ma had told him in the last phone call that his brother Kevin in Bournemouth was *going through* a period of financial hardship. Business hadn't been going too well. He and his wife had *fallen behind* on the mortgage payments and it wouldn't be long before the bank repossessed the property if they didn't get back on top pretty quickly.

There'd been a spate of floods that winter forcing people to cancel their bookings. Kevin and Lindsay were now fighting eye in tooth to keep their heads above water. The guesthouse wasn't just their place of work – it was also their abode. They'd had an extension built on to the rear of the building which had become their home. It comprised of a small sitting room, bathroom, kitchenette and bedroom. This separated them from the guests but at the same time kept them close at hand should anyone need their assistance.

'Repossession is a last resort for the bank,' Mr Devlin the bank manager told them that day they'd made an appointment to try to *work something out*. 'We can offer you a six-month interest-only arrangement which means that at the end of this period your mortgage repayments will be recalculated based on the remaining term. Your repayments will increase due to having a shorter term to *pay back* the outstanding mortgage balance.' Kevin and Lindsay had no alternative but to agree to the proposed arrangement.

Mark had difficulty in sleeping that night. He lay in bed thinking about how desperate his brother must be. He knew how proud Kevin and his wife Lindsay had been the day they'd finally managed to make their dream come true. They'd saved hard and *done without* for a good number of years in order to secure the down payment the bank had required before issuing them with a loan.

Mark's mind *drifted back* to the time Kevin had invited him to Bournemouth for a break as soon as he'd *found out* that Mark had been talking about moving to Rome. They'd tried to help him and now he wished he could help them. After all, he thought to himself, one good turn deserves another.

Mark thought and re-thought about it until he fell into a deep sleep.

The next morning he *woke up* with a brainwave.

What if he were to arrange full immersion English courses in England? He

could make arrangements with a low cost airline company to give him a super discount were he to book a large party of people. They could all stay at his brother's guest house. That would give his brother and sister-in-law a financial boost and get them back on their feet. The guesthouse had twelve rooms and it was within easy reach to London.

He *headed for* the telephone and *picked up* the receiver. He dialled Kevin's number. A sleepy Kevin answered the phone.

'Hello,' said Kevin stifling a yawn. 'Who is it?'

'Hi Kevin, it's Mark.'

'Hi Mark, is everything alright?' asked his brother alarmingly.

'Yes. Why?'

Kevin's eyes were on the alarm clock next to the phone on his bedside cabinet. 'It's seven o'clock in the morning over here so for a moment I thought something terrible had happened.'

'Oh sorry to scare you like that Kevin, I forgot you're an hour behind. Over here it's eight o'clock and I wanted to catch you before we both begin our working day.'

'Ok but *is* everything alright?'

'Everything is ticking along fine at this end. Ma told me that things are not so well with you.'

'Yes Mark. I'm doing my best to resolve things although at times I really feel like I'm hitting my head against a brick wall. We're now a couple of months behind on our mortgage. These floods knocked us back financially. We lost a lot of bookings through them. I've got a good few people coming for Easter and July and August are fully booked but it's not enough to get me on an even keel.'

'Kevin, I have an idea. Listen and tell me what you think. I'm going to try to put together a group of forty students to take over to England. The idea is that they travel to Bournemouth to do an intensive English course and that's where you come in. If we arrange for them to stay at your guesthouse, half board, perhaps breakfast and an evening meal included and have the English courses right there in the guesthouse. I've still to make arrangements with an airline company and get the students together but if you could let me know the period in which you have the most vacancies then I'll arrange it for around about then.'

'Really Mark. Thanks ever so much. That would be really fantastic. You're a real lifesaver. Lindsay and I have been praying for some kind of a miracle

but I wasn't expecting it to come by way of my own brother.'

'No problem Kevin. That's what families are for. If you can't rely on your own family in your hour of need, who can you rely on?'

'*Hang on a sec* Mark I'm still trying to *take it all in*. I'll just have a quick look at my bookings diary. The last two weeks in May and the beginning of June so far look like a totally dead period. I've just got one couple booked up. They're coming over from France.'

'Will you have room for forty guests?'

'I'll make room.'

'There will be three teachers including myself so that will be forty three people in total.'

'You and the other two teachers could sleep in my house and Lindsay and I could *move into* the garage for a week.'

'*Move into the garage!*'

'Mark, a week in the garage is nothing compared to the risk of losing our livelihood. I'll do anything it takes to save what Lindsay and I have worked so very hard to build.'

'Yes of course. I see where you're coming from. Anyway Kevin, have you got forty chairs?'

'Yes we have Mark. We've also got about twenty foldaway chairs in the garage for emergencies' sake. You could use the dining room chairs. In fact you could have the lessons in the dining room. It's really spacious.'

'Kevin I'm going to order a blackboard on internet and I'll get it sent to your address. I'm going to need a printer as well to print out the lessons when we get there. I can't carry a week's load of lessons over to England.'

'Don't worry Mark, of course we've got a printer.'

'Send me an email with the make of the printer so I can order a couple of extra toners and paper to *see us through* the week.'

'Don't worry Mark. I can see to that at this end. Don't bother yourself any more than what you have to. You're already doing so much for us as it is. I still can't believe what you are going to do, thanks bruv, thanks so much.'

'No need to thank me Kevin, I'll get going now so I can *get down to* organizing everything and I'll *get back to you* in a couple of days' time.'

'One second Mark before you go. What if you're unable to find all those students?'

'I will Kevin, I will. Remember that when I put my mind to something, I *see it through* to the end. Nothing is impossible. Remember the old saying?

“Where there’s a will, there’s a way.”

‘Thanks so much Mark. You really are a Godsend. Lindsay will be so relieved. She hasn’t been eating these days due to the stress we’ve been *going through*.’

‘Go and make yourselves a good meal then - your troubles will soon be over. If this course is successful I could arrange another one later on in the year. That will really get you back on track and keep you there.’

‘Thanks again Mark. I’ll speak to you then in a couple of days’ time.’

‘Bye Kevin, keep your chin up and tell Lindsay I was *asking after her*.’

‘I will do, I will. Take care bruv, bye.’

Lindsay hugged and kissed her husband with tears in her eyes. Who would have thought that her brother-in-law, the former leader of the Liverpool Young Team, of all people, would come to their rescue? ‘It’s true what they say, God works in mysterious ways,’ she said to Kevin.

Mark spoke to Dora about his plan. She told him that most of the courses would be finishing at the end of May and that it would be the best period for him and Karen and one of the other teachers to be absent from the school for a week. ‘I’ve got a whole load of summer courses *starting up* in the middle of June so try to *be back* by then. So with Dora’s approval he *pinned* a notice *up* on the school notice board.

The notice said:

Special offer for students attending the school; valid also for their friends and family. Intensive English courses in Bournemouth, flight, food and board (breakfast and dinner) and four hours a day of English lessons with a day trip to London included in the price. Estimated departure date 29th May, estimated return to Italy 8th June give or take a few days. Approximate cost five hundred and fifty euros per person.

Maybe they could hire a coach to take them all to London. It might be cheaper than paying for forty three return tickets by train from Bournemouth. He’d *look into* that nearer the time.

Mark had three English classes the next day. Some of the students had already seen the notice *pinned up* on the notice board and for the ones who

hadn't he made sure they *found out*. He gave a lesson on Bournemouth and brought in some beautiful pictures. He spoke to them about the course he'd planned and how wonderful it would be for them all to be together in England. It would be like one big adventure for them as well as being able to put into practice the English they'd learned at the school.

Marie-Thérèse, a French girl from the intermediate class, asked if her father could travel with them. She lived in Rome and had brought her elderly father from France to be with her. 'I couldn't just leave him in Paris all alone,' she'd said. 'And if I go to England, he'll be left in Rome all by himself. I'd feel a whole lot better if he came with me. Dad has a pretty boring life so maybe this trip could *spice it up* a bit. There's the added fact that he has the occasional memory lapse.'

'You can bring whoever you want,' said Mark. 'The more the merrier. Will he be *taking part in* the courses?'

'Well maybe you could put him in the elementary class,' said Marie-Thérèse. 'I'm a bit concerned about these lapses in memory he's been getting from time to time and maybe an English course would be a good idea to kind of exercise his mind, if you know what I mean?'

'Yes, I think some sort of mental activity is good in these cases,' replied Mark. 'We could give him some homework to activate his brain a bit.'

Marie-Thérèse's father Gregoire was seventy four years old. Her mother had *passed away* while giving birth to Marie-Thérèse. Dad had no brothers or sisters and had lost touch with his wife's only sister who'd immigrated to Canada when Marie-Thérèse was just two years of age so for the past thirty four years it had always been Marie-Thérèse and her dad. She'd come to Rome ten years previously for an Italian boyfriend whom she'd met in Paris. When the relationship ended she'd got so used to life in Rome that she couldn't imagine herself *going back* to live in France. She'd gone to visit her father regularly and he'd come to stay with her in Rome several times but a couple of years previously she'd noticed how old and frail her father was becoming. That's when she'd made up her mind to bring him to live in Rome. Dad had agreed. As long as he was with his daughter that's all that mattered. So she'd *rented out* her father's flat in Paris and was now paying the rent in Rome with the money they made from dad's flat. Her father also had a healthy pension which they used for their living expenses. Marie-Thérèse worked part time teaching French which brought in some extra cash. Everyone who met Marie-Thérèse told her what a lucky father she had to

have a daughter like her. She always replied by telling them that it was *she* who was the lucky one to have a father like him.

Luca, Ilaria, Sonia and Flavio told Mark immediately to *count them in*. The other students had no wish to *miss out on* this wonderful opportunity and told Mark they'd speak to their parents that evening. The proposed price of five hundred and fifty euros all inclusive was something they could not let *slip by*. Ilaria's parents had *coughed up* almost three thousand euros a few years ago for an English course in England. Okay, she'd been there for three weeks, but still.

'You must let me know as soon as possible,' said Mark. 'Time is of the essence. We're going to be flying out to England in seven week's time. You won't find this special deal anywhere else. As well as being in an excellent location, you'll get the chance to put your English into practice. You'll all need to pay fifty per cent of the trip as soon as you can so I can go ahead with booking the flight. The other fifty per cent you can pay nearer the time.'

The other fifty per cent would be going to his brother cash in hand when they got there and it would also be paying the teachers' a symbolic salary.

That night he ordered a large blackboard on internet and informed Kevin to *look out for it* as the expected delivery date was in two days time.

Next step was to find a low cost airline company that gave discounts on group bookings.

He logged onto the internet and contacted a couple of low cost airline companies. Each said they'd *get back to him* in the next twenty four hours or so.

A couple of days later he received a phone call from one of the airline companies offering him two flights. One outgoing flight early in the morning on 29th May and a return flight late in the evening of the 5th June. These two flights had plenty of available seats. They'd quoted him forty nine euros per person outbound and a hundred and twenty nine for the return journey airport tax included. The total cost for forty three passengers would be seven thousand six hundred and twenty four euros. He'd be required to secure the seats as soon as possible with a minimum of a ten per cent booking fee; the balance would be payable twenty eight days prior to departure.

He wasted no time. He secured the seats immediately paying the airline company the seven hundred and sixty six euros requirement from his own pocket.

Mark did his maths. He *worked out* that if all went according to plan, forty students at five hundred and fifty euros a head would make twenty two thousand euros. As the teachers, he, Karen and Julie would be travelling free of charge due the three of them having agreed to accept a small salary for the week in Bournemouth. The free flight and lodgings were more than enough to *make up for* the loss of income. His brother would earn ten grand for the week; more than enough to give him the financial boost he so desperately needed. That could clear four months' mortgage repayments after taking overheads into account. It was a good all round deal for everyone concerned.

Mark was the happiest he'd ever been in his whole life. He thought back to his days at the margarine factory. Gawd! It seemed so long ago, as though it had been in another lifetime. He'd been like one of the pieces of machinery in that place. Every day the same dull and dreary routine; nothing new and no new faces for years on end. Gawd! It'd been as boring as hell and he hadn't realised it at the time. He'd got so used to that monotonous way of life that it had become almost "normal".

He'd accomplished more in the months he'd been in Rome than a lifetime in Liverpool. He'd been living a suppressed life. No wonder he needed a good "drink" back then. It had kind of numbed the reality of his dreary existence. Yes, that's what it had been, existing and not living. Here in Rome he was living life to the full. He'd never felt so useful in all his life. He'd changed Dora's life around and it gave him immense satisfaction to see what a happy person she'd become. He'd managed to repay her for giving him a chance; *taking him on* as a teacher when he had absolutely no qualifications to his name. He enjoyed teaching so much that he felt that this is what he really had been cut out for. He loved standing up in front of the board with his audience *looking on*, almost like an actor on the stage. He'd read somewhere that EFL teachers were really failed actors that didn't quite make it to the big screen. Their audience was their students who had all eyes on them, listening intently and taking notes as the actor on stage gave out his speech on one tense or another.

After just three weeks Mark had enough students to take to England. Some of the students in the school had told their friends. One boy, Giorgio had recruited another three people; his girlfriend, his brother and his brother's girlfriend.

Maria had *put in for* three days' holiday at the primary school where she

worked. Anyway it would soon be closing for the summer holidays and the last days of school were not so important as what they were during the year. The children were allowed to bring games to the classroom.

They were all leaving on Friday 29th May. It was a long weekend in Italy due to the national holiday on 2nd June which fell on a Tuesday so the primary school would be closed on the Monday anyway.

Sergio was also going with them. Maria had contacted him to see if he was still interested in doing one of the English courses. He was still out of work and had told her he'd *get back to her* when he *found out* his new future working hours, that is, if he managed to find a job in the next few days or so. She mentioned that they were all going to England and joked with him about him going with them.

'Yes I'll come,' he said.

'Seriously,' replied Maria thinking how great that would be. She would be near a member of Giancarlo's family for a week; maybe she'd *get it out of him* what Giancarlo had said about her and their relationship, that is, if he had said anything at all. She was so sure he must have. How could he not have spoken about her to his cousin Sergio that week Sergio had stayed at Giancarlo's?

'We're going to Bournemouth and will be spending a day in London,' added Maria.

'I'll definitely come Maria if they have a full immersion beginner's course. It would be good to do as much English in one week in case a job *crops up* and I'm no longer available for English lessons.'

Sergio had heard so much about London and was curious to see what it was like. He'd seen it on TV but that was as far as it went. It was a city that had always fascinated him.

That evening Sergio got on the phone to his father.

'Dad, it seems to be that no one will give me a job unless I know a minimum amount of English.'

'I told you my son that you'd regret not studying it when you had the chance at school. All those wasted years of not taking advantage of the two-hourly weekly classes you had.'

'Yes I know. How was I to know that all of a sudden you'd need to speak English even for the crappiest of jobs? Anyway dad, I was thinking of using some of that money, you put in my bank account, to go to England for a week. Maria's going.'

‘Maria? Who would that be?’

‘Giancarlo’s ex-girlfriend.’

‘How do you know she’s going?’

‘I met her by chance above the underground and she invited me to an English course that should be *starting up* soon. She *helps out* in an English school in her free time and she was *handing out* flyers with an English boy. Anyway dad, if I do one of the English courses Maria was *flogging off*, and a job *crops up*, I may have wasted my money, I mean your money, so if I go to England, I can do it all in one week.’

‘How much is this trip to England son?’

‘It’s only five hundred and fifty euros and that includes the flight, food and board in a guesthouse in Bournemouth, four hours of English a day and a day trip to London.’

‘Okay my boy. Go for it. It sounds like a good opportunity to learn the language and it’s quite reasonably priced. Do what you have to do to find a job. But don’t waste your time when you’re in England. Take the opportunity to study and do whatever homework the teacher sets for you.’

‘Maria is going to help me. She already speaks English really well dad.’

‘Good, good. I don’t know what *came over* your cousin the day he left that girl. He must be off his head. Girls like Maria are hard to come by these days. I often wonder if he met someone else. That would be the only reasonable explanation.’

‘I don’t think so dad. I stayed at his place for almost a week and he didn’t mention anybody else. In fact he didn’t even talk about Maria so I didn’t mention *breaking off with* Gianna. I didn’t want to *stir up* any buried feelings he may have had for Maria. Oh talking about Gianna. Have you seen her? Is she back from Milan?’

‘No I haven’t seen her. She’s still in Milan. That’s what they say anyway.’

‘Do you want to speak to your mother?’

‘Yes dad. *Put her on*.’

‘Hello Sergio. How are you my boy? How’s it going in Rome?’

‘I’m fine mum and I love it here but I still haven’t been able to find a job. They all want people who speak English.’

‘Well you had the opportunity at school and you let it pass you by. We even offered to pay for an English tutor to come to the house but you refused point blank.’

‘I know mum. Don’t *you* start; dad’s just given me the third degree.’

‘Okay okay, as long as you’re happy. If you’re happy then we are too.’

Sergio told his mother all about the English courses in Bournemouth.

‘Go boy go. Don’t let money stand in your way. Your dad transferred that money into your account for you to use, but use it wisely. You know the sacrifices your dad made to *put that money aside*. It was supposed to be for your university studies so don’t waste it.’

‘I won’t mum. I put a deposit down on the rented room and paid a couple of months’ rent in advance. The rest of the money is still in the bank and I’m only using it to buy food and the bare essentials. When I *get back* from England I can get a job as a waiter in a bar or a restaurant in the centre of Rome. I’ve already seen quite a few adverts in the windows of several bars. I went into some of them but they told me because of the many tourists, they’d prefer someone who spoke at least the basics of English.’

‘Well learn the basics when you’re in England. Do your best to learn this time. Don’t just let it go in one ear and out the other like you always did when you were at school.’

‘No mamma. This time I’m definitely going to learn and study and do the homework. I can’t wait to start working in one of those beautiful bars in the historic centre. They pay a higher salary than the other ones and the tourists are generous with their tips. I heard that some of the rich Americans leave five euros. All these tips can pay the rent on my room and I’ll have a full salary all to myself.’

‘Fantastic my son. It’s so great to hear how enthusiastic you’ve become - but be careful when you’re in England. You don’t know the language and I wouldn’t want you to get lost or anything. I’ve heard that the food is not so good so try not to eat any junk when you’re there. Eat plenty of fresh fruit. I wouldn’t want you to get ill or anything. When you *get back* from England your dad and I will come to visit you in Rome. If there’s anything you need then just let us know nearer the time and we’ll bring it up to Rome for you. Give us a ring when you get to England and let us know how you are. If you need anything when you’re there we’ll get it sent over.’

‘Okay. Thanks mamma and bye for now. Say goodbye to papa. Speak to you soon.’

Sergio felt quite weepy when he came off the phone. Now that he was living away from mamma and papa he realised just what good parents they actually were. Mamma had changed her ways. He remembered a time when she’d never allowed him to go anywhere. She’d always been petrified

something terrible would happen to him. But she probably meant no harm. Without them he would never have been able to come to Rome – with what money? And now it was papa's money that was paying for him to go to England. In fact it was papa's money that had paid for everything in his life. He vowed he would change his ways. He'd try to become a son they would be proud of instead of the delinquent-natured boy he'd been in the past.

Mr Esposito was happy that at last their son was beginning to take his life into his own hands. He was glad that his wife had begun to see sense and not cling on to their boy so much the way she'd done in the past.

Maybe there was hope for the boy after all, thought Alfredo that night as he *settled down* in bed to read a book.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Ask after (someone) – enquire of a person's well-being

Break off with (someone) – leave, separate

Come over (a person) – this is said when someone conducts him/herself in a peculiar unexpected way

Come up – become available/arise

Count (someone) in – include someone in a plan or activity

Cough up – pay (British colloquialism)

Crop up – happen or appear usually unexpectedly

Do without – renounce the small pleasures of life such as buying clothes and going to the cinema etc.

Fall behind (on payments) – default/go into arrears

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Flog off – sell (British colloquialism)

Get back (from a place) – return from a place

Get back to (someone) – resume contact

Get down to – start to do something that requires attention

Get (something) out of (someone) – cause a person to give you information that you want

Go back – return

Go through – experience something unpleasant

Hand out – distribute/give to

Hang on (a sec) – wait (a second)

Head for – begin to go in the direction of

Help (someone) **out** – provide assistance to make another person's task become easier

Look into (something) – investigate

Look on – watch with interest and curiosity like a spectator

Look out for (someone or something) – be attentive by listening or watching so as not to miss someone

Make up for – compensate

Miss out on (something) – lose an opportunity

Move in (to) – start living in a place

Pay back – repay borrowed money/restitute money

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Pin (something) **up** – attach to a wall or notice board or suchlike with a pin

Put (something) **aside** – reserve for a later date

Put in for (something) – apply for/ask for/ make a formal request

Put (someone) **on** (the telephone) – pass the telephone to a person so you can speak to him or her

Put (someone) **up** – give hospitality to/let someone sleep at your house for a period of time

Rent out – allow use of something for a set period in exchange for money

See (something) **through** – continue with a job or a project or suchlike until it is finished

See (someone) **through** – (see us through until next week) to last us until next

Settle down (in bed to read a book) – make oneself comfortable and relaxed

Slip by – pass without having taking advantage of

Spice up – make more interesting and exciting

Start up – to undertake a business venture/make an activity become operational

Stir up (old feelings) – cause to resurface

Take (something) in – mentally absorb

Take (someone) on – recruit/hire/employ

Tick along – progressing quite well

Work (something) out – think of a solution

Work out – calculate

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A brainwave – when a sudden clever idea comes into one's mind

A good few – several

A last resort – a course of action used only when all else fails

A whole load of – a lot of something

After all – in the context “maybe there was hope for the boy after all” = despite everything/used to indicate a possible unexpected outcome

An even keel – keep stability/maintain balance/keep control of

As far as it goes – implies a limitation. In the context – “Sergio had seen London on TV but that was as far as it went” = it was limited to that/it did not go beyond that

At last – finally

At times – occasionally

At this end – here, where the speaker is

At your end – where the listener is

Be a godsend – this is said when something good unexpectedly happens when it is most needed

Be cut out for (something) – to be suitable/the right kind of person for something, have the necessary qualities

Be off (one's) head – to be absolutely crazy

Be out of work – be unemployed

Cash in hand – money paid in cash, most often to avoid paying tax

Change (one's) ways – change oneself for the better

Come off the phone – end a telephone call

Down payment – a sum of money paid in advance to secure a purchase or a deal

Fight tooth and nail – make a strenuous effort to do something

Free of charge – without having to pay

From time to time – at irregular intervals/occasionally

Get back on (one's) feet – to be in good health or a good financial state again after a bad period

Get back on top – return to a favourable position

Get going – begin to go

Get on the phone to (someone) – make contact telephonically

Give (someone) a call – telephone a person

Give or take – more or less

Give or take a few days – used to give an approximate number, it could be more but it could be less

Go for it – grab the opportunity while you can without hesitating

Go in one ear and out the other – pay little or no attention to what is being said and as a consequence quickly forget

Grand – a thousand (British colloquialism used for sums of money)

Hard to come by – difficult to find

Have all eyes on (someone) – to have the full attention of

Hit (one's) head against a brick wall – make no progress despite making a great deal of effort

In (one's) hour of need – a time when help is needed the most

Keep (one's) chin up – stay happy/stay positive/try not to be sad

Keep (one's) head above water – manage to survive

Let (something) pass you by – to lose an opportunity/allow an opportunity to escape

Make room – create/find space

Make up (one's) mind – decide

Of all people – used in exclamation when a person you least expect appears, or does something or says something or is something etc.

One good turn deserves another – repay an act of kindness

Put a deposit down (on something) – give a sum of money to secure a deal

Put (one's) mind to (something) – apply oneself with maximum effort to doing something

Refuse point blank – adamantly refuse

See where (someone) is coming from – understand why a person has a particular opinion or feeling

Stand in (someone's) way – obstruct/hinder, try to prevent someone from doing something or making progress

Take advantage of – use an opportunity or a person for one's own personal gain

Take (one's) life into (one's) own hands – take responsibility for oneself

Take part in (something) – participate

That's where you come in – that/this is where your role in the matter is needed

The more the merrier – this is a commonly used fixed expression which implies that a situation will be more enjoyable if there are more people. It is used to invite another person/or other people to a group in a welcoming way

Time is of the essence – this is said when there is no time to waste and that a matter needs urgent attention/it needs to be dealt with immediately

Where there's a will there's a way – if you really want to do something you will find a way no matter what/nothing and nobody will stop you

Mr De Longo bumps into Mr Esposito

Mr De Longo was out of his mind with worry. He'd just *got back from* the post office where he'd *run into* Sergio's father. He turned to his wife.

'You'll never guess who I met at the post office.'

'I've no idea Ernesto. Who *did* you meet?'

'Angelo Esposito and he told me Sergio was in Rome but will be going to England soon to do an English course.'

'He's in Rome,' exclaimed his wife in total shock. 'How the blazes did he *find out* that Gianna was there when we've told everyone she's in Milan? Has he hired a private detective or something?'

'Calm yourself down Elsa. Seemingly he's going to England to do this course. I've just told you that. From what I gathered Sergio has no knowledge of Gianna being in Rome. He initially went there to spend some time with his cousin – to distract himself from thinking about our Gianna. Angelo Esposito told me that he and his wife *talked him into* going to stay with his cousin for a bit. The idea of going to Rome did not come from Sergio. But still I'm worried he might meet her. It's a small world.'

'Well her internship ends next week so it would be better if she *came back* here so we can keep an eye on her. How long is Esposito going to be in Rome? What exactly did his father say? What were his exact words? Try to remember every detail.'

'Well I told him Gianna was in Milan and he told me Sergio had gone to Rome to stay with his cousin for a bit but had decided to *stay on* and find a job as he likes being in the capital. He then told me that Sergio needed to learn English for work so was going to England with his cousin's ex girlfriend to do an English language course then *going back* to Rome to look for work as a barman in the city centre.'

'*He's going to England with his cousin's ex girlfriend?*'

'So it would seem. At least that's what Angelo Esposito said.'

'This whole thing is beginning to sound like something out of a soap opera,' said Elsa. 'When exactly is he going to England and for how long?'

'Angelo Esposito said he's going for a week to do an intensive English language course. He didn't say exactly when.'

'Why didn't you ask him?'

'I wasn't thinking straight at the time. I know I should have asked him but

it was a lot for me to *take in*. I was too dumb-struck to even think when I *found out* that rat bag was in Rome.'

'Well Gianna's internship finishes at the end of this week so it's better if she *comes back* here immediately.'

'Yes I know but she wants to *stay on* in Rome and find a job.'

'Well she can *go back* once a job *crops up*. We can't just pay rent on a room for her to sit around twiddling her thumbs all day long when she's got her own room here. I'm sure you'll agree that it's no longer safe for her to be there, unless of course Esposito has *got over her*.'

Mr De Longo thought for a few moments then said, 'she's got her heart set on staying in Rome for some reason or other but it could take months for her to find a job unless of course she has a stroke of luck.'

'Well she can apply for jobs from this end and we could accompany her to Rome if she gets *called up for* an interview.'

'It's not going to solve the problem of Esposito being in Rome. They may live there all their lives and never meet or they could *bump into* one another any day now. Who's to know what fate has in store?'

'Well once she's back here we could try to *talk her out of* looking for a job in Rome or hopefully she'll find a job elsewhere.'

'What's the time Elsa?'

His wife looked at her watch. 'It's *just going on twelve thirty*.'

'I'll *call her up* and see when she's *coming back*. I think she should be about to go on her lunch break – she usually does at this time.'

Mr De Longo *picked up* the phone and dialled his daughter's number. After a few rings she answered.

'Hello Gianna. It's papa. Can you talk right now or are you busy?'

'Hi papa. I can talk. I'm just about to go on my lunch break. Is everything alright papa?'

'Everything is fine. I'm just phoning to *find out* when you'll *be back*. Your internship will be finishing soon.'

'I was thinking of *staying on* and looking for a job papa.'

'It would better if you *came back* here and look for a job from this end. If something *crops up* we can accompany you back to Rome to be interviewed.'

Gianna did not want to *go back* to her town. She did not want to leave Giancarlo.

'It would be better papa if I stayed here and looked for a job. It'll be so much easier to find one if I'm already here.'

‘Nowadays with the internet you can be in Timbuktu and still find a job in Rome,’ was her father’s reply.

Elsa De Longo motioned to her husband to *put her daughter on to her*.

‘*Hold on* a moment Gianna, your mother would like to speak to you.’

‘Hello Gianna.’

‘Hi mamma. Is everything alright?’

‘Yes it is. Everything is just fine. I just wanted to say that it would be better if you *came back* home until you find a job. You heard what your father said didn’t you?’

‘Yes I did mamma but I’ll find a job much more easily if I stay put.’

‘You can look for one once you *get back* here. As your father just said, we’ll drive you back to Rome if an interview *comes up*. Plus it’s a bit of a waste of money to be paying rent and bills when there’s no reason to be doing so.’

Gianna was becoming desperate. She couldn’t leave Giancarlo. She was also afraid of meeting Sergio again if she were to go back to the town.

‘Mamma,’ she said.

She was now going to play her last card.

‘Don’t you think it would be much safer for me to *stay on* in Rome? You never know. Sergio Esposito could start stalking me again.’

Elsa couldn’t help herself. She *blurted out* about Sergio being in Rome.

‘Your father *bumped into* Angelo Esposito in the post office this morning. He told your father that Sergio went to Rome; not to look for you. He has no idea that you are there. He went to stay with his cousin to try to *get over you*. Seemingly he likes being in Rome and is going to look for a job, but first he’s going to England with his cousin’s ex girlfriend, of all people, to do an intensive English language course then he’ll be back in Rome for good. It’s dangerous for you to be there Gianna. Get back home as quickly as you can. If it *were up to me* I’d have you back home this very evening.’

Gianna gasped in horror upon hearing about Esposito being in Rome.

‘He can’t be here mamma. He can’t be.’

‘Indeed he is,’ replied Elsa, ‘and we don’t want to take any chances. Your father and I will be in Rome on Saturday morning to bring you back home.’

Mr De Longo took the phone from his wife.

‘Hello Gianna, did you hear what your mother just said?’

‘Yes papa, yes I did.’

‘Well get your things packed. We’ll be there first thing on Saturday

morning. You finish your internship on Friday don't you?'

'Yes, I do papa'.

'Well there's no reason for you to be in Rome after Friday. Just make sure you go straight home from the office and don't chance going to the city centre. For all you know, Esposito could be around that area looking for a job. His father said he wanted to find a job as a barman in the historic centre of Rome.'

'Okay papa. I'll be careful. I'll see you on Saturday morning. Bye papa, bye.'

Gianna *put down the phone* in a state of shock. She turned to see Giancarlo standing behind her. For a moment or two she'd forgotten that they'd arranged to have lunch together.

'Gianna, is everything okay? You look as if you've seen a ghost.'

She decided to tell Giancarlo the truth and why she'd have to *go back* to her town.

They went for lunch in a small café close to the office.

When Gianna had finished telling Giancarlo all about her ex and why her parents would be *picking her up* on Saturday morning, he too looked as though he'd seen a ghost. The guy she'd just described as her ex-boyfriend sounded so much like his cousin Sergio and this ex boyfriend of Gianna's was in Rome and so was Sergio. There were too many coincidences.

'What's your ex boyfriend's name?'

Gianna gave him the answer he'd dreaded.

'Sergio.'

'And his surname?'

'Esposito.'

Giancarlo began to feel faint. His cousin had come to Rome to *get over* his girlfriend. Sergio hadn't spoken about her that week he'd stayed at Giancarlo's house and Giancarlo hadn't asked any questions. He thought it was best not to talk about things that could open up semi-healed wounds. Never in a million years would he ever have imagined that the girl Sergio was trying to *get over* was his own new girlfriend Gianna.

Gianna interrupted his thoughts. 'Giancarlo,' are you alright?'

'Gianna, your ex is my cousin.'

'*Your cousin?*'

'Yes, *my cousin.*'

'How can he be your cousin?'

‘He’s my mother’s sister’s son. We *grew up* together. We spent our holidays together. I can’t believe it. This is too much for me to *take in* Gianna. How can I betray my cousin by being with his girl?’

‘I’m not his girl Giancarlo. I’m yours – only yours.’

‘This is so complicated Gianna. I love you but how would I ever be able to introduce you to any members of my family? It is completely out of the question. How would they react? None of them would ever forgive me and I’d never be able to forgive myself.’

Gianna started to scream and cry hysterically. They left the café. She was in too much of a state to *go back* to work.

She went home and Giancarlo said he’d go round to her flat that evening and so they could talk about the situation.

He went back to the office in a daze.

‘Gianna was sick and had to go home,’ he told them.

They believed him. Who wouldn’t believe the distraught person they had in front of them.

He couldn’t concentrate on his work. Mr Spampinato told him he could go home early as he didn’t look too well.

‘Go home and get some rest. Maybe you and Gianna have both *come down* with some kind of virus. If you don’t *feel up to it* tomorrow, don’t come into the office.’

Giancarlo thanked his boss and went straight to Gianna’s flat. He’d begun to calm down a little from the initial shock of it all.

Gianna opened the door her eyes red and swollen.

‘I love you Gianna and I don’t want to lose you.’

‘I love you too Giancarlo.’

‘You know what a terrible family betrayal it would be if our relationship were to come out into the open? For all his faults Gianna I love my cousin. We were like brothers as children. How would he ever be able forgive me?’

‘What is there to forgive? You didn’t steal his girlfriend. You didn’t even know I was his girlfriend and I’m *not* his girlfriend. I haven’t seen him in nearly four months. I left him Giancarlo. He was jealous and possessive *and* he *beat me up*. My father had to get a restraining order against him. That’s why my parents are coming to take me back home on Saturday morning. They’re afraid for my life.’

Giancarlo couldn’t help thinking that his cousin had deserved to be left by Gianna. What a cowardly act. *Beat up* your girlfriend? *Beat up* the beautiful

Gianna. Sergio had played the victim to gain everyone's sympathy; sympathy that he did not deserve at all. But still, he *was* his cousin and here *he was* with his cousin's ex girlfriend.

'We've done nothing wrong Giancarlo. How was I to know you were his cousin and how were you to know I was your cousin's ex girlfriend?'

Gianna continued. 'My mother told me he's going to England to do an English course with his cousin's ex girlfriend. Do you have another cousin Giancarlo?'

'*He's going to England with his cousin's ex girlfriend?*'

'Yes, that's what mamma told me. He's going for a week and then *coming back* to Rome.'

'He has many cousins on his father's side but I'm the only maternal cousin he has.'

Giancarlo suddenly thought about Maria. She was in Rome. No, it couldn't be Maria. She and Sergio had absolutely nothing in common. Maria had met Sergio millions of times. Yes she liked him in her own way but he was definitely not her type. His mind began to wander for a moment or two. He visualised Sergio *running away* with Maria. If this were to happen then they'd both be even. Sergio would have Giancarlo's ex and Giancarlo would have Sergio's ex. That would make everything *work out* though they'd need to avoid one another for the rest of their lives; it would be too embarrassing for everyone concerned.

'Do you know the name of this cousin and the ex girlfriend?' he suddenly asked Gianna.

'No but I could ask papa if Sergio's father mentioned it.'

'Sergio's father – my uncle,' said Giancarlo.

Giancarlo had a funny feeling it could be Maria and the cousin could be none other than himself.

'We could come clean Giancarlo. Tell him the truth. You had no idea I was his girlfriend. You met me while working in the same office. He's already *beaten you up* out of jealousy. This time he could kill you. He could even kill me if he goes out of his mind. Gianna. I can't even speak to my mother or my Aunt Giuseppina about our relationship for obvious reasons not to mention that they would never understand my having a new relationship so soon after leaving Maria.'

'Who's Maria?'

Giancarlo realised he had never mentioned Maria to Gianna.

‘I didn’t want to mention Maria. I had no intention of jeopardizing our relationship by talking about my last girlfriend. I left Maria after seven years because I fell in love with you. It wouldn’t have been right to *string her along*. She came to Rome for me shortly after I met you.’

‘Really,’ gasped Gianna in shock. ‘Where is she now? Is she still in Rome?’

‘Yes she is. She’s living in a flat with an English teacher.’

‘Why have you never spoken about her?’

‘Probably for the same reason you’ve never spoken to me about Sergio. I still can’t believe you were his girlfriend. You’ve got nothing in common with him whatsoever. Whatever attracted you to him in the first place?’

‘His charm and good looks. He paid me endless compliments which soon *turned into* insults. His true colours started to *come out* after a few months of being together. The love I felt at the beginning soon *turned to* repulse. He had no future goals and spent a great deal of his time *hanging about* the local bar with a bunch of idiots like himself. As the saying goes, ‘walk with the lame and learn how to limp’.

‘Your Aunt Giuseppina and Uncle Angelo are lovely people Giancarlo. They’re the kindest people anyone could meet.’

This was all too strange for Giancarlo. Gianna had already met his aunt and uncle. She’d been his cousin’s girlfriend. It was just far too much for him to *take in*. Luckily she hadn’t been in his flat that night they brought Sergio to Rome. That would have been a nightmare for everyone concerned.

‘They can never *find out* about us Gianna. Do you realise that? Can you imagine me taking you to their house for dinner? Me introducing my girlfriend to them?’

He shuddered again at the whole damn mess he’d found himself in. Was he being punished for leaving Maria in the lurch? He sincerely hoped not.

He couldn’t bear the thought of Gianna *going back* to her parents’ town. He needed her here with him.

‘Gianna I was going to ask you to *move into* my flat. That way you wouldn’t have to *go back* to the town. You could stay with me and look for a job.’

‘That would be wonderful Giancarlo but what would I say to my father? What would happen if Sergio decided to visit you? You *are* his cousin after all.’

‘He wouldn’t visit unannounced. He’d surely phone me first to see if I’m at

home. Anyway the chances of meeting Sergio on the outskirts of Rome are by all means extremely slim.'

'Papa and mamma are coming on Saturday to take me back. They won't hear of my staying on in Rome. I could introduce you to them but if they were to *find out* you were related to Sergio all hell would be let loose. My father would hit the roof.

'What if we don't tell them?'

'Yes but if you were to come down to my town one day in the future and we so happened to meet Sergio or any of his friends who know you're his cousin.'

'I don't really know any of his friends. Just one of them from years ago whose name's Salvatore. He came to the beach quite a lot as a boy and played with me and Sergio. I know they are still good friends coz my mother and Aunt Giuseppina are good friends of Salvatore's family.'

'Salvatore got married and *moved to* Naples,' said Gianna.

'But his parents still live in the town so he could visit them and see us together and inform Sergio.'

'Well what if you weren't to visit me in the town Giancarlo?'

'How am I going to see you Gianna if your parents don't want you to be in Rome?'

'I know Giancarlo. We'll have to find a solution. Maybe we could go to Milan and find jobs.'

'I can't Gianna. I've got such a good job here that pays me a high income. I'd have to *start all over* in Milan.'

'Maybe if papa meets you on Saturday morning he'll allow me to *stay on* in Rome at your house Giancarlo. We'll just have to wait and see.'

Giancarlo did not like the sound of her father. He seemed to control her every move.

That evening papa called Gianna.

'Have you started to pack your things my girl?'

'Not yet papa. I've still got another few days to go. Papa can't I *stay on* in Rome. I have a new boyfriend who's totally the opposite of Sergio.'

'*A new boyfriend!*'

'Yes papa. He's an engineer at the auditing company. He's offered to let me stay at his house just outside Rome while I'm looking for a job. I'll be safe with him.'

'You hardly know the guy for gawd's sake girl.'

'I *do* know him papa. We've been seeing each other for almost three months; since shortly after I arrived in Rome. I didn't want to mention it to you until I was sure that we were really boyfriend and girlfriend.'

'Three months is nothing my girl. It takes a lifetime to get to know a person really well. Look what happened with Esposito. He had the wool pulled right over your eyes for about four or five months until his true colours showed through.

'Sergio is a layabout. Giancarlo's a hard worker. He's a completely different kettle of fish.'

'There's no *getting through to you* young lady, is there?'

'Papa. I'm not a baby anymore. I'm nearly twenty five years of age. I can think for myself.'

'That's what you think. You couldn't think for yourself when that piece of scum was controlling your life.'

'I ended it all with him once I *saw through him*. You know I did.'

'Listen, I'll *get back to you* tomorrow night. I'll speak to your mother about the matter and see what she says.'

Ernesto De Longo said goodbye to his daughter and *hung up*.

'What was that all about?' asked Elsa.

'The situation gets more complicated by the day, or should I say by the hour. Now she wants to go and live with a young man she hardly knows.'

'*What! Am I hearing things?*'

'No you aren't. She's got a new boyfriend she met at the auditing company. She says he's the opposite of Sergio and that he's an engineer. Just because he's got a degree in engineering doesn't mean he's a good man.'

'Well it's an improvement on that layabout she wasted seven months of her life on. What else did she say?'

'She wants us to meet him on Saturday.'

'Maybe we should Ernesto. You're a good judge of character. You'd be able to *suss him out* in next to no time.'

'Yes, maybe I should take the opportunity while we're in Rome. We don't want them to have to resort to doing things behind our backs do we?'

'You're right Ernesto. Maybe we should give the young man a chance. Which part of Italy is he from?'

'I didn't ask but I'll *find out* tomorrow night when I call Gianna back.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be back – return to a place where you previously were

Be up to (someone) – have the authorization to decide/be responsible for deciding

Beat (someone) **up** – physically attack causing injury

Blurt out – suddenly open one's mouth and reveal something usually due to not being able to control one's emotions

Bump into (someone) – unexpectedly meet someone

Call (someone) **up** – phone someone

Call up for (something) – formally request somebody to do something/summon

Come back – return

Come down with (an illness or minor ailment) – begin to have an illness or ailment such as the flu, a cold, a bug or a virus or suchlike

Come up – become available/arise/materialise

Crop up – unexpectedly arise

Feel up to (something) – have the energy and/or the will to do something

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Go back – return

Get back from (somewhere) – return from a place

Get back to (someone) – resume contact

Get over (someone) – recover from a shock to the system caused by separation from a person or even the death of someone

Get through to (someone) – be able to make someone understand or reason

Grow up – grow from babyhood to adulthood

Hang about/around – pass the time somewhere doing nothing concrete or useful, usually with friends

Hang up – end a telephone call

Hold on – wait

Move into a house/flat – begin to live there

Move to (a place) – transfer to a place

Pick (someone) up – collect a person by car or another vehicle and accompany him/her to a place

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Put down the phone/put the phone down – end a telephone call /literal meaning = place the phone on a surface

Put (someone) on to (someone) – pass the telephone call to someone by giving them the phone

Resort to (something) – do something you have no wish to do because you have no option

Run away – go away/escape

Run into (someone) – meet by chance

See through (someone) – to be able see the true nature of a person

Show through – begin to become evident

Suss (someone) out – understand what a person is really like

Start over – begin from the beginning

Stay on – continue to stay in a place after the expected time of leaving

String (someone) along – to use a person for one's own gain and mislead him/her into thinking you have serious intentions

Take in – mentally absorb

Talk (someone) into (something) – persuade someone to do something

Talk (someone) out of (something) – persuade someone not to do something

Turn to – become/transform into

Work out – if something works out, it has a good outcome

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A different kettle of fish – completely different in a positive way

A stroke of luck – unexpected good fortune

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to 'when all is said and done'. It reinforces and supports what was said before

All day long – from the morning until night

All hell would be let loose – there would be chaos and anger

Be dumb-struck – be left speechless by shock or astonishment

Be hearing things – imagining/to be the fruit of one's imagination

Be out of (one's) mind (with worry) – become crazy

Be out of the question – unthinkable/to be too ridiculous to even consider

By all means – for sure/without doubt

Can't/couldn't bear (something) – to be unable to accept

Can't/couldn't help+ verb + ing – to be unable to stop oneself from doing something

Come clean – confess/admit the truth

Come out into the open – when something that was kept secret is revealed/no longer hidden

Do (something) behind (someone's) back – sneakily and deceitfully do something without letting the person know

First thing + a period – at the very beginning of the given period first thing in the morning, at the very beginning of the morning

For a bit – for a short period of time

For all you know – this phrase carries a very specific hypothetical meaning ... 'for all you know' Esposito could be around that area looking for a job = has it occurred to you that this could be possible?'

For good – forever

For some reason or other – for one or more unknown reason/s

From this end – from here (from where the speaker is)

From what I gather – from what I understand/understood

Get to know a person – to begin to know a person on a deeper level

Go out of (one's) mind – become crazy

Have (one's) heart set on (something) – to want something very much, so much that you are greatly disappointed if you do not get it

Hit the roof – go crazy with anger

In the first place – to begin with/from the onset

It's just going on + time – it's nearly/almost

Keep an eye on (someone) – closely monitor/keep under close surveillance

Leave (someone) **in the lurch** – abandon/desert a person leaving him/her to cope alone in a terrible moment of difficulty

Next to no time – extremely quickly

Pull the wool over (someone's) eyes – deceive a person

Rat-bag – a despicable person

Stay put – remain where you are

Take a chance/take any chances – take a risk/risk doing something

Think straight – think clearly

Timbuktu – the land of nowhere

True colours – the true nature of a person

Twiddle (one's) **thumbs** – sit around doing nothing

Walk with the lame and learn how to limp – a Latin proverb which means you become like the people you associate with

Will/would not hear of (something) – under no circumstances permit or tolerate a situation-used with 'will' and 'would'.

Giancarlo meets Avvocato De Longo

Saturday morning soon came and Avvocato De Longo and his wife *were up at the crack of dawn* to make their way to Rome. After driving for about half an hour they turned onto the A1 motorway. A few kilometres further along they *stopped off* at a service station to *fill up* with petrol and have a coffee. It was still early. The appointment with Gianna and her new boyfriend had been set for 9 a.m. and it was only 6.15 a.m. It would take another couple of hours to *get to the capital*.

‘I’m glad you’ve agreed to give the boy a chance,’ said Elsa as they sat sipping the rich dark espresso in the service station’s café. We’re going to have to *back off* a little and give her a bit more breathing space so she can begin to think for herself – otherwise it’s only a matter of time before she begins to despise us for interfering too much in her life. After all, you and I were already married at the age of twenty five. I’m not sure you would have been at all happy if my father had monitored my every move?’

‘Your father had no reason to monitor your every move. He knew you were with a decent chap and not a nutcase like Esposito.’

‘Yes but she’s no longer with Esposito. This is a different person; a boy who has studied engineering. He hasn’t wasted time *hanging about bars day in and day out* has he?’

‘Here’s hoping you’re right Elsa. I only hope this new boyfriend is nothing like that delinquent she so stupidly *fell for* the last time. It’s important she does not make another bad choice. After all, the next guy in her life could be the one she marries and we don’t want a monster of a son-in-law destroying our family, do we?’ He shuddered at the thought of what could have been had his daughter *ended up* marrying Esposito. Their lives would have been ruined.

They finished their coffee and made their way back to the car and headed on down the motorway. A couple of hours later they exited the motorway and drove onto the “*Grande Raccordo Anulare*” the great ring road.

They’d arranged to meet Gianna in a bar opposite the flat she shared with the other girls. They thought it would be more appropriate than to meet this Giancarlo sitting on the bed in Gianna’s room.

‘It wouldn’t exactly be the ideal setting to meet your daughter’s new boyfriend,’ Ernesto De Longo had said to his wife the previous day. She’d

agreed.

The De Longos were not the only ones who *were up bright and early* that morning. Giancarlo hadn't slept a wink all night. He *was* already *up* and in the shower at 5.30 a.m. The thought of meeting Gianna's father terrified him. He had to look his best and act his best. It was extremely important that he had this man's approval. He was the man who seemed to have the final say in his daughter's matters. Yes he had to make a good impression.

The De Longos were already seated in the bar with their daughter when Giancarlo arrived.

Mr De Longo stood up. Giancarlo held out his hand.

'It's good to meet you Avvocato. Gianna has told me so much about you.'

Avvocato De Longo took Giancarlo's hand and nodded in response. Giancarlo then turned to Mrs Esposito, curtsied and kissed her hand.

'Now I know where Gianna gets her beauty from.'

Elsa De Longo was flattered. She'd been beginning to feel like an old bag of late and this compliment couldn't have come at a better moment. This young man had made her day.

'Take a seat young man,' said Gianna's father.

'Thank you sir.'

'What would you like to drink?'

'I'll get it Mr De Longo. What would *you* and your lovely wife like?'

'No, I must insist,' said Mr De Longo.

Mr and Mrs De Longo had a cappuccino and so did Giancarlo. Gianna opted for a glass of fresh orange juice.

'Would you care for a piece of cake Mr and Mrs De Longo?' offered Giancarlo. 'This bar has excellent cakes delivered fresh each morning.'

'Thanks young man but not for us. Have a piece yourself though.'

Mr De Longo was not the ogre Giancarlo had visualised him to be. In fact he seemed quite a pleasant man.

Gianna's father's first impression of Giancarlo was a good one. He was a boy with fine manners.

'What exactly do you do Giancarlo?' asked Mr De Longo.

'I'm an audit engineer. I mainly *work on* construction projects although I have other tasks such as identifying and evaluating risks. I *carry out* internal controls criteria to audit against. I have several duties within the company. I also analyse and document processes and audit evidence. The list goes on.

Gianna *butted in*. 'Papa, did you know that Giancarlo was promoted not

long after joining the company?’

‘Promoted?’

‘Yes papa. He was given a one-month deadline to complete a project and he finished it in just three days.’

A bright boy thought her father. He liked this young man. A man like this could provide a secure future for his daughter. Nothing like Esposito who had done nothing other than to *scrounge off* his elderly parents.

Gianna knew she would have to broach the subject of staying at Giancarlo’s flat. She’d already asked her parents on the phone. Papa still hadn’t given her a straight answer.

Giancarlo understood that it wouldn’t be appropriate for Gianna to ask them outright twenty minutes after meeting him. They’d need to spend more time together.

‘If you aren’t in a hurry to *get back* home then I’d like to invite you to spend some time at the lake. I live quite close to Lake Bracciano. We could *stop off* at my house for an aperitif and maybe have a bite to eat when we reach the lake; on me of course.’

Elsa looked at her husband. ‘Shall we Ernesto?’

‘Why not Elsa. There’s really no rush to *get back to the town*.’

Ernesto De Longo had to know more about this young man before entrusting him with his daughter so he agreed.

Gianna was beaming with happiness. She could tell that her father approved of her new boyfriend.

They spent a pleasant morning together. Ernesto noticed how spick and span the boy’s home was. This was a young man with an orderly life. ‘An orderly life meant an orderly mind,’ he later said to his wife.

They had a lovely lunch together sitting in a restaurant overlooking the lake. Giancarlo insisted on paying and in the end Ernesto De Longo accepted.

Gianna plucked up the courage to ask papa if she could stay with Giancarlo.

‘Papa. Do I really have to *go back* with you? Can’t I just stay here with Giancarlo? What would I do all day down there when I could be here looking for a job?’

‘I’m in two minds about the matter my girl.’

Mr De Longo turned to Giancarlo. ‘You can call me old-fashioned but I’m not too happy to allow my daughter to live in sin.’

Giancarlo’s mouth fell open in horror. Gianna looked shocked.

It was an embarrassing moment for them all. Finally Elsa broke the silence. 'Ernesto, you have to move with the times. Everyone lives together nowadays.'

'My daughter is not 'everyone', was his reply.

Mr De Longo continued. 'You know Gianna had a terrible experience with that last boyfriend she had. Yes he presented himself very well at the beginning but then *turned out to be* the worst piece of slime ever to crawl the planet. He used her and abused her. Not only did he mentally abuse my daughter but he physically abused her as well. We had to get the police involved in the matter as well as going to court to get an injunction against him.

Giancarlo blushed with embarrassment knowing that the piece of slime Mr De Longo spoke of was none other than his cousin Sergio.

'Tell you what my boy. 'I'll leave my daughter with you but any signs of trouble and you will have me to *deal with*. If you are serious about the relationship then I'm sure you'll agree about getting a ring on her finger in the not too distant future.'

'Thank you Mr De Longo,' replied Giancarlo. 'I can assure you that you won't be disappointed.'

'Well if you don't mind Elsa and I shall be *getting off* now. We'll be back in the near future to see how things are going. Any signs of abuse and she'll be *coming back* with us.'

Gianna squealed with delight. Her father had relented. She'd half hoped he would.

They said their goodbyes and Gianna's parents *got on their way*. On the way back Elsa asked her husband about his change of heart.

'Well Elsa, I *do* trust this young man. He appears to be a man of studious and quiet habits – definitely the type I would like as a future son-in-law so I didn't think it opportune to stand in their way. I said what I said as a kind of warning not to *string her along* in any way. There is also the added fact that if she were to *come back* with us, she'd just be sitting around depressed all day thinking about this young man. It's better for us all if she's well and happy after what she *went through* with the scum-bag Esposito.

'Yes, you're right Ernesto. There would be nothing worse than seeing her *moping about* all day blaming us for *standing in her way*. We've made the right decision. I like the young man. I really enjoyed his company.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back off – not pester someone anymore/stop doing something to avoid problems

Be up – be awake and out of bed

Butt in – interrupt a conversation to say something

Carry out – do/perform/conduct

Come back – return

Deal with – to handle/manage/take action/give the necessary treatment to someone or something

Drift back – slowly return

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Fill up – fill the petrol tank with petrol

Get back (to) a place – return

Get into – enter

Get to – arrive/reach

Get up – leave the bed or move up horizontally from a sitting position

Go through – experience

Hang about/around – pass the time somewhere doing nothing concrete or useful, usually with friends

Mope about – lethargically sit around doing nothing due to boredom and/or depression

Scrounge off (someone) – impose on others for money/shamelessly never pay, have others pay for you

Stop off – briefly stop at a place

String (someone) along – use a person for one's own gain and mislead him/her into thinking you have serious intentions

Turn out (to be) – reveal to be/be someone or something different to what was initially perceived

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A change of heart – change one’s attitude towards something/re-think a matter and have a change of opinion

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar to ‘when all is said and done’. It reinforces and supports what was said before

Ask (someone) straight out – overtly ask, usually suddenly

At the crack of dawn – very early in the morning when night-time changes to day-time

Be in two minds – have difficulty in making a decision

Be short with (someone) – be rude and bad-tempered to someone

Bright and early – an expression used when one wakes up feeling happy and energetic

Day in and day out – all day every day

Get a ring on (one’s) finger – legalize a relationship by getting married

Give (someone) a straight answer – answer in a direct, clear and honest manner

Have a bite to eat – have something quick to eat, usually a quick snack

Have the final say – to be the one who has the final decision in an argument or discussion, used a lot for someone in authority

Make (someone’s) day – to make a person really happy for the rest of the day by saying or doing something really nice

Move with the times – update one’s thinking or behaviour to be in line with the current trends

Not sleep a wink all night – not be able to sleep/be awake all night

On me – this means ‘I’m paying’. ‘be’ on + ‘person’ -the drinks are on me/you/him/her etc.

Pluck up the courage – to find the courage to do or say something

Spick and span – very clean and tidy

Stand in (someone’s) way – obstruct/hinder, try to prevent someone from doing something or making progress

Tell you what – this expression introduces a suggestion or an offer

The list goes on – this has a similar meaning to ... and so on and so forth/the

list continues/the list is never ending

Would you care for – this is an extremely polite and formal version of ‘would you like’. Used with ‘for’ + noun’ or with the infinitive when a verb follows.

Would you care for a drink? Would you care to dance?

England here we come

Mark had ordered forty three red t-shirts with “England here we come” written on the back. On the front was a picture of the Union Jack entwined with the Italian flag.

‘We don’t want anyone to get lost in the crowd,’ he said as he *handed them out* to each of them the day before their departure to London.

Next morning Mark *was up bright and early*. He’d set the alarm clock to *go off* a couple of hours before he’d be leaving the house. That would give him plenty of time to phone the others to make sure none of them *slept in*. It’d also give him more than enough time to get to the airport. He’d arranged to meet several of the students at the coach stance not far from Termini station. Before having breakfast he *picked up* the phone and started to call each of the students to ensure they *were up* and ready to *head off*. Sergio was the only one he couldn’t *get through to*. He tried several times but got the usual voice message.

“*The number you have dialled is unobtainable at the moment. Please call back later.*”

‘He must have his phone *switched off*,’ he thought with dismay.

He then made himself a quick *cuppa*, got washed and dressed, *picked up* his suitcase and his megaphone and made his way to the underground station. Upon reaching Termini station he *got off* the tube and made his way up the escalator out into the fresh morning air. It was only 6.15 a.m. and the station was already buzzing with people coming and going in all directions. He walked across the square and made his way to Via Giolitti where he saw the others in the distance waiting. Upon seeing Mark they all started to wave. Mark waved back at them.

‘Thank goodness,’ he thought. They were already there.

‘Great,’ he said as he approached them. ‘Are we ready to *set off*? Have you all got your passports?’

‘Yes,’ they all replied in unison.

Ten minutes later everyone was on the coach chatting away excitedly as they *headed for* the airport which they reached in *just under* an hour.

The two Spanish twins Pedro and Miguel were *getting out of* a taxi just as the coach *pulled up* outside the airport.

Karen, Maria, and Julie arrived shortly after, accompanied by Julie's boyfriend who'd offered to *pick them up* on his way to get Julie.

Karen had told him not to *put himself out* and that they could get the coach along with Mark and the others.

'I have to *go by* your house anyway to get to Julie's so really it's no bother at all,' he'd replied. 'I certainly won't be *putting myself out*.'

And so it was. They *took him up* on his offer.

Many of the other students were accompanied by their mothers who had come to *see them off*.

Mark couldn't help but notice how the mothers clung to their respective offspring crying uncontrollably as their sons and daughters reluctantly *broke free* to *go through* passport controls.

'I'll phone you mamma as soon as the plane reaches London,' called out Sandro from the upper intermediate class.

Monica from the elementary group turned her head as her mother gave one final shout before her daughter disappeared from view.

'Did you remember to take your umbrella in case it's raining?' 'Yes mamma, *and* I've got my cagoule.'

'Thank goodness, baci, baci amore di mamma e buon viaggio,' called back her mother. 'I'll call you in a few hours' time to make sure you've arrived safe and sound.'

'Okay mamma. Ciao, ci sentiamo presto (speak to you soon).'

Mark thought they were acting as though they'd never see each other again. My goodness! They were only going to be gone for a week. He'd never seen anything like it but then again they *did* say that Italian families were extremely close-knit. The Brits were not so lovey dovey with one other.

He remembered how awkward he'd felt the first month in Italy when people kept kissing him on both cheeks. It was even more awkward for him when a man kissed him and he'd felt himself blushing with embarrassment. Back home in Liverpool none of his friends had ever kissed each other. Gawd! They'd laugh and take the mickey out of you if you were to start kissing your mate. The only time it would be acceptable would be if Liverpool were to win the world cup and even then. Only now was he beginning to get used to it all and had come to realise it was all part of the Italian culture.

Once seated in the departure lounge Mark called the register to give one final check that nobody was missing. It would be quicker than counting them

all he told himself.

They were all present bar one.

'Who's still to arrive?' he called out through the megaphone he'd brought.

'Sergio,' called back Maria.

'Well if he doesn't get here soon we're going to have to leave without him.'

'*Hang on* Mark and I'll give him a buzz,' said Maria.

'I've already tried to *get through to* him but his phone is unreachable,' said Mark.

'I'll try anyway,' said Maria.

Sergio's phone started to ring.

'It's back on again Mark,' said Maria. 'It's ringing.'

After a few rings a grotty sounding Sergio answered.

'Hello Sergio.'

'Hi, Maria, I'm nearly there. Don't leave without me.'

'Where are you? You'll have to *hurry up* or you'll miss the flight.'

'I know, I know. I *slept in*. I called a taxi as soon as I woke up. I've told the taxi driver to get a move on. He says we'll be there in about ten minutes.'

'*Have you got your red t-shirt on?*'

Yes I have.'

'Good. That way we'll be able to spot you. We're in the departure lounge. We're all wearing our red t-shirts so you should find us quite easily but try to *hurry*. The plane leaves in thirty five minutes.'

'The taxi driver can't go any faster than he's already going. He'll *end up* crashing if he does.'

'Okay, okay, here's hoping you don't miss the flight though.'

Ten minutes later an announcement came over the loudspeaker.

'Would all passengers travelling to London on flight number FLB 304 please make your way to gate number 8. The plane is now ready for boarding. Please have your valid travel document and boarding pass ready at the boarding gate.'

'Where the heck is he?' muttered an anxious Mark.

They all joined the queue and nervously looked around to see if there were any signs of Sergio.

Just then another announcement came over the loudspeaker system.

Good morning, would passenger Sergio Esposito travelling to London on flight number FLB 304 please make your way to gate number 8. This is the

final boarding call for Sergio Esposito. The plane is about to leave.

‘He’d better hurry,’ said Mark. ‘There’s no time to lose. The boarding gate closes twenty minutes before the plane *takes off*.’

‘There he is,’ shouted Maria.

Everyone turned to look.

A bedraggled, out of breath Sergio was *rushing through* the departure lounge.

‘Here I am,’ he shouted. ‘Thank God, another five minutes and I would have missed the flight.’

‘Another *two* minutes and you would have missed the flight,’ said Mark. ‘You’re going to have to be more careful the next time Sergio.’

‘Oh *leave off* will you. I’m still half asleep,’ replied Sergio. ‘I need a strong coffee to *wake me up*.’

They boarded the plane and sat in their allocated seats chatting away happily as the plane *took off* soaring through the sky to Mark, Julie and Karen’s homeland. Everyone was in high spirits at the prospect of spending a whole week together and getting the chance to put their English language skills to the test.

‘Now let’s forget the Italian language shall we? Leave it behind you. You can *pick it back up* once you get back to Italy. From now on, it’s English and English only.’

Sergio had no idea what Mark *was on about* so Maria translated. She told him that he wasn’t to speak Italian until he got back to Italy.

‘I don’t know any English so what am I supposed to do? Not talk until I get back to Italy? Do you want me to zip my mouth up?’

‘We can teach you the basics during the plane journey,’ said Maria.

‘Great idea,’ said Mark and Karen.

‘Let’s get started then. Okay, are you ready to begin Sergio?’

‘Si,’ he muttered.

Those who were sitting closest to Sergio were used as examples.

Karen began and the others followed, each giving a simple introduction.

‘I’m Karen.’

‘I’m Mark.’

‘I’m Pedro.’

‘I’m Miguel.’

‘I’m Julie.’

‘I’m Maria.’

'And *you* Sergio,' beckoned Karen.

'I'm Sergio.'

'Fantastic Sergio,' said Mark.

'Now let's add our ages to the introduction, shall we?' said Karen.

'I'm Karen. I'm thirty three.'

'I'm Mark. I'm twenty nine.'

'I'm Pedro. I'm twenty six.'

'I'm Miguel. I'm twenty six.'

'I'm Julie. I'm thirty one.'

'I'm Maria. I'm twenty five.'

'I'm Marie-Thérèse. I'm thirty four.'

'And *you* Sergio,' beckoned Mark.

'I'm Sergio. I'm twenty five.'

'Now let's add our nationalities,' said Karen.

'I'm Karen, I'm thirty three. I'm Scottish.'

'I'm Mark. I'm twenty nine. I'm English.'

'I'm Pedro. I'm twenty six. I'm Spanish.'

'I'm Miguel. I'm twenty six. I'm Spanish.'

'I'm Julie. I'm thirty one. I'm English.'

'I'm Maria. I'm twenty five. I'm Italian.'

'I'm Marie-Thérèse. I'm thirty four. I'm French.'

Now you Sergio

'I'm Sergio. I'm twenty five. I'm Italian.'

Great Sergio,' said Mark. 'Now let's repeat it all over again.'

They each repeated their names, ages, and nationalities another three times. Sergio's eyes *lit up* as he told Maria that he was now beginning to remember some of this stuff from his school days.

'Great Sergio. It's all stored in the memory bank. It's just a matter of pulling it all out again. Let's repeat again but this time we can add where we are from.'

Mark began

'I'm Mark. I'm twenty nine. I'm English. I'm from England.'

'I'm Karen, I'm thirty three. I'm Scottish. I'm from Scotland.'

'I'm Pedro. I'm twenty six. I'm Spanish. I'm from Spain.'

'I'm Miguel. I'm twenty six. I'm Spanish. I'm from Spain.'

'I'm Julie. I'm thirty one. I'm English. I'm from England.'

'I'm Maria. I'm twenty five. I'm Italian. I'm from Italy.'

‘I’m Marie-Thérèse. I’m thirty four. I’m French. I’m from France.’

Now you Sergio

‘I’m Sergio. I’m twenty five. I’m Italian. I’m from Italy.’

Sergio was made to repeat it at least ten times so as not to forget.

Everyone applauded.

‘Fantastic Sergio,’ they all chorused.

The other passengers on the plane found it all very entertaining. Most of the passengers were Italian but there were also some English people aboard the plane. The Italian passengers started *joining in*.

One man shouted from the back of the plane.

‘Hey Sergio. I am Santino. I am sixty eight. I am Sardinian. I am from Sardinia and if I can speak English then you can too and by the way, nice to meet you.’

‘Sergio gave Santino the thumbs up. ‘Grande, amico,’ he shouted down the aisle.

‘Now let’s add our occupations – that is, our jobs.’

Karen began this time

‘I’m Karen, I’m thirty three. I’m Scottish. I’m from Scotland. I’m an English teacher.’

‘I’m Mark. I’m twenty nine. I’m English. I’m from England. I’m an English teacher.’

‘I’m Pedro. I’m twenty six. I’m Spanish. I’m from Spain. I’m a bank clerk.’

‘I’m Miguel. I’m twenty six. I’m Spanish. I’m from Spain. I’m a trainee doctor.’

‘I’m Julie. I’m thirty one. I’m English. I’m from England. I’m an English teacher.’

‘I’m Maria. I’m twenty five. I’m Italian. I’m from Italy. I’m a teacher.’

‘I’m Marie-Thérèse. I’m thirty four. I’m French. I’m from France. I’m a French teacher.

Now you Sergio

‘I’m Sergio. I’m twenty five. I’m Italian. I’m from Italy. I’m “*Come si dice disoccupato?*” ‘How do you say “*disoccupato?*”?’ he whispered to Maria. ‘Unemployed,’ she whispered back.

‘I’m unemployed,’ said Sergio.

They swapped places with the other students who were sitting in the rows further down the plane and started all over again.

They continued throughout the journey adding more phrases to give Sergio a kick start before reaching England. They *went over* all the question words and practised asking and answering the most useful questions Sergio and the others would need when they got to England.

The plan was to have three different levels: elementary, intermediate and upper intermediate. None of the students had reached the advanced level yet so there was no need to form an advanced group. Most of the beginners were now reaching the next level and they didn't want Sergio to *hold them back*. But Sergio amazed them all. More and more of the words and phrases he'd learned at school started to *come back* to him. It had just been a matter of jogging his memory.

Everyone stopped chatting as the captain's voice came over the speaker.

'Ladies and gentlemen we are now approaching London where the weather is cloudy but warm. The local time is at present 9.55 a.m. Please fasten your seatbelts as we begin our descent. The plane will be landing in approximately ten minutes.'

Ten minutes later the captain spoke again.

'Ladies and gentlemen, once again we are pleased to announce that we have arrived ahead of schedule. Please remain seated and refrain from switching on any electronic devices until the plane has come to a complete halt. May I take this opportunity on behalf of myself and the rest of the cabin crew to thank you for travelling with Fly-Like-A-Bird airlines. We wish you a safe and pleasant onward journey.'

There was a huge round of applause as the plane *touched down* on British soil.

'Take full advantage of being in England,' called out Karen to the students as they disembarked. 'Listen and speak as much as you can. Now let's go and collect our luggage and proceed to passport control.'

'Have you all set your mobile phones to roaming?' asked Mark as they *queued up* at passport control.' They all had.

Mark had mentioned before leaving Italy that they could "roam like at home" within the EU at no extra charge as long as they didn't overdo it.

They had only just set foot out of the airport when the sound of ringtones *hailed out* nineteen to the dozen. Everyone *fumbled around* in their bags and

pockets in a desperate bid to find their phones. Mark could hear the word ‘mamma’ numerous times in the space of about ten seconds. ‘It must be the mothers from Italy checking to see if their offspring had arrived safely,’ he thought to himself.

‘Tell mamma, you’re in good hands,’ he shouted through his megaphone.



Mark shouted through his megaphone

There were thirteen coaches daily from Heathrow airport to Bournemouth. Mark had tried to book online but was told there would be no need due to the frequency of the buses.

‘As long as you get here after “peak time” there should be no problem in getting seats,’ is what he’d been told. The man on the phone had also said that “peak time” was usually more expensive than “off-peak”. Mark had asked him to be more specific and give him the exact times that “peak time” covered. The man had replied. ‘Peak fares apply Monday to Friday (not on public holidays) between 06:30 and 09:30, and between 16:00 and 19:00. Off-peak fares apply at all other times.’

This was good to know. They’d be there well after 09:30 in time for the “off-peak” fare which would be a big saving considering there were forty three of them.

At 10.55 they all boarded the coach. They’d arrive in Bournemouth coach station at roughly 12.15 the driver said.

They were all excited to be in England but Sergio was the most excited of them all. He told Maria it was even more exciting than being in Rome. He’d never seen any other part of the world. Even as a teenager when the school had organized a few trips abroad Sergio hadn’t been allowed to go. He remembered his mamma arguing with his papa over it. Papa had wanted him to go abroad with the rest of the boys and girls in his class but mamma had been too afraid to let him go.

‘I’m too scared to let him go,’ she’d say. He might get lost, he might fall

ill, we never know what could happen to him and with us being so far away, how would we be able to help him.'

'Nothing will happen to him,' papa had said. 'It'll do him good to *get away from* here and see some new places.' 'No I can't let him go. What if he gets sick? What if he needs his mamma? What if there's an accident? What if the plane crashes?' His father would shout. 'Enough of the "what ifs". You can't go through life thinking about "what if" all the time. You're being overprotective of the boy. You wrap him up in cotton wool. He'll never *grow up* if you *go on* like this. He's a teenager, not a two-year old. He needs to learn to stand on his own two feet in life and if he doesn't learn now, he never will. You're stifling his mental development. Can't you see that?' But it was no good. His mother always had the final say in all matters concerning their one and only child. It wasn't until Sergio reached the age of twenty one that she finally started to *back off* a bit and give him some breathing space.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back off – stop pestering someone/stop doing something to avoid problems

Be on about – used when someone is talking without making sense. 'What are you on about?' = I have no idea what you are talking about? You're talking in riddles/speak in a way that is confusing

Be up – be awake and out of bed

Break away – manage to free one's grasp

Come back – return

Come to – reach (come to a complete halt-reach a complete halt)

Fumble around – attempt to find something by clumsily moving your hand aimlessly through other objects in a desperate bid to try to find it

Get away from – have a break away from a place

Get off (a bus, train, boat, ship, motorbike, scooter, bike) – leave by making a downward step

Get out (of) a car or taxi or similar type of vehicle – exit

Get through to (by phone) – manage to connect

Go by – pass

Go off – (for an alarm clock or any other kind of alarm) ring

Go on – continue

Go through – pass

Grow up – become a responsible and mature person/to not act in a childish manner anymore

Hail out – come out in rapid succession like bullets coming from a machine gun

Have the final say – have the ultimate authority in a decision

Hand out – distribute by hand

Hang on – wait a moment

Head off – begin to go in the direction of a place

Hold (someone) back – prevent from making progress

Hurry up – be quick

Join in – to begin to partake in something

Leave off – don't annoy me/don't irritate me

Light up – illuminate/become brighter (past tense-lit up)

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Pick (someone) up – go in a vehicle to fetch someone or something and accompany from point A to point B (destination)

Pick (something) back up – begin to do what you had stopped doing

Pull up (for a vehicle) – move to the side of the road and stop

Put (oneself) out – inconvenience oneself

Queue up – form a line/stand one behind the other while waiting

Put (something) to the test – try/test something to see how it works or if it works

Rush through – to hurriedly pass through a place

See (someone) off – accompany a person to a place to say goodbye

Set off – begin to go/begin a journey, even a short one

Stand on (one's) own two feet – become responsible and independent without always relying on others to do everything for you

Switch off – interrupt the flow of energy needed to make a device function

Take off (for an aircraft) – leave the ground/move upwards

Take (someone) up on (an offer) – gladly accept

Touch down – to land

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A kick start – do something to help a process get underway

And even then – for a clear understanding of the meaning of this phrase it needs to be read in the context. ‘The only time it would be acceptable would be if Liverpool were to win the world cup and even then (*it might not be acceptable*)

Bar (one) – ‘bar’ means ‘except’

Be in good hands – be safely and competently cared for

Bright and early – out of bed early and refreshed

But then again – this has a similar meaning to ‘if you really think about it’ and is used as an afterthought

Can't help/couldn't help – be unable to stop oneself from doing something

Close knit – have a very close relationship

Cuppa – British way of saying 'a cup of tea'

Get a move on – hurry up/be quick/go as fast as you can

Get to – reach a destination

Give (someone) a buzz – colloquialism meaning to telephone someone

Give (someone) the thumbs up – make a gesture of approval with the thumb

It's no good/it was no good – indicates impossibility to accomplish something

Jog (one's) memory – say or do something that will cause to resurface something that is at the back of one's memory

Just under – a little less than

Lovey dovey – expressing affection towards someone

Nineteen to the dozen – rapidly, when used after certain action verbs

On behalf of – this is used when representing either yourself or others

Overdo (something) – exaggerate

Safe and sound – very safe/out of danger

Take advantage of (someone or something) – exploit a situation or a person

Take the mickey out of (someone) – tease jokingly or ridicule (depending on context)

Wrap (someone) up in cotton wool – be overly protective of someone

Arriving in Bournemouth

As the bus turned onto the M3 motorway Sergio's mind came back to the present. They passed a road sign which had "Reading" written on it. 'Does that mean "reading" as in reading a book?' Maria joked. 'Hahahaha!!!! Maria,' laughed Mark. 'English is a strange language. Although the name of this town is spelled "Reading", it's pronounced "Redding".

'Yes, that's right,' said Karen who was sitting two rows behind them with Julie the other teacher. 'My aunt used to live there. It's the largest town in England. It's famous for rugby and football among many other things.'

'I didn't know it was the largest town in England,' said Mark.

'Well now you know,' replied Karen. 'It's true what they say Mark. You learn something new every day.'

'You sure do,' said Mark. 'You sure do.'

Julie turned to the students who were sitting nearer the back of the coach.

'We are now in the South East of England and will soon be passing through Basingstoke, then Winchester and then on to Bournemouth.'

Julie had been to Bournemouth many times until the age of fifteen. It had been her grandparents' favourite place and they'd always taken Julie with them during the summer holidays when her parents were working. 'I know the place inside out so I can easily *show you all around*,' she said.

Mark took a walk up and down the aisle of the coach to see what the other students *were up to*. Some were uploading videos to their facebook pages. Messages were coming in from their friends to say they were green with envy and that the next time they'd be coming to England too. Others had taken photographs of every step of the journey from kissing mamma goodbye to walking down the steps of the plane onto the runway. These photos were also being uploaded to facebook.

Sergio had his photograph taken with Mark and Maria and he too uploaded it to his "rarely used" facebook page. The other students had given him the idea and now he was beginning to get bitten by the facebook bug. He'd tell mamma and papa to subscribe to facebook so they could see what life was like in England and keep up to date with their son's movements. In fact it would save them money on phoning him in England although come to think of it mamma didn't even know how to *switch* a computer *on*. Papa was a dab hand at navigating around the net so he could keep mamma up to date. Yes,

papa could *set himself up* a facebook page and Sergio would befriend him. That would be the easiest way round it.

Mark didn't have a facebook page and didn't want one either.

'I prefer to phone people to keep in touch,' he told them all – 'or speak to them via Skype. I like to hear their voices. I can't be bothered with all this uploading photos all the time and writing silly status messages for people to read. It's not for me. We all have our preferences in life,' he added.

Everyone clapped loudly as the coach turned the corner into the seaside town of Bournemouth. 'At last we've arrived,' called out Mark.

Kevin had volunteered to meet them all at the coach station and accompany them to the guesthouse. 'It's only a five-minute walk,' he'd told Mark.

As they one by one stepped off the coach and made their way round to the side compartment to collect their luggage, Mark spotted Kevin and Lindsay running towards him.

They hugged. 'Great to see you bruv,' said Kevin patting Mark on the back.

'Great to see you too and you Lindsay – you're looking as beautiful as ever. How do you manage to stay so young-looking?'

'It's a genetic factor Mark. I inherited youthful genes from my mother's side of the family so I'm lucky in that respect.'

'Did you all have a nice journey,' said Lindsay not knowing where to look. There were so many of them. Mark took his megaphone and repeated the question.

'Did you all have a nice journey? My brother and his wife would like to know.'

'Yes we did,' they all called back.

'Okay then, let's get going,' said Kevin. Everything's under control. The rooms are ready. Some rooms sleep four and others three. You can all decide who you want to share with.'

The guesthouse was beautiful and was only a stone's throw from the beach. Everyone was on a high.

Sergio had never shared a room. He wasn't sure if he liked the idea. Mark suggested he slept in the same room as the Spanish twins.

'Can't you put me in with a couple of the girls,' he asked.

'I don't know if that's a good idea,' said Maria. 'They will feel awkward sharing with a male.'

‘I’ve never shared a room before,’ said Sergio.

‘Well it’s never too late to start,’ replied Maria.

She knew that this was strange for Sergio. Maria had often heard Giancarlo’s mother speaking about how oppressive her sister had been with Sergio. He’d never been allowed to sleep over at his friends’ houses as a young boy.

‘It’s no wonder my nephew’s got problems,’ she’d said to Maria on many an occasion.

Now he was so used to *not* sharing that the idea of sharing filled him with terror.

‘What will I say to these people?’

‘Say what you like Sergio or if you don’t want to speak then don’t say anything. Remember you’re here to learn English so if you *do* say something, say it in English.’

‘Tell you what,’ said Mark. ‘I’ll share with you Sergio. At least you know me a little bit more than you know the others. We’ll find another two people to share with. I was supposed to be sleeping in my brother’s small adjoining flat with the other teachers. Maria can still sleep there with Karen and Julie and someone else.’

Sergio agreed. He had no other option. After deciding on who would share a room with whom, Lindsay and Kevin called them down into the dining room. They’d prepared lots of sandwiches and drinks for everyone. They all sat down and ate and drank and decided how they would spend the rest of the afternoon.

‘Do you know we’re right next to the English Channel,’ said Mark. So if anyone feels like a swim we could swim across to France,’ he joked.

Before going out for the afternoon, Mark handed his brother the remainder of the money. Kevin thanked him profoundly and proceeded to the bank where he settled his arrears with Mr Devlin, the bank’s manager. Kevin heaved a sigh of relief as he exited the bank. A feeling of liberation swept through his entire body. He returned to the guesthouse with a spring in his step.

Mark and the others spent the afternoon walking along the coast breathing in the fresh sea air. Miles of sweeping coastline stretched ahead of them. They *took off* their shoes and strolled along the golden beach enjoying the feeling of the silky smooth sand as it filtered its way between their toes.

Lessons had been arranged for the next morning between the hours of 10 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. They'd also have a one and half hour lesson in the afternoon.

'Sorry it won't be possible to begin your English classes before 10 a.m.,' said Kevin, 'but the French couple need to feel free to have breakfast until at least 9.30/9.45 a.m.'

They'd arranged to use the dining room as a makeshift classroom for the biggest group of students along with the most spacious of the bedrooms which was to be used for another class and the small elementary group were to have the lessons in the small adjoining flat. Karen and Julie had everything arranged. Day one's lesson was to be pair work activities for all the students. They'd mapped out some lesson plans to *get them through* the week.

Everyone made their way down to the dining room the next morning to have a typical English breakfast.

Lindsay had *been up* since seven o'clock to cook bacon, sausages, eggs, fried tomatoes, fried mushrooms, fried bread and fried pancakes. The delicious smell wafted through the guesthouse and everyone's taste buds were watering by the time they were seated.

Marie-Thérèse and her father Gregoire sat down at the table in the far corner. A few tables away sat a couple who looked to be in their late sixties early seventies. Marie-Thérèse couldn't take her eyes off the woman - there was something about her.

'Why are you staring like that?' asked Gregoire to his daughter.

'Dad there's something so familiar about that woman.'

'What woman?'

'That woman sitting with the man a few tables down from us. I think they must be the French couple Mark was talking about.'

Gregoire looked over and agreed with his daughter that there was indeed something extremely familiar about the woman.

Maybe they were neighbours of ours in Paris or something. But please don't stare like that Marie-Thérèse. You know it's rude.

The French woman caught Marie-Thérèse's eye and stared back. Marie-Thérèse, feeling a trifle embarrassed, diverted her gaze. Dad had always given her into trouble when he caught her staring at people. He'd told her time and time again that it was the height of bad manners.

She took another quick glance in the direction of the couple and this time the woman was talking to Mark.

After a few moments Mark made his way over to Marie-Thérèse and Gregoire's table.

'The lady over there wanted to know where you are from. I hope you don't mind but I told her you are from Paris but live in Rome.'

'No of course we don't mind,' replied Marie Thérèse. 'Are they the French couple?'

'Yes, they are,' replied Mark.

'Do you know their names? The lady looks so familiar.'

'I don't know their names but I can ask my brother. He'll know. Kevin mentioned that they've been coming to the guesthouse for quite a number of years.'

Mark returned after five minutes with their names.

'The lady's name's Madame Géraldine Le Guen and her husband is Monsieur Jean Jacques Pasteur.'

Gregoire's eyes watered over as he sat staring into the abyss for a few moments.

'Dad! What's wrong? Are you alright?'

'Le Guen is your mother's maiden name. Her sister who immigrated to Canada is called Géraldine. Don't you remember Marie Thérèse. I've spoken to you about your aunt countless times.'

Marie Thérèse remembered the name but had no recall of her Aunt Géraldine. She'd been only two years old when her mother's sister had immigrated although she'd seen her in photographs – photographs *dating back* thirty odd years.

'Dad, do you think she's mum's sister?'

'I believe so. She looks so familiar although my logic tells me it can't be. Your Aunt Géraldine lives on the other side of the world. But I must say it's like looking at your mother, that is, how she would look now. She strongly resembles you around the eyes and you have your mother's eyes *mon cheri*. I've always told you that.'

Marie Thérèse found herself gravitating towards the French couple's table.

'Mark, the English boy, told me you are French,' she said.

'Yes we are and he told us that *you too* are French.'

'Yes, that's right.'

Marie Thérèse held out her hand.

'Enchanté,' (nice to meet you).

'Nice to meet you too my dear.'

Marie Thérèse continued.

‘I’m so sorry for staring at you like that, it was so ill-mannered of me but you look so familiar. Did you by any chance have a sister by the name of Virginie Le Guen?’

‘Yes I did but unfortunately my dear sister *passed away* over thirty years ago.’

Marie Thérèse’s voice trembled as she spoke.

‘I’m her daughter, and the man sitting at the table with me is her husband – my dad.’

‘*You’re* Marie Thérèse?’

‘Yes, that’s right.’

‘I can’t believe it. I was just telling Jean Jacques, my husband here that you bear a striking resemblance to my late sister Virginie. Never in a million years would I have thought that I’d meet my long-lost niece, of all people, in an English guesthouse.

Madame Géraldine stood up and hugged her niece tightly. They clung onto each other and remained embraced for several minutes until Géraldine’s husband Jean Jacques got up from his chair to join in the tear jerking moment.

This was like something you only saw in films, thought Jean Jacques who had never met either Marie Thérèse or her mother or father for that matter. He’d arrived on the scene a few years after the birth of Marie Thérèse and the death of Virginie. Géraldine had talked so much about her sister and her niece over the years and was so glad when they moved back to Paris.

‘At long last we can be reunited with Marie Thérèse and Gregoire,’ she’d told him as they flew from Canada to France. We have a lot of lost time to *make up for*.’

Mark upon seeing what was happening accompanied Gregoire, who was not so steady on his feet, to join them. Tears streamed down his face as he hugged and kissed his sister-in-law and his newly found brother-in-law.

‘It’s been so long,’ said Gregoire. ‘Never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would see you again Géraldine, more so in an English guesthouse. When you went to live in Canada it was a sad day for myself and my daughter. Of course she was too young to understand but to lose a mother and then an aunt was by all means a misfortune for the child. You’re the only living relative she has, that is apart from myself, and I’ve always been worried about her being left alone when the day comes for me to *pass over* to

the other side to join my beloved Virginie.’

Gregoire had always hoped his daughter would meet a nice young man and *settle down* and have a family of her own. She’d wasted years with the Italian boyfriend and since the breakup she’d taken no further interest in the male species. She’d suffered so much that she’d told her dad that she wanted to be alone until her dying day. She’d seemed so content just to be with her dad. She’d always felt safe with him. He was the one man who she could *rely upon* – the one man who’d never betray her.

Marie Thérèse and her father remained at Géraldine and Jean Jacques’s table for breakfast. They had a lot to *catch up on*.

Géraldine spoke.

‘I’m not the only living relative you have. Jean Jacques and I have three children and two grandchildren. Joëlle is thirty years old and is married to a French Canadian. They live in Toronto and have two children. Then there’s Marie-Claude who’s twenty eight. She lives in Nova Scotia with her Canadian boyfriend and then there’s Édouard who lives with us in Paris. He’s the baby of the family and is twenty five years old. At the moment he’s completing his studies at the Academy of fine arts. They’re all joining us in Paris for Christmas so please *do* come with Marie Thérèse. Let’s have a family reunion. We’ll have the best Christmas ever and you can meet your extended family.

‘We’ll definitely be there, won’t we dad?’ said Marie Thérèse with tears of joy in her eyes. Dad agreed. ‘Nothing and no-one will stop us,’ he said.

‘What made you decide to leave Canada?’ asked Gregoire.

‘When Jean Jacques retired six years ago we decided we wanted to go back to our roots for the final part of our lives so we left Canada and returned to Paris. We did everything possible to *look you up*. We even drove to your last known address but the flat was occupied by two Germans whose French was limited so they were unable to give us any indication of your whereabouts although they did tell us that you, Gregoire, were their landlord.’

‘What brings you to Bournemouth,’ asked Marie Thérèse

‘We love our short breaks to England, especially this delightful seaside town. We also come so we can speak English from time to time. In Canada we spoke both French and English. Now that we’re back in Paris, we never seem to have the opportunity to keep our English up,’ said Géraldine.

‘Switching from one language to another is like gymnastics for the brain,’ Jean Jacques told Gregoire. It helps to keep our minds active in our old age.’

Marie Thérèse and Gregoire skipped the lessons that day. They couldn't bear to tear themselves away from Géraldine and Jean Jacques. There was too much catching up to do.

Marie Thérèse was astounded to hear that her youngest cousin Édouard was studying at the Academy of fine arts.

'How coincidental, Aunt Géraldine,' she said. That is where *I* studied.

'Unbelievable,' said Jean Jacques. 'It is indeed a great coincidence.'

The next day the group were *heading off* to London for the day. It would be too tiring for Gregoire so it was agreed that he'd spend the entire day with Géraldine and Jean Jacques.

That night Gregoire went to bed tired but the happiest he'd been in a long time.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be up – be awake and out of bed

Be up to – do/often implies mischievous or conniving behaviour. 'What are the children *up to*?' This example implies devious or mischievous behaviour. 'What are you *up to* at the weekend?' This example means - 'what are you doing?'

Catch up on – update

Date back – originating from a particular time in the past

Get (someone) through – cover for a period of time

Head off – start to go in the direction of

Keep (something) up – maintain the same pace/not falling behind

Look (someone) up – locate and visit

Make up for – compensate for/make amends for something

Pass away – a softer way to say that a person is not with us anymore, that is, he or she is dead

Pass over – transition from this world to the next/die

Rely on/upon – trust in/depend on someone

Settle down – find a husband or wife and set up home together/establish an orderly life

Show around – when a person doesn't know a place and is seeing it for the first time, 'show around' means that you lead the person around the different parts so he/she can see it all, you act rather like a guide

Sleep over – sleep in a place for just one night

Switch on – activate the flow of energy to an electrical or electronic device by turning a knob or pushing a button

Take off – remove

Tear (oneself) away from (something or someone) – reluctantly leave a place or person or stop doing something which you strongly desire to continue doing

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A spring in (one's) step – have a feeling of light-heartedness, freedom and joy

A/the way round (something) – a solution to something

At last – finally

At long last – finally-gives more emphasis than 'at last' does

Be a dab hand at (something) – be particularly good at something

Be on a high – to feel ecstatic

By all means – for sure/without doubt

Can't or couldn't take (one's) eyes off (someone) – to be unable to stop looking at a person/to find it difficult to stop looking at someone

Catch (someone's) eye – grab a person's attention by looking him or her

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

From time to time – occasionally

Get going – begin to go

Give (someone) into trouble – reprimand someone

It's not for me – it's not the type of thing that attracts me

Know (something/somewhere/someone) inside out – to know extremely well

Never in (one's) wildest dreams – used to say that something so surprising

has happened that was completely unimaginable

Not be steady on (one's) feet – to be unable to keep one's balance and be likely to wobble and fall over

Of all people – used in exclamation when a person you least expect appears, or does something or says something or is something etc.

Something about (someone) – used to say that there is something strangely familiar about a person but you are not sure exactly what it is

Tell you what – this expression introduces a suggestion or an offer

The height of bad manners – extremely rude/extreme rudeness

Time and time again – repeatedly

Until (one's) dying day – until the day one dies

A day trip to London

Everyone *was up* at the crack of dawn to catch the coach to London. They'd decided that the earlier they got there the better; that way they'd have a lot more time to see the sights. Mark put the map of London, and the guide book his brother had given him, into his satchel. He *picked up* his megaphone and was set to go.

'Take your notebooks,' said Karen. 'Take as many notes as possible of the places we visit and when you return to Rome you can do a project entitled, 'My visit to London.' *Write down* everything you can remember. This will be a good way to practise your writing.'

'We can have 'pub grub' in one of the many pubs,' said Mark on the way to the coach station.

'What's that?' said Sandro.

'Well "grub" is slang for food, so what it basically means is "lunch in a pub." They do very reasonably-priced good meals.'

'Well "grub" actually means larva but in slang the word is used to mean food,' said Karen. 'British people use it very often in colloquial speech.'

A total of twenty coaches a day left Bournemouth for London and the cost of a single ticket was just £6.50.

'Great,' said Mark. 'It's a whole lot cheaper than I thought it would be.'

The first coach to leave did not have enough vacant seats for the whole group but they were told they could all travel together on the next one which would be leaving in twenty minutes' time.

They waited and chatted and soon the next coach drove round the corner and into the depot. They *got on* and once they were all seated, Mark spoke through his megaphone. He consulted his guide book and proceeded to tell them some of the history of the city of London.

The city of London is over 800 years old. Covering just one square mile it has many museums, galleries, parks, festivals, restaurants, culture venues, churches as well as an abundance of shops. It is also the financial capital of the world *fending off* stiff competition from New York and Asia. More than \$1.85 trillion flow through its currency markets alone.'

An hour later they *got off* the coach at London's Victoria station and made their way down Buckingham Palace Road. Less than five minutes later the Palace came into view.

‘Wowww!!!’ They all exclaimed in unison.

‘This is the official home of the British monarchy,’ said Mark.

‘That gold and red flag flying above the palace is the royal ensign. It means the Queen is in residence. If, instead, you see the Union Jack, it means the monarchy is not in residence and will more than likely be residing at Windsor Castle - not far from London.’

‘Can we wait to see the changing of the guards?’ asked Filippo, from the elementary class.

‘I don’t know what time it’s at,’ replied Mark. ‘Let me just take a look at the guide book to see what it says.’

Mark opened the guide book to the page on Buckingham Palace.

‘It says here that the changing of the guards *takes place* at 11 a.m. and ends at 11.30. It’s too early. It’s only 8.15. If we’re still in the area we can *come back* later.’

Everyone agreed.

They took several photographs outside the palace before entering Saint James’ Park.

‘This is the Royal Park,’ said Mark. ‘Be sure to *take in* all its beauty. It’s famed for its wonderful wild life.’

‘Look! Are those pelicans?’ asked Sandro.

‘Indeed they are,’ replied Mark. The park is home to many exotic birds. The guide book says that the first pelicans were presented to Charles II by a Russian ambassador in 1664. The pelicans are fed fresh fish every afternoon.’

They took countless photographs as they strolled along enjoying the beauty of the glorious royal park and breathing in the morning freshness as they did so. They admired the greenery and inhaled the sweet scent of the numerous magnificent flower beds.

‘There are many more parks here in London; each one as beautiful as the other but we’d need to be here a whole lot longer than a day to get round them all,’ said Karen.

‘It’s like paradise,’ said Sergio. ‘I’d love to live in London. Hey maybe I could find a job and stay here.’

‘That’s an idea,’ said Maria. ‘Could you *put up with* the weather though? It rains a lot in Britain.’

‘I can’t stand the heat in Italy during the summer months. I’d be more than happy to live a life in the rain. How refreshing that would be,’ replied Sergio.

They exited the park and walked down the mall in the direction of the

famous Trafalgar Square.

Upon reaching the Square, Mark told them that it was *named after* the Battle of Trafalgar where the British battled the French and Spanish.

They took photos of Nelson's column and all fought like children to have their photo taken with the statues of the lions that guarded the column.

'Look, there's the National Gallery,' cried Eliana, one of the students on the trip. 'Can we go there next?'

'Given the fact it's right in front of us and entrance is free it would be crazy not to,' said Julie.

'Not to mention the fact that it's one of the finest art museums in the world,' added Eliana.

Everyone agreed that they couldn't *miss out on* the opportunity to see the gallery.

They crossed the square. The building itself was so beautiful that they were all left with their mouths hanging open in awe.

Mark once again consulted his guidebook.

'The gallery was founded in 1824 and houses 2,300 paintings all *dating back to* the middle of the 13th century until 1900.

They entered the gallery and walked around to have a look at the wondrous paintings. They saw Samson and Delilah and Van Gogh's "Sunflowers". They stopped to admire a self-portrait of Rembrandt from the year 1640.

Eliana and Laura, another student on the trip, were studying the history of art and both said they would have stayed all day long if they could. 'Maybe we can *come back* again before *going back* to Italy,' said Laura to Eliana. 'Yes that would be a great idea. 'We'd have to skip the English lessons but this is much more important. We can *catch up with* the missed lessons at any time.'

Marie-Thérèse called the others over. 'Look', she exclaimed excitedly. 'A French painting by François-Hubert Drouais. It's the famous Madame de Pompadour at her Tambour Frame in 1763-4. She was the mistress of Louis XV for one year before she died.'

Marie-Thérèse having graduated in fine arts knew everything there was to know about art.

They left the gallery an hour later and Mark once again spoke through the megaphone.

'Let's make our way to Tower Bridge now.'

He had a look at the map.

‘I think we’re going to have to get a boat. It looks like a long walk.’

Mark stopped a passerby.

‘Excuse me! ‘Could you tell us where to get the boat to Tower Bridge?’

‘Sorry. I no speak English,’ was his reply.

He asked another passerby who luckily so happened to be a Londoner.

‘Yes mate. You need to get a bus. It’s quicker and cheaper but they no longer accept cash. You need a day pass or an oyster card.’

‘What’s an oyster card?’ ‘It’s a contactless card that you *top up* with credit. You swipe it across a machine as you *get on* the bus and it deducts the lowest possible fare from your credit but I think you need to apply for one before coming to London. They get sent to your home address.’

‘What about the day pass? How much is it and where can we buy one?’

‘Well the one-day bus pass costs £5. It’s a paper ticket and it gives you unlimited bus travel until 04.29 a.m. the day after you buy it. You can get it from the ticket office above the underground.’

‘Thanks a lot mate,’ said Mark.

He turned to the others.

‘What do you think?’

They all agreed that it would be a good idea to buy the bus pass as many of them were now tired of all the walking.

‘We’ve still got all afternoon and early evening to go so it’ll be good to know we can jump on a bus whenever we want,’ said Julie.

‘Yes, my feet are absolutely killing me,’ said Rosella, one of the students.

‘No wonder with those high heels you’ve got on. You should have put on your trainers,’ said Mark.

‘I know, I know but they didn’t match my dress.’

‘Vanity, vanity, female vanity,’ joked Mark.

Once they’d bought their bus passes they decided to split into four groups.

‘There are too many of us to get on one bus,’ said Julie.

And so it was decided that Karen would stay with one group, Mark with another, Julie with another and Maria with another. Sergio wanted to be in Maria’s group in case he needed her as his interpreter.

‘We’ll meet at the tower in roughly an hour,’ said Mark. ‘That’ll give us all time to get there. If you so happen to *run into* any problems, just give Karen, Julie or myself a ring on our mobile phones.’

They’d only been at the bus stop for a few minutes when a bus arrived.

‘Excuse me,’ said Karen. ‘Does this bus go to Tower Bridge?’

‘It does indeed love,’ replied the driver.

‘Let’s hop on,’ said Karen to her group. ‘See you all soon,’ she called to the others.

The students were amazed that the driver had called Karen ‘love’.

‘It’s an affectionate way of addressing people here in London, and the rest of England for that matter,’ she told the group.

None of them could imagine the bus drivers in Rome calling you ‘love’. Most of them just *let out* a grunt when asked anything.

The next bus arrived in just under five minutes though it was a different number. A man at the bus stop told Mark that there were quite a few buses that went close to Tower Bridge. This time Mark told one of the students to ask the driver if the bus went to Tower Bridge. ‘It’s good if you practise asking questions as much as you can. Take the opportunity while you have it.’

They all *got on* the bus and off it went.

Just over an hour later they were all met at Tower Bridge.

Some very strange buildings came into view as they crossed the bridge.

‘Look over at that building’, said Mark pointing.

They all looked. ‘What does it remind you of?’

‘I can see a gherkin,’ said Mauro, another of the students on the trip. The building in front of it looks like a cheese grater.’ ‘In fact it’s known as the “cheese grater,” said Mark.

‘Look at that other building,’ said Karen pointing. ‘It’s known as the “walkie talkie” because it looks like one. These are the great architectural landmarks of London. They are part of the London skyline.’

Everyone was taking endless photographs of each other with the wondrous buildings in the background.

‘Okay, shall we get going?’ said Mark. ‘There’s so much that we’ve still to see.’

They marvelled at the astounding beauty of the Tower of London.

‘The Tower of London is where the crown jewels are held,’ said Julie.

‘It was also a prison many years ago,’ added Karen.

‘Yes,’ said Mark. ‘Many were imprisoned for espionage.’

They all continued to take notes and photos.

As they were crossing the road to head for the Tate modern, everyone quickly turned round to the sound of Karen screaming at the top of her voice.

‘*Look out Sergio, look out!!!*’

Sergio had nearly got *run over* by a taxi. The taxi driver rolled down his window and shouted. ‘Next time look where you’re going lad.’

‘*Cap é cazzo!*’ (dick-head!), replied a furious Sergio in Neapolitan.

‘Are you alright Sergio?’ said Karen.

‘*Mamma mia, che spavento*, (what a fright I got). For a moment Sergio had forgotten that he wasn’t in Italy and had stepped out onto the road looking to the left instead of to the right. ‘I completely forgot that here they drive on the left hand side of the road,’ he said, still looking completely shocked.

‘You’re lucky it wasn’t one of those double-decker buses,’ said Pedro. ‘It might not have been able to stop in time and you could have got killed.’

‘Yes,’ added his brother Miguel. ‘You’re lucky to be alive.’

‘Oh *shut up*,’ replied Sergio. ‘*Shut up*. I’m not in the mood for your stupid remarks.’



A double-decker London bus

‘Don’t worry Sergio,’ said Mark. ‘It happens to us all. I’ve lost count of the number of times I’ve nearly been *run over* in Rome. It was *rammed in to* us at primary school to look right, look left, and then look right again before crossing the road. I’ve been doing this automatically all my life. You know what they say. ‘Old habits die hard.’

‘The same with me,’ said Karen. ‘We even had a warning written on the front cover of our exercise books all throughout primary school. It’s engrained in me. It’ll be there ‘til the day I die.’

‘I was nearly hit by a bus the first day I arrived in Italy,’ said Julie. ‘I have to think twice before stepping out on to the road in Rome. ‘The fact that Italian drivers all seem to drive as though they were formula 1 pilots doesn’t help the situation,’ she added.

Sergio felt better that he wasn’t the only to have been *caught out*. He proceeded with the sightseeing in a much more positive note.

The Tate modern was the new modern art gallery close to the Thames. Eliana, Laura and Marie-Thérèse were eager to see it.

‘We’ve already been to an art gallery,’ said Sergio. ‘Isn’t one enough?’

‘Several of the students on the trip have a passion for art,’ replied Karen. ‘It wouldn’t be fair on them if we were to skip it.’

‘Okay,’ grunted Sergio.

Mark opened the guide book.

‘This is the most visited modern art gallery in the world,’ he called out through his megaphone. ‘It has around 4.7 million visitors per year. It holds the national collection of British art from 1500 to the present day as well as international modern and contemporary art.’

The students who had no interest in art *traipsed around* bored to tears. The others *took in* the breathtaking beauty of the art.

‘It’s very avant garde,’ said Julie.

‘It is indeed,’ replied Karen.

After *traipsing round* the gallery for nearly half an hour, Sergio spoke.

‘Can we go and get something to eat and drink?’

‘It’s a quarter past twelve,’ said Karen. A bit too early for lunch. There’s a large café here in the gallery. Why don’t we go there?’

So they all sat down for a coffee and a slice of chocolate gateau in the gallery’s café where they were able to admire an incredible view of the city.’

After they had taken many photos of the fantastic view of the city, they left the Tate modern and headed across the Millennium Bridge to Saint Paul’s cathedral.

‘Saint Paul’s cathedral is where many great events took place including Prince Charles and Lady Diana’s wedding,’ Mark said through the megaphone.

Next they walked towards Downing Street.

How disappointing. Heavily armed police stood outside huge wrought iron gates which *sealed* the street *off*.

‘It’ll be for security reasons,’ said Karen. ‘It would be dangerous for the prime minister if anyone could just walk up to the front door.’

‘Yes, I suppose you’re right,’ muttered the disappointed students.

Crowds of people all over the place made it difficult to get any decent photos but still they managed to get a couple with the street’s name plate in the background.

Mark gave them a quick rundown on Downing Street.

‘This is where the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom lives,’ he called through his megaphone. ‘It’s one of the most famous addresses in the world and can be referred to as ‘the White House of England.’

Many tourists *gathered round* to listen to Mark thinking he was an official guide.

‘It was lucky we all *put on* our red t-shirts,’ he said afterwards. ‘With all those people we could easily have lost one another.’

Next they took a walk along the banks of the Thames.

‘This is London’s famous river,’ shouted Mark, again through his megaphone. ‘It’s the longest river in Britain’

Once again they all *took down* notes to add to their projects. They then crossed the river at Westminster Bridge.

‘This is the oldest road bridge across the Thames in central London,’ Mark called out.

‘Look,’ shouted Karen. ‘Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament.’

Mark consulted his guidebook once again.

‘If you want to take pictures of Big Ben, do so now. The guidebook says that this is the best location to get iconic pictures.’

They all got out their cameras and mobile phones and started *snapping away*. They took many pictures of each other on the bridge with Big Ben in the background. Mark took a few group pictures and then some of the other students took group pictures with Mark in them.

‘We can add some of our photos to the project,’ said Aldo, one of the students.

‘Great idea,’ said Karen. ‘Yes, of course. Your projects will look a whole lot better with photographs.’

‘*Hang on* one second before adding more info to your notes,’ called out Mark. ‘I don’t want you to be misinformed.’

He proceeded to read the guide book he held in his hand.

‘The clock’s name is not ‘Big Ben’. This is just its nickname. The name ‘Big Ben’ actually refers to the bell inside the clock that chimes the hours. The clock’s official name is the Elizabeth. It’s the Houses of Parliament’s iconic clock tower and is one of London’s most famous landmarks. The Palace of Westminster, attached to the clock tower, is home to the House of Commons and the House of Lords.’

Most of them didn’t know this and quickly *jotted it down* in their notebooks so they could add this info to their projects. Some of the students

recorded Mark with their mobile phones to save them from having to take notes. They would listen to the recording and write everything down later on.

It was late afternoon when they finally decided they'd have to have a late lunch somewhere.

They looked for a pub big enough to seat 42 people.

After *traipsing around* for what seemed like an eternity, they finally found one with a very spacious back garden with enough seats for them all.

Two doors down from the pub Maria spotted a recruitment agency.

Let me take a couple of photos of the jobs advertised in the window. It will be good to compare salaries with those of Italy.

They were shown in to the large garden to the rear of the pub.

While waiting to be served Maria enlarged the pictures on her mobile phone.

'They don't half pay a lot more than they do in Italy.'

'Look, there's one for an Italian waiter. Sergio, the restaurant is called "La Bella Napoli".

'La Bella Napoli?'

'Yes.'

She read the ad and translated for Sergio.

La Bella Napoli is looking for a passionate and outgoing waiter/waitress to join their team. If you have a great service and food experience/knowledge from a high volume restaurant or bar, then we want to hear from you!

We offer:

career growth opportunities

weekly wage

other excellent benefits include a healthy pension

Only those eligible to work in the UK will be considered for the waiter/waitress role.

£15 per hour

The restaurant comprises of a bar area, main dining room and a basement

area which can be used as two private dining rooms or additional seating for the restaurant.

Open all day for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea and dinner Monday to Saturday.

Our ideal candidate will:

be a naturally good communicator

have the ability to speak and understand English

have the ability to speak Italian and have a general knowledge of Mediterranean cuisine

have at least 6 months' experience as a waiter in a similar sized restaurant

Benefits:

uniforms provided

meals whilst on duty

Please note that applications without a CV will not be considered. If you have not heard back from us within 5 working days, your application is unlikely to have been successful on this occasion.

Everyone ordered a baked potato with melted cheese and some salad and tomatoes. Sergio asked Maria and Karen to accompany him to the recruitment agency while the others relaxed with a beer in the garden of the pub.

'We'll be back in five or ten minutes,' said Karen to the others.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be up – be awake and out of bed

Be caught out – be tricked due to not paying attention

Catch up with – update something you should have done previously

Come back – return

Date back to – originating from a particular time in the past

Fend off – push away, do everything you can to keep at a distance

Gather round – if people gather round, they move/come together to form a group

Get on – board a bus, coach, train, plane, boat, motorcycle, scooter or bicycle and any other vehicle which you have to move your feet upwards to board.

Get off – this is the opposite of ‘get on’. Disembark from a bus, coach, train, plane, boat, motorcycle, scooter or bicycle and any other vehicle which you have to move your feet downwards to disembark.

Go back – return

Hang on – wait a moment

Jot down – quickly take notes by writing with a pen/pencil on paper

Let out – emit

Look out – be careful, used to alert to danger

Miss out on (something) – lose an opportunity

Name after (something) **after** (something) – give the same name as

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Put on – (for clothing) wear

Put up with – tolerate

Ram into – if you ram something into someone you force the person to accept an idea by continuously repeating it until it enters into his/her head

Run into (difficulties) – unexpectedly encounter

Run over – hit with a car and cause injury or even death

Seal off – secure an area so as no unauthorized person/s can gain entry

Shut up – an impolite way of saying ‘keep quiet’. An invitation to someone to be silent

Snap away – take photographs in rapid succession

Take down (notes) – write notes on paper

Take in – mentally absorb

Top up – add credit to

Write down – take note by writing

Glossary – idioms and expressions

At the top of (one's) voice – shout very loudly, as loud as one's voice can reach

Be bored to tears – be so bored that you feel like crying

Can't stand – strongly dislike

Crack of dawn – very early when night time ends and day time begins

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

Get going – begin to go/move

In awe – stupefied with surprise/be really amazed at something or someone

Just over – a little more than

Just under – a little less than

Not to mention – in addition to what has already been said/not only (what was said before) but also ...

Old habits die hard – used to say that it is extremely difficult to stop doing something that one has been doing for an extremely long time

Traipse around – walk around in a bored and tired manner

Take place – occur/happen

You don't half – this expression is very common in Britain and it means you really – it underlines something to be really true. 'They don't half pay a lot more than they do in Italy = they really do pay a lot more.' It can also be used with the verb 'be'. 'John really is an intelligent person.' 'He isn't half' = yes, he really is.' 'Not half' = 'whole'

Back in Rome

The week in London flew past like lightning. All too soon they were on the plane flying back to Rome. This time there were forty two of them. Sergio had decided to take the job in the 'Bella Napoli'. Ms Philips who ran the recruitment agency had convinced him that he was just the person for the job. She'd even offered him lodgings in her own home at an absurdly low rent.

'There's a spare room in my flat which I never use,' she'd told Sergio using Maria as the interpreter. 'It's not very far from the 'Bella Napoli' so it'll be easy to get home when you do the late shift. In fact there's a night bus that stops right round the corner and it's only five stops from the restaurant.'

Sergio had jumped at the chance. His luck was changing. He'd soon be earning some decent money for the first time in his life.

'I think she's got her eye on you Sergio,' Maria said as they left the recruitment agency to join the others in the garden area of the pub. 'She just couldn't take her eyes off you.'

'Yes,' I noticed that too,' said Karen. 'She definitely had the hots for you.'

'I'd be happy if she did. She's a bit of alright. After all, I'm young free and single again. The world is my oyster.'

She looked a few years older than Sergio and was dressed with style and elegance. Katrina Philips had always had a flair for fashion. Her long curly fair hair reached down to her waist. Maria thought she looked a bit hard -the type of woman you wouldn't want to get on the wrong side of.

Katrina organised everything for Sergio. She applied for a national insurance number to enable him to start working.

'It'll take a couple of weeks,' she was told. 'Just as long as he has a fixed abode and provides valid documents of identity there should be no problem.'

Katrina Philips had already contacted the Bella Napoli to inform them that she had just the right person for the job.

'His English is quite limited but he's attending lessons so should have enough English to take customers' orders. It's going to take a couple of weeks to get his NI. He's experienced having worked in several restaurants in Naples.' This is what Sergio had told her and even if he hadn't she would have gladly lied for him.

'Can he provide references?' enquired Mr Collela the restaurant's manager. 'Yes of course,' Katrina had replied. 'He's going to have them e-

mailed over.’

‘Okay, then, send him along for an interview in the next couple of days once he has everything squared up.’

Sergio’s cousin on his father’s side was the owner of one of Naples’s finest restaurants. Sergio had been there many a time to dine with his parents. He’d never worked there but he knew his cousin would willingly supply him a good reference. Sergio knew what was required of a waiter. All you had to do was write down orders and deliver the food and drinks to the tables. Even an idiot knew how to do that, thought Sergio.

Katrina Philips knew his English wasn’t up to scratch but she’d make sure he practised, practised and practised with her. She’d teach him. He had to get the job. He just had to. He couldn’t *go back* to Italy. She couldn’t bear the thought of this handsome guy slipping through her fingers.

‘Can I take your order sir?’

‘Madam, would you like anything to drink with your meal?’

She went over in her head, all the phrases he’d need to get the job.

She’d make him repeat a thousand times. She’d be the customer and he’d be the waiter, then they’d swap roles and she’d be the waiter and he the customer. Soon she’d have him speaking the English required for the job if it were the last thing she did.

She couldn’t take her mind off Sergio. She was *lusting after* him. Gawd! How good looking he was. This was the guy of her dreams.

She could hardly contain herself at the prospect of having this gorgeous Italian male all to herself. Looks wise he was the complete opposite of her soon-to-be ex husband who was blonde with a fair complexion and blue eyes. This guy was drop dead gorgeous with his dark curly hair, dark skin and dark eyes. Yes, soon they’d be a couple. She knew how to make a man tick and it wouldn’t be difficult with this one. He knew nobody in London so he’d be completely dependent on her. The spare room wouldn’t be occupied for long. She’d have him *move into* her own room. She could not concentrate that day thinking about the nights of passion that lay ahead.

Little did she know that it wouldn’t be long before Sergio Esposito had her eating right out of the palm of his hand.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be squared up – be dealt with

Go back – return

Lust after (someone) – strongly desire someone sexually based on physical attraction

Move in (to) – start living in a place

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A fixed abode – a fixed residence

A bit of alright (someone or something) – if a person is a bit of alright, it means that you think he/she is attractive

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Be up to scratch (something) – be satisfactory/be of the required standard

Be young, free and single – a typical English expression to mean that you have no commitments therefore you are free to do what you want

Can't take (one's) eyes off (someone or something) – to be so attracted to (someone or something) that you find it very difficult to stop looking

Can't take (one's) mind off (someone or something) – to be unable to stop thinking about (someone or something)

Contain (oneself) – control one's emotions/if you can hardly contain yourself it means you are having difficulty in keeping your emotions under control

Drop dead gorgeous – extremely good-looking

Get on the wrong side of (someone) – if you get on the wrong side of someone, you do something to provoke anger in him/her therefore breeding contempt

Have a flair for (something) – have a natural ability

Have (one's) eye on (someone or something) – to desire someone or something/show an eager interest in someone or something

Have (someone) eating out of the palm of (one's) hand – to have complete control over someone/have someone in a position where you can do what you want with them

Have the hots for (someone) – to sexually desire someone

If it's the last thing (someone) does – this phrase means that the speaker is determined to do something

Jump at the chance – very quickly grab an opportunity while it's there

Little did (someone) know – this means that the person in question was far from the knowing the truth/it was something he/she would never have imagined

Slip through (one's) fingers – allow an opportunity to escape

The world is your oyster – all the opportunities in the world are open to you

New premises

The flat adjacent to the school had recently become available. It was more than double the size of the one Dora used as her school. She had a sudden idea. She *picked up* the phone and called Signor Marini – her landlord – to make an appointment to view the flat next door. Signor Marini had inherited the whole building upon the death of his father. He was not a greedy man and charged an honest rent. After all, with no outstanding mortgages with the bank and never having bought the flats in the first place, any profit was a good one.

The flat that had become available had previously been used as a legal firm for over a decade. The head solicitor had mentioned to Dora in the passing that they'd found bigger premises closer to the Vatican area.

'We're expanding and need a larger studio,' Avvocato Merlo had said. 'Not only, it's better for us to be closer to the courtrooms which are over on that end of the city. We'll save so much time. You know what they say, 'time is money.'

The next day Mr Marini arrived to *show Dora around* the flat. It had six rooms *done out* as studios and a very elegant, spacious reception area.

This was far superior to the place she was renting next door. She'd be able to *fit* more than double the amount of students *into* this place.

'How much is the rent Mr Marini?'

Dora was already paying a reasonable rent of 750, 00 a month for the flat next door. She knew only too well that Mr Marini could get a good bit more for it but he wasn't a greedy man.

'Well to be honest with you Dora, these lawyers had one of these old contracts and were paying next to nothing. They *took over* the contract that was previously held by Avvocato Merlini's uncle. When I inherited the property, I also inherited the tenants along with their contracts. Now if you agree I'll rent it to you for 875, 00.

'Are you sure Mr Marini?'

'Yes Dora. I'm certain. I've never been one to take advantage of people and try to squeeze them dry moneywise. In my opinion 875, 00 is a fair amount plus the fact you've never defaulted on the rent payments. As the proverb goes, 'a bird in the hand is always better than two in the bush'.

'I'm ever so grateful to you Mr Marini. That is so very kind of you.'

‘Well Dora, it’s a whole lot more than I was getting on the old contract I inherited. These lawyers were paying 300, 00 a month.’

‘They weren’t,’ exclaimed Dora. ‘I don’t believe it.’

‘Indeed they were.’

‘Couldn’t you have evicted them and rented it out to someone who would have paid you more?’

‘They had a perfectly valid contract and even if that hadn’t been the case, who in their right mind would try to evict a team of lawyers, especially ones who specialize in eviction. The law would undoubtedly have been on their side. Moreover, it’s not in my nature to evict people, unless of course they stop paying the rent – then I would *be faced with* no option.’

And so it was agreed that Dora would move to the bigger premises next door.

That evening Dora thought about how kind Mr Marini had been. Her mind *went back* to the church group she had attended most of her married life. She’d heard it so many times. Do not despair. Just like angels the right people are put in your path just when you need them most. Some are fleeting, others stay longer and some are permanent fixtures in your life.

She had a little cry to herself and thanked God for the people he’d put in her life after the painful breakup with Luigi.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Fit (something) into – find the right sized space to accommodate something

Do out – when referring to rooms this expression is used mainly in the passive form. It means decorated in a particular way

Go back– return

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Show (someone) around – when a person doesn’t know a place and is seeing it for the first time, ‘show around’ means that you lead the person around the different parts so he/she can see it all, you act rather like a guide

Take over – take control

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush – an English proverb which

means 'it is better to keep what you have than risk losing it for something better.'

After all –reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Along with – together with

Be faced with – used in the passive voice, this means that you have a difficult, unpleasant situation to deal with

Contain (oneself) – control one's emotions/if you can hardly contain yourself it means you are having difficulty in keeping your emotions under control

In the first place – to begin with/from the onset

In the passing – briefly, when passing someone in a place

Next to nothing – almost nothing, in the context – a very small amount of money

Take advantage of – exploit

Promotion for Mark

Since opening the school Dora had never felt the need to have a director of studies; it was a position she'd always been able to fulfil herself along with her many other daily tasks. There was also the fact that she'd never really been in a stable enough financial position to employ one. However, things were different now. There were so many courses to oversee and the workload was becoming more than she could *cope with*. There was also the added fact that *all* "serious" schools had a director of studies on the staff role.

Now she was thinking that Mark would certainly fit the bill. He had what it takes. He was young, good looking and charming. He was a people's person and all the students lapped up every single word he said. Wouldn't it sound much more *professional* if she could send the students to have a word with the director of studies? She called him into her office.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Cope with – effectively deal with a situation or a problem

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A people's person – a friendly person who is good with people and gets on well with everyone

Along with – together with

Fit the bill – to be suitable for a particular purpose

Have a word with (someone) – briefly talk to someone about something

Have what it takes – have the necessary qualities mainly characterial traits

Lap up every word one says – listen to enthusiastically and *take heed* of everything someone says – take heed = pay attention

La Bella Napoli

Sergio was hired for the job and soon started working in the Bella Napoli. The customers loved his ‘broken English’ and his strong Italian accent.

‘It really feels like we are in Italy when we come here,’ said Mr and Mrs Murray, two of the restaurant’s regular customers. ‘Where are you from?’ Mr Murray asked Sergio. ‘I’m from ‘bella Napoli’, beautiful Naples, like the name of this restaurant.’ The Murrays were impressed. They often ate at the Bella Napoli and now they had a waiter all the way from Italy from the real Bella Napoli. They’d heard that all Neapolitans were sunny people, just like the weather in Naples. They told Sergio this and he agreed. He was feeling ‘sunny’ and happy. He loved the job. He’d only been there a few days and he was getting so much attention from all the customers – and they were leaving him generous tips. Only the day before an Australian family had left him five pounds.

He really did *fit in* well with his typical Italian looks and accent. Mr Collela, the manager thanked Katrina for having made such an excellent choice. At first he’d been skeptical about *taking Sergio on* due to his low level of English but he then reconsidered the matter as Sergio’s face seemed to *fit in* perfectly well with the surroundings *and* the references he’d produced were enough to reserve him a place in heaven. He really looked the part and that counted a lot. The boy would soon *pick up* English, he told himself. It was just a matter of a few weeks of patience – that’s all it would take.

Sergio spoke to Mr Collela to give him, what he thought was much needed advice. He advised him to add some typical Neapolitan dishes to the menu. ‘Many are missing,’ he told him. We, in Naples eat “gnocchi alla sorrentina” – potatoes dumplings – baked in tomato sauce and mozzarella cheese. It’s an economical dish but exceptionally tasty. You would have a good margin of profit if you put this on the menu. You haven’t included “pasta e fagioli” either Mr Collela. It’s also an inexpensive dish to make as well as being highly nutritious. You should have employed a Neapolitan chef. Where’s your chef from?’

‘He’s from the north of Italy though he’s lived in London for over twenty years.’

‘Oh that would explain why a good few Neapolitan dishes are missing

from the menu.’

Sergio *went on*. ‘In Naples we focus more on simplicity rather than sophistication. We also eat a lot of seafood therefore you really should have anchovies, clams, mussels and squids on the menu. I’m sure your customers would really appreciate some spaghetti with clams.’

He continued. ‘Dishes ideally should include the colours red, white and green which represent the Italian flag as I’m sure you’re already aware.’

‘Yes, I see what you mean Sergio. How do you make the “pasta e fagioli” – pasta and bean soup?’ asked Mr Collela who was a native Londoner born of Italian parents. His parents had always spoken to him in Italian though Sergio noticed that he spoke mainly in dialect from the Caserta region, but still, Sergio understood. Caserta was not too far from Naples. He wondered why Mr Collela’s own mother hadn’t suggested these recipes.

‘As regards to the “pasta e fagioli”, there are several recipes which differ from region to region. I’ll tell you how my mamma makes it. I’ve seen her make it countless times. First of all she soaks dried beans in a bowl of water overnight. For the restaurant you’d probably need a large basinful of beans due to the high volume of customers or you can buy tinned beans which are already cooked. That would save on the labour time. Anyway cook the beans for about half an hour, or an hour if they haven’t been soaked. Drain them and throw out the water used to cook them in. You need to *chop up* some celery into small pieces and fry it gently in plenty of olive oil along with a couple of cloves of garlic. Remove the garlic once it begins to turn a golden colour and add a couple of chilli peppers cut in half. You can add tomatoes too if you want, some prefer it with tomatoes and others without. Anyway I’ll give you the recipe for the dish which includes tomatoes – the one my mamma uses. Add the peeled tomatoes, leave to simmer for about ten minutes stirring from time to time and then add some salt and pepper. Meanwhile *mash up* half of the cooked beans and add them to the tomatoes and stir. The *mashed up* beans add density to the soup. In another pot cook the pasta. In Naples we use “ditali” – short pasta that looks similar to thimbles. Once the pasta is ready, drain it and add it to the rest of the ingredients along with the rest of the beans, that is, those which have not been mashed. It sounds complicated but it’s really quite simple. Garnish with a little bit of chopped parsley or some oregano. It’s delicious and extremely nourishing. The beans have the same nutritional value that a steak has.’

‘I think you’re going to have to write that recipe down for me,’ said Mr

Collela. ‘I’ll get the chef to cook it for tomorrow’s dish of the day. Do you eat it with parmesan cheese?’

‘Some use parmesan cheese, others prefer it without. It’s all a question of taste. I, personally, use lots of parmesan. I love the stuff, but you need to *leave out* the chili peppers if you want to add parmesan. Spicy food does not *go down well* with any kind of cheese dishes.’

‘Thank you Sergio. Our restaurant will soon be revolutionised all thanks to you. If you can think of anymore recipes I’d be more than grateful.’

‘I can think of plenty. My mamma is a wonderful cook and I’ve been watching her cook all my life. I can also get my cousin to forward on some recipes. As you already know, he runs one of Naples’s finest restaurants.

‘Thanks so much Sergio. The restaurant could do with a revamp.’

Sergio was feeling so happy. He felt useful and it made him feel good inside. He’d felt so useless back in his hometown. He thought back to the boredom he’d experienced day in and day out. He wasn’t bored here. Life was great. He didn’t miss his town at all. He didn’t even miss the friends he *hung out with* at the local bar. In fact, he began to think they had been the cause of his depression. The same old faces and the same old silly talk every day. That’s how it had been. He felt a bit sorry for them. He imagined them all at the age of forty still standing around outside the bar doing nothing with their lives. He realised that he’d made a lucky break.

Mamma had been worried about him eating what she called “English junk food”. She couldn’t have been further from the truth. Here in the restaurant he was eating more than well. Meals had been included as one of the “benefits” that came with the job. The chef was an excellent cook even if the menu did not have as many of the real Neapolitan dishes as it should have.

Back home Katrina was also cooking him the best of food. She’d thought about the English proverb which stated that “the way to a man’s heart is through his stomach” and she wanted Sergio’s heart.

Katrina had been feeling a bit troubled all day. She’d *popped into* the restaurant the day before to finalise Sergio’s paperwork with Mr Collela and hadn’t failed to notice the attention Sergio was getting from two young girls lunching in the restaurant. He’d been *lapping it all up*. She’d pretended not to notice. She had no wish to display any signs of jealousy. Katrina was a smart woman and knew that jealousy was an extremely destructive emotion. She’d just have to *work on* making Sergio crave only her and her alone. This would be her weapon.

Mamma and papa had arranged to visit Sergio in London. They were feeling quite lonely now that he was gone. 'There is nobody to argue with anymore,' they told him jokingly on the phone. But Mr and Mrs Esposito deep down weren't joking. They really did miss arguing and telling him what to do and what not to do. Now that he was gone there was a strange emptiness in the house. 'We'll have to get another couple of Persian cats,' Angelo joked to his wife.

'That wouldn't at all be a bad idea,' she replied. 'At least there would be a bit of life moving about the house instead of this dead silence all the time.'

Sergio had asked Maria before she'd left London to arrange a meeting with Giancarlo to *hand over* the house keys to his room in Rome.

'Please do this favour for me Maria. Giancarlo can store my belongings at his house until mamma and papa arrive in Rome to *pick them up*.'

Maria had adamantly said no. 'Your mamma and papa can get in touch with me when they arrive in Rome and I will give them your keys. That's the most I can do for you Sergio. Take it or leave it.'

Maria had no wish to see Giancarlo ever again. She had found so much happiness with the time spent in London with Mark. She was in love with Mark and she knew that the feeling was mutual. She could tell by the look in his eyes. She remembered Karen's words that time she'd cried her eyes out for the umpteenth time when she'd *woken up* and the reality of Giancarlo having left her had hit her like a ton of bricks.

'You'll go through a rollercoaster of emotions swinging from love to hatred,' Karen had said, 'but when indifference *sets in* there will be no *going back*.'

Yes, thought Maria, there definitely would be no *going back*. He'd dropped her like a ton of bricks and hadn't given a toss about her feelings. Karen had also told her on several occasions that 'what's for you won't go by you.' Karen had been right. Obviously Giancarlo hadn't been for her. Her destiny was with Mark - the wonderful fun-loving, good-natured Mark. He might not have a degree in engineering, but who cared, she thought. A man with a degree was no guarantee of happiness or fidelity for that matter. She also loved Mark's brother and his wife. They were good hard-working people. Yes, Mark came from a family who were not afraid to roll up their sleeves and *get down to some hard graft*. Giancarlo's life had been plain-sailing in comparison. His mamma and papa had *seen him through his studies*. He'd never had to worry where his next meal was coming from. Mark had told

Maria about the poverty his family had endured while he was *growing up* and how at times they'd had to share a few crusts of bread between a family of eight children and two adults. This had made Mark appreciate everything in life – giving him joy and happiness for the least little thing. This was the type of man she would gladly marry – a man who had *gone without* – who would experience joy and happiness for anything that came his way.

Sergio had *had second thoughts about* giving Maria his house keys. He'd give them to mamma and papa when they visited him in London. He'd paid some advance rent on his room in Rome so his belongings could remain there for the time-being.

Sergio was being spoiled rotten by Katrina. She cooked him the best of food, which she bought from Harrods' food department, and catered to his every need just like mamma had done. She refused to accept the small amount of rent money she'd initially proposed. He didn't insist and quickly put the money back in his wallet. She was going out of her way to impress him.

It was just a matter of weeks before they became a couple. All their free time was spent together and Katrina showered him with even more attention as the days *went by*. She started to see less of the few new friends she had made since arriving in London. Every moment was dedicated to Sergio. She found herself daydreaming about marriage and maybe a baby. Yes, why not? She was nearly thirty one years of age. She'd better get a move on if she wanted to start a family. She didn't want to leave it until she was forty. She visualised a beautiful little dark-haired and dark skinned Italian bambino running about the house. She'd have to sweet talk Sergio into marrying her. She willed those finalised divorce papers to come through the door. She'd been on the phone to her solicitor who'd told her countless times "any day now".

Mark had been getting any mail sent to his flat in Liverpool redirected to ma and pa's address. A few weeks after arriving back in Rome he received a phone call from Ma.

'There's a letter here from a solicitor in London. Do you want me to open it?'

'Yes ma. It'll probably be from Katrina's lawyer about the divorce.'

She opened the letter and read it to Mark. The divorce was finalised. They'd both agreed to *go ahead with* filing an uncontested divorce which was the cheapest and fastest way and would not involve them having to meet in

court. Mark had had to remain domiciled in England even though he lived in Italy in order to ease any complications.

Mark thanked ma. There was one good thing about Katrina. She'd never been a money grabber. Had she tried to take him to court to obtain fifty per cent of his house then the divorce would have taken a whole lot longer due to the involvement of "financial issues". It would also have become a costly business. He'd agreed with her on obtaining the so called uncontested "quickie divorce". She didn't need his house anyway. Katrina was the only child of a property developer. Her father had insisted they go to live in a more sophisticated part of Liverpool when she'd got married to Mark, but Mark had already purchased his own little house before ever meeting Katrina. Katrina had been so in love with Mark at that time that she'd agreed to "lower her standards" as long as she could marry this blonde haired wonder, as she used to call him. Looking back Mark now realised that things had turned sour due to the two of them jumping into marriage far too quickly. He now doubted that his nights in the pub with the boys had had anything to do with it. This had been her excuse to leave him.

Back in London Katrina had also received the long awaited notification stating the finalisation of the divorce. She heaved a sigh of relief. She'd been waiting anxiously for this day and had been harassing her solicitor all week. Thank goodness she'd taken her father's advice. She'd been on the verge of getting her solicitor to *put in* a claim *for* part of Mark's house. Dad, who was an extremely wise and kind man, had stopped her.

'The boy comes from a working class background and has done everything possible to secure himself a small home for the future. Do not take that away from him. You've had a privileged upbringing with the best education money can buy. Your mother and I gave you the best in life while Mark *grew up* in poverty. You'll have more than a house one day. You'll inherit a whole block of flats once your mother and I *pass on* so there's no need for you to go the nasty route.'

Mr Philips had always *been fond of* Mark and had felt so sorry for him when his daughter had walked out on him. He'd tried to convince her to give the boy another chance. He'd seen the young version of himself in Mark. He, himself had had to struggle through life until at the age of thirty he'd hit it big when he'd had a substantial win on the football pools which he had wisely invested in the property market.

Mr Philips added. 'There's another thing you must *take into account*

Katrina. You abandoned the marital home so the boy has a good case against you on the grounds of marital abandonment but he has chosen not to put this forward for grounds for divorce. This could revoke any right you may have had to the house. He could even have refused to divorce you had he wanted to and then you'd have had to wait a minimum of five years. Bear those things in mind my girl and do not be malicious for your own gain. Remember that life is like a boomerang. Every action *comes back* to you so think twice before proceeding. You've got your own home in London now so there is no need to go after Mark for anything and *thank your lucky stars* there are no children involved in the issue.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be fond of (someone) – have feelings of affection for a person

Chop up – cut into pieces

Come back – return

Fit in (as part of a group) – conform to by having similarities

Get down to – start to do something that requires attention

Go ahead with – proceed to do something

Go back – return

Go by – pass

Go down (well) – accept/receive well

Go on – continue (he went on)

Go without – be deprived of things due to lack of resources/money

Grow up– grow from babyhood to adulthood

Hand over – give by hand

Hang out with – spend time with (people)

Lap up – happily accept praise, attention, admiration and adoration/smugly accept attention

Leave out – omit

Mash up – crush into a pulp or paste

Pass on – a softer way to say that a person has died

Pick up (a language or another skill) – slowly begin to learn

Pick (something) up – fetch from a place

Put in for – apply for/ask for/formally request

Pop in (to a place) – pay a quick visit

See (somebody) through (his/her studies) – be financially supportive

Set in – to begin to take roots

Sweet talk (someone) into doing (something) – coax someone to do something by using sweet words

Take (someone) on (for a job) – recruit/employ/hire a person for work

Wake up – finish sleeping

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon someone usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Work on – start to do what is necessary to influence someone to do something

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A money grabber – a person who obtains money unethically

Be on the verge of (doing something) – to be about to do something/be close to doing something

Be plain sailing – run smoothly and easily

Bear in mind – take into account/remember/keep in the forefront of one's mind

Broken English – “Broken English” is English spoken by a non-native speaker who hasn't mastered the language yet; for instance, wrong word choices, grammatical errors and long pauses while the person tries to think of the correct word or grammar point.

Can/could do with (something) – 1) be in need of 2) have the desire for

Cater to a person's every need – provide a person with everything they ask for to the point of overindulgence

Drop (someone) like a ton of bricks – suddenly end a relationship with no forewarning and no further contact

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

For the time being – for now, for the present, used to say that although a condition or situation is the way it is now, it could change in the future

From time to time – occasionally

Get a move on – hurry up

Get in touch with – make contact

Go out of (one's) way to do (something) – make a tremendous effort to do something for someone even to the point of inconveniencing oneself/can be used both in positive and negative situations

Hard graft – hard work

Have second thoughts about (something or someone) – suddenly have a change of heart/change of mind

Hit (someone) like a ton of bricks – a sudden realisation which forcefully impacts a person

Hit it big – have a stroke of financial luck

Look the part – have the right look/appearance for something

Make a lucky break – be fortunate by escaping from a bad situation

Not give a toss about (someone or something) – emphasises that you don't care in the least/you're not interested

Spoil a person – be indulgent with a person/give someone everything he/she wants

Spoil a person rotten – when you add “rotten” it gives more emphasis to the meaning - be excessively indulgent with a person/give a person everything he/she wants

Take into account – consider

Take it or leave it – either accept the offer or leave it, there will be no negotiating

Thank (one's) lucky stars – be grateful

Turn sour – become unpleasant

What's for you won't go by you – this expression means that if something

in life is destined for you, then it will remain in your life

Will (something) to happen – to mentally plead that something will happen because you desperately want it to /use all power of thought to desperately hope that something you want to happen will happen

Gianna goes home for the weekend

Gianna still hadn't found a job and boredom was beginning to *set in*. Most of her time was spent alone while Giancarlo worked every hour God sent. The fact they'd been having quite a few rows lately didn't help the matter. Maybe a few days back home with mamma and papa would do her the world of good.

She got on the phone to her father.

'Papa, I'm *coming back* for a few days.'

'Are you coming by yourself or are you coming with that pleasant young man of yours?'

'I'm coming by myself papa. I want a few days alone with you and mamma. I'll maybe stay until Sunday or Monday. I need to *get away* for my own sanity.'

'Okay,' said Papa. 'Let us know what time the train is getting in and your mamma and I will be at Napoli station to *pick you up*.'

Gianna *put down* the phone. She cried and cried. How could Giancarlo have spoken to her in such a horrid manner? He'd always been so gentle with her. Of late he seemed like a Jekyll and Hyde. He'd lost the rag the night before just because she'd put the pasta in the wrong cupboard. 'All the pasta goes together in this cupboard, on the bottom shelf,' he'd said. 'How often do I have to keep reminding you?'

Gianna had moved the pasta to the other cupboard onto the bottom shelf and he'd pulled it back out again and told her that she'd put the packet in the wrong way round. 'Keep all the packets of pasta facing in the same direction,' he'd said.

Gianna heaved a sigh of relief as the train pulled into Napoli station. Mamma and papa rushed forward and hugged her and continued to do so as they left the station together. They got into papa's car and drove away.

'How's it going with that fine young man of yours,' asked Papa.

'Papa it's not going too well.'

'What do you mean Puppetta?'

She felt like a little girl again in the safety of mamma and papa. Puppetta was the affectionate nickname Papa called her from time to time.

'I had a long think on the train and I'm considering coming home for good papa.'

Mr De Longo couldn't believe his ears.

'You want to come home for good? I don't understand. You were so adamant about staying in Rome.'

'Yes I know papa but I don't feel at home in Giancarlo's house.'

'Why ever not?'

'What's wrong my love?' asked her mother.

'I can't do anything without him flying off the handle. I left the toothpaste tube next to the taps on the washbasin in the bathroom and he called me into the bathroom as though he were my father and I was a naughty child.

'You do realise that the toothpaste should be put in its proper place,' he said. He *picked it up* mamma and put it in the plastic cup. He even rearranged the towel I'd used to dry my hands. He said I'd hung it up the wrong way round.'

Papa spoke. 'It's better a clean and orderly man than a lazy slob like the one you were with before.'

'Yes,' said mamma. 'You need to be a bit more tolerant and turn a blind eye to certain things. Nobody is perfect.'

'I know mamma but the problem in this case is the opposite. He's totally *obsessed* with perfection. I knew he was perfect in his job but I wasn't expecting this in his own home. He got mad when I closed the curtains and they didn't meet perfectly in the middle. He stood back and told me that one of them was drawn too much to the left and the other one too much to the right. Everything in the house has to be symmetrical just like his projects in the office. All this has caused nothing but bad feelings. '

Once again papa spoke.

'There's still hope. You need to understand how the mind of an engineer works. You will find that more often than not, engineers, and other professionals for that matter, are of a perfectionist mindset. Being great planners and organisers they fail to leave those traits behind them at the office door. They often criticise people for trivialities. With some time and patience you can make him understand. There's no point in you getting upset. The next time it would be wise to tell him that his way of doing things is different from yours. I can honestly say that, in a certain sense, I can relate to him.'

'Really papa. But you're not an engineer.'

'Yes I know Puppetta but in my line of work a certain degree of perfection is *called for*. In a way I was similar to Giancarlo when I married your mother.'

I had high standards of tidiness and cleanliness while your mother could quite easily *sit back* and read a good book while completely ignoring the mess around her.'

'Yes,' said mamma. 'Cleaning and tidying were never my priorities. It was only when the house began to look like an atomic bomb had fallen on it did I finally take action and *get down to* giving it a good thorough cleaning. Your father and I just had very different tolerance levels for mess. Halfway through a meal he was already up and moving the pots and pans from the stove over to the kitchen sink. He was unable to relax in the midst of a mess. Isn't that right Ernesto?'

'Yes, that's right Elsa. I remember those days only too well. If I hadn't come to my senses our marriage would have gone right out the window. Thank God I realised it before it was too late or this lovely young lady of ours would never have come into existence.'

'Yes, indeed Ernesto. There's more to life than a super tidy house.'

'Mamma, what do you and papa think I should do?'

'He'll soon realise that your relationship is worth a lot more than a toothpaste tube left lying in the wrong place,' mamma said. 'He's an intelligent young man. He'll soon see sense.'

'I totally agree with your mother. I *backed off* when I saw the harmful effect my "disorder", so to speak, was having on my relationship with your mother. We reached a compromise. I had to lower my standards of tidiness a little and she had to raise hers so as to meet in the middle. This is what we did and it has now become second nature. It did take time for each of us to adjust but it can be done with a bit of effort on both parts.'

That night Gianna lay in bed *mulling over* her parents' words. She and Giancarlo would need to have a long talk if they were to save their relationship before it went on a downward spiral. She loved him. He had so many good qualities, which outweighed the bad, but he seemed to be overreacting to everything. Maybe he was under stress at work. After all, he did work extremely long hours.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back off – stop pestering someone/stop doing something to avoid problems

Be called for – if something is called for, it is required

Come back – return

Get away (from a place) – go away to have a break/escape

Mull over (something) – ponder/go over something in one's mind

Pick (someone) **up** – go to collect someone in a vehicle and accompany from point A to point B (destination)

Pick (something) **up** – lift something/raise something with your hands

Put (the phone) **down** – end a telephone call/position the receiver in its place after ending a telephone call

Set in – begin to take root

Sit back – seated and relaxed/passively observe

Glossary – idioms and expressions

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Can't believe (one's) **ears** – this means to be in total disbelief/find it difficult to believe something

Come to (one's) **senses** – finally begin to reason

Do (someone) **the world of good** – be extremely good for and beneficial to a person

Feel at home – feel comfortable and relaxed in a particular place

Fly off the handle – become very angry

For good – forever

For that matter – used to indicate that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

From time to time – occasionally

Get down to – start to do something that requires attention

Get going – begin to go/move

Get mad – become angry

Get on the phone to (someone) – make contact telephonically

Lose the rag – become very angry

Second nature – if something is second nature then it is done naturally

without having to think

See sense – begin to understand and reason

Take action – begin to do something about a situation

There's no point – it's useless/a waste of time/senseless

Turn a blind eye to (something) – pretend not to notice

Giancarlo reflects

Giancarlo was working intently on the project in his office on the third floor of the auditing company – only stopping for a moment to glance at his watch. It was just gone 9 p.m. The rest of the staff had gone home and he was alone in the building apart from the night watchman. He stood up and walked over to the window. The street below was deserted. There wasn't a soul in sight – a stark contrast to how it was during the day, he thought.

Mr Spampinato had told him well over an hour ago that he ought to go home.

'The deadline isn't until two weeks this Friday. You've still got plenty of time. Go home and rest and come back refreshed tomorrow.'

Giancarlo had thanked him and said he'd prefer to finish the part of the project he was working on. 'Plus,' he'd added. 'I work a whole lot better in dead silence without anybody around to distract me.'

He returned to his desk and *got back to* work on the task at hand.

The silence was broken by the sound of a loud rumble rippling through his stomach reminding him that he hadn't eaten a thing since breakfast. Maybe it was time to call it a day.

It wouldn't be good if his health were to suffer. He was only too aware that his mental health was on the verge of breaking down.

He saved his work, *switched off* the computer and made his way downstairs and exited the building, stopping for a moment to say goodnight to the watchman.

He arrived home to find the house in darkness; there was a strange emptiness about the place without Gianna to greet him with her warm kisses. He'd taken her for granted – never again!

Pangs of hunger shot through his stomach but he was in no mood to cook. He grabbed an apple and a banana which he ate purely to keep the hunger pangs at bay. He thought back to how awfully he'd treated Gianna that morning, and the day before, and the day before the day before for that matter. In fact he'd been rather nasty for a good few weeks now. He knew he had to start turning a blind eye to her untidiness otherwise their relationship would go right out the window. He *put it down to* the stress he'd been *going through* on trying to meet the deadline of an important project - long before the deadline was even due to be met, he reminded himself.

Gianna *woke up* the next morning feeling gutted. She was already missing her beloved Giancarlo.

She sat down to breakfast with mamma and papa.

‘I’ve been thinking,’ said papa. ‘You can call me old-fashioned if you like but you know I’ve always been against living together before marriage my girl. By living together you’re cutting out the courtship period, which, in my opinion is extremely important for setting the foundations of a solid relationship. You would have cut out all that silly bickering about the toothpaste being left lying next to the taps had you taken my initial advice.’

‘Your father’s right, my dear,’ said Elsa. ‘*Moving in* together was not the wisest thing to do but your father and I didn’t want to *stand in your way*. We all learn by our own mistakes. Anyway, if the boy wants to save the relationship, he’ll be reflecting on the matter right in this very moment. You know what they say, ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder.’’

‘Yes,’ indeed it does,’ said Ernesto to his wife. ‘Only when a person is absent does one truly reflect. And, as another saying goes, start as you mean to carry on. He has broken this cardinal rule and so have you my dear,’ he said turning to his daughter.

‘Gianna, when he phones, tell him that if he wants to see you, then it would be better to visit you here in your hometown.’

‘Yes, papa. I’m missing him but he seems to see his home as his territory and not mine.’

‘That’s why it’s always a good idea for a couple to choose a home together,’ said Gianna’s mother. ‘That way there is none of this childish bickering about what belongs to one and what belongs to another.’

Just then the phone rang.

‘Hello,’ said Gianna

‘Hi Gianna, “*amore della mia vita*” - love of my life.’

‘Hi Giancarlo,’ replied Gianna dryly.

‘I can’t wait for you to *come back*. Last night the house was so empty without you. I’m so sorry for my nastiness Gianna but the truth of the matter is that I’m overworked and under constant stress. I’ll never ever speak to you like that again. You can leave the toothpaste wherever you want. I’m not interested. As long as we’re together - that’s all that matters.’

‘Giancarlo I think we should start dating again. We’ve jumped into this relationship far too quickly.’

‘How can we date if you’re not in Rome?’

‘Easy - you drive down here to the town.’

‘Where will I find the time?’

‘Giancarlo, there’s no other solution. I’d rather get to know you away from your house. I can’t stand the thought of ever hearing you scolding me as though I were a naughty child and you were my father.

‘But you already know me Gianna.’

‘It would seem that I don’t; this being told what to do and what not to do will *end up* destroying our relationship. I miss you too Giancarlo but I can’t *go on* like this one moment longer.’

‘I’ve just told you I’ll never scold you again. I’ve learned my lesson the hard way.’

Mr De Longo took the phone from his daughter.

‘Hello Giancarlo.’

‘Hello Avvocato,’ said an embarrassed Giancarlo.

‘My daughter is extremely upset about the whole episode. I know you’re a good young man with many fine qualities so I wouldn’t want to see the relationship you have with my daughter jeopardized in any way. If you want you can come to visit her here in her own home and see if you can reach some kind of compromise.’

‘Okay Avvocato. I’m awfully sorry for *being so short with* Gianna and I’ll do everything I can to prove I’m not the person she thinks I am. I can only *put it down to* being overworked.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Carry on – continue

Get back to – return

Go on – continue

Go through – experience

Move in – start to live in a place

Put (something) down to (something) – regard an outcome as being the cause of something else

Glossary – idioms and expressions

Absence makes the heart grow fonder – an English proverb which means that only when someone is far away from do you realise you love him/her

Be short with (someone) – be quite rude to someone

Call it a day – quit work and go home usually because you are tired

Can't/couldn't stand – strongly dislike

Get to know – slowly begin to know on a deeper level

Just gone – a little bit after (for the time)

Keep (someone or something) **at bay** – keep at a distance

Learn (one's) **lesson the hard way** – to only understand one's mistakes by experiencing something unpleasant

Stand in (someone's) **way** – obstruct/hinder, try to prevent someone from doing something or making progress

Switch off – interrupt the flow of energy needed to make a device function

Take (someone or something) **for granted** – failure to appreciate due to too much familiarity

Turn a blind eye to – pretend not to notice

A proposal

Friday morning came and Giancarlo *woke up* to the sound of birds chirping in the trees outside his bedroom window. He was feeling as chirpy as those merry little creatures who seemed to rise and shine without a care in the world. He had a lot to be chirpy about he told himself. This evening he'd be seeing his Gianna again. It had been days of worry not to mention the loneliness he'd felt not having the love of his life to *snuggle up to* in the evenings. Maybe he should ask his boss if he could take the afternoon off. Yes. That's what he'd do.

Upon reaching the office block, he leapt up the stairs two at a time, too euphoric to get into the lift. He stopped outside his boss's office adjusting his tie before knocking on the door.

'Come in,' called a gruff voice.

'Good morning Mr Spampinato. Sorry to bother you but I was wondering if I could take the afternoon off today. I have to *go back* to my town.'

'Of course you can young man. You've been working practically night and day for the past two weeks or so. On the subject of work, how's the project going?'

'I've nearly finished it Mr Spampinato. It should be ready by Monday evening.'

'There's no hurry my boy. We've got another two weeks to go. Take your time. Don't stress yourself out. In fact if you want you can take the whole day off.'

'Thank you Mr Spampinato, I will do if you don't mind.'

'I don't mind at all. Have a nice relaxing weekend and I'll see you on Monday.'

Giancarlo thanked his boss, left the office and immediately called Gianna. 'I can be there by about eleven thirty, that is, if you don't mind.'

'Aren't you working today?'

'I was supposed to be but I asked my boss if I could take the afternoon off and he told me I could take the whole day off. That'll give us more time to *sort things out*. I can sleep at my parents' house and *come back* to see you on Saturday and Sunday Gianna.'

'Okay, I'll see you before lunch then.'

An ecstatic Gianna placed down the receiver. 'Great, he's taken the day

off. It must mean that I come before his job,' she thought happily.

She skipped into the sitting room where papa was reading the morning paper.

'Papa, Giancarlo's coming in a few hours' time. He's taken the day off.'

'*He's coming in a few hours' time?* Then I shall have to take the day off myself. Fortunately I have no court cases to attend this morning.'

Avvocato De Longo had his own studio in the town centre and juggled his time between work and family life.

'Thank you, papa, but really there is no need for you to take the day off. You'll see Giancarlo this evening when you come home.'

'I'd like to be here to welcome the boy. Not only, it's good if he sees the presence of a strong father figure behind you my dear. That way he'll buck up his ideas. You know, keep him on his toes.'

'Yes, of course papa.'

Elsa came running out of the kitchen having overheard her daughter and husband.

'Did you say he's coming in a couple of hours' time?'

'Yes mamma. Yes I did.'

'What are we going to have for lunch? The boy will be hungry after the journey. It's a good sign my dear that he's taken the day off. It shows he cares.'

'I know mamma. I was thinking the same myself,' replied a gleeful Gianna.

'What shall I cook?'

'Jump down to the market. Today's Friday when the fishermen sell fresh fish. We can get Olga to cook it. You know she's a dab hand when it comes to fish dishes,' replied Mr De Longo.

'Okay,' said Elsa. 'Let me just grab my jacket before the best fish gets snapped up.'

Elsa scurried out the door *bumping into* Olga the maid as she did so. 'Oh Olga please clean the bathroom and dust the sitting room if you can before eleven o'clock. We've got a visitor coming at half past eleven. Leave the windows for now. You can do them on Monday. I'll need you to cook the fish I'm just off to buy.'

'*Si, signora, certo*' – yes madam, of course.'

Olga was the De Longo's housemaid who came in three times a week to help with the housework.

By 10.30 a.m. everything was ready for the arrival of Giancarlo. Olga couldn't help thinking that they were acting as if the Queen of England was coming to lunch. They'd even got her to *polish up* the silver and lay the table with their best dinner set.

Mr De Longo had no intention of *sitting back* and allowing his daughter to destroy her relationship with a good man. She might *end up* in the arms of another Sergio-like creature he thought to himself. There were quite a few of them *hanging about* the bars in the town. He'd have to *steer* his daughter *back* in the right direction. Yes, he thought again. Giancarlo, despite his little mania for cleanliness and order, was as decent a chap as his daughter would get.

Before driving to Gianna's, Giancarlo *stopped off* at the jeweller's close to the office. He'd had his eye on a ring he'd been admiring in the shop's window since the previous Monday.

Gianna would love a ring like that. It was pretty expensive but then again his love for Gianna was priceless. No amount of money was enough for his Gianna. *And* he could afford it. He was on a good salary he reminded himself. Yes, money was no object where his Gianna was concerned.

He rang the bell and the door was opened by Signor Cataldi, the local jeweller. 'I'd like the ring in the window.' 'Which one?' asked Mr Cataldi. 'That beautiful sapphire engagement ring,' he said pointing from the inside of the window.

He left the jeweller's with a spring in his step. Next on the books would be a marriage proposal. He'd learned his lesson once and for all. He wasn't going to ever risk letting a girl like Gianna slip right through his fingers through his own stupidity.

A couple of hours later he turned off the motorway into Gianna's hometown. After driving around for a good twenty minutes he finally reached the street where his beloved lived. He'd had to check the address again. Did she really live here? Gosh, it was definitely one of the most exclusive houses in the whole neighbourhood. He checked his appearance in the rear window mirror. Yes, he looked pretty acceptable he thought as he flicked his hair back from his face although he didn't feel it. He had butterflies in his stomach which seemed to be fluttering all over the place with a vengeance. Taking his handkerchief out of his pocket he mopped the beads of sweat that

were beginning to drip from his brow. After taking several deep breaths to calm himself down he *got out* the car.

He rang the intercom and the beautiful wrought iron gates slowly opened into a beautifully well-kept garden full of fruit trees and colourful, well-defined flower beds all lined up on either side of the lawn.

The door opened and he was met by Mr De Longo and his wife Elsa followed by his beloved Gianna. He was welcomed in as though he were a long lost son. In disbelief he looked around him. The grand sitting room had a well-judged mix of old and new tasteful furnishings and fittings *playing off against* the terracotta floors, wooden beams and old stone walls.

Mr De Longo *showed him around* the rest of the house while Olga prepared some coffee and delicate cakes Mrs De Longo had *picked up* at the cake shop in the town centre that morning.

Lunch was served and they all had a good long talk. Mr De Longo *took over* the conversation explaining that he and his wife had *gone through* exactly the same “teething problems” and that a bit of *give and take* was all that was needed to get back on the right foot.

‘It’s not easy to live with someone,’ said Elsa De Longo. ‘You have to learn to *put up with* their irritating habits.’

‘Yes,’ added her husband, ‘you need to take the rough with the smooth. Life is not a bed of roses you know.’

Giancarlo was in awe of Gianna’s parents and their incredible wisdom.

‘I’m extremely grateful to you for being so understanding,’ he said. ‘Next time I see anything out of place I will *bite my tongue*.’

‘Gianna will need to *bite her tongue* as well, won’t you Gianna. No huffing and puffing like a spoilt child.’

‘Yes, of course,’ papa,’ replied Gianna.

After lunch Gianna and Giancarlo went for a run in the car and promised they’d never again speak badly to one another. ‘I’ve got a little surprise for you Gianna.’ ‘What is it?’ ‘You’ll have to wait until tomorrow.’ ‘Tell me now Giancarlo. Please.’ ‘No, the best surprises are the ones you have to wait for my lovely. You’ll see tomorrow.’

Giancarlo drove to his parents’ home that evening and spent the night there. Iva tried to get him to stay the whole weekend. ‘No, I can’t stay,’ said her son. ‘I can only sleep here. I will be gone all day tomorrow and all day

Sunday.’ ‘Where will you be,’ asked his father? ‘It’s a secret. I can’t tell you yet.’

Next day was Saturday and Giancarlo sat down to have breakfast with his parents. ‘Where are you going to be all day,’ his mother asked again curiously. ‘We never see you. At least when you come home you should spend a bit more time with us.’ ‘Don’t worry mum, you’ll *find out* sooner or later,’ he replied. ‘It’s too early in the day to let you know. Let’s just say that an important event in my life will soon be taking place.’ ‘Is it to do with your job?’ asked Iva. ‘No. Something else but you’ll soon *find out*. And when you do *find out*, you’ll understand why I couldn’t tell you sooner.’

He kissed his mother and father goodbye and climbed into his car, ‘see you tonight at about 11 p.m.,’ he called out the window before driving off.

‘What the heck has *come over* him?’ said Iva to her perplexed husband. ‘I’ve no idea. It beats me,’ he replied.

Giancarlo had invited the De Longos to eat in one of the best restaurants in the town. He wanted to *pay them back* for the hospitality they’d given him the previous day. He also had something else in mind and needed the right setting.

At the end of the meal, much to everyone’s surprise, he got down on one knee and proposed.

‘Will you marry me Gianna?’

Gianna *let out* a squeal of delight. ‘Of course I will Giancarlo, of course I will.’ Mr De Longo and his wife were thrilled. ‘This *calls for* a celebration. Let’s get a bottle of the best champagne.’ He called the waiter over to the table.

‘Bring us the best champagne you have.’ ‘Yes sir, of course,’ replied the waiter who returned with the restaurant’s finest champagne and its best crystal glasses.

‘What about if we set the wedding date for six months from now,’ said Giancarlo? ‘Would you agree to that?’

‘Yes of course. I’ll see about booking the church in the town’s Square,’ said Elsa De Longo who had the terribly annoying habit, along with her husband, of always answering on her daughter’s behalf.

‘Have you informed your own parents?’ asked Mr De Longo.

‘Not yet. We’ll have to arrange a night out in a restaurant with us all together. Let’s say at the end of the month. It’ll be a bit of a surprise for them

as they don't even know I have another girlfriend.'

'What do you mean *another* girlfriend?' asked a shocked-looking Elsa.

'Well I might as well come clean. I don't want there to be any secrets between us. Before I met Gianna I was engaged to the girl next door for seven years. Gianna already knows this, don't you Gianna?' 'Yes. Giancarlo told me papa but what he did before he met me is really none of my concern.'

'Anyway,' continued Giancarlo. 'I firmly believed I was in love but it was only when I met Gianna did I realise what it really feels like to love someone. I realised that Maria and I were just like best friends. I had mistaken friendship for love. I *grew up* with Maria and when I was just a teenager it just seemed like the done thing for us to become boyfriend and girlfriend. As you are probably well aware, teenagers sometimes are unable to tell the difference between love and infatuation. My parents haven't quite recovered yet from the shock of Maria and I *splitting up*. So as you can see Mr De Longo. I will have to break the news to them gently.'

'Why haven't you told them yet?'

'So as not to hurt Maria. My mother would have involuntarily opened her mouth to her next door neighbour, that is, Maria's mother, who would have proceeded to inform Maria. It's not very nice for a girl to think she has been replaced by another. By the end of the month I'll have *broken the news* to my parents and we can all get together. That way you'll meet my mother and father and so will Gianna. They're really decent people I can assure you.'

'I see your point young man. A bit of delicacy is *called for* in such cases. It shows you have some sensitivity towards others and I won't deny that it's an excellent character trait, but to keep your parents in the dark about such matters, well I don't know if it's something I, myself, as a father, could accept.'

'I'm a fully grown man Mr De Longo and I know my parents like the back of my hand. My mother tends to overreact so I need to be careful how I handle the situation. I've already mentioned to both my mother and father that an important event will soon be *taking place* in my life, without going into the details.'

Giancarlo had been afraid of the De Longos meeting his own parents. What if it came out that Sergio was his cousin? He knew his mamma had a big mouth on her and once she started talking she couldn't stop. He would have to give her a good talking to. He'd need to let her know that she'd have to keep quiet about Sergio. There was also the fact that his mother spoke to her

sister on a daily basis. He imagined her telling Aunt Giuseppina about his new girlfriend and Giuseppina recognising that it was Gianna. It wouldn't be long before word got to Sergio and then what? He'd see Giancarlo as a traitor. No - things would have to be handled with care. He'd have to take care of Sergio first before the news was broken to anyone else. Yes, Sergio would definitely have to be the first to know and it would be better if it came straight from the horse's mouth.

He'd explain everything and tell Sergio that he'd just *found out* by chance that Gianna was his ex. He'd also tell him how sorry he was and ask him his permission to continue his relationship with Gianna. Yes that's what he'd do. And if Sergio didn't give his permission, he'd go ahead with the wedding anyway but he had to let Sergio think that he was in charge. This would soften him a bit.

On Monday evening Giancarlo nervously made his way home from the office. Tonight was the night he'd be informing his cousin of the situation.

It was with trembling fingers that he dialled his cousin's phone number.

Sergio's reaction came as a surprise. Giancarlo had imagined him screaming at him and telling him he was the biggest "stronzo" - swine, he'd ever met and that he'd never talk to him again, but Sergio remained cool, calm and collective. He wasn't in the least bit interested *where* and *how* Giancarlo had met Gianna.

She's history. You're more than welcome to the bitch,' said Sergio. 'I'm getting married myself in three weeks' time. Katrina has already booked the registry office. She's four months' pregnant. The baby's a boy and we're going to call him after my grandfather, that is, Tonino. You know, keep the name in the family. I'm having a great time over here. Katrina's the only child of a property developer so I'll be securing my future when she marries me. She spoils me Giancarlo. She spends all her money on me.

'What about your mother and father? Do they know about the wedding? Where are you getting married? England or Italy.'

'In London. We're getting married in the registry office. Katrina's been married before so a church wedding is out of the question. Of course mamma and papa will be coming though I've still to tell them. I'll be letting them know in the next couple of days. Don't say anything to them if you so happen to see or hear from them. Katrina has offered to pay for the flights to get them over to England. And, what's more, we're moving into a bigger house so

mamma and papa can come to England whenever they like. There'll be room for everyone except Gianna of course. So if you want to come to my wedding, please do so but without that good for nothing who gave me nothing. No, sorry, she did give me something – a whole load of stress, that's what she gave me. Katrina is the opposite – she buys the best of food and gives me her undivided attention. She loves me more than anyone could ever love me.'

'Do you love her Sergio?'

'I do in my own way. I feel safe and secure with her *and* she's a woman with guts, unlike that soft headed Gianna. Oh how I'm so glad to be well rid of her. Good riddance to bad rubbish, that's all I can say.'

Giancarlo got the impression that this Katrina sounded more like a mother figure than a future wife. Maybe this is what his cousin needed – a woman who would mother him, just like he'd been used to all his life. 'How could his Gianna ever have spent a day in his cousin's company let alone seven months? It was all about how much he got from Katrina. Never a word about how much he gave, but by the sound of things he gave nothing to the relationship. What a selfish man his cousin was, thought Giancarlo whose father had taught him that giving was a whole lot more rewarding than taking. He pitied his cousin more than anything. How could he be happy when he was just one of life's takers. A shallow person he later told Gianna.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Bump into (someone) – idiomatically 'bump into someone' means to meet a person by chance, but it also has the literal meaning, just like all phrasal verbs do, which means to collide. In the previous context, Elsa collided with Olga.

Call (someone) **after** (someone) – give a baby the same name as someone else, usually a relative – 'call' can be replaced with 'name' – name someone after someone

Calls for – requests/needs

Come back – return

Come in – enter

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Get out – leave/exit

Go back – return

Go through – experience

Grow up – grow from a baby to an adult

Hang about/around – spend time somewhere doing nothing concrete/doing nothing useful

Let out – emit

Pay (someone) back – repay/recompense for a good turn someone has done to you/punish for a wrongdoing/seek revenge

Pick up – fetch from a place

Play off against – when two or more things enhance one another

Polish up – clean and make shiny

Put (the phone) down – end a telephone call

Put up with – tolerate

Show (someone) around – when a person doesn't know a place and is seeing it for the first time, 'show around' means that you lead the person around the different parts so he/she can see it all, you act rather like a guide

Sit back – passively observe

Snuggle up to (someone) – sit or lie in a comfortable position nestling yourself against a person

Sort (something) out – find a solution to a problem

Split up – separate, end a romantic relationship

Steer back – guide/manoeuvre to a previous point

Stop off – briefly stop at a place

Take care of – handle/deal with

Take over – take control

Wake up – finish sleeping

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A bed of roses – easy and straightforward

After all – reinforces and supports what was said before by giving an additional reason

Along with – together with

Be a dab hand at (something) – be particularly good at something

Be in awe of (someone) – have a feeling of admiration and respect mixed with amazement

Be in charge – be in a position of authority

Be out of the question – unthinkable/to be too ridiculous to even consider

Be prone to – have the tendency

Be well rid of (someone or something) – if you're well rid of someone or something, then you're much better without the person or thing

Bite (one's) tongue – think before one speaks so as not to say something that may be regretted/do everything possible to avoid say something that could prove to be hurtful or inappropriate

Break the news (to someone) – inform someone of something, usually something surprising or shocking

Buck up (one's) **ideas** – make an effort to become serious about what one does

But then again – this has a similar meaning to 'if you really think about it' and is used as an afterthought

By chance – coincidentally

Come clean – tell or admit the truth

Come straight from the horse's mouth – first hand news/information from the original source

Cool, calm and collected – self composed/unaffected

Get back on the right foot – return to the beginning when things were more favourable

Get snapped up – be quickly taken

Give (someone) a good talking to – state firmly to someone about a situation and how he/she should behave

Give and take – an equal exchange in a relationship

Good riddance to bad rubbish – an expression used in anger when you are happy that someone is out of your life

Handle with care – treat delicately

Have a big mouth on you – this refers to a person who cannot keep a secret and has to tell everyone they meet about the “latest news”, in short, it refers to a person who *is prone to gossip*

Have a great time – really enjoy oneself

Have a spring in (one’s) step – to walk in a light-hearted, happy and energetic manner due to the happiness one feels inside

Have butterflies in (one’s) stomach – to have a churning feeling in your stomach due to nervousness

Have (one’s) eye on (someone or something) – to desire someone or something/show an eager interest in someone or something

It beats me – I don’t understand/I have no idea/it’s difficult for me to comprehend

Keep (someone) in the dark – to exclude/purposefully not inform someone as to what is happening

Keep (someone) on his/her toes – cause someone to stay alert and pays attention to what he/she does

Know (someone or something) like the back of (one’s) hand – to know extremely well

Let alone – much less

Let (someone/something) slip through (one’s) fingers – allow to escape/waste an opportunity

On the books – on the agenda

Once and for all – indefinitely/finally/conclusively

Rise and shine – wake up, usually happy and full of energy

See (someone’s) point – understand what someone means

Take (one’s) time (someone) – not hurry, do things calmly

Take place – occur

Take the rough with the smooth – accept the bad things and not only the good

Teething problems – initial problems

The done thing – what is expected of a person/what is socially acceptable

Too early in the day – far too soon

With a vengeance – with great force

You're more than welcome to (someone or something) – if you say 'you're welcome to someone or something,' it means that the speaker no longer wishes to have the person or thing in his/her life. If you say, you're *more than* welcome to (someone or something) it adds extra emphasis that you desire to be well rid of whatever or whoever it is.

Mark and Maria

Mark and Maria had also been planning *their* wedding. They'd been to Liverpool for four days where Maria had *been met with* an incredibly warm welcome from the whole of Mark's family.

His sister Maggie loved Maria and instantly hit it off with her. Maggie told Mark that he deserved such a lovely girl after all the suffering that awful Katrina had *put him through*. Ma was delighted to see her golden boy so happy and even pa, who never gave his opinion on anyone or anything, told Mark that he'd really struck it lucky with Maria. 'If I were fifty years younger I'd gladly marry her myself,' he'd added.

'What about me Jim?' Mark's mother Kitty had asked.

'I meant if I'd never met you. You know you're my number one girl Kitty. I couldn't have asked for a better wife.'

Kitty was touched. It wasn't often her husband paid her compliments but Mark's arrival with Maria had put them all in good spirits – it had kind of dulled the monotony of their everyday existence.

And the old mates down the pub said he'd done alright for himself. They all agreed that Katrina was not a patch on Maria.

'There's absolutely no comparison mate,' Phil had said. 'You're well rid of callous Katrina. She was nothing but a snob – a spoilt rich kid who didn't appreciate you, or anything else for that matter. Don't know what you ever saw in her.'

'Yes, in fact, I really don't know what I ever did see in her. I must have been blind back then. She's got nothing going for her,' Mark had replied.

Mark was walking on air. He realised once again that things happened for a reason. The day Katrina had left him was the day that destiny's wheel of fortune had decided he deserved to be dealt a much better hand in life.

He'd eventually *got round to* telling Maria about Katrina and about the now finalised divorce. She hadn't batted an eyelid. He'd imagined her to be shocked beyond belief.

'What you did before you met me has got nothing at all to do with me,' she'd told him. 'We all make mistakes in life. I was in a long-term relationship myself though I wasn't married – but it's kind of like the same thing when you think about it – only without the contract. I know only too well how it feels to be left in the lurch.'

They were now back in Rome and planning a visit to Maria's family in the south of Italy. Mark had already met her mother and father that Sunday they'd come up to Rome to bring their daughter a week's supply of homemade food that mamma had cooked for her.

'As long as you're happy, then we're happy,' they'd told her. They'd been at their wit's end with worry about their daughter when Giancarlo had just dumped her like that and were over the moon to see that she'd met someone like Mark who'd put a smile back on her pretty face – *and he was* a director of studies – quite an impressive title.

Mark and Maria *moved into* the flat next door to the school. Mr Marini had very gladly rented it out to them for the same rent he'd been getting from Dora prior to her move to the new adjacent premises.

'He's such a lovely man,' Maria said to Mark.

'Yes, he is indeed, and haven't you noticed Maria that he seems to be in the building every day for some reason or another. Not that I mind. He's such a pleasant character to have around.'

'Yes I *have* noticed that he's here more often than ever and he seems to be spending a lot of time talking to Dora. Funny thing is I feel as if I've always known him or maybe I met him in another life.'

Mr Marini felt he was among family whenever he went to the building for one thing or another. He admired Dora and loved her enthusiasm. There was never a dull moment in Dora's school. People were coming and going all day long. He was now beginning to hate *going back* to his empty house. Maybe he should *move into* one of his own flats in the building. Yes he was living in a beautiful villa out near "*Castelli Romani*" – The Roman Castles, but of late he was feeling the need for company and there was plenty of that in this building. Even when he left the building he was amidst the hustle and bustle of city life – a stark contrast to leaving his villa and not meeting a soul even after a ten minute walk. He realised that he'd spent much too long in his own company. After the death of his wife he'd retreated into his own little world and it hadn't helped at all that papa had paid for everything to try to *cheer his son up*. Maybe if he'd been compelled to find a job things might have been different. He'd have been in amongst people all day every day instead of becoming more of a recluse as the years *went by*.

Signora Dora was thanking her lucky stars. Mr Marini had just *asked her*

out. She couldn't believe it. She called in Karen, Maria and Mark and excitedly told them the news.

'Go for it Dora,' they all said. 'He's such a lovely man.'

'Do you know anything about his life Dora?' asked Karen.

'Yes. I only know that he was married many years ago and his wife died in an accident at sea. They had no children and he's never looked at another woman since. He now feels the time is right to *embark on* a new relationship and I can't believe he's chosen me. I truly think I must be dreaming. Somebody pinch me to see if I *wake up.*'

'Don't jump the gun Dora,' said Karen. 'Wait to see how things go first. You might not like him as much when you get to know him.'

'I see what you mean Karen,' replied Dora 'but I already feel as if I've always known him. He's so easy to *get along with.* He's such good company and I feel relaxed around him. You know, I feel like I can be myself.'

'How old is he?' asked Maria.

'He's sixty two. Four years my senior,' replied Dora.

'He told me he got married at the age of thirty two and after just three years of marriage his dearly beloved wife *passed away.* He blames himself. Seemingly she fell out of a motor boat he was driving and drowned. He has never forgiven himself although he's got nothing to do with it. It was an accident and accidents do happen. He's hasn't looked at another woman in twenty seven years, that is, until now.'

'That's a long time,' said Mark. 'In fact it's a life time for me.'

'It is indeed,' replied Dora. 'I thank my lucky stars that I'm being given a second chance in life just four years after the break up with Luigi.'

'Let's hope it all *works out* for you Dora.'

'Thank you Mark. I don't like the thought of having to approach old age all alone and I'm sure Mr Marini is thinking along the same lines. I'm not sure if I believe in falling in love at my age but I'm more than willing to *settle for* pleasant company with a decent man.'

Mr Marini and Dora got on like a house on fire. He'd been feeling lonely lately he told her over dinner in a restaurant overlooking the Spanish Steps. 'I made excuses to visit the building when I was "*checking up on*" the state of repair', he added. Really there was nothing to *check up on* but how else could I justify my presence in the building.'

'Well you own the building so you really there's no need to justify being

there,' said Dora.

'Yes I know but I would have looked like some kind of an oddball *hanging around* for no reason. And that other time I arrived with a few painters and *hung around* with them while they did a spot of painting. It had all been excuses to get to know you a little bit better Dora – you know, become familiar with each other before I plucked up the courage to finally *ask you out*. I was kind of testing the waters first and something told me that you'd accept my invitation otherwise I would never have asked you.

I knew you were a woman with a heart that time you had tears in your eyes.'

'What time was that?' asked Dora.

'The time I told you how much the rent would be on the new premises. The gratitude you expressed that day said a lot about the person you are and that's when I wanted to get to know you better.'

Dora felt flattered. She'd never have guessed Mr Marini had been in the building so often of late to be near her.

The evening went well and an ecstatic Dora arrived home in the early hours of the morning to be met by a worried Mario.

'Mum, what time's this to come *rolling in*?' he asked. 'I've been out of my mind with worry.'

'Your mother's got herself a new boyfriend son.'

'A new boyfriend?'

'Yes, a new boyfriend.'

'Who? Where did you meet him if you're always working mamma?' asked a curious Mario.

'He's my landlord - the owner of my school.'

Mario was flabbergasted. He remembered his mother talking very highly of this man and how kind he'd been at keeping the rent at an affordable price.

'I'm so happy for you mamma. You deserve it. I only hope it lasts.'

'It *will* last Mario, it will. Soon you'll have a second father.'

'Well how can I have a second father if I don't have a first one? You know mamma I washed my hands of papa four years ago. He's not fit to be called a father especially seeing that he didn't waste time in marrying that Bulgarian the minute your divorce came through. It didn't take much for her to twist his arm, did it?'

'Yes I know Mario. One day he'll get a wake-up call but it'll be too late. He'll *end up* a lonely old man, I can assure you. It's clear to see she only

married him for her own interests. What normal twenty five year old would be interested in a man who's hitting sixty and what normal middle-aged man would abandon his wife and son for a twenty five year old? He's caused a lot of suffering to us but our lives are about to *turn around*. Mr Marini, or should I say Mauro, is a gentleman. Good days lie ahead my boy.'

Mario lay in bed thinking about the whole situation hoping for mum's sake that Mr Marini was a serious man with serious intentions. How wonderful that would be. Mario would be free to attend the master's degree course in Milan without having to worry about his mum being alone. 'Here's hoping' he thought. Mamma deserves the best.

Dora lay in bed *going over* in her head every word Mauro had said. It seemed too good to be true. She'd imagined Mr Marini, or Mauro, she had to get used to calling him, happily married with several children. She never imagined that he was an available man with his heart set on her. She drifted into a wondrous sleep feeling a sense of light heartedness. Her struggles would be over. She visualised herself working part-time in the school and having some leisure time – a luxury that was, at the moment, out of her reach. Yes, leisure time to spend some afternoons walking hand in hand around the historical centre with Mauro, or maybe they could even go out for a run to the lake, and stop for an ice-cream and possibly have the occasional evening out for a pizza. Her only night out in four years had been the time Mark had invited her to his housewarming.

Maria and Mark were at home relaxing in the new flat.

'You know Mark, it's really odd that Mr Marini's wife fell out of a motorboat and drowned. It's not exactly the most common of ways to die.'

'What's odd about it?'

'Well my mother had a sister who died in exactly the same way long before I was born. Her sister lived in Rome with her husband and my mother has often mentioned how Aunt Sofia's husband kind of withdrew from the world and spent all his time in his own company never venturing out to go anywhere. In fact he lost touch with everyone. I remember my mother saying that she'd tried to contact him for a few years after Sofia's death but to no avail. He'd *moved out* of the home he'd shared with my aunt.

'Oh come on Maria! You can't possibly be thinking Mr Marini is your aunt's husband.'

'He could be. You never know. It's a small world but I doubt it Mark. It

would be too much of a coincidence. But anyway, we can ask my mother to tell us more about Aunt Sofia's husband when we go down to the town next weekend.'

'Can you imagine what it would mean Maria if he did *turn out* to be your aunt's husband? We'd be kind of related to him. Not blood related but related in some kind of way. He'd be your uncle, and when you and I are married then I'd be related to him through you and if he were to marry Dora then we'd all be related in some kind of way.'

'That would be wonderful Mark but I think the odds of him being my aunt's husband are extremely remote. But anyway, remind me to ask my mother next weekend.'

Friday evening arrived and Mark and Maria boarded the 6.30 p.m. train to Naples. It was wonderful to have Termini station two minutes' walk from their new flat. Maria's father was going to be *picking them up* from Naples station and taking them to the town.

An excited Mark held hands with Maria throughout the journey. It seemed impossible to believe but it was true. He was going to Maria's hometown. It made their relationship seem so official. Would he *wake up* soon to find it was all a dream? Never in his life had he experienced such immense feelings of happiness.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Ask (someone) out – invite a person on a date, that is, a romantic appointment

Check up on (someone or something) – verify that all is going well

Cheer (someone) up – try to make someone happy

Embark on (something) – begin something that is new to you, something exciting such as a journey, a project or a new relationship

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Get along with (someone) – have an agreeable relationship

Go back – return

Get round to (doing something) – to eventually find the time and the will to

do something that you've been *putting off* for some time

Go by – pass

Go over – replay in the mind

Hang around – spend time in a place without doing anything in particular

Meet with (something) – to experience/undergo

Move into (a place) – begin to live in a house or flat or suchlike

Move out (of place) – stop living in a place and go to live somewhere else

Pass away – a softer way of say 'die'

Pick (someone) up – go to a place to get someone and take the person to his/her destination

Put off – postpone

Put (someone) through (something) – cause someone to experience unpleasantness

Roll in – arrive, usually when a person rolls in, he/she arrives home very late and often not in a very good state (colloquialism)

Turn around – in the context 'if someone's life turns around' it means it changes completely

Turn out (to be) – reveal to be

Wake up – finish sleeping

Work out – if something works out, it has a good outcome

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A wake up call – when something happens to shock you into realisation

Back then – in that moment in the past

Be at (one's) wit's end – to be extremely worried and upset – so much so that you feel you will go crazy

Be out of (one's) mind – be in a state of craziness

Be over the moon – be super happy

Be touched – be emotionally affected in the positive sense

Be walking on air – if you're walking on air then you're super happy

Be well rid of (someone or something) – if you're well rid of someone or something, then you're much better without the person or thing

Do alright for (oneself) – an expression that is used to compliment someone when he/she has been successful in an area of his/her life

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

Get on like a house on fire – to have an excellent relationship

Get to know – to begin to know on a deeper level

Go for it – grab an opportunity while you can without hesitation

Have nothing going for you – to have nothing positive or beneficial about you

Have (one's) heart set on (someone) – to want someone so much that it'll be greatly disappointing if there's a negative outcome

Have (one's) heart set on (something) – to want something very much, so much that you are greatly disappointed if you do not get it

Hit it off with (someone) – immediately have an excellent relationship

Leave (someone) in the lurch – abandon someone usually leaving he/she in a difficult situation

Not a patch on (someone or something) – if someone is not a patch on someone else, it means there is no comparison; the person who is not a patch on the other is greatly inferior in every way. Used also for things. For example, if I say that my old car is not a patch on my new one, it means that my new car is much better and that there is no comparison.

Not bat an eyelid – to remain calm and completely unaffected by something

Pluck up the courage to do something – find the courage

Test the waters – probe with caution in order to understand any reaction or interest before advancing

Thank (one's) lucky stars – be grateful/thankful

The break up – the separation

The early hours (of the morning) – around about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning

Think along the same lines – think in a similar way

To no avail – without success

Twist (someone's) arm – strongly persuade someone to do something, usually something he/she is reluctant to do

Wash (one's) hands of (someone or something) – end all contact/have nothing more to do with

A weekend in Maria's hometown

As the car *drew up* outside her parents' home in the quaint old Italian town on the outskirts of Naples, Maria pulled down the window and called out to her mamma. 'Ciao Mamma.'

Mrs Ferrara was, as always, standing outside chatting away to her next door neighbour Iva.

"*Ciao Stellina mia*" – hi my little star,' she called back rushing forward to greet Maria as she *got out* the car followed by her father and Mark. She threw her arms around her daughter and kissed and hugged her as though she hadn't seen her in years. After a few moments she turned to Mark.

'It's great to see you again,' she said as she kissed him on both cheeks.

All this affection was really quite overwhelming, thought Mark.

Next her neighbour Iva kissed and hugged Maria and shouted to her husband.

'Roberto, *come out* and see who's here.'

'Well I never! It's our Maria! Give me a kiss "*cara*" dear.'

They both shook hands with Mark.

'Good to see Maria has found such a nice boy,' they said although deep down they weren't so happy.

They'd always hoped their son would come to his senses and beg Maria to *go back* to him. They loved Maria so much and had always *looked upon her* as their future daughter-in-law and the future mother of their grandchildren. Only now was it beginning to really *sink in* that it would never be the case. It was clear to see Maria had *moved on* and who could blame her?

'Well let's all go inside, shall we?' said Mrs Ferrara.

It was a lovely little house. The front door opened from the street into a cosy living room with a large fireplace in the corner and a marble archway leading from the living room to the kitchen. A wondrous smell of cooking wafted through the air.

'I've cooked "*pasta al forno*" baked pasta,' said Mrs Ferrara.

Mark could feel his stomach rumbling just at the mere thought of it.

After chatting for a bit Franco Ferrara set the table and everyone sat down to a scrumptious Italian meal.

'Have a glass of my home-made wine,' said Mr Ferrara.

'Thank you so much. I won't say no.' replied Mark holding out his glass.

‘What do you make of it?’ asked Maria’s proud-looking father.

‘It’s the best wine I’ve ever tasted – mmmm.’

‘I make it myself. The cellar’s full of the stuff. I’ll give you a few bottles to take back to Rome with you.’

‘What a pleasant jovial man,’ thought Mark. No wonder Maria is such a nice girl, having a father like Mr Ferrara who was going out of his way to make Mark feel so at home.

At the end of the meal Iva *came in* from next door carrying a tray of mushroom-shaped pastry-like cakes.

‘This is the Neapolitan babà,’ she said. ‘You can’t come here without trying one.’

‘Mark savoured a piece in his mouth for a few moments. ‘Absolutely scrumptious,’ he said. ‘There’s a lot of liqueur in there.’

‘Yes,’ said Maria. ‘They’re soaked in rum. Don’t you think it looks a bit like a large mushroom?’

‘It does indeed,’ replied Mark. ‘Mmmm, how delicious!’

‘It’s been said that the babà was inspired by the dome of St. Sofia’s Church in Constantinople,’ said Mr Ferrara.

Upon hearing the name “Sofia” Maria was reminded to ask her mother about Aunt Sofia.

‘Mamma. Who was Aunt Sofia’s husband?’

‘There’s a photograph of him with our Sofia in the display cabinet over there. I’ll just go and get it though you’ve already seen it umpteen times Maria. It’s always been there in the display cabinet since as far back as I can remember.’

‘Yes, I know mamma but I’ve never really taken much notice of it.’

Mrs Ferrara stood up and walked over to the display cabinet and took out the photo.

‘There you are,’ she said placing it down in front of Maria and Mark.

‘Oh my God,’ cried Mark.

‘Is something wrong?’ asked a startled Mr Ferrara.

‘It’s Mr Marini,’ said Mark and Maria in unison.

‘Yes, I know it is but why are you so alarmed?’

‘He’s our landlord. The kind man I told you about mamma. He’s also the owner of the English school where Mark is employed as the director of studies.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said Mrs Ferrara - tears streaming down her face.

‘You’ve found Mauro?’

‘Yes mamma. ‘He’s the kindest man we’ve ever met apart from papa of course.’

‘I remember his father was the owner of an old building close to Termini station in Rome. He also owned two or three villas, if I remember well.’

‘Well his father is no longer with us so Mauro inherited everything. What’s good about him mamma is that he’s a very down to earth gentleman. He’s got no airs and graces like many people who own a lot of property.’

Mark was still in disbelief as he sat staring at the photograph.

‘How old was he in this photo,’ he finally asked

‘He was just twenty eight years old. The photo was taken a few years before he married our Sofia.’

‘You can tell it’s him. He hasn’t changed much.’

In the photo Mr Marini had short jet black hair and a more youthful complexion.

‘His face is much thinner now and his hair is speckled with grey but he still looks the same. Look at those eyes. He’s still got that very kind expression about him,’ said Mark.

‘Yes,’ added Maria. ‘And he’s still tall and thin like he is in the photo.’

Mrs Ferrara started to sob. ‘Dear Mauro, what I would do to see him again. I just can’t believe that we’ve at long last found him. He was well loved by everyone who knew him. All those lost years.’

Maria told her parents everything that Dora had told both her and Mark about Mauro.

‘He’s never looked at another woman mamma since the death of Aunt Sofia but now he’s met Dora. You’ll love her mamma. She’s a kind considerate lady.’

‘Oh I’m so thankful that he has at last found happiness after years of solitude,’ sobbed Mrs Ferrara. ‘He was such a gracious soul. He loved Sofia with all his heart. The day she died, a part of him died along with her. He was inconsolable.’

‘Mamma, now he’s got family. He’ll have me, his niece, close to him in Rome and Mark can be the nephew he never had.’

‘We’ll all be related then,’ said Mark.

‘Yes, Mark. And Dora will be related to us too.’

‘Yes Maria, he’ll have Dora, and Dora’s son Mario. He’s going to be living the rest of his life surrounded by the family he thought he’d never have.’

‘Oh how wonderful. I’m so happy he’s not going to *go into* old age alone. He’s already had his fair share of sufferance in life,’ said Maria’s mother.

‘Well you know what they say,’ said Mark. ‘Every cloud has a silver lining.’

‘Yes,’ replied Maria, and ‘after the rain comes the sunshine.’ His rainy days are over. ‘I can’t wait to get back to Rome to tell him mamma.’

‘We’ll need to tread carefully Maria. This will come as a shock to him, to know that his tenant is actually his niece. You’re a blood relative of his beloved Sofia my dear. We also need to consider the fact that he’s never attempted to get in touch with us. We’re still at the same address and he’s never *looked us up.*’

‘Maybe he felt embarrassed to *look you up* after not being in touch for so long?’ said Mark. ‘I’ve got a couple of cousins I haven’t seen for about twenty years and I often wonder how they’d feel if I suddenly appeared on their doorstep. Mr Marini may be delighted or he may not. The ball can swing either way.’

‘Yes, I suppose you’re right Mark,’ said Maria. ‘We’ll have to break the news to him gently, you know, test the waters first to see how he’ll react. He may not want to open old wounds.’

‘I’m sure he’ll be delighted,’ said Mr Ferrara. ‘Going by what you’ve told us about him, it looks like he finally wants to come out of his shell.’

They finished the meal and had a little chat then Franco and Anna Ferrara led the way up a marble staircase to the bedroom area upstairs. They showed Mark into a small room.

‘This is the spare room for guests Mark. You can sleep here. Maria’s room’s next door. ‘The bathroom is over there so if you want you can have a shower. Well it’s time to get off to bed then,’ said Mrs Ferrara. ‘We’ll see you at breakfast in the morning. “*Buona notte,*” good night.’

“*Buona notte,*” replied Mark and Maria.

Next morning after breakfast Mark and Maria *headed down* to the town’s square still on a high about Mr Marini being related to Maria. Everyone stopped along the way to ask about Mark - curiously scanning every lineament of his face as they did so. He really did *stand out* with his blonde mop of wavy hair. Mark felt as though he were an alien just landed from another planet by the way they all seemed to scrutinise him. They spoke in the local dialect so he, who still struggled to understand Italian, had no idea

what they were saying. He kept hearing the name Giancarlo though. Later he asked Maria.

‘They were all just curious to know why I have a new boyfriend and they wanted to know what happened between me and Giancarlo. That’s all Mark.’

‘Did you see the way they *looked me up and down*?’ said Mark

‘It’s because we rarely see strangers in the town. We see the same people every day. Plus the fact with your fair complexion, blue eyes and mop of blonde hair. It’s impossible not to notice you – you really do *stand out*.’

‘Well I didn’t *stand out* in England. Nobody ever took any notice of me. I suppose it was because I *blended in with* the rest of the population.’

Mrs Ferrara couldn’t contain herself. She had to tell someone and her friend Iva was just the one. Iva already knew all about Sofia and Mauro – she’d heard the story a million times over.

Iva was flabbergasted. She ran hurriedly inside calling on her husband Roberto to *come out*.

‘Hurry, we’ve got some exciting news to tell you.’

And so it was - he was told the whole story.

‘I’m sure some things are meant to be,’ said Anna.

‘What do you mean?’ asked Iva

‘Well if Giancarlo and Maria hadn’t *split up*, Maria wouldn’t have met Mark. And if Maria hadn’t met Mark, she wouldn’t be living in Mauro’s building, and we would have died without ever known what *became of* Mauro.’

Just then Mark and Maria arrived back from the town Square.

Maria’s mother told them what they’d just been discussing about life’s chain of events.

‘Well,’ said Maria. ‘Really we’ve got Karen to thank for everything or maybe even Giancarlo. If Giancarlo hadn’t just dumped me like that, I wouldn’t have gone to live with Karen. And if I hadn’t gone to live with Karen, I would never have gone to the English school and I wouldn’t have met Dora or Mark or Uncle Mauro. There’s a chain reaction to everything we do.’

‘Yes,’ said Mark, ‘it would seem that there sure is a consequence to every action or decision we take in life.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Blend in with – if you blend in it means you are so similar to the other people or surroundings that nobody notices you

Come in – enter

Come out – exit from a place

Draw up – if a car or another vehicle ‘draws up’, it moves over to the side of the road and stops

Get back to – return

Get out – exit

Get in touch – make contact with someone

Go back – return

Head down – go down in the direction of

Look (someone) up – locate and visit

Look (someone) up and down – look at a person from head to toes/from top to bottom

Look upon (someone) as – see someone as

Make of (someone or something) – if you ask someone ‘what do you make of it?’ you are asking for his/her opinion. If in a statement you say ‘I don’t know what to make of him/her/it/them, it means you don’t know what to think.

Move on – go forward with one’s life leaving past matters behind you

Sink in – to slowly realise the truth of a matter/to begin to fully understand, refers mainly to unpleasant situations

Split up – separate

Stand out – be conspicuous/be very noticeable

Glossary – idioms and expressions

After the rain comes the sunshine – after a bad period a good one follows

Airs and graces – full of oneself/to have a feeling of self-importance and superiority

Along with – together with

At last – finally, ‘at long last’, emphasises finally

Break the news gently – tell someone something in a gentle way, usually something that could greatly surprise or shock the person

Come out of (one's) shell – to stop being withdrawn/become more confident and engaging with others

Come to (one's) senses – finally begin to reason

Contain (oneself) – control one's emotions/if you cannot contain yourself it means you cannot control your emotions

Down to earth – of simple style and manner and easy to get on with

Every cloud has a silver lining – good times follow the bad

Feel at home – feel comfortable and relaxed in a place as though you were in your own home

Go out of (one's) way to do (something) – make a tremendous effort to do something for someone even to the point of inconveniencing oneself/can be used both in positive and negative situations

Fair share of (something) – have more than enough/more than what is considered the average - if preceded by 'more than' then it means you've had an excessive amount, a lot more than what is seen to be normal

In touch – in contact

Is no longer with us – if you say that someone is no longer with us, it means he/she is dead

On a high – if you're on a high you are in a state of exhilaration

Take no notice of – ignore

Test the waters – probe with caution in order to understand any reaction or interest before advancing

The ball can swing either way – the outcome can either positive or negative

Well I never – an exclamation expressing great surprise

You can tell – one can understand by looking

Maria and Mark return to Rome

It was Sunday evening and Maria and Mark were about to enter their flat in Rome when something caught Mark's eye.

'What's that?' he asked Maria as he bent down to pick it up.

An envelope had been pushed through the bottom of the door with a "post it" sticker attached to the front.

'I've no idea,' said Maria. '*Hang on* a second and I'll *turn on* the light.'

With the light now on Mark was able to read the "post it".

It said:

Hi Mark,

This letter was delivered to the school on Saturday morning. It's addressed to you. Hope you had a nice weekend with Maria's family. Mauro and I had the best weekend of our lives.

It was signed, Dora.

Mark looked at the front of the envelope.

It said: *To Mark at the English Language School.*

'It's from someone who doesn't know either my surname or my address or even the fact that I live next door to the school. Who can it be?'

'There's only one way to *find out* and that is to open it and see,' said Maria.

Mark ripped the envelope open. Inside was a letter along with a wedding invitation from Sergio.

First he read the letter

Dear Mark,

I hope you receive this letter which I'm sending to the school where you work as I don't have your home address. I haven't forgotten how nice you were to me when we were in Bournemouth and London. You were a true friend. In fact, if it hadn't been for you organising the trip, I would never have met my future wife so in a certain sense I've got you to thank.

I just wanted to let you know that I'm getting married in a month's time. The only family members who are coming to the wedding are my mother and father. It would make me so happy if you were to come.

I've also sent an invitation to Maria, at the same address so her invitation should arrive round about the same time as yours. Please *look out for it* as I don't know if Maria still frequents the school. Maria was also a true friend when I was in England. It would be lovely to have you here to *make up the numbers*, otherwise there will be just my mum and dad and *maybe* my cousin Giancarlo, hopefully without that bitch of a girlfriend or I might be tempted to punch her face in. Don't know what he's doing with her when Maria was a million times better, anyway, we live and learn and one day he'll come down to earth with a bump.

It wouldn't look good for Katrina's family and friends to see that only my mum and dad are at the wedding. I invited the four friends I used to *hang around* the bar with but none of them can make it, so they say. They *made up* the excuse that they've got no money and can't speak English when really they don't need to speak English to attend a wedding. Anyway a couple of friends would make things look better for me, otherwise Katrina's family will think I have no friends and that would look bad on me. Please let me know as soon as possible and if you so happen to see Maria, please try to *talk her into* coming. She can be the interpreter for my mother and father who don't speak a single word of English and I'm worried they'll feel kind of lost. Maria's presence would be such a huge relief for me.

bye,
Sergio.

'What do you *make of* that Maria?'

'It sounds like he needs more guests than just his mum and dad and he's chosen you and I.'

'Well it looks like he just wants to use us to make up the numbers, and use you as his interpreter Maria.'

'Yes, I'm afraid it does. Re-read what he said about Giancarlo. Did I hear right? Did he say something about a girlfriend and how he might well punch her face in?'

There was no reply from Mark.

'Mark! Mark! Are you alright?' asked Maria anxiously. 'What's wrong Mark? You're ghostly white. Speak to me please. Say something. Let me fetch you some water. Shall I call a doctor?'

'Just a second Maria - I'm alright. Just give me a moment to *get a grip*. It's

just that this is all too much for me to *take in*.'

'What do you mean? The fact that my ex boyfriend may be at the wedding? Don't worry Mark. If *he's* going then *I* won't be going. Plus the fact we don't really have the money to fly to London. We've hardly just got back from visiting your family in England. We need money for our own wedding, though papa's already told me not to worry. He's put some money aside.'

'Maria,' said a deathly white Mark. 'His future wife's name's Katrina.'

'So!'

'She's the one who runs a recruitment agency, right? The one who *fixed Sergio up with* that job in the "Bella Napoli"?''

'Yes,' replied Maria. 'What's wrong with that Mark?'

'Well when my ex wife went to London, her father *set her up in business* at a recruitment agency and *her name's* Katrina. What are the odds of two women by the name of Katrina running their own recruitment agency in London? I know it's a big place and it must be absolutely full of recruitment agencies but still.'

'You don't think it could be the same Katrina Mark, do you?'

There was no reply from Mark as he opened the wedding invitation.

It said:

Mr & Mrs Philips are pleased to announce the wedding of their only daughter Katrina to Sergio Esposito at the ...

The wedding invitation dropped from Mark's hand onto the floor.

'It's *her* Maria. I don't believe it.'

'This is too much of a coincidence Mark. I'm truly stunned. Words fail me. Between Mr Marini being my uncle and now this.'

'Well Maria,' said Mark once he'd *got over* the initial shock. 'He's welcome to her. He'll have an awful life with that bitch I can tell you. She's a nasty piece of work and I'm well rid of her. Rather him than me.'

Mark took Maria in his arms and kissed her.

'Thinking about that bitch Maria only makes me appreciate you even more.'

'But still Mark, it's hard to believe. I saw her. I spoke to her. Don't you remember I was in the agency translating for Sergio? Just as well you remained in the pub Mark. It would have been awful for you to come face to face with her.'

'No, that wouldn't have bothered me; at least I could have warned Sergio

what he'd be *letting himself in for*.'

'No you couldn't have warned him. He wasn't her boyfriend when we were in London so there would have been nothing to warn him about.'

'What did you think about her when you saw her Maria?'

'I remember really clearly that I told Karen that although she was quite good looking with her long curly hair and expensive clothes, there was a coldness about her eyes. She was extremely business-like, I remember that about her.'

'Oh Karen spoke to her too,' said Mark.

'Yes, she did.'

'It's a small world Maria. It really is. So many strange coincidences have been happening one after the other. It's unbelievable. Who knows what's going to happen next. I spent thirteen years in the margarine factory and believe me when I tell you Maria, nothing happened. Thirteen long years of the same old thing every day. Since I've been in Rome it's been non-stop.'

'Maybe all these things are happening Mark to *make up for* the thirteen years of boredom.'

'Maybe Maria, maybe, but one thing's for sure, and that is, since I set foot on Italian soil there's never been a dull moment.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Fix (someone) up with – arrange for someone to have something they need or want

Get over (something) – recover from

Hang around – spend time in a place doing nothing in particular

Hang on – wait a moment

Let (oneself) in for (something) –become involved in an unpleasant situation without being aware of it

Look out for (someone or something) – stay alert in order not to miss someone or something expected to arrive

Make of (someone or something) – if you ask someone 'what do you make of it?' you are asking for his/her opinion. If in a statement you say 'I don't know what to make of him/her/it/them, it means you don't know what to

think.

Make up – invent

Make up (the numbers) – to have enough people to make an event worthwhile

Make up for – compensate for

Pick (something) **up** – lift something from the floor or ground

Set (someone) **up** (in business) – arrange and provide the means for someone to start a business

Take in – mentally absorb

Talk (someone) **into** (something) – persuade someone to do something

Turn on (a device) – activate

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A nasty piece of work – someone who is a nasty piece of work is a horrible, unpleasant person who is best to be avoided

Along with – together with

You're more than welcome to (someone or something) – if you say 'you're welcome to someone or something,' it means that the speaker no longer wishes to have the person or thing in his/her life. If you say, you're *more than* welcome to (someone or something) it adds extra emphasis that you desire to be well rid of whatever or whoever it is.

Be well rid of (someone or something) – if you're well rid of someone or something, then you're much better without the person or thing

Catch (someone's) **eye** – grab someone's attention by looking at a the person

Come down to earth with a bump – to suddenly become aware of the reality of a situation–the hard way

Get a grip – recompose oneself/control ones emotions

In a month's time – a month from now

Punch (someone's) **face in** – punch someone's face so hard that'll move inwards (towards the inside)

The odds – the possibility

Words fail me – used to emphasise a state of disbelief

Giancarlo breaks the news

Giancarlo had decided to split the weekend between Gianna and his parents. Saturday would be spent at his mother and father's house and Sunday with Gianna. This was the weekend he was going to break the news about his relationship with Gianna. He'd tell them over lunch. Yes, it would be a better idea to inform them when they were all sitting down relaxed at the table.

Iva had cooked her son's favourite food, "*melanzane alla parmigiana*" aubergine pie with tomato sauce and parmesan cheese, and "*peperoni ripieni*" stuffed peppers.

Over a mouthful of aubergine pie Giancarlo broke the news.

'Mum and dad. I've got something very important to tell you. Do you remember I told you that an important event in my life would soon be taking place?'

'Yes,' said Iva. 'What is it?'

'Well mamma, I'm engaged to be married.'

His father's fork flew out of his hand and landed on the floor at the opposite end of the kitchen.

'What?' said Iva nearly choking on a mouthful of aubergine pie. 'What do you mean? You never even told us you had a girlfriend. What about Maria?' she added, then quickly remembered that Maria was also getting married, but unfortunately not to their son.

'I'm engaged to a girl called Gianna. We're making arrangements to get married.'

'Why haven't we met her and why haven't you told us about her?'

'Well mamma. It's a strange story.'

He proceeded to tell his parents the whole story about how he'd met Gianna at the auditing company and how, unbeknown to him, she'd been Sergio's girlfriend.

'I couldn't risk telling you before now for two reasons. One, you might have, or rather, you probably would have, involuntarily opened your mouth to Aunt Giuseppina who would have in turn opened her mouth to Sergio, and two, I didn't want to hurt Maria. You, mamma, would have told Maria's mother who would have then told Maria.'

'Not if you had told me not to.'

‘You’d have told her mamma without realising it. You know fine well you can’t be trusted to keep a secret.’

‘That’s not true,’ replied Iva. ‘What do you take me for? So you left Maria for this girl? You threw everything up in the air for this Gianna? I hope for your sake you’ve done the right thing. It’s now too late in the day to go back.’

‘I know mamma, I know. I love Gianna more than I ever loved Maria. Anyway there’s one thing that Gianna’s father must *never know* if it can be helped.’

‘What’s that,’ asked his father still shocked at his son’s sudden announcement.

‘He must never know that I am related to Sergio. He hates Sergio for what he did to Gianna. Mr De Longo never stops talking about bad blood running in families and if he thinks I’m related to Sergio he’ll think I’ve got the same blood.’

‘What do you mean he’ll *think* you’ve got the same blood? You *have* got the same blood.’

‘Well not really mamma.’

‘You can’t deny it son,’ said his father. ‘Your mother is Sergio’s mother’s sister so you share some of the same blood.’

‘Yes dad but Sergio’s bad blood comes from his grandfather on his father’s side. It doesn’t come from his mother’s side of the family. Isn’t that right?’ said Giancarlo turning to his mother.

‘Yes it is but there’s no getting away from the fact that you are related to him.’

‘I know mamma but I don’t want Mr De Longo to know otherwise he’ll paint me with the same brush.’

‘Oh forget about what this girl’s father says, *or* thinks for that matter. You’re not planning on marrying *him* plus there’s the added fact that you and Sergio are as different as night and day. You’ve got absolutely nothing in common,’ replied Iva.

‘And haven’t you thought about Sergio’s reaction to the matter?’ asked his father.

‘Well I made sure that Sergio would be the first to know. I’ve already told him.’

‘Oh my gawd,’ said Iva. ‘What was his reaction?’

‘He didn’t have much of a reaction mamma. In fact he seemed to take it

with a pinch of salt. He told me I was welcome to her because he'd be getting married to an English girl soon.'

'Yes we already know he's getting married. It's a shotgun wedding,' said Roberto, his father. 'She's pregnant.'

'Yes he told me that. I get the impression he's only marrying her because she comes from a wealthy family.'

'I wouldn't put it past him,' said Iva. 'Knowing Sergio he'd be happy if he never had to do another day's work in his entire life. Anyway, he's invited us to the wedding. Giuseppina wants us to go to London with her and Angelo but really your father and I are afraid of flying, aren't we Roberto?'

'Yes, that's right. I prefer to keep my feet firmly on the ground. I feel a whole lot safer that way. If there so happened to be an accident up there in the sky how would I *get out* the plane?'

'Oh, come off it dad! Statistics have shown that the odds of dying in a plane crash are 10 million to 1. You stand a better chance of winning the lottery.'

'I don't care what statistics have shown. Knowing my luck I'd be that 1 in 10 million.'

'Anyway,' said Giancarlo. 'Gianna's mother and father can't wait to be introduced to you. I thought that maybe next week we could all go to a restaurant so you could get to know each other.'

'This is very complicated,' said Iva. 'Haven't you thought about the fact that you'll have to invite your Aunt Giuseppina and Uncle Angelo to the wedding? They know Gianna. Giuseppina told me many a time about how awful it was that her son had mistreated that lovely girl. She also told me that this Mr De Longo had been to their house to discuss what to do about Sergio's violence towards their daughter. They'll see each other at the wedding and Mr De Longo will want to know why they are there. He already knows them for goodness sake.'

'Well I was thinking about not inviting them. I know it's terrible not to invite your own aunt and uncle but I'm faced with no other option mamma, either that or ask them to pretend they are just family friends.'

'Just tell them the truth son,' said Roberto. 'Honesty is always the best policy. If this Mr De Longo doesn't like it he can lump it.'

'I can't dad. He'll wonder why I've never told him before now. He never stops *harping on* about how vile Sergio is, so it's not as if I can *make out* I never knew that the Sergio he's forever *running down* is our Sergio. He's

spoken about how wonderful Giuseppina and Angelo are and how it's so unbelievable that such a nice couple can produce such scum, as *he* puts it. It's obvious that I know which Sergio he's always *on about*.'

'You can't let this man control your life,' said Iva. 'This is madness at its best. Does the girl know you're related to Sergio?'

'Yes she does mamma.'

'And what does she think about it?'

'She doesn't care. She loves me for the person I am.'

'Well that's all that matters, isn't it? This father sounds like an interfering busybody if you ask me. Let's just think about this nearer the time, shall we?' said Iva. 'Your father and I have still to digest this sudden news.'

'Yes,' said his father, 'we'll need some time to take it all in.' 'Anyway,' said Iva, 'I'll have a word with Giuseppina and Angelo and explain everything. We'll see if we can *come up with* a solution. Meanwhile organise this night out in the restaurant so we can get it over and done with.'

'Don't mention it to Aunt Giuseppina and Uncle Angelo yet mamma. I don't want to hurt their feelings.'

'You'll be hurting their feelings by *not* inviting them to the wedding.'

'I know, I know. Anyway I'll discuss it with Gianna. Don't breathe a word to anyone yet mamma.'

'Okay, mum's the word,' said Iva 'although it beats me why you have to get married so soon to someone you hardly know.'

'I know her really well mamma. I'm marrying her because I love her and also because her father is against "living in sin", as *he* puts it.'

'Oh I've heard it all before,' said Iva. 'This is ridiculous but it's your life and you must live it how you see fit.'

'Yes,' added his father. 'It was a crazy idea to throw your relationship with Maria up in the air. At least her father is a normal human being who doesn't judge others according to who they are related to. I don't think I like the sound of this Mr De Longo. But anyway, it's too late now. You've made up your mind and even if you were to *back out of* this marriage, Maria is no longer available so there's absolutely no *going back*.'

'What do you mean Maria's no longer available?' asked Giancarlo.

'Well, she was here last weekend with her new future husband,' said his mother.

'What?'

'You heard what your mother said Giancarlo.'

‘Yes I know but did you say *her new future husband?*’

‘Yes I did. A very nice English boy; he’s the director of studies at a language school in Rome and the school is owned by Maria’s uncle. They even live in the flat next door to the school. Maria’s uncle is the owner of the whole building.’

‘Which uncle would that be?’

‘Her late Aunt Sofia’s husband - by some freak coincidence it *turned out* her landlord was the long lost Mauro. Maria’s parents lost touch with him long before Maria was born and now he’s been found.’

A twinge of jealousy shot through Giancarlo. Maria’s life seemed to be going really well. How could she have *got over* him so quickly?

‘She didn’t waste time did she?’ he eventually said to his parents.

‘Well, what was she to do?’ asked Iva. ‘Sit around *pinning for you* for the rest of her life. You’ve made your bed my son and now you must lie on it. If you have a re-think, it’s too late in the day. You’ve thrown away any possibility of marrying a good, decent girl, a girl with good family values, a girl you’ve known since you were children, a girl who comes from a family who does not judge others according to their relatives – talk about the seven-year itch? I’d just love to see how things go with this Gianna seven years down the line. You can’t expect to feel the same initial excitement after seven years. You’re a fool Giancarlo, nothing but a fool and I only hope for your sake my son that you’ve made the right choice although the way things are looking I don’t think your father and I like the idea of these future in-laws. We’re simple, down to earth people with no airs and graces. Going by what you’ve told us, this Mr De Longo sounds quite pretentious. I only hope I’m wrong.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back out of – to decide you don’t want to do something anymore, something you’ve committed yourself to

Be on about – to boringly speak in a long-winded way about something or someone/in the question “what are you on about?” = I’ve no idea what you are talking about

Come up with – find a way/think of a solution

Get out – exit

Get over – recover from

Go back – return

Make out – pretend/try to make someone believe something

Pine for (someone or something) – yearn for, so much so that it destroys you inside

Run (someone) down – criticise a person

Glossary – idioms and expressions

A busybody – someone who interferes in other people's business

A shotgun wedding – a quickly arranged marriage due to the bride being pregnant, usually to avoid the embarrassment of the baby being born out of wedlock

Airs and graces – full of oneself/to have a feeling of self-importance and superiority

As different as night and day – completely different/no comparison

Break the news (to someone) – inform someone of something, usually something surprising or shocking

Can't wait – if you can't wait it means that you are excited, eager and impatient about a forthcoming event

Come off it – 'don't be silly - you can't be serious about what you are saying/what you're saying is ridiculous'.

Don't breathe a word – don't say anything

Down the line – 'seven years down the line' = seven years from now

Down to earth – of simple style and manner and easy to get on with

For goodness' sake – used to express annoyance or frustration

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

Get (something) over and done with – finish something, you see as unpleasant, as quickly as possible so as to free yourself from having to think about it

Get to know – to begin know in a more profound way

Have a word with (someone) – briefly talk to someone about something

I've heard it all before – it's not the first time I've heard such nonsense

I wouldn't put it past (someone) – it would not surprise me (in the context, if he is marrying her for her money)

If he doesn't like it he can lump it – a commonly used British colloquialism - 'If you don't like it you can lump it' = if you're unhappy with the situation, no problem, you'll just have to accept it. Nobody intends to change it to suit you.'

If you ask me – if you want my opinion

It beats me – I find it difficult to comprehend

It's too late in the day – it's much too late to do something about something

Late – late + person (Maria's late Aunt Sofia) this means that the person you are talking about is dead if you put 'late' before the person's name

Live in sin – this refers to a couple who live together without being married

Make arrangements – organise to do something

Make up (one's) **mind** – decide

Mum's the word – a way of saying "your secret's safe with me", I won't say a word to anyone

Paint (someone) **with the same brush** – unfairly judge someone to be the same as another person – this idiomatic expression carries a negative connotation

See fit – consider appropriate

Take it all in – mentally absorb

The odds – the chances/possibilities

The seven-year itch – used to say that after seven years together, a couple usually experience dissatisfaction in their relationship. It's said that if you can make it to eight years together, then you'll have avoided the seven-year itch

There's no getting away from – it's unavoidable/it can't be avoided – used mainly for facts

You're more than welcome to (someone or something) – if you say 'you're welcome to someone or something,' it means that the speaker no longer wishes to have the person or thing in his/her life. If you say, you're *more than*

welcome to (someone or something) it adds extra emphasis that you desire to be well rid of whatever or whoever it is.

You've made your bed and now you must lie on it – you've made your decision and now you must bear the consequences

A letter to Sergio

Monday night came and it was with a sigh of relief that Mark finished his last lesson. He'd had trouble concentrating all day and some of his students were a little concerned about their favourite teacher.

'You don't seem your usual self,' Diego had said.

'I'm just a bit tired, thanks. I got home late last night after quite a few surprises over the weekend. There are a good few things I've still to digest. Maybe one day I'll do a lesson entitled "Life's surprises" or perhaps I'll write a book with the same title. So much has happened since I set foot in Italy. It's all too amazing to be true.'

'Oh please, tell us what happened over the weekend,' said a curious Diego.

'It would take me literally hours to tell you everything. But one day you'll *find out*; but right now I'm too tired even to think, let alone go into lengthy detail about something.'

After saying good night to the students Mark locked the school and went to his flat next door. What a relief not to have to travel, he thought as he opened the door to be greeted by his lovely Maria, who wasn't as lucky to have her place of work next door. Maria did a three and a half hour round trip daily to and from the primary school where she worked.

'Maria I think tonight I'll get that letter written to Sergio and send it off to him tomorrow. It's only manners to let him know as soon as possible that we won't be able to attend his wedding. At least we've got a good excuse not to go.'

'Yes' replied Maria. 'How could you possibly *take part in* your ex wife's wedding. Just tell him the truth Mark. There's no need to mention we're strapped for cash and how we need money for our own wedding; all that is irrelevant now.'

'I'd love to be a fly on the wall when he sees that he's getting married to my ex wife. She'll go berserk when he tells her that I was his teacher. I can just imagine her.

'*Sergio, you're wrong. He's not a teacher. The only job he ever had was in a margarine factory.*'

'Hey Mark,' said Maria. 'Sign the letter, Mark Milroy, the director of studies. That'll leave her speechless.'

'Brilliant idea Maria. I'll do that; let her know I've come up in the world.

She's met you Maria so mentioning to Sergio that I'll soon be *marrying* you will put her right in her place. She can't *not* have noticed just how beautiful you are. In fact it'll put her nose right out of joint.'

Maria was touched to hear Mark speak about how beautiful she was. Giancarlo had never paid her such lovely compliments. She felt a sudden surge of overwhelming love for Mark. He'd be the best husband any woman could wish for. Yes, he'd come into her life for a reason. Giancarlo was now history. Mark made her laugh and made her feel loved. Giancarlo was a serious boy who rarely laughed.

Mark got out a pen and paper and began to write.

Dear Sergio,

I'm writing to thank you for being so kind as to invite myself and my lovely Maria to your wedding. I'm so glad you've met your other half. It is with much regret that I cannot accept your invitation – reason being, you're getting married to Katrina Philips, alias, my ex-wife. I'm sure she does not share the same sentiment you hold for myself and the beautiful Maria, who is soon to be my wife.

I give you my blessing dear friend and hope you will both have a happy life together. Maria is sitting beside me as I write and is deeply dismayed that she cannot be present on one of the most important days of your life. How can my soon-to-be wife attend the wedding of my ex-wife? I do hope you understand dear Sergio. Remember, no hard feelings my friend. I hope you have found in Katrina, the same happiness and love that I have found in my darling Maria.

All the best and good luck for the future,

Kindest regards,

Mark and Maria

Mark folded the letter and put it into an envelope. He'd post it first thing in the morning.

'Well Maria, that's another thing out of the way. Next on the agenda is Mr Marini. Let's wait until the weekend to break the news, shall we? I've had enough excitement to last me a lifetime. I don't need any more for the time-being. I need to *get over* the fact that Sergio is marrying my ex. It's kind of knocked me for six.'

'Yes,' agreed Maria. 'Let's *wind down* first before the next bout of excitement. I've had more than my fair share for now.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back out of – to decide you don't want to do something anymore, something you've committed yourself to

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Wind down – slowly begin to relax after doing something tiring or stressful

Glossary – idioms and phrases

Another thing out of the way – one less problem to deal with

Be strapped for cash – to not have much money

Be touched – be emotionally affected, in the positive sense

Come up in the world – have a higher status

Fair share of (something) – have more than enough/more than what is considered the average - if preceded by 'more than' then it means you've had an excessive amount, a lot more than what is seen to be normal

First thing in the morning – immediately after you wake up

For the time-being – for now

Go berserk – become angry and a little bit crazy

Knock (someone) for six – stun/leave a person dumb-founded/stupefied

One's other half – your husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend

No hard feelings – this basically means 'I don't hold a grudge against you/I have no resentment towards you'

Put (someone) in his/her place – deflate a person's ego/cause a conceited, self righteous person to experience a degree of humility

Put (someone's) nose out of joint – cause a person to experience annoyance and envy possibly leading to feelings of inferiority and humility

Take part in – participate

Iva's recount

Iva and Roberto had just *popped in* for a coffee and a chat with their next-door neighbours Franco and Anna Ferrara the day after meeting their son's girlfriend Gianna and her parents.

Anna Ferrara knew Iva and Roberto had been for the "dreaded meal" in a restaurant the night before to meet their future in-laws and was bursting to hear all about it.

'How did it go Iva,' she asked excitedly.

'I'm not so sure they're the type of in-laws I want to have for the rest of my life.'

'What do you mean?' asked Anna.

'Oh maybe I'm just so used to it always having been Giancarlo and Maria and our cosy little families who have known each other for years,' said Iva.

'Yes,' said Anna, 'but you're going to have to face reality Iva. He's in love with this Gianna and there's nothing anyone can do about it. I know it would have been a whole lot better if he had *stuck with* our Maria but you're going to have to face the facts. Maria's *moved on* so there's no *going back*. Anyway what was this Gianna girl like and what about her parents? Tell us all about it. We're *all ears*, aren't we Franco?'

'Yes we are,' replied Anna's husband. *Fire away.*'

'Well to start with,' said Iva, 'she's from a completely different background – very upper class so as you can imagine, Roberto and I don't really have much in common with them, do we Roberto?'

'No, we don't,' replied Roberto. 'He's a top lawyer so he moves in higher circles. We're just simple, down-to-earth folk.'

'Anyway,' *went on* Iva, 'although she's an extremely pretty girl, she's not a patch on your Maria. She lacks that warmth you feel when Maria's around. The girl didn't say much to us. She just shook hands and said, "pleased to meet you, I'm Gianna." There was no further conversation between us for the rest of the evening.'

'Yes,' added Roberto. 'The father and mother did all the talking on her behalf. Once or twice she did try to speak to us but Mr De Longo got there first.'

'Maybe she'll be different Roberto without the presence of her father,' said Iva. 'We're going to have to give her the benefit of the doubt.'

‘Maybe, maybe, you never know,’ replied Roberto. ‘I only hope you’re right.’

‘And what about her mother?’ asked Franco Ferrara.

‘She was quite nice. ‘I’ll say this much about her, she did go out of her way to make us feel comfortable but it doesn’t change the fact that they’re both from a different social class. There’s no getting away from it.’

‘Was there any mention of Sergio being related to you?’ asked a curious Anna.

Despite Iva’s promise to her son she’d *blurted out* to Anna everything Giancarlo had said about the De Longos strong dislike for Sergio. Well, he did say not to mention it to Aunt Giuseppina and Uncle Angelo so that side of the promise Iva had kept.

‘We didn’t have to mention Sergio and neither did Giancarlo,’ replied Iva.

‘Why was that?’ asked a wide-eyed Anna.

‘The De Longos already knew they were cousins.’

‘What do you mean they already knew? Did Giancarlo finally pluck up the courage to tell them?’

‘No. This is what bugs me Anna. The De Longos already knew because Mr De Longo *took it upon himself* to do a background check on our family. What a nerve! As you can imagine Roberto and I were not in the least bit amused when he told us. He’s got a real cheek on him.’

‘A background check?’ said Franco. ‘Who the heck does he think he is?’

‘Well when he told us, Giancarlo nearly fell off his seat and so did Gianna. He tried to justify what he’d done by telling us that he had had no alternative because of what his daughter had *gone through* with Sergio.’

‘Yes,’ said Roberto. ‘He said he needed to know what kind of family background our Giancarlo was from. His background check revealed that Iva was Sergio’s mother’s sister although his main concern in that moment was how his daughter Gianna would react, not knowing that she already knew Giancarlo and Sergio were cousins.’

‘I thought these background checks could only be conducted by the police or other authorities,’ said Franco. ‘It’s a complete and utter disgrace that this man gained access to sensitive information such as past employment and financial records and, above all, criminal records, which thankfully none of you have.’

‘I know Franco, I know,’ said Roberto. ‘Nowadays you can pay for this type of investigation to be *carried out*. With him linked to the judiciary

system he'll have connections able to access this type of information.'

'It's a sheer disgrace. How sneaky can you get?' said Anna. 'Anyway was he annoyed with Giancarlo, given the fact that he'd never told him that Sergio was his cousin?'

'We're the ones who should be annoyed,' replied Roberto 'Not him. Imagine going to such lengths to *find out* more about Giancarlo. Couldn't he just have taken him at face value like a normal person does?'

'Anyway,' said Iva; 'to answer your question Anna, he did ask why Giancarlo had never told him that he and Sergio were cousins and that's when Roberto *stepped in*.'

'Really!' 'What did you say Roberto?' asked Anna.

'I answered on behalf of my son, just like he always answers on behalf of his daughter. This time, I got there first. I told him that Giancarlo hadn't mentioned it due to the more than likely negative reaction he'd have got and that he had intended on letting him know sooner or later and that it was just a matter of waiting for the right moment and anyway, what was the big deal?''

'Tell them what you said next Roberto,' said Iva. 'Go on.'

'Yes,' said her husband. 'I was a bit annoyed with the man so I told him straight to his face that every family has a skeleton in the cupboard with no exception and why should any other family member be judged *based upon* one black sheep.'

'Really,' said Anna, enjoying every moment of the recount.

'And what did he say to that?'

Iva *took over* the conversation. 'Anna, we put him right in his place.'

'What do you mean Iva?' said Anna. 'Tell me more.'

'Well you'll never guess what happened next?'

'Anyway,' continued Iva, 'Roberto said, and I quote, 'I bet you have a black sheep in your family Mr De Longo.'

'That's when his wife Elsa put her foot in it.' 'She answered on behalf of her husband.'

'Get to the point Iva,' said a by now desperately curious Anna.

'Yes Iva, don't keep us hanging on like this,' added Franco.

'Let *me* tell them this bit,' said Roberto. 'This is where he was put right in his place. Well, as I was saying, Elsa *put her foot in* it by suddenly answering on behalf of her husband. She said: 'Yes, you are right about every family having a black sheep. Ernesto's late uncle was the black sheep of their family, that is, his mother's deceased brother. He served a five-year prison

sentence for embezzlement. He was as corrupt as they come.'

'You're joking,' said Anna.

'No, it's the truth. Well needless to say Mr De Longo hung his head in shame for a few moments and then completely changed the subject.'

'I don't think he'll ever *go on about* bad blood again.'

'Yes, and I'm sure if we decided to do some background checks on his family we'd find many more skeletons in the cupboard. Maybe make our Sergio look like an angel in comparison,' added Iva.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Based upon – on the basis of

Blurt out – suddenly open one's mouth and reveal something usually due to not being able to control one's emotions

Carry out – do/perform/conduct

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Fire away – an informal way to say, 'yes, go ahead, start speaking'

Go back – return

Go on – continue

Go on about (someone or something) – tediously talk about someone or something

Go through – to experience something unpleasant

Move on – go forward with one's life leaving past matters behind you

Pop in – pay a brief visit to someone

Stick with (someone) – stay with/remain close to a person

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A skeleton in the cupboard – a dark, embarrassing secret from the past

Be all ears – be very keen to listen

Bug (someone) – annoy/irritate (colloquial English)

Face (the) facts – accept that someone not so pleasant is true

Get to the point – tell the main details without including unnecessary details

Give (someone) the benefit of the doubt – not judge a person where the truth of a situation is unclear/interpret a situation in the person's favour if you are in doubt

Go out of (one's) way (to do something) – do all that is possible even if it means inconveniencing oneself

He's got a cheek (on him) – he's impertinent/he's overstepped his mark (line of authority)

I'll say this much about her – this expression, 'I'll say this much about + person' means that you are about to say something positive about a person, especially after some criticism has been used

Keep (someone) hanging on – keep someone anxiously waiting

Late – if you say 'late + person', such as in the context 'late uncle' it means the person is dead

Not a patch on (someone or something) – if someone is not a patch on someone else, it means there is no comparison, the person who is not a patch on the other is greatly inferior in every way.

Pluck up the courage to do (something) – find the courage

Put (someone) in his/her place – deflate a person's ego/cause a conceited, self righteous person to experience a degree of humility

Put (one's) foot in it – accidentally open one's mouth and say something that causes great embarrassment to someone

Step in – intervene in something that is being disputed

Take (someone) at face value – accept someone based on appearance and expression without doing in-depth investigation

Take it upon (oneself) – do something when you have no authority or approval to do so

Tell (someone, something) straight to his/her face – tell a person clearly and honestly exactly what you think or feel even if it means being rude

The big deal – (What was the big deal?) What was so important?)

There's no getting away from (something) – it's unavoidable/it can't be avoided, used mainly for facts

Sergio receives a letter

Sergio Esposito had just arrived home from 'La Bella Napoli'.

'What's for dinner?' he *called out* to Katrina. 'Hope you've cooked something nice. I'm starving.'

'Yes. We're having steak and chips tonight,' *called back* Katrina from the kitchen. 'By the way, there's a letter for you. It's from Italy.'

'It'll be from my old English teacher Mark, or maybe from my cousin's ex girlfriend Maria. I sent each of them a wedding invitation, marked "RSVP", so this should be one of them responding.'

Sergio *took off* his jacket and tossed it onto the sofa. He sat down, opened the letter and began to read.

His face went white.

'What's wrong Sergio?' asked Katrina *coming out* of the kitchen. 'You're as white as a ghost.'

'Get me a glass of whiskey.'

'Tell me what's wrong.'

'Just get me a glass of whiskey Katrina. I don't believe what I've just read. There must be some kind of a mistake.'

'Is it your mother or father? Are they alright?'

'Get me a glass of whiskey,' he repeated.

Katrina *headed for* the drinks cabinet and *came back* with the whiskey and a glass.

Mark poured himself a double and downed it.

After a few moments he spoke.

'The letter is from Mark my English teacher, *and* Maria, my cousin Giancarlo's ex-girlfriend.'

'Do they know each other?'

'Yes, they do. They both came to England with me. In fact you've met Maria. She was in the agency as my interpreter. Don't you remember?'

'Yes, I remember that beautiful Italian girl. How could I ever forget? In fact I must admit I felt quite envious of her Mediterranean beauty. Hey, why are you looking at me like that Sergio?'

'Does the name Mark ring a bell?'

'Well it's a common name, why?'

'What was the name of your ex-husband?'

‘He was called Mark.’

‘Well, according to this letter, my English teacher, the one I invited to our wedding, is your ex-husband.’

‘No, this is some kind of joke,’ said Katrina. ‘My ex-husband has always been a factory worker. Not an English teacher.’

Sergio took another look at the letter.

‘*This* Mark, that is, my former English teacher, is now a director of studies. Take a look. It’s signed, Mark Milroy, director of studies.’

‘Hahahahaha!!!’ laughed Katrina. ‘Tell me another one. Is this the first whiskey you’ve had today Sergio or have you had a few shots down at the restaurant. You’re talking in riddles. Give me the letter. I know your English has improved a lot but not to the point where you can understand every word you read.’

Katrina grabbed the letter off Sergio and read it. She too needed a double whiskey. She felt quite faint.

‘You’re pregnant so it’s better if you avoid alcohol,’ was what Sergio told her.

She lay on top of the bed. It was too much to *take in*. She didn’t even know her ex lived in Italy. Yes she knew he had *moved out of* the flat they’d shared when they’d been married. She took it that it was because it had been too painful for him to *carry on* living there - too much for him to bear because it reminded him of her and that the only way to lessen the pain would be to *move out*. All correspondence regarding their divorce had been sent to his ma’s house in Liverpool.

He was getting married to that beautiful girl. It was unbelievable. He was a director of studies. Incredible! He lived in Rome. How was this possible? She’d even imagined him to *end up a down and out*, drinking more and more to dull the pain of the separation.

Sergio proceeded to *switch on* the computer. He *logged on* to his Facebook page.

‘Come here and take a look,’ he said.

He *flicked through* the albums he’d uploaded until he found the one with ‘the over 500 photos’ he’d taken in Bournemouth and in London. There it was, third photo in the album - a photo of Sergio with Mark and Maria. Maria and Mark had huge smiles on their faces. Mark was looking incredibly handsome, healthy and above all - happy.

‘Now do you believe what the letter says?’

Katrina felt rather light-headed for a moment or two. How handsome her Mark was in the photo and it was clear to see the close relationship he had with this Maria. She'd imagined him single forever – unable to forget her and unable to ever love another woman. A wave of jealousy swept through her body. She tried to pull herself together. She had Sergio now and she was getting married soon, although lately she'd noticed that Sergio seemed to be treating her more like a mother or maybe even a servant, than a future wife. It was always, 'iron my shirt,' or 'what have you cooked?' or 'where did you put my shoes?'

Only now did she remember how Mark had cooked all the time and how he had washed the dishes and ironed his own clothes. Mark had loved her little dog and had even taken it for walks. Sergio, on the other hand, couldn't stand the sight of it and, much to her dismay, she'd had to give it to her parents to *look after*. He wasn't interested in the fact that she missed little Larry and their daily walks together.

She hadn't given Mark a second thought since she'd walked out on him, but to see how happy he was with this Maria was like a stab in the back. Her father had warned her time and time again but his warnings had always fallen on deaf ears. Now she was thinking that maybe she should have taken his advice. She began to think it had all been her mother's fault. Yes, it was *her* fault. When dad had given her advice, all mum had said was, 'let her do what she wants. She's a big girl now.' Maybe if she'd had a mum who had given her good advice all this would never have happened.

This was one thing Katrina had in common with Sergio. They liked to blame others for their downfalls.

She turned to Sergio.

'Where was Mark the day you came into the recruitment agency with that Scottish girl and this Maria?'

'He was in the pub next door eating a baked potato with all the other students.'

Katrina couldn't believe it. All the while she'd been talking to Sergio – her husband had been next door. Yes, *her husband* – it was before the divorce came through – the divorce she'd begged her solicitor to *speed up*.

Sergio spoke and interrupted her thoughts.

'I wonder why he divorced you.'

'He didn't divorce me. It was me who divorced him.'

'Why would you divorce an amazing guy like Mark?'

‘He drank like a fish when I was married to him.’

‘Not anymore,’ said Sergio. ‘Mark is teetotal. He never touches alcohol. Are you sure you weren’t the cause of his drinking problem? You can be a bit of a nag at times and that’s enough to drive any decent man to drink. Maria is so sweet so I can’t imagine *her* ever nagging Mark.’

‘Oh, *shut up* Sergio. Can’t you say anything nice to me? If you think I’m such a nag we can always *call the wedding off*. It’s no skin off my nose.’

‘Do as you please,’ said Sergio. ‘Stop acting so precious. Be thankful you’ve found a guy like me. Do you know how many girls in ‘La Bella Napoli’ would give their eye teeth to have someone like me? Young, handsome and above all Italian. Yes, I’ve noticed how those English girls go crazy for handsome young Italian macho males like me. So suit yourself. If you don’t want to marry me, fair enough. There are plenty of fish in the sea.’

Katrina lay on the bed and cried. What had she done to deserve all this, she thought pitifully to herself as more and more tears streamed down her face wetting the pillow case in the process.

Sergio left the room and then re-appeared at the bedroom door but it wasn’t to comfort her the way Mark had done when she’d been upset.

‘Hey, aren’t we going to eat? Didn’t you say that steak and chips was on the menu tonight?’

‘I’ve lost my appetite,’ she cried.

‘Well I haven’t lost mine. Are you just going to lie there feeling sorry for yourself and let me starve to death?’

There was no answer from Katrina. That letter, and the way Sergio had spoken to her, had ruined the evening and the meal. She couldn’t stomach food. Not now. It upset her to see that Mark was happy without her and had *moved on* with his life.

Next morning Katrina Philips *woke up feeling gutted*. Had it all been a bad dream? No it hadn’t she soon realised when she saw Sergio waving the letter in his hand at the breakfast table. Sergio’s initial shock after reading the letter had *worn off*. He was back to normal and was going to write two letters before going to work. Yes, two, he thought. Nobody was going to get the better of a Neapolitan – and not just *any* Neapolitan. He was a Neapolitan through and through with seven generations of born and bred Neapolitans in the family. He had generations of real Neapolitan blood running through his veins. He chuckled to himself as he began to write, remembering that ‘he

who laughs last, laughs the best.’ He’d teach them all a lesson or two. He’d have the last laugh.

Letter number one was for his cousin Giancarlo, but first he *switched on* the computer and connected to Facebook. He proceeded to print out the photo of himself with Maria and Mark.

The second letter would be for Mark and Maria.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Call back – respond to someone who is at a distance from you by raising your voice so as to be heard

Call (something) off – cancel an event

Call out – raise one’s voice, in order to be heard, to someone who is at a distance from you

Carry on – continue

Come out – exit

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Flick through – quickly and casually glance by moving from one page to the next usually to find something specific or just to quickly browse, refers to books, magazines, text messages and photo albums. You can also flick through TV channels using a remote control, which means move quickly from one channel to another glancing as you do so.

Head for – go in the direction of a place

Log on/in – gain access to a computer system or website by inserting one’s username and password

Look after – attend to the needs of someone or something by giving what is necessary to keep safe from harm. You usually look after children, pets, plants, gardens and if you look after a thing, such as a car, you make sure you keep it in good condition

Move out – move from the house you live to go to live in another place

Pull (oneself) together – recompose oneself by taking control of one’s emotions

Shut up – an impolite way of saying ‘keep quiet’. An invitation to someone

to be silent

Speed up – make something go faster

Switch on – activate the flow of energy to an electrical or electronic device by turning a knob or pushing a button

Take in – mentally absorb

Take off – remove

Wear off – subside, slowly lessen and have no more effect

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A down and out – a homeless person who sleeps on the streets

By the way – is used as an afterthought which basically means, ‘before I forget to tell you’

Cannot/could not stomach (something or someone) – if you cannot stomach something, it means the thought of it makes you feel nauseous. If you cannot stomach someone, even the thought of the person causes you to feel disgust due to having such a strong dislike for the person

Down (something) – drink something in one gulp

Fair enough – that’s fine by me

Fall on deaf ears – not be heard

Feel gutted – to feel destroyed inside (British colloquialism)

Get the better of (someone) – outwit/cunningly surpass in ingenuity

Give (one’s) eye teeth (for something or someone or to have something or someone) – do everything possible and more

Go white – ‘go’ + adjective of colour and certain other adjectives means ‘become’

Have the last laugh – yesterday’s winners are today’s losers and yesterday’s losers are today’s winners, so today’s winners are now laughing at those who laughed at them

He who laughs last, laughs the best – the same in meaning to ‘have the last laugh’/to gain the upper hand/the last one to laugh wins; this expression has a slight tone of vindictiveness and irony

I take it – I assume/I imagine

It's no skin off my nose – it doesn't bother me in the least

Not give (someone or something) **a second thought** – to no longer consider or think about someone or something/to have whatever or whoever it is far from one's mind

Ring a bell – sound familiar

RSPV – this term is used on wedding invitation and comes from the French phrase 'Repondez, s'il vous plait' which means, 'please respond'. Guests are invited to respond to the invitation to let the couple who are getting married know whether they are going to attend the wedding.

Suit yourself – this means, 'do as you wish,' but with a subtle tone of sarcasm

Talk in riddles – talk without making any sense

Tell me another one – used with sarcasm to say you don't believe what someone has just told you

Time and time again – repeatedly

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon someone usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Sergio's letter to Giancarlo

Giancarlo was on his way home from work late that Friday night – still livid about the meeting between his parents and the parents of Gianna.

Since that awful evening he'd done nothing other than to replay the whole episode over and over again in his head. He still hadn't *got over* the fact that Mr De Longo had had the audacity to do a background check on him. What a cheek the man had on him. Mamma and papa *were* still *fuming over it* and did nothing else but talk about it – to everyone they met. Now the whole town knew.

He was feeling *let down* by the De Longos *and* his own parents. Yes, they'd *let him down* by trying to humiliate Mr De Longo in front of them all. It was true Gianna's father had deserved it but not from mamma and papa. He'd wanted the evening to go as smoothly as possible but it had all gone wrong. And Gianna! She'd just sat there without saying a word to her father about the fact he'd so sneakily *carried out* such a devious act. Any other girl with some guts would have told her father straight to his face what she thought – but not Gianna. She had just sat there in silence taking it all.

He began to wonder whether it had all been a mistake to leave Maria. At least Maria's father was a normal human being who didn't feel the need to go *prying on* other people's private affairs. It really bugged him that Mr De Longo knew his family's financial position which wasn't exactly a healthy one. It was none of the man's damn business. In fact he had a good mind to report him.

Twenty minutes later he turned the corner into the street where he lived, parked his car – relieved that he'd yet again managed to avoid the rush hour traffic – and *got out*.

Upon entering the building he glanced over at the mailbox hinged on the wall close to the lift. In it was a white envelope. Doesn't look like a bill he thought as he unlocked it and took out the letter before entering the lift. It had an English stamp on it. Yes it was definitely an English stamp. Staring back at him was an image of the Queen of England. It could only be from one person – his cousin Sergio.

Once inside his flat he *settled down* on the sofa, took out his reading glasses, opened the envelope and pulled out the letter. As he read he had a sickening feeling in his stomach. He had to re-read the letter a few times to

make sure he'd understood. It was more like an enigma than a letter. It said:

Dear Gianfranco,

Well here is the long-awaited wedding invitation, ha! ha! ha! You'll find it in the smaller envelope enclosed in this envelope but first, read the letter. With you being an engineer you should know that it's better to do things in the right order.

Anyway, you can come to the wedding but on one condition you come without my ex. She's the last person I want at my wedding.

Anyway my dear cousin. Isn't life full of surprises? First you inform me of your plans to marry my ex and then after I'm informed by the ex of my wife-to-be that he's marrying your ex.

Sounds like a riddle. Then decipher it and you'll soon see who I'm talking about.

So please feel free to attend my wedding. Your ex, though invited, cannot accept my invitation for reasons you will soon discover, therefore avoiding any embarrassment for you Giancarlo. How could your ex possibly attend my wedding when it's also the wedding of your ex's husband-to-be's ex. It would be extremely awkward.

*bye my dear cousin,
Sergio*

Giancarlo sat back. It had taken him quite a few minutes to *work it out*. The ex of Sergio's future wife was the man his Maria was going to be marrying. How could this be so? Sergio was marrying Maria's future husband's ex-wife, yes that was it. How weird this all was. His Maria was marrying a divorcee. It just didn't make sense at all. It had been he, Giancarlo, who had forced her into the arms of another man. With a sickening feeling he put the letter down on the coffee table then lifted it back up to pull out the smaller envelope with the wedding invitation in it and, from the same envelope, out fell a photo. He picked it up and turned it over. It was a photo of Sergio with Maria and this Mark, his Maria's future husband. They looked so happy together and Maria was more beautiful than he could ever remember. And this Mark, there was no denying the fact that he was a handsome boy.

His Maria was gone for good. There would be no turning back. Yes, mamma and papa had told him that night but really it hadn't *sunk in*. He'd

been too focused on trying to get his parents to agree not to mention to the De Longos that Sergio was related to him.

Too gutted to eat he went straight to bed lying there replaying everything in his head once again. If he were to marry Gianna, he'd be marrying her father and mother too. All three of them seemed to be joined at the hip. Maybe he should forget about the wedding.

At three o'clock in the morning, still unable to sleep, he *got up* and *switched on* his computer. He *went back* to the blog he'd created months before and re-read the advice he'd been given by the bloggers.

Gawd there were quite a few differences in opinion here but there were a few bloggers who'd given him bloody good sound advice which he so stupidly hadn't taken heed of.

He re-read and re-read and felt sick that he hadn't listened to those four wise insightful people.



Anonymous -5 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If you decide to *split up with* your girlfriend, you should do so because your relationship has *come to* its natural end. Do not leave her just because you've met someone else.



Lovelesslarry -4 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

If you *do* decide to *embark on* a new relationship, you should stay single for a period of time to *get over* your current girlfriend before starting a new relationship. Aren't you jumping the gun a bit? You haven't known this girl long enough to really know her.



Betruetoyourself-1 min ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

It happens all the time. It's just human nature. Just don't *act on it*.



Nobodyseverhappy -30 seconds ago

The grass is always greener on the other side.

Finally, weary from over-thinking, he *switched off* the computer and *went back* to bed and dreamt that it was he who was marrying Maria and not this Mark guy. Only when he *woke up* a few hours later did the reality of it all hit him like a ton of bricks.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Act on (something) – put into effect/do

Carry out – do/perform/conduct

Come to – reach

Come up – become available/arise/materialise

Embark on (something) – begin something that is new to you, something exciting such as a journey, a project or a new relationship

Fume over (something) – be very angry about

Get over – recover from

Let down – disappoint

Pry on (someone) – tastelessly enquire into someone's private affairs

Settle down – make oneself comfortable and relaxed

Split up with (someone) – end a relationship

Switch off – interrupt the flow of energy needed to make a device function

Switch on – activate the flow of energy to an electrical or electronic device by turning a knob or pushing a button

Wake up – stop sleeping

Work (something) out – use all mental power to try to understand something

Glossary – idioms and phrases

For good – forever

Guts – courage

Have a cheek on you – be so impertinent that you step over the mark (line of authority)

Have a good mind to do (something) – said in anger as a type of threat meaning that the speaker strongly desires do what he/she is threatening to do, but usually refrains from doing so

Hit (someone) like a ton of bricks – a sudden realisation which forcefully impacts a person

Husband-to-be – future husband

It bugged him – if something bugs someone, it annoys and really irritates the person (Colloquial English)

Jump the gun – do something before the time is right/act prematurely

Over and over again – repeatedly

Take heed of – pay attention to something someone tells you

Take it – accept it

Tell (someone, something) straight to his/her face – tell a person clearly and honestly exactly what you think or feel even if it means being rude

Wife-to-be – future wife

Sergio's letter to Mark and Maria

It was Saturday morning when the postman *popped* a white envelope with an English stamp on it *into* Mark and Maria's mailbox.

'Look Mark,' said Maria. 'It's a letter from England. There's an English stamp on it.'

'Yes,' replied Mark. 'It must be from Sergio. My parents phone me if they wish to speak to me and so do my brothers and sisters. None of them ever send letters.'

'Well let's open it and see what it says,' said Maria.

Mark opened the letter and began to read.

Dear Mark,

I understand perfectly well why you can't attend my wedding. It came as an awful shock to find out that my wife-to-be was once married to you. I have got over the shock but I must admit Katrina hasn't. She didn't even know you were in Italy and she found it impossible to believe you were the director of studies at a language school. She mentioned feeling a touch of jealousy at the beauty of Maria when we spoke about the day Maria accompanied me for the interview.

Anyway, I'm sure if she'd known Maria was soon to be your wife she would have reworded what she said.

Well Mark, there is more surprising news. Did you know that Maria's ex, that is my cousin Giancarlo, will soon be getting married? And guess who to? It would seem that he is also marrying someone's ex. Turn the page to see the answer.

Goodbye for now dear friend and say hello to the lovely Maria

Your friend,

Sergio

Maria turned the page immediately.

'Mark the name's written in code. That's typical of Sergio's childish ways. We're going to have to try to *work it out*.'

Written on the other side of the page were the numbers 7, 9, 14, 14, 1.

'It's easy to decipher Maria. A, B, C, D, E, F, G, there you are, 'G' is the

seventh letter of the English alphabet so if 7 corresponds to the letter 'G' then 1 will represent the letter 'A'. So the first letter is 'G' and the last one is 'A'. He's just changed the letters to numbers. It's not as complicated as I thought it would be.'

'It deciphers out as Gianna,' said Maria. 'Who's Gianna?'

'I've no idea,' said Mark.

'Maybe my mother will know. Giancarlo's mother Iva will have undoubtedly told her.'

Out of curiosity Maria *picked up* the phone and dialled her mother's number.

'Hi mum, how's it going?'

'Everything's *hunky dory*. Are you alright? You don't sound like your usual self.'

'That's because in this moment I'm not my usual self mum. I want you to answer me honestly. Who's Giancarlo getting married to mum?'

'Oh Maria, sooner or later you're going to *find out* so I might as well tell you. Anna and Roberto are not in the least bit happy. They'd rather have you as a daughter-in-law.'

'Who is it mamma. We received a letter from Sergio but he's playing his childish guessing games.'

'He's marrying Sergio's ex girlfriend - a girl by the name of Gianna.'

'What?' cried Maria down the phone.

'I spent seven years of my life waiting for him mamma and he marries someone he's just met *and* it's his cousin's ex girlfriend. What kind of a person is he? I'm so glad to be rid of him mamma. How could he be so sadistic and twisted?'

'It was meant to be Maria, remember that sometimes things in life *turn out* completely different to the way we plan them. You've got Mark now and he's a good person.'

'I know mamma I know but it still hurts to think that he's marrying someone so soon after meeting her when I was the one who dedicated all those years of my life to him, *for nothing*. Just to be dumped. I wonder if he dumped me for her or if he met her afterwards.'

'He more than likely met her afterwards,' lied Maria's mother.

Maria *put down the phone* and started to cry.

'Don't worry Maria. You've got me now. Your future is with me and not someone who is emotionally disturbed which obviously he is. Not everyone

marries their first boyfriends or girlfriends. People *break up* after thirty years and then what do they do?

‘Like Dora, Mark. I think she *broke up* with her husband after thirty years.’

‘Dora’s an exception. She was lucky to find Mr Marini. Think of all those people out there who after thirty years of marriage *end up* alone. At least you only wasted, well not wasted as I’m sure you had seven years of happiness, but what I mean is at least you didn’t *plod along* until the age of sixty. You’re still very young so it’s easier for you to adapt to a different life.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Break up (with someone) – end a relationship, usually a romantic one or a business partner

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Get over – recover from an illness or a shock

Pick up – (literal meaning) lift/raise something with your hands

Plod along – move forward slowly and aimlessly without any specific direction in mind, achieving nothing worthwhile in the **Pop** (something) **into** (something) – quickly put

Put down the phone/put the phone down – end a telephone call /literal meaning = place the phone on a surface

Turn out – in the end become

Work (something) **out** – use all mental power to try to understand something

Glossary – idioms and phrases

Glad to be rid of (someone) – happy not to have a certain person in one’s life anymore

Hunky dory – if everything is hunky dory, it means everything is going really well. (British colloquialism)

Wife-to-be – future wife

Giancarlo makes a decision

Gianna De Longo had just been discharged from hospital after being admitted the previous evening suffering from a severe attack of palpitations. Her parents had wasted no time in calling for an ambulance and had been beside themselves.

Cardiologist Doctor Perelli had assured Mr De Longo and his wife that the tests *carried out* had revealed there was nothing at all wrong with her heart and that the heart pounding she'd experienced had been *brought on* by panic and anxiety.

'Well I can assure you there *is something wrong* with her heart even if it's not physically,' Ernesto De Longo had told the doctor. 'I believe she's suffering from a severe case of heartache. These panic attacks began when her fiancé *called off* the wedding or should I say *put it off* doctor as really there was nothing to *call off* given that it had still to be organised.

Putting off a wedding should be no cause to trigger palpitations – a death in the family or the loss of a job maybe, but to *put a wedding off* should not result in such anxiety.

'Yes doctor but not only has he *put it off*, he's in Rome having what he calls a "*cooling off period*" and this is undoubtedly the true cause of my daughter's anxiety.'

Gianna was blaming her parents for everything.

'Why did you have to let it slip to Giancarlo and his family that you did a background check on him,' she'd screamed. 'You could quite easily have kept it secret and they'd never have known.'

'Your father didn't mean to tell them,' her mother had said. 'It just came out.'

'I know he didn't. I've just asked him why he let it slip, didn't you hear me? And *you* mum, why did you have to *go on about* dad's uncle being in prison? I've never been so humiliated in all my life. This meeting with his parents meant so much to me and you both ruined it all. It's all your fault that he's having this *cooling off* period. What if he finds another girlfriend? He's in Rome while I'm stuck here. He's surrounded by more females than males in the auditing company and they've all *been after him* since his promotion. He might even *go back* to his ex girlfriend Maria. I can't stand all this. It's

making me go out of my mind.’

Her mother had simply added, ‘but not all those females are as beautiful as you are my dear. Look in the mirror. Can’t you see how lucky you are to have been born a true beauty? There’s no need for all this insecurity. You mustn’t allow him to see how you are feeling. He’ll *be back* soon. He’s just a bit outraged at your father doing the background check. He’ll soon *get over* it all. It’s not the end of the world my dear. Just calm yourself down. It’ll soon pass.’

Giancarlo had told her, not to her face, but on the phone that he’d rather they put the wedding arrangements on hold for the time being as he needed to *straighten out* his mind.

He still spoke to her daily by phone, but preferred to keep his distance.

‘We’ll *get back* together in due time,’ he told her. ‘You’re going to have to *stand up for yourself*. Your father rules you. When a daughter marries, the father loses a daughter but gains a son. You’re father will be *hanging on to you* until the day he dies.’

The shock of Maria getting married just months after his having left her had shook him back to reality. Deep down he hoped she’d *back out of* the marriage or that this Mark would *back out* but according to mamma and papa, Maria was overjoyed. She lived in an old but beautiful building. She had Mark, she had her new-found uncle, she had Dora, yes mamma had *rubbed it in*. She was surrounded by people who loved and appreciated her and what’s more, she’d found a man who loved her enough to want to marry her without waiting for years like he himself had done.

His mother had told him it was a case of wanting something only when it’s out of your reach. His father said that you only appreciated a good thing when you no longer had it.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Back out of (something) – withdraw/re-think about a situation and decide you no longer want to go ahead with it

Be after (someone) – desire to have for oneself

Be back – return

Bring on – cause/be the cause of

Call off (an event) – cancel

Get back – return

Get over – recover from

Go back – return

Go on about (someone or something) – tediously talk about someone or something

Hang on to (someone or something) – not let go/keep

Put off – postpone/change to a later date

Put (something) on hold – momentarily suspend

Rub (something) in – continue to talk about something to someone who'd rather not be reminded due to it being either too painful or too embarrassing

Stand up for (oneself) – defend oneself by being self assertive and speaking one's mind/not allow oneself to be undermined

Straighten out (one's mind) – clarify one's thoughts

Glossary – idioms and phrases

A cooling off period – a period to think things over and decide what is the best thing to do

Can't stand (someone or something) – hate

Be beside (oneself) – to be in a state of anxiety

For the time being – for now, for the present, used to say that although a condition or situation is the way it is now, it could change in the future

Go out of (one's) mind – become crazy

In due time – when the time is right

Let (something) slip – mistakenly say something that should be kept secret or could cause embarrassment

Sergio sweet talks

Sergio Esposito was working in the Bella Napoli thinking about what Katrina had said. Yes, he'd heard what she said alright. It wasn't his imagination. She'd said something along the lines of not getting married anymore. No way could he allow her to *pull out of* the wedding – she was his golden goose after all. If she ditched him he'd have to *go back* to his hometown which would be a fate worse than death. If he were to continue staying in London no way would he be able to maintain the lifestyle he was living. Gawd it cost a fortune just for a bedsit – the cleaning lady in the restaurant was paying £550 a month for a single room. No, he could not allow this to happen to him. He'd remained in London to earn money not to *chuck it away* on rent. He was one of the privileged ones living in a "well to do" area. He'd seen bedsits advertised in his area and they were *going for* a whopping £900 a month. Gawd! He'd have nothing left of his salary.

There was also the fact that it wouldn't be long before baby Tonino made his entrance to the world – blood of his own blood. He'd have to sweet talk her into forgetting what he'd said that night. He should have kept his damn mouth shut – at least until after the wedding when his presence would be made official.

An idea struck him. He'd get her some flowers and chocolates on the way home from work. Yes, that's what he'd do. That would soon *soften her up*.

Mathew Philips was at home in a not-so-good mood. He turned to his wife Mary.

'Have you seen the way that Sergio treats our Katrina?'

'Yes I have Mathew. I've spoken to her about it but she's still adamant the wedding will *go ahead*. She's already booked the registry office.'

'It's obvious he's only marrying her for his own disgusting financial gain,' said Mathew Philips. She was so much better off with Mark. She's making the biggest mistake of her life by marrying that Sergio. She's blinded by looks so she is.'

'You can't put an old head on young shoulders,' was his wife's reply.

'What do you mean? She isn't exactly a spring chicken. She's nearly thirty two years of age. She should know better.'

'I know she should,' said Mary, 'but obviously she doesn't.'

‘Do you realise Mary that if anything were to happen to you and I, Katrina would inherit everything and Sergio Esposito would be quick in squandering every penny I’ve ever worked for. Money burns a hole in his pocket. Have you seen the new designer clothes he’s been buying himself since he started working in that Italian restaurant? He contributes nothing towards the home expenses. He’s nothing but a disgusting creature.’

‘He’s taking advantage of her,’ said Mary. ‘One day she’ll come down to earth with a bump but until that day there’s no *getting through* to her. Anyway what do you mean every penny you’ve ever worked for? You won that money don’t you remember?’

‘Of course I remember but I’ve worked damn hard over the years investing the money in the property market and the mere thought of someone like him squandering it all makes my blood boil. And if anything were to happen to Katrina after we *pass on*, he’ll get the whole bloody lot. I’ve a good mind to state in my will that under no circumstances must he inherit a penny.’

‘What about our grandson?’ said Mary. ‘Baby Tonino will soon be born. Do you want to cut him out of your will?’

‘He’ll get a sum of money upon reaching the age of twenty one but until that day he’ll get nothing. Here’s hoping he *takes after me* and not his father otherwise that’ll be another spendthrift in the family. I only wish she’d never left Mark. At least he knew the true value of money. Don’t you remember he even refused to accept that house I wanted to purchase for them when he married our Katrina? He was happy to live in that small place he’d so proudly managed to buy with great sacrifices.’

‘Oh Matthew, we’re still quite young. If all goes well we should have about another thirty years ahead of us. People are living into their nineties nowadays.’

‘Yes I know Mary but you never know. It’s always best to take precautions.’

‘Just relax Mathew. We’ll cross that bridge when we get to it. There’s no point in getting yourself all het up for nothing. Hey, she might divorce him when she comes to her senses and that’ll be the end of the problem.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Be het up – agitated

Chuck (something) away – throw away/dispose of/discard of

Get through to (someone) – be able to make someone understand or reason

Go for – sell for/rent for

Go back – return

Go ahead – proceed

Pass on – die

Pull out of (something) – withdraw/re-think about a situation and decide you no longer want to go ahead with it

Soften (someone) up – do something to please someone in order to make the person do as you want

Take after (someone) – inherit the same characteristics

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Glossary – idioms and phrases

A fate worse than death – a misfortune that renders life unbearable

A spring chicken – a young person

Be better off – be in a much more favourable situation

Come down to earth with a bump – to suddenly become aware of the reality of a situation—the hard way

Come to (one's) senses – finally begin to reason

Cross that bridge when we get to it – deal with/face a problem when it arises

Cut (someone) out of (one's) will – leave nothing to a person when you die

Golden goose— a source of money

Have a good mind to do (something) – said in anger as a type of threat meaning that the speaker strongly desires do what he/she is threatening to do, but usually refrains from doing so

Make (one's) blood boil – if something makes your blood boil, it causes you to become very angry

Money burns a hole in (one's) pocket – unable to keep money, have no control with money and spend it all the minute you have any

Put an old head on young shoulders – prematurely make a person wise, usually when they are too young to have had enough experience in life

Spendthrift – a person who spends and wastes money as though it grew on trees

Sweet talk (someone) **into doing** (something) – convince by using sweet words

Take advantage of – profit from for one's own gain/use something to your advantage

Well-to-do – affluent/wealthy

Mark and Maria break the news

Mark and Maria had decided to have a word with Dora before “breaking the news gently” to Mr Marini.

In a nearby coffee bar they enquired as to whether Mauro had ever mentioned anything about Sofia’s family.

‘Well as a matter of fact he has,’ replied Dora.

‘He deeply regrets not having kept in touch with them over the years - especially Sofia’s sister Anna. He often wonders what became of them and if Anna ever married her “then” boyfriend, a boy by the name of Franco. He said that for all he knows he might even have some nieces and nephews. He’s mentioned once or twice that he was actually thinking of contacting them but would feel a trifle embarrassed. So many years have *gone by* and what would they think is what he said. You know twenty seven years of silence is rather a long time. And do you know what Mauro says about you and Mark?’ Dora said turning to Maria.

‘What?’ asked Mark and Maria curiously.

‘Well the fact that Sofia died before they had the chance to have any children greatly saddens him. In fact, he thinks I’m so lucky to have my son Mario. Anyway, to get to the point, when he sees you both, he often thinks about the children he and Sofia never had. You see, if Sofia hadn’t died so prematurely, they’d probably have had a couple of children and Mauro says they’d be about your ages now and how he would have loved to have had a son like you Mark and a daughter like Maria. He says that *you* Mark and *you* Maria would be a son and daughter to be proud of. He sees you as what could have been, had fate not decided to deal such a cruel hand.’

Maria, upon hearing this, could no longer contain herself.

‘Dora please brace yourself,’ said Maria.

‘What do you mean? Why? What’s wrong?’

‘Well Dora. Mark and I have something to tell you – something too unbelievable for words – something that’s going to be difficult for you to *take in*.’

Dora suddenly *took on* a ghostly appearance.

‘I hope it’s not something terrible,’ she replied after a few moments.

‘No, of course not, rather, on the contrary.’

‘You’re not going to believe what Mark and I are about to tell you. Do you

remember you mentioned Sofia falling out of a boat and drowning?’

‘Yes,’ said Dora. ‘I certainly do. Why do you ask?’

‘Well, you see Dora. I thought it was a strange coincidence that my mother’s sister died in the same way.’

‘You’re not saying

‘Yes I am Dora,’ said Maria. ‘Mark and I asked my mother to show us a photo of her sister Sofia and her fiancé. There in the photo was Aunt Sofia with Mauro – *your* Mauro Dora. A younger version of him but it was him. He hasn’t changed much.’

Dora grabbed onto the table to stop herself from falling off her chair.

‘It’s too incredible to be true. *You, Maria are my Mauro’s niece!*’

‘Yes, I am Dora. My mother and father know everything but they agreed with Mark and I that we’d have to test the waters before breaking the news. We weren’t sure how Mauro would react. You know, whether he wanted to be contacted. My mother said that it would be best if we treaded carefully.’

‘Yes,’ said Mark. ‘Some people are not happy to unearth the past so we thought we’d test the waters through you Dora.’

‘Believe you me, he’ll be more than happy,’ cried Dora, tears of joy rolling down her cheeks. He’ll be in seventh heaven. Do you realise what all this means?’ said Dora.

‘Yes,’ said Mark. ‘We are all going to be related. We’re going to be one big happy family.’

They stood up and hugged one another. Dora cried and cried and cried and so did Mark and Maria.

‘Let’s call Mauro and get him down here quickly. This is going to be the biggest surprise he’s ever had and he deserves it I can assure you,’ said Dora. ‘I can’t believe how my life has *turned around* so much after those four years of darkness. And dear Mauro’s after twenty seven years of a life of gloom. I just can’t believe it,’ she added crying, but this time she cried tears of joy.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Become of – happen, used when wondering what happened or will happen to someone

Go by – pass

Take in – mentally absorb

Take on – in the context ‘her face *took on* a ghostly appearance’ it means

‘adopt’

Turn around – in the context ‘if someone’s life turns around’ it means it changes completely

Glossary – idioms and phrases

As a matter of fact – used to give emphasis, similar in meaning to ‘actually’/to be honest with you

Be in seventh heaven – to be overjoyed/super happy

Believe you me – an emphatic way to say ‘believe me’

Brace (oneself) – prepare oneself for some surprising or shocking news

Break the news gently – tell someone something in a gentle way, usually something that could greatly surprise or shock the person

Contain (oneself) – control one’s emotions/if you can no longer contain yourself it means you can no longer keep your emotions under control

For all he knows – this phrase carries a very specific hypothetical meaning ... ‘for all he knows’ he might have some nieces and nephews/there is the possibility that he has some nieces and nephews

Get to the point – talk about the main issue without wasting time on trivial details

Have a word with (someone) – briefly talk to someone about something

Keep in touch – remain in contact/not lose contact with a person

On the contrary – the opposite is true

Test the waters – probe with caution in order to understand any reaction or interest before advancing

The double wedding

Tears of joy streamed down Mr Marini's cheeks that day Maria, along with Mark and Dora, 'broke the news to him gently'.

They hugged and kissed as Mauro cried that he should have contacted Maria's family but he'd become so depressed and withdrawn that he couldn't bring himself to make contact with anyone.

'After many years you feel a bit of a fool to get in touch with people you've made no contact with over the years,' he'd said still finding it hard to believe that Maria was his niece and the fact that soon he'd be reunited with dear Anna and Franco.

To think that he'd dreamed of having a son and daughter like Maria and Mark and to discover he was related to Maria and soon would be related to Mark! It was going to take quite some time for all this to really sink in. He felt he was dreaming and at any moment would *wake up*.

Dora was still finding it unbelievable to have *found out* that her "guardian angels" were going to be related to her and also the fact that her son Mario would have a real family again.

'I can't help thinking that the day Luigi met that Bulgarian girl on the internet was the day that destiny decided I deserved better than a man who *cheated on* me. God alone only knows how many other women he had throughout our farce of a marriage. Now he's all alone but he brought it on himself so he did. Did he really think a twenty five year old girl would stay on the scene for long?'

'What do you mean?' asked Mark.

'Oh sorry Mark, with all the excitement that's been *going on* I completely forgot to mention it. Well, he contacted Mario begging for forgiveness. Seemingly his twenty five year old got bored with him and found someone younger, someone of her own age, but it didn't stop her from claiming maintenance for the children. From what I gather, he's now living in a rented room, rather penniless I should add; she really took him to the cleaners when she left him. She was awarded a huge chunk of his salary.'

'Sorry Dora but it serves him right,' said Mark. 'He should never have treated you the way he did. The fact that he mercilessly abandoned his own son as well says a lot about the type of person he really is. He's made his bed and now he must lie on it.'

‘Yes,’ said Maria. ‘As the saying goes Dora, one man’s loss is another man’s gain. His loss is Mauro’s gain.’

Mauro and Dora moved into the attic flat in the building. It took Dora precisely two minutes *to get to work*. It was such a relief for her not to be stuck in traffic jams anymore. The school was only two floors down from her home so now she could sleep longer in the morning. She was now living a stress-free life and looked ten years younger for it.

A flat had become available on the second floor so Mark and Maria relocated there while Mr Marini *called in* a team of builders to knock down one of the walls in Mark and Maria’s former flat. The idea was to extend Dora’s school giving them another three classrooms and a small studio where Mr Marini could work. He’d gladly joined the school part-time and his job was to *take care of* the administrative side of things. That way he had something to occupy himself with and, at the same time, keep him mentally active, *and* it would also take the onus off Dora. They were both working part-time now and had more free time to spend together to enjoy life.

Life went from good to better. Weekends were spent at Mauro’s villa near the Roman Castles where Dora could completely unwind in the peace and quiet away from the hustle and bustle of life in the city. A couple of Sundays a month Mark and Maria would join them for lunch.

There was a lot of bureaucracy and paperwork involved but the day soon arrived when Maria and Mark stood in the registry office in Rome along with Dora and Mauro. They’d decided on a double wedding.

The brides arrived in a limousine, courtesy of Mauro Marini.

Mark’s breath was taken away as Maria stepped out looking stunningly beautiful in a lace ivory gown carrying a bunch of white adorned flowers and wearing a matching flower head piece. Dora followed in a satin ivory gown embroidered at the neck wearing a head piece with a mix of flowers and pearls and carrying a fragrant bouquet of blooms. Mauro gasped in admiration.

As they made their way up the steps to the registry office the sound of the song, “Love is in the air” *boomed out*. The atmosphere was magical. Cameras were clicking all around capturing the moment.

Mrs Ferrara *fussed over* her daughter, fixing her hair and adjusting the head piece. Franco Ferrara was so proud to see his lovely daughter glowing with

happiness.

It was a day of great joy for everyone although a little tinged with sadness for Mark. Ma, pa and his brothers and sisters would not be present. It would have cost them too much to travel to Rome and none of them were in the financial position to pay out for airfares and a hotel. Yes, he and Maria could have offered to *put some of them up* but there were too many in his family and it wouldn't have solved the issue of the airfares.

But anyway, they would all be going to Bournemouth the day after the wedding to celebrate with his family. Mr Marini had so generously booked and paid for flights for everyone to travel to the UK.

'This will be my wedding present to you Mark and to my long lost niece. You've all brought so much happiness into my life and anyway I can afford it. After all, money is made for spending. Nobody wants to die rich do they?'

Kevin and Lindsay were now back on their feet and had said they'd *put them all up* in their guesthouse, free of charge, to *pay back* the favour Mark had done for them.

Maria's parents hadn't batted an eyelid when they *found out* their daughter was marrying a "divorced" man. They were a little bit sorry about not having the big white wedding in the "paese" –the town, but the excitement of being reunited with Mauro and meeting the lovely Dora more than *made up for it*.

Mauro had organised coaches to take the wedding party to his villa at the Roman Castles where a team of caterers had been *called in* to serve them up the best of food. A band played music in the garden and everybody danced to the soundtrack of "*La vita é bella*" (Life is beautiful) followed by "That's amore" and "*Nel blu dipinto di blu*". It was a day of joy and happiness for everyone.

At the end of the evening Mark borrowed a microphone from a member of the band and gave a speech.

'First of all I would like to thank you all for coming. It means so much to myself and my beautiful wife Maria. A special thanks to Mr Marini for his kindness in providing the venue together with this wonderful band and excellent food. Thank you,' he called to the caterers who were clearing the tables.

Looking over at Mr Marini, Mark proceeded to say.

'I'm touched by Mauro's generosity and kindness. One day I will repay you for all you've done,' he said with tears in his eyes.

Mr Marini came forward and took the microphone.

‘There’s no need to repay me. I’ve been more than repaid by life itself. I have my new-found family and that is all that matters. Let’s call it a little gift from father to son,’ he winked before walking away to join Dora who was chatting away to Maria’s mother and father.

Mark took the microphone and continued.

‘I’d like to thank my wonderful mother-in-law, and thank you Franco,’ he said turning to his father-in-law. ‘What would I have done without you all?’

Franco Ferrara stood up and took the microphone.

‘Welcome to the family son. You’re now an official member,’ he said embracing his new son-in-law.

The evening ended with the band playing “Everlasting love.”

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Become of – happen, used when wondering what happened or will happen to someone

Boom out – to come out very loudly/high volume

Call in (someone) – request a home visit from a specialist in a certain field

Cheat on (somebody) – to be unfaithful in a husband/wife, boyfriend/girlfriend relationship

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Fuss over – give a great deal of attention to

Get to – reach arrive

Go on – continue

Make up for – compensate for

Put (someone) **up** – give hospitality to a person/offer to let someone sleep at your place for a period of time

Sink in – to slowly realise the truth of a matter/to begin to fully understand, refers mainly to unpleasant situations

Wake up – finish sleeping

Glossary – idioms and phrases

After all – gives emphasis to a point by adding an additional reason - similar

to 'when all is said and done'. It reinforces and supports what was said before

Along with – together with

Back on (one's) feet – go to a previous more favourable financial position

Be touched – be emotionally affected in the positive sense

Can't help – be unable to stop oneself from doing something

For it – in the context, 'because of it'

Free of charge – without having to pay

From what I gather – from what I understand

Get in touch with – make contact with a person/s

Not bat an eyelid – to remain calm and completely unaffected by something

One man's loss is another man's gain – for every loser there's a winner

Penniless – without money/have no money

Serves (you/him/her/them right) – this is said to say that if something bad happens to someone, he/she deserves it

Take care of – in the context 'oversee'

Take the onus off (someone) – remove a burden, duty or responsibility from a person/lighten a person's load

Take (someone) to the cleaners – strip a person of all money and valuables

Traffic jam – a blockage of cars and other vehicles due to heavy traffic/congestion

You've made your bed and now you must lie on it – you've made your decision and now you must bear the consequences

Arriving in Bournemouth

Kevin and Lindsay had been working hard to organise everything for the arrival of the newly-weds and Maria's parents, Dora's son Mario, and his girlfriend Francesca.

Balloons and streamers decorated the façade of the guesthouse and over the doorway hung a huge sign.

"Welcome to the newly-weds"

Mark was touched by the effort they'd gone to and even more touched to see ma and pa - knowing full well that pa hated travelling. He gave each of them a tight hug.

'Great to see you ma and pa. Thanks a lot for coming.'

'Ma was delighted to see her golden boy again and the fact he was so happy made the journey from Liverpool even more worthwhile.

'Oh the lovely Maria,' said papa embracing and kissing her. 'My beautiful new daughter-in-law.'

Pa had never been a man to show affection. Mark knew that his pa was going out of his way to be a good hostess for his son's new Italian family. Later Mark would thank him for that. He remembered how cold his father had been the day he married Katrina. Papa had never liked her and had never hidden the fact either.

Mr Marini and Dora were welcomed as though they were royalty.

Kevin and Lindsay thanked them for everything they had done for Mark and so did ma and pa.

'It's great to *breathe in* this glorious English sea-air,' said Mr Marini. 'It's a wonderful place to live. One day in the future I may quite well invest in a holiday home here for myself and my lovely bride and our son Mario,' he said turning to Dora and Mario. 'We could even retire here Dora when the time comes.'

Dora was in her element at all the attention her new husband was *showering upon her* while Mario tried to *take in* the words Mr Marini had just said.

'Did I hear right?' he asked Francesca.' Yes, you did. He sure did say "our son".'

Mario suddenly felt a sense of security. The security he'd lost when his own father had *walked out on him* years before and the fear he had *gone*

through watching his mother overwork, terrified that her health may suffer; now thankfully all that was in the past.

Mario and Francesca were happy to practise their English and took the opportunity to do so by *mingling* and conversing *with* Mark's family.

The day went well and the children ran around playing chases.

'Aunt Maria, say something to me in Italian,' said little Kitty who had been *named after* Mark's mother.

'*Come ti chiami?*' asked Maria.

'What does that mean?' asked Kitty.

'It means, what's your name?'

Now little Kitty was running around asking everyone the question. '*Come ti chiami?*' Soon the other children were running around asking everyone the same question.

'We can speak Italian,' shouted Jimmy's son Brendan.

Everyone was in high spirits and the four days' in Bournemouth were the best they'd ever had.

Before leaving for Italy, Mr Marini took Kevin aside.

'I wish to thank you for the wonderful hospitality you've shown us since we arrived. It's a fantastic place Kevin and I see, like your brother Mark, you're a proud man and a hard worker. I don't want you to be offended but Dora mentioned the fact that Mark had travelled over with a group of students to *help you out* when you *ran into* some financial difficulties.'

'I'm not in the least offended Mr Marini. Mark didn't waste time in helping me when he heard what Lindsay and I were *going through*. He's a one-in-a-million brother.'

'Well Kevin if you ever experience any of those difficulties again, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me. I'll gladly help you out. We've expanded the school now so we could organise another group of students, even on a regular basis. Mark could take time off from the school and bring them over. That way he'd be close to his wonderful family. Here's my business card,' he said patting Kevin on the shoulder. 'Remember, do not hesitate to get in touch if you should ever find yourself in deep water. I'll be deeply offended if you don't.'

'Thanks so much Mr Marini, thanks again, I'm ever so grateful.'

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Go through – experience

Breathe in – inhale

Help (someone) out – provide assistance to make another person's task become easier

Mingle with – intermix

Name (someone) after (someone) – give someone the same name as someone, usually an older family member

Run into (difficulties) – unexpectedly encounter

Take in – mentally absorb

Walk out on (someone) – leave/abandon someone usually by leaving the home you share with the person

Glossary – idioms and phrase

Be in (one's) element – be super happy

Be touched – be emotionally affected in the positive sense

Get in touch – contact a person

Go out of (one's) way to do (something) – make a tremendous effort to do something for someone even to the point of inconveniencing oneself/can be used both in positive and negative situations

In deep water – in trouble

Shower (someone) with attention – give a lot of attention to someone/lavish with attention

Giancarlo leaves Italy

Giancarlo looked at his watch. In an hour or so he'd be on his way to London. He'd been *tracked down* by head hunters and offered a job in a large auditing company in the capital. The salary on offer was triple what he'd been making in Italy.

He'd jumped at the chance and had been interviewed via Skype. A couple of seniors from the London based company had scheduled a second interview and had travelled out to Rome. This was the man they were looking for. They'd had no desire to jeopardize things by asking him to fly to London. They had to make it all easy for him or he could *turn down* the offer. They'd even found him a chic flat in the Chelsea area which the company would be paying for. It came as one of the perks of the job.

He'd *got over* the shock of Maria getting married. He'd thought about it day after day and had come to realise that his mother had been right all along. It was a case of wanting what you can't have; wanting something that was out of your reach. Yes, mum had been right when she'd said that things seemed more attractive when you couldn't have them.'

He'd *logged on* to the blog again and scrutinised the replies he'd received that night he'd posted a request for help. One reply had caught his attention.

He'd read and re-read. Yes, maybe this guy Stanley had been right all along.

He took note of the phrase to remind himself.

'If you have such deep feelings for another girl, then it means you are not in love with your girlfriend.'



Stanley 4 mins ago

Dear Tornbetweentwolovers

You need to see this from your girlfriend's point of view. If I were her I would want to know the truth. It's not fair to *string her along*. Maybe you have just got so used to being with each other, you know, feeling comfortable with each other like a pair of old slippers. If you have such deep feelings for another girl then it means you are not in love with your girlfriend.

Just then Gianna *came out of the ladies*'.

'Sorry to keep you waiting my love. There was such a long queue.'

'No worries my darling. Give me your hand. Let's *go through* to the

departure lounge.'

Gianna had proven her love for him. She'd left her parents to be with him and Mr De Longo had given them his blessing.

'It's the least I can do Giancarlo,' he'd said. 'I hope you can forgive me for that stupid background check I *carried out* on you. I guess I'm just an over-protective father who went too far.'

'Of course I forgive you Mr De Longo. We all make mistakes. I've made many myself and I'll probably *go on* making many more. Anyway remember you are more than welcome to visit us in London anytime you like. I'll make sure your daughter is well looked after, *and* I'll make sure to bite my tongue if I see the toothpaste lying around.'

'Have a safe journey then,' said Mr De Longo as he *took hold of* Giancarlo's hand and hugged him.

'Thanks, we will, and maybe we can arrange the wedding to take place when we *come back* on holiday.'

'Yes, of course son,' replied Gianna's father. 'Anytime you're ready. There's no rush. I know she's in good hands with you – married or not.'

'Giancarlo was touched. Mr De Longo had just called him son.'

Elsa De Longo kissed her daughter and turned to Giancarlo.

'Thanks for everything,' she said. 'Ernesto and I are so glad you and Gianna are together again. We couldn't wish for a better person for our daughter.'

'Thanks Elsa. We'll phone you when we get to London and remember, you haven't lost a daughter, you've gained a son.'

'Thank God they're back together Ernesto,' said Elsa as they both sat down to dinner that evening. 'I couldn't take any more of seeing her almost suicidal.'

'Neither could I Elsa,' replied her husband. 'I'm so glad to see her so happy again and I'm so glad Giancarlo forgave my wickedness. Never again do I wish to see my daughter in the state she was in, and never again am I going to stick my nose in her affairs. I've learned a good lesson once and for all.'

Gianna and Giancarlo landed in London after a smooth flight and took a taxi to the flat in Chelsea.

'Oh it's wonderful to be here Giancarlo, just you and I alone. I'm so excited.'

‘I am too Gianna. We’re together and that’s all that matters.’ ‘Yes Giancarlo and I’m so happy that you and papa have *made up*. I feel so lighthearted I could dance.’

Giancarlo paid the taxi driver and he and Gianna headed up to the new Chelsea flat. Somebody from the company would be waiting for them with the keys.

‘Oh look Giancarlo,’ said Gianna pointing to a restaurant on the other side of the road.

‘Look at the name. It’s like being home from home.

Giancarlo looked across to the other side of the road.

‘La Bella Napoli’.

‘Wonderful! At least if we can’t get used to the English food, we can *pop over* there for a meal. Just as long as it isn’t the restaurant where Sergio works.’

‘Don’t be silly,’ laughed Gianna. ‘That would be far too coincidental.’

‘Yes I know,’ replied Giancarlo. ‘I was just joking.’

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Carry out – do/perform/conduct

Come back – return

Come out of – exit a place

Go on – continue

Get over – recover from

Go through – pass

Make up – make peace after a disagreement

Pop over – pay a quick visit

String (someone) along – to use a person for one’s own gain and mislead him/her into thinking you have serious intentions

Take hold of (one’s) hand – take in your hand and grasp

Track down – look for and find

Turn down – refuse/decline an offer

Glossary – idioms and phrases

All along – the whole time

Be in good hands – be safely and competently cared for

Be touched – be emotionally affected, in a positive way

Bite (one's) tongue – think before one speaks so as not to say something that may be regretted/do everything possible to avoid say something that could prove to be hurtful or inappropriate

Can't/couldn't take (a situation) any more or any more of a (situation) – this means you can no longer tolerate something

Go too far – exaggerate

Home from home – a place where you feel as comfortable as you would in your own home

Jump at the chance – accept an opportunity without hesitation

Perks of the job – benefits

Point of view – opinion

Once and for all – finally and conclusively

Stick (one's) nose in – meddle

Take note of (something) – mentally try to remember something because it's important *or* write something down so as to remember it

Take place – occur/happen

Baby Tonino

Angelo and Giuseppina Esposito had just landed in London having come to visit Baby Tonino who was now twenty one months old. They hadn't seen him since the christening *apart from* photographs Sergio had shared on Facebook.

'He's beginning to look more and more like my father as the weeks *go by*,' Angelo had said to Giuseppina that day a whole new batch of photos were uploaded to Facebook. 'And to have given him the same name!'

Five days after their arrival the Espositos decided to *go back* to Italy. They couldn't take any more of the constant bickering between their son and Katrina while their grandson Tonino *smashed up* his toys and screamed all day long. Katrina just got hysterical. She had no idea how to handle her baby and Sergio just handed him chocolate and toys in a bid to keep him quiet but it was of no use; he just took the toys and threw them violently on the floor and proceeded to stamp all over the chocolate causing such a mess as he did so.

Baby Tonino had been expelled from two nursery schools so far.

Mrs Dawkins from the nursery school had *called* Katrina *into* her office.

'I'm so sorry Mrs Esposito but our staff are not qualified for children like Tonino. He bullies all the children and grabs their toys off them, screaming, 'mine', 'mine', 'mine'. He wants everything for himself. He does not want to share anything. I think you should take him to a child assessment officer to *find out* why he's behaving in such a terrible way. It's just non-stop.

'As always, Katrina *took* her frustration *out on* Sergio.

'We're going to have to employ a nanny,' she screamed. 'I can't *go on* like this any longer'

'A nanny costs money,' screamed back Sergio. 'Have you got a thousand quid to *throw away* each month, coz that's how much they cost? You should know, you run a recruitment agency.'

'I can't take any more of Tonino's behaviour. I haven't had a decent night's sleep since the day he was born. It's all too much for me. I'm going to *end up* having a nervous breakdown at this rate. Look at the bags under my eyes. Look at them,' she screamed. 'I'm beginning to look like an old bag through lack of sleep. I've aged ten years since the day he was born.'

‘You’re the one who wanted a baby, not me,’ screamed back Sergio.

Katrina’s parents often visited to help with Tonino but even they couldn’t stand the rowdiness of the boy. A day in their flat was more than enough. Mr Philips eventually told his daughter that for their own sanity, he and his wife would have to sleep in a hotel. So they’d booked into a hotel in the neighbourhood and took Tonino off their daughter’s hands for a few hours each day. That was more than enough for them before they felt they’d lose their minds.

Put his reins on,’ said Katrina ‘or he’ll *run away* like he did a couple of weeks ago. We nearly lost him for good, didn’t we you little rascal, she goosed turning to the little terror. ‘He can run as fast as lightning. In fact the little devil could practically run before he could walk. He’s a real little whizz kid, aren’t you?’ she said as she *lifted him up*, though she quickly put him back down again when he *tugged on* her hair with all his might. ‘Ahhhhhh!!!’ Screamed Katrina. ‘You’ve hurt me.’

The only time they saw their son laugh with glee was when he’d inflicted pain on his parents or anyone else for that matter. He seemed to take great delight when they screamed in horror at him.

During the four days spent in London, Giuseppina and Tonino took him to the park to feed the ducks. He threw a tantrum because he couldn’t take one of the ducks. There was no consoling him. Everyone stared at Giuseppina and Tonino as they made their way back to their son’s home dragging a wailing baby along with him. Some muttered, ‘poor grandparents having *to put up with* that.’ An elderly lady stopped to say, ‘I’m so glad I don’t have any grandchildren. That’s enough to put anyone in the loony bin.’

He wailed the place down when he didn’t get what he wanted.

‘A life of hell awaits our Sergio and his wife,’ he told his wife on the plane back to Italy. ‘I wouldn’t want to be in their shoes.’

‘Neither would I,’ replied Giuseppina. ‘I’ve already had twenty five years of that - more than enough to last me two lifetimes. I know he is our son and Tonino is our grandson but I’m glad they are all in England out our way’.

‘Yes,’ said Angelo. ‘I see what you mean. History has repeated itself once again. Tonino is worse than Sergio was. *Much worse*.’

‘Anyway it’s great to be *going back* to Italy but it’s a pity we didn’t manage to visit Giancarlo. Iva will be disappointed,’ said Giuseppina.

‘Well London’s a big place and I don’t know my way around so we’d probably have got lost. Iva said not to mention Giancarlo being in London. She wouldn’t like Sergio to start any trouble. You know with Gianna being there. If Giancarlo wants, he can *look Sergio up*. It’s better if we *keep out of it*.’

How peaceful it was when they entered their home and their two purring Persian cats came over to greet them.

‘How wonderful it is to be back home with our peaceful, non-troublesome babies,’ said Angelo.’

‘Yes, Home Sweet Home,’ replied Giuseppina. ‘Everything is back to how it was when I first met you Angelo.’

‘Yes, it’s like being in paradise,’ he replied.

Glossary – phrasal verbs

Breathe in – inhale

Call (someone) into (a place) – request to formally speak to someone about an issue

End up – be or do something in the end/an unplanned end result of something/eventually

Find out – obtain information/discover/become informed or aware of

Go back – return

Go by – pass

Go through – experience (verb)

Keep out of (something) – not get involved

Lift up – raise with the hands

Look (someone) up – locate and visit

Put up with – tolerate

Run away – move away very fast by running/escape

Smash up – angrily break into pieces

Take (something) out on (someone) – treat someone unpleasantly because you are frustrated and angry/expel one’s anger onto another person

Throw away – dispose of/in the context the meaning is ‘to waste’

Tug on – pull forcefully

Glossary – idioms and phrases

All day long – from the morning until the night

Apart from – except

Be in (someone’s) shoes – be in a person’s situation

Can’t/couldn’t stand – strongly dislike/hate

Can’t take (a situation) any more or any more of a (situation) – this means you can no longer tolerate something

For good – forever

For that matter – used to specify that a subject or category, is as relevant as the one previously mentioned

In a bid – in an attempt

Lose (one’s) mind – become crazy

Quid – slang for pound, as in, pound sterling (£)

The loony bin – the asylum, a place for the mentally ill

Throw a tantrum – scream and shout with anger usually kicking one’s legs up in the air and throwing oneself to the ground

The End