



SNOW PROBLEM

by John Emms

EXCERPT

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CHARACTERS

Martin (mid-forties)

Jenny (thirties)

Cheryl (thirties/forties)

Inside a high-speed train. Martin is sitting at a table with a laptop and a mobile phone in front of him. He is smart and smooth. Jenny approaches to take a seat opposite him. She has obviously just come out of heavy snow. She takes off her coat, and pushes it onto the rack over the seat. Martin watches shamelessly, especially as she stretches up. She notices him and gives him an impatient look. Then she takes a newspaper out of her bag and opens it. A bing-bong sound on the intercom precedes an announcement.

Cheryl: *(over the intercom)* Good evening. This is Cheryl, your on-board customer services manager, welcoming customers who have just joined us at Lancaster. This is the severely delayed 1851 LMS Trains service to...oh, no, oops. That's the time from Preston. Sorry. *(She giggles)* This is my first day doing this. I'll start again *(giggles)*. This is the severely delayed 1908 LMS Trains service to Glasgow Central calling at, if we ever manage to get there, Oxenholme, Penrith, Carlisle and Glasgow Central, due to arrive in Glasgow at 2117, though we'd only have a chance of managing that now if Euston had had a platform 9¾ *(giggles)*. I apologise for the delay to this service caused by the severely adverse weather conditions...

Martin: She means the snow.

He smiles at Jenny, who ignores him.

Cheryl:...as you may have noticed. Frankly I think we'll be lucky to make Penrith, so if we have anyone of a religious persuasion on board your assistance with prayer will be appreciated*(giggles)*.

Martin: How about that? A human customer services manager.

Another, wider, smile.

Jenny: *(from behind the paper)* They do exist apparently.

Martin checks his watch then picks up his phone and makes a call.

Martin: Hi, darling. 'Sme....I'm still in Preston. Trains are in chaos....Yes. I was waiting for the eight twenty five and the seven oh eight turned up....Well, it's snowing like hell, so I thought I'd better stay where I am....You know what the line's like through the Lake District....So I'm looking for a hotel before they all fill up....

Jenny: *(having lowered the paper to stare at him - to herself)* Hmm - either a fruitcake or, more probably, a bastard.

Martin: With any luck I'll be able to get home tomorrow... Though of course it'll be Christmas Eve and with the rush and the weather, who knows?...Yes, of course I'll do my best, my darling...Love you. Mwah! *(He breaks the connection, then directs a wink across the table before making another call)* Hiya, Mary, sweetie dreamboat. Guess who...

Jenny: *(still staring - to herself)* Bingo! Confirmed bastard!

Martin: I'm on a train....No, they're still running so it means we can....Yeah! I've just phoned the witch and told her I'm staying in Preston. So I can be in Carlisle, well, not sure how long, but anyway I'll be with you tonight.....*(He laughs)* Naughty girl!....Well, if the weather stays bad I might have to tell her I can't get home for Christmas...We could have fun unwrapping each other's presents *(laughs again)*.... Love you too, darling. Mwah!

He puts down the phone, then notices Jenny still staring, and grins.

Jenny: Life gets complicated, don't it?

Martin: Oh, well. You know how it is.

Jenny: Does your wife know what a bastard you are? I assume she is the witch.

Martin: Well, she knows I'm a man, so she may have some idea.

He laughs.

Jenny: You think all men are like you, do you? I'm surprised. I'd have thought you'd think you're very special.

Martin: Oh, I am! But there are certain characteristics all men have, don't you think?

Jenny: No I don't. It takes a very particular sort of man to be that kind of bastard and so completely unashamed of it.

Martin: All men are genetically programmed to put it about. Scattering their seed far and wide.

Jenny: Thank you for the delightful picture.

Martin: It's what happens in all life, though. You must have watched David Attenborough.

Jenny: Not scattering his seed.

Martin: You know what I mean. It's what being male is all about. Making chances and taking them.

Jenny: Well, I expect my men to be loyal. As, I think, do most women.

Martin: Your men? (*He laughs*) How many have you got?

Jenny: (*sarcastically*) Ha ha. At least I have them one at a time.

Martin: Of course you do. You're female. Females can't scatter their seed. So they select their males carefully.

Jenny: You're so romantic. No wonder you're irresistible. But your wife doesn't seem to have been very careful in her selection, though, does she? Or, since you're clearly an expert, perhaps you can explain what is so attractive about a rampant, self-obsessed, arrogant buffoon.

Martin: Do you know, I'm beginning to like you. I'm partial to a girl with teeth.

Jenny: I have claws, too.

Martin: I bet you do. Lovely!

Jenny: (*returning to her paper. To herself*) Pillock!

Bing-bong!

Cheryl: (*on the intercom*) Good evening again, this is Cheryl your on board customer services manager, for those who've forgotten me since last time (*giggles*). I'm afraid that for the time-being at least we will be restricted to a maximum of no more than sixty miles an hour...