

Kate Tyler writes from Sussex:



Dear Editors,

Two days ago, sitting in the spare bedroom where I keep my books and trying to rank my Oxenham Wants in order of priority on a jasmine-fragranced notelet with attractive wildlife design, I had a very strange experience. Sunk in reverie, I had begun all unaware to write *with my left hand*. It was not till the excited barking of Ashdown, my Yorkie, broke the spell (he had spotted the new issue of OK coming through the letterbox) that I saw what I had been doing. Now. Did it happen, as my husband claims, because I had indulged in an unaccustomed third glass of Lambrusco Light? Or did I truly, for a few transcendent minutes, make contact with the departed spirit of EJO? After all, Rosemary Brown had all those composers...

Judge for yourselves. I call this fragment:

THE ABBEE GIRLS REVISITED

CHAPTER ONE

ALL THE NEWS AND A THRILLING PARTY

"But *why* won't you come? I won't go without you, Margaret-Twin," Elizabeth wailed down the phone.

A hacking cough answered her. Elizabeth gazed at the receiver with tragic eyes.

"Oh, *no*, Daisy! You haven't come off the Nicorelle patches? What would Mother say?"

"Be your age, woman. Mother's been back on the fags herself since she divorced Ivor again. What do you think she's doing all those hours by the rose window in the sacristy?"

"No! But poor Mother does have some excuse. At least she was prepared when it was Aunty Primrose - you know she always suspected something between those two - but for Sir Ivor to come back and then run off again, with Doc-Jock, was really too bad. But it's you we're talking about, Peggy-Twin. You really can't miss the big party for Rosilda-Cousin's coming out."



"I thought it was two years she got this time."

"That's nothing with remission. She's promised to live with Rachel in the Abbey and help with the new Leisure Centre."

"English Heritage are letting the Abbot stay on, then?"

"Yes, waiting quietly in the background till she's needed. You know how we all go to her for psychotherapy."

"Including Queen Lobelia?"

"Of course. Now don't be a silly girl, Twin. Anyone would think Jansy had pinched Dickon from you, instead of the other way round. Which wasn't quite playing the game, now was it?"

"What did she expect, going off to Harvard and leaving him all alone? And that was years ago. Look at the way she's carrying on now. Disgusting, I call it."

"Littlejan's little John may be rather young for her, I know, but to call him a toyboy is really too unfair. After all, Bobbibach wasn't that much older."

"And I suppose Rosabel'll be throwing her weight around as usual?"

"No, she's staying quietly at home at present. Sir K wants a big family before it's too late, you know. Something to do with pension funds."

"Well, there's one thing I absolutely insist on, Betty-Twin. If we do go, you're to let *me* wear the Versace this time..."

"Brownie, my dear!" Cicely hailed her joyfully from her bathchair in a dark corner of the tithe-barn. "Congratulations! The first of us to reach a hundred grandchildren!"

"You're out of date, Golden Queen," Jen said gloomily. "A hundred and two last Wednesday." Then she brightened. "But some of the older ones are doing well, I must say. Did you hear that young Joaniejoy's gone into McSquirrelburger's with Andypete? Shares are up again this week. And Boniface has taken Lavender Rose Grandison on as a back-up singer; and -"

"Oh no!" The interruption came from the Rose Queen, staring with horrified eyes across the swirling crowd of gaily-coloured dancers. "Jenny-Wren! President! Do you see who's just come in? Behind Frost with the sound system?"

"Carry Carter! I don't believe it! Joy would never have invited her!"

"Oh yes she did, petal," a new voice sounded above the strains of *Picking Up Sticks*. "Carry Carter's the new Jennifer - yes, you know, on *Harper's* - and Lady Marchwood'd do anything to get her mug in print, so -"

"Jackie-Paul!" Rosamund whirled round. "What are you doing here?"

"Don't say you're surprised, Aunty-Countess. I distinctly heard Mumsie telling you *all* the old queens would be coming -"

"Never mind that," Jen made herself heard. "Ros! President! Don't you see? Joy's standing directly under Cecily and Michael, and - quick! Carry Carter's up there on the platform fiddling with the ropes -!"

At this point I was interrupted, and have since been unable to re-establish contact. Was this an authentic psychic experience? Answers on a postcard, please.

