

[Part 2 of the story]

**Only in Woman can you follow the exciting new adventures of the Bellamy household in your favourite TV series...
Upstairs Downstairs**

For everyone but James it looked like being a romantic Christmas. Viscount Bellamy was traveling to Scotland with his fiancée, Virginia, for a family holiday; Georgina had fallen in love with a wounded soldier – even Rose had met a dashing young man.

A voice echoed out of the fog. “Is that Rose?”

The shadowy figure loomed at the back door of the house.

Rose couldn’t answer. Her throat had closed at the sound of that rasping Australian accent. Gregory! Yet Gregory, her fiancé, had been killed at the Front...

The figure was real enough, but something was not quite right. Perhaps it was the tilt of the hat, the stance, the tone... Steadying herself, she whispered: “Who is it?”

The visitor moved a pace towards the door, and a beam of yellowish light from a street lamp on the pavement above caught and illuminated a rugged face.

The hair was fair under the Anzac hat, the eyes were clear blue.

It was not Gregory Wilmot; but it was someone who looked amazingly like him.

“Bill Cunningham. Pal of Gregory Wilmot’s. Thought I’d look you up. May I come in?”

Rose was too upset to speak. She nodded her head, and stood aside as the stranger stepped into the kitchen.

A faint smell of baking wafted up to meet the acrid fog as she shut the back door, and the kitchen drew them in with its winking brass and copper, and the lamps already lit against the gloom of the evening.

“It’s cold outside,” she said at last. “You’d better come to the fire and get warm.”

“Thanks. Miss Buck, isn’t it?”

“Rose Buck,” she managed a friendly smile. “Sorry I stared like that, only I thought at first – well – seeing you standing there in the fog – same uniform and hat and...”

“That’s all right. Can’t blame you, Miss Buck.”

“It’s Rose.”

“Rose,” Bill said as he followed her into the empty servants’ hall, “Greg and me were about the same height, same coloured hair. Our officer used to get us mixed up sometimes. Quite funny really.”

“Go on,” said Rose, as Bill put his hat down on the table and sat in the armchair, very much at home. Then he looked at Rose with his pale blue, honest eyes and his voice became quieter.

“He was my pal, Greg was. Of all our lads who...got it, he’s the one I miss the most. Old Greg Wilmot. He was my platoon sergeant. So I thought I’d like to pay you a call.”

“I see,” said Rose quietly. She was sitting at the table now, still staring at him.

“He used to talk about you quite a bit. Showed all the lads your photo.”

“All of you?” Rose sounded a bit shocked at this public display of the snap she’d given Gregory before he went to France for the last time.

It was a bit daring. Rose, in her frilly bathing costume and cap, posed on the steps of one of those bathing machines at Herne Bay. It had been taken by Daisy, the Bank Holiday before the war broke out in 1914.

“He used to say how you were going to marry him and go out to Australia when the war was over. And he’d show your picture around. He was proud of you, Rose.”

She looked down at her lap. After a short silence she got up and started for the kitchen door.

“Sit there, while I put the kettle on for a cup of tea, eh?”

Bill Cunningham thought she matched up pretty well to her photo. A bit drawn and pale perhaps. But that was to be expected.

One thing the photo didn’t show, he reflected, was that nice voice. Warmth, that’s what it had, real friendly warmth, Bill thought.

As Bill talked over tea, Rose began to lose her early shyness. He told her that he was on a fortnight’s leave from a training camp on Salisbury Plain.

He’d been all ready to leave for France, when the news came through of the armistice. Now, it was a case of waiting around in England for his unit to embark for Australia and eventual demobilisation.

But that might take weeks. He had time on his hands.

“Maybe we could meet again, some time,” he said. “I’d like to, well, take you out dancing. if you’d like. We could go to one of those tea-dance places.”

Poor Bill, how was he to know what her reaction would be?

“Gregory used to take me to a tea-dance place, in Charing Cross Road.”

Bill looked at his feet, and flushed.

“I’m sorry,” he said.

“It’s all right.” Then seeing his embarrassment, Rose added quickly, “I’d like to go dancing again. I mean with you. I wouldn’t mind. Seeing you were his pal.”

Bill looked up again, relieved and smiling.

“I’ve got ten days before my leave ends. When’s your afternoon off?”

“Thursdays.”

“Next Thursday then?”

She nodded her head, thinking how much more determined Bill was than Gregory, who had always seemed a bit shy, tentative.

“Where’ll I meet you?” she said. “Outside Swan and Edgar, Piccadilly Circus,” came the unhesitating answer. “Three o’clock, if you can manage it.”

“Yes, all right,” Rose said. Something inside her said: “That’s too quick, too neat.” Greg would never have been so certain of what to say, where to suggest meeting.

She found herself comparing Bill’s nose with Greg’s. Bill had a smaller, straighter nose. A better profile altogether. Finer features.

But inwardly she rebuked herself for being disloyal. She’d been ready to marry Greg. Now he was dead and she’d inherited a small but considerable sum of money under his will. She must not start comparing him with his friend.

Bill was honest-looking. He had troubled to seek her out, a spinster of 32, a housemaid. He must be trusted, taken at face value.

She poured him another cup of tea and they sat together, talking.

Between them had grown a sort of unspoken agreement not to mention the war, or people being killed or wounded; and to speak of Gregory only as someone close they had both known.

Rose found this touching and very much to Bill’s credit. He was clearly a sensitive young man. He understood how she felt.

“Time I was going,” he said finally, getting up and glancing at the old clock on the mantelpiece. “Mustn’t keep you up too late.”

At the back door the young Australian shook Rose warmly and firmly by the hand. Then he vanished into the fog and Rose heard his footsteps echo along the pavement of Eaton Place into the distance...

The following Thursday, when Rose set out to meet Bill, Edward, the Bellamys’ former footman, arrived at the back door of 165 Eaton Place, to collect Daisy his wife, who’d given notice from her job as housemaid.

This was her last day in the Bellamys’ service and Edward had come to take her off to spend Christmas with his family at Walthamstow before they started the great adventure of trying to earn a living outside domestic service. He was in civilian clothes for the first time.

As he chatted in the kitchen to Mrs. Bridges, he told her he’d been discharged that morning from the Middlesex Regiment – a few months earlier than most of his pals because of his recent shellshock.

“Daisy ready, is she?” he asked.

“Upstairs getting her hat on,” volunteered Ruby, the unlovely kitchen maid.

When Daisy at last came down from her attic room, dressed for travel and carrying a small hold-all, Hudson gave her a look of ill-concealed contempt, as he emerged from the pantry with a tray of glasses. He simply couldn’t understand why anyone should want to leave the security of a good position in service and venture into the world without job or prospects of any kind, as far as he could see.

“I understand you’re leaving your trunk here, until after Christmas.”

“If it’s not in the way, Mr. Hudson?” the girl answered, glancing at Edward for support. Edward took the cue.

“Too heavy for us to take on the bus all the way to Liverpool Street, Mr. Hudson.”

“Very well.” Hudson was about to continue upstairs, but paused and turned to Daisy, offering his hand rather coldly.

“I’ll say goodbye then, Daisy,” he managed. “A happy Christmas to you both and good luck in the New Year.” He nodded and went on up the stairs.

“Thanks, Mr. Hudson,” said Edward. Daisy said nothing.

The young couple said goodbye to Mrs. Bridges, who wiped flour from her hands to give Daisy a motherly kiss. Ruby shook hands with them both, grinning sheepishly at Edward for whom she’d always cherished a secret passion.

“Cheerio, Rube,” said Edward, sadly. “Pity Rose isn’t in. Have to say goodbye for us, won’t you, eh?”

“That’s right,” Mrs. Bridges said. “It’s her afternoon off.”

Ruby added: “She’s gone out to a tea-dance with Mr. Cunningham.”

“Who’s he when he’s not at home?” asked Edward.

“He’s an Australian soldier, pal of Mr. Wilmot’s, as called to see her last week,” said Daisy.

“Oh,” was all Edward could find to say.

Mrs. Bridges carried on whipping up cake mixture in a bowl. “Take her mind off things,” she said.

“Well,” said Edward, suddenly his old cheery, cheeky self. “Let’s be off. Dais.” And he slapped her playfully on the bottom.

But Daisy was in no mood for horseplay. This was a solemn moment for her. She was cutting herself off from Eaton Place, the other servants, her home for the last five years. She was taking a plunge into the unknown world outside.

She felt distinctly insecure and anxious.

“Cheerio then,” Daisy said, trying to smile and look hopeful as she followed Edward to the back door.

In a few moments they were walking along Eaton Place towards Victoria, where they would get on an omnibus for Liverpool Street. A young married couple, from service below stairs. Ready to face the world outside.

“This hold-all’s ever so heavy. Eddie,” Daisy grumbled. Edward had his kitbag and another heavy bag to carry.

“I’ll take it.”

“You can’t manage it.”

“Yes I can.”

“Why couldn’t we run to a taxi, Eddie? I could have brought my trunk and not had to go back there after Christmas.”

“I’m not made of money,” Edward said, rather cross with her. “Besides, it’ll be a nice excuse to pop down and see them all again.”

“I don’t want to see them again. None of them. Never.”

“What’s the matter with you?” Daisy had stopped now, in the middle of the pavement and was openly crying her heart out.

“Daisy.” Edward took her by the arm but she shook him off.

“Come on, Dais. Pull yourself together.”

“Leave me be, please leave me be,” she shouted, tears now coursing down her cheeks.

“Just because I can’t afford to take you all the way to Liverpool Street Station in a taxi there’s no need to start bellowing in the street...”

Two elderly women came along the pavement and had to dodge past Daisy, staring at her as they went, and muttering to each other. Edward was mortified.

Edward chases a tearful wife

“Daisy,” he pleaded. “Not here, not in the street. What’ll people think?”

“If we’re so poor we can’t get my trunk to the station, why are we leaving service?”

“You know why, Daisy. I’ve told you. We’re going to better ourselves, get a new job and a nice house and have babies...”

“I don’t want to go, I’m frightened,” the girl wailed. And she started to run down the street back towards Number 165 Eaton Place.

Edward chased after her and caught her fiercely by the arm.

“Come on, Daisy, stop this! You’re coming with me.”

“Eddie,” she begged appealingly.

“You’ll do as I say, Dais, because I’m your husband and what I says goes.”

“All right, Eddie,” she said quietly. “I’ll try and be more cheerful.”

“That’s better. Now blow your nose, and let’s catch that bus, eh?”

Edward smiled encouragingly at her. Daisy put her left arm through his, keeping her hold-all in the other. Edward picked up his bulging kitbag and his battered gladstone, and the pair of them walked on again down the street towards Victoria Station and a new life...

Another couple were also heading towards one of London’s main line stations – and the start of a new life together that Christmas. Viscount Bellamy and Virginia Hamilton, the attractive young widow who had agreed to marry him. They were to catch the fast train to Inverness from King’s Cross station.

With them were Virginia’s two children by her first marriage, and faithful Nanny who had been with the Hamilton family for years. Richard Bellamy had agreed she should stay on to look after Alice and William.

Unlike Edward and Daisy, who'd had to push their way on to a packed local train and stand all the way, Richard and Virginia were met at the station entrance by Mr. Slater the station master, in morning coat and silk hat.

"Lord Bellamy?" he asked, as the two small children looked up at him with wonder.

"That's right," Richard said.

"Good morning to you."

Virginia smiled and took a child in each hand, leaving Nanny to carry their light bags.

"The porter has instructions to place your luggage in the van and label it, m'lord. There are 14 pieces I believe."

"That is correct," Richard said. And Virginia nodded.

The station master bowed and gestured to Richard and Virginia to follow him towards the ticket barrier and the waiting train.

To Scotland and an uncertain welcome

The Bellamys swept through the barrier and up the platform; passengers and porters stepped aside as the station master cleared the way, until half-way up the train they reached a locked first-class compartment with a label on the window which read: *Reserved for Viscount Bellamy and Party.*

Mr. Slater unlocked the compartment and they all climbed in. The children at once started bouncing about on the plush seats until Nanny told them to stop.

The station master gave some instructions to the carriage attendant and, satisfied that Lord Bellamy and his party were comfortably settled for the long journey to Scotland, he prepared to depart from the coach.

Richard discreetly slipped him a £5 note which Mr. Slater palmed as though it had never existed. He raised his silk hat and disappeared back along the platform to his office.

As the train rattled north towards Edinburgh, Richard put down his book, *A Life Of Lord Melbourne*, and glanced over to where Virginia was asleep in her seat opposite.

Across the compartment Nanny was pointing out cows in herds, signal boxes, factory chimneys and viaducts, as the two heads of the Hamilton children began to nod.

Richard stared out of the window at the winter landscape and wondered whether Admiral Hamilton, Virginia's father-in-law, would welcome him warmly as his dead son's successor. Or whether he would receive Richard with cold

formality and leave him in no doubt as to his annoyance that Virginia and his grandchildren were shortly to leave him and live in London.

"Ah well," thought Richard, as his eyes began to close with the steady rhythm of the wheels, "we'll just have to hope for the best"...

Rose was quite out of breath when the tango finally came to an end and Bill steered her back to their table on the balcony overlooking the ballroom.

This was their third visit to the *Capitol* in five weeks.

Bill was a wonderful dancer. He held her firmly but so gently. He'd changed into a civilian suit to take her out, and anyone watching them as they glided around the dance floor would have taken them for a pair of professionals.

An exciting new romance for Rose

"I'm puffed," Rose laughed, fanning herself with the menu.

A waitress brought them another plate of paste sandwiches, and Rose took one.

"You like dancing, don't you?" Bill asked.

"With you I do, that is..." She floundered a bit "...with someone who dances well."

"You're not so bad yourself," Bill said.

Rose fell silent for a moment. She could not help comparing everything Bill said with Gregory.

After all, they'd sat, she and Gregory, in just such a tea-dance place as this not a year ago.

When they'd got up to dance Gregory would walk down the stairs behind her. Bill always took her hand and led her down to the dance floor.

During tea Gregory used to look round the room at everyone. Bill always sat gazing at her all the time. It was so flattering.

"Where are you?" Bill asked, and she saw that his clear blue eyes were fixed on her, smiling and amused.

"Must have been dreaming," Rose said, flushing.

"You're pretty when you're dreaming. Do you know that?"

Rose flushed again slightly.

"Am I?" What else could she say? Bill took her hand under the table and held it for a while in his. Rose did not resist.

His hand was strong and firm, so comforting. She felt a glow all over, as though his strength and presence were warming her.

Tears came into her eyes for a moment. Suddenly the lights in the ballroom were dimmed and the orchestra began to play a slow waltz.

She began to think of Gregory, then to imagine herself gliding to the music in Bill's arms. She felt all at once guilty, excited and wonderfully happy.

In the taxi going back to Eaton Place, Bill took her face in his hands, and with a very polite, quiet "May I?" – a question Rose had no time to answer – he kissed her gently on the lips.

As the taxi rounded Hyde Park Corner, Rose clasped him to her, so that her hat shifted to a crazy angle on her head.

"Bill, really we mustn't," Rose whispered.

"Why not?"

Rose had no answer to that.

They kissed again. Then the taxi stopped outside Eaton Place and Rose knew there was no inviting Bill in for supper that day, for she was on duty. Mrs. Bridges was going out to see her friend. Hudson was tired.

There was work to do.

Bill tried to arrange another meeting, but Rose wanted time to think.

"I've got your address, Bill. I'll drop you a line."

He accepted this with good grace and blew her a kiss as the taxi bore him away. Rose went down the area steps in a daze.

Later that night in her attic room, Rose stood in her nightdress before Gregory's photograph.

With Daisy gone and all her bits and pieces, the room felt different, but Rose welcomed the solitude.

"You mustn't mind me going out dancing with Bill. He was your pal, and he is nice," she murmured to Gregory's smiling face.

Then she put down the photograph and crept into bed.

Christmas-time and the family's apart

When Harry Gurney's two-seater car pulled up outside No. 165 the following afternoon, James and Georgina were drinking their after-lunch coffee by the morning room fire.

"Sounds as if your friends are here to fetch you," James said, nonchalantly.

"Good," said Georgina with unconcealed excitement. "I'll get my things and be off." She hurried from the room.

Georgina was off to spend Christmas at Malton Priory in Kent, the home of Harry Gurney's aunt, Lady Prescott. And Harry himself had arranged to drive her down together with her friend, Angela Barclay, and Martin Adams.

The two young Grenadier officers and the two VAD nurses had struck up a wartime friendship, and had become almost inseparable.

Until, that is, an occasion a few days before when Martin had taken Georgina to the theatre and to supper, and she began to realise that for her, friendship had deepened into love.

"Goodbye, Jumbo, have a happy Christmas, and give my love to Bunny and Diana." Georgina said, rushing in with her coat, scarf and overnight case in her hand. She kissed James warmly and dashed out again.

Georgina greeted Harry and Angela, who sat beside him, both of them wrapped up in thick scarves and heavy coats.

Georgina climbed up into the "dicky" seat at the back, where Martin was hunched up in his overcoat, his nose already red and eyes watering from the cold.

Georgina snuggled up beside him, as the little car jerked to a start and spluttered off down the street.

James watched them go from the window, smiling a little sadly to himself.

For the first Christmas of peace the Bellamy family was scattered, when most families in Britain were enjoying a re-union after four years of separation by war.

He knew Georgina had been torn between going off with her friends and staying at Eaton Place with him, not wanting him to be alone so soon after the death of his young wife Hazel. But an invitation to stay with his friends the Newburys, at Somerby Park in Leicestershire, had solved the problem for her.

James had decided to accept, knowing that the welcoming warmth of their large Christmas house party would help him forget his loneliness and the grimness of his wartime experiences for a little while.

Diana Newbury was a gay and charming hostess. The gramophone would be playing non-stop and there would be dancing and laughter in the great hall.

And, of course, Diana's favourite diversion – charades.

Up in Scotland, at Aberdarrie Lodge, dinner was over and the port was on the table. Virginia tactfully rose and left Richard with her father-in-

law, Admiral Hamilton, to go up and see to the children's Christmas stockings.

In the trap of divided loyalties

As the two men resumed their seats, the Admiral silently pushed the decanter toward Richard. He had hardly spoken throughout dinner, and Virginia had fought desperately to keep a conversation going. Plainly the old man was not in a good mood.

As they feared, he saw Richard as an interloper, coming up from London to take Virginia and her children away from their rightful home in Scotland.

William and Alice were his grandchildren and, in the absence of a father, the Admiral felt they should remain under his control.

And Virginia, as far as he was concerned, was somehow betraying his dead son Charles by remarrying.

Richard was sensitive enough to recognise that, although totally loyal to him and ostensibly on his side, Virginia was unhappy about her father-in-law's displeasure.

She was very much in the old man's debt and would rather die than upset him. She was caught up in a trap of divided loyalties.

"Unhealthy place to bring up children, London," grunted the Admiral suddenly, breaking the silence.

"Oh, I don't know," said Richard, caught off balance.

"My son couldn't stick London. Always intended to send the children to school in Scotland."

"I see," Richard murmured, very ill at ease.

"Still, it's up to Virginia, I suppose. She's their mother."

Richard had no answer to that. The Admiral had succeeded in making him feel guilty, an imposter, an unwelcome guest. He sipped his port and fell silent...

Meanwhile, at Malton Priory, the gentlemen had left the dining-room. Lady Prescott had retired to her sitting-room and the young people were playing "Sardines".

Harry had volunteered to hide first and, after a count of 100, Georgina, Angela and Martin had set off to search for him.

After 20 minutes or so, Angela disappeared, having presumably found Harry and crept into his hiding-place to share it, until the others discovered it too.

Half an hour later Georgina returned to the great hall, from which they'd started out, to find that Martin had apparently abandoned the search and

was liberally helping himself to a glass of whisky and soda.

"I give up, don't you?" said Georgina, flopping into a deep sofa by the fireside.

"I suppose so." Martin had his back to her and the drinks tray, and something in his voice made her look sharply across to him. Was she mistaken or was his voice rather thick and blurred?

"Oh well," she went on cheerfully, "we've done our best to find them. Let them stay huddled together in some dark stuffy housemaid's cupboard, if they want to. We can sit here by the fire and be comfortable, can't we, and..."

She stopped short, for Martin had turned round and was moving unsteadily towards her, a whisky glass in his hand, his eyes bloodshot.

"Serve 'em right if they suf...suffocate...what?" he mumbled. It was obvious to Georgina that he was drunk.

"Martin!" She was at his side in time to prevent him from bumping violently into a side table with a lamp on it. "Aren't you well?" she asked with tactful concern.

Georgina faces a delicate situation

Martin did not reply. He slumped down in a chair and put his head back to stare at the ceiling. Georgina knelt beside him and took his hand in hers.

"What's the matter, darling?" she asked. "Please tell me."

Martin raised his head to look at her and she saw tears in his eyes.

"You're so kind, such a good little nurse, aren't you?"

"I love you, Martin."

"Oh, God." He let his head fall back again. Georgina bent over and kissed his forehead. Why did he sound so despairing – as if he had no chance with her?

"Martin, I...want you to know...that if you were afraid that...well, with your arm...I'd rather not...well, if you're worried about asking a girl to marry you..."

Georgina chose her words carefully. She was so sure that Martin loved her very much, but dared not declare his feelings.

How could she reassure him? It was a delicate and painful situation, she must be very careful not to hurt him.

Martin remained still, a dazed, rather blank look on his face. He had evidently drunk a lot of whisky – his head lolled and his eyes kept closing.

“Let me help you to bed,” Georgina said finally. “A good night’s sleep will do you good. Come on, I’ll help you.”

Somehow she managed to get him up from the sofa, and supported him to his room on the first floor. She got him on to his four-poster bed and began to remove his shoes and socks without much resistance.

Martin was sad, apologetic and helpless. He knew he had drunk too much, and begged her to forgive him. He was troubled, but he wouldn’t tell her why.

“You’re a brick, Georgina,” he said softly. “A very good friend. Thank God for you.”

“That’s all right,” she said.

She was certain she meant more to Martin than just a good friend. He is so shy and tongue-tied, she thought. He can’t say he loves me.

Puzzling behavior of Angela and Harry

She turned off the light and tip-toed from the room, walked along the silent, empty corridor to her own room. No sign of Harry and Angela. They must have forgotten the game in the joy of each other’s company.

Georgina decided to leave them tactfully to their own devices. They were most likely locked in a passionate embrace among the mops, dustpans and brushes in some remote corner of the house where they would be unlikely to be discovered.

Georgina was soon in bed, and was settling down, when a creaking sound outside in the passage made her sit up and listen.

Low voices came from outside her door. There was Harry’s voice quite audible, pleading.

“Please, Angela.”

“No, Harry. Don’t spoil everything.”

“But I...want to kiss you...please let me.”

“Harry, please don’t go on. You know why I can’t. I’m very fond of you, but...”

“Angela, you’re being very cruel to me, you know.”

“I cant help it. Please let’s say goodnight and talk about it in the morning.”

“Oh, very well,” said Harry as he stalked off.

The corridor fell silent. Georgina lay back on her pillow, puzzled. What had happened between them? Surely Angela was in love with Harry as he obviously was with her. Yet here they were, almost

quarrelling and what did Angela mean “fond” of him. She had sounded as despairing as Martin had, in fact she was behaving just as oddly as Martin had.

Georgina heard the great clock in the hall chime two and then three, and as she watched the curtains lifting and falling as the night wind gently tugged at them, a sudden feeling of desolation, total emptiness began to creep over her.

NEXT WEEK: A newcomer joins the household as the Bellamys prepare for a wedding.