

Though I'm not suggesting my fly should take this opportunity. Not yet - well, not at this precise moment. After all, eggs is eggs. But the option is there. She's free to go - and come back again, I suppose. Or not.

Whether or not - and *weather* or not - I won't be closing the windows from now on - not all of them, not completely. So you never know what might come in...

And on Friday next, if Madame D has a similar little lapse - *perhaps she is human, partly* - and allows another fly to make itself at home, then once again - in a small but undeniable way - this weekend could be really buzzing.

*David Norris*  
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## St Bart's Monthly Christmas Supplement

2014



'My Fly and I'

A short story  
by  
David Norris



**My first time with Marriage Guidance** and I'm not looking for a counsellor – I'm looking for a hitman

I say '*my*' first time, though I'm not exactly on my own, obviously. And to be perfectly honest, I'm not exactly married, either.

But I am in a relationship, and unfortunately it's looking permanent. We're almost an item. And I'm desperate.

Which is why I'm writing all this down. Otherwise you wouldn't believe it. I don't, for one. But bear with me...

...All this really began when I'd been made homeless - all right, *technically* just for the afternoon. But it happens to me on a weekly basis.

You see, I have to go out when *she* comes in - *she* being *elle* - Hell, I nearly said - Madame Domestos, my *femme-de-ménage*.

Not that I go out just because she's told me to (which she has). I go out - and sit on the prom with a flask and a bottle of aspirins - because she doesn't just do my flat, she also does my head in.

*Why am I in this state?* Don't I give everywhere a total going-over, before she descends? It's not as if I'm asking her to *do* anything. And still she gets to me. I dream about her. She's sprinkles me with Vanish and hoovers me up. *And we've never even met* - not in the flesh.

We've never had any human contact. She was recommended. (It must have been one of those well-wishers.) She sent me her conditions in a letter; I signed them, unconditionally; and the occupation followed. I remember one clause in particular: *It would be better if you weren't here*. It's become my motto.

But I can't be completely crazy, can I? Because I keep thinking



*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz...*

Just now she's settled down on my boiled egg - the top of it, detached. As for me - I'm enjoying the rest - plus my breakfast cup of tea.

By the way, could you tell I was softening up back there? In the midst of the aggro? The '*cheeky little fly*' comment? Did you spot it? I could have said '*plucky*' - that lowly English word reserved for the highest English praise... Yes, *plucky's* definitely the word. Think Belgium.

So. Strange to say, all's well now. Well, *well-er*. So I might not send these ramblings to Marriage Guidance after all. A dating agency could be a better bet. Or the waste-paper basket. Except I can't find it at the moment.

Because the flat's in a complete mess, of course. Furniture upended all over the show... Everywhere tacky - and whiffy... Everything here, there and... nowhere it should be - nowhere it *used* to be, that is.

But, oddly, I'm getting to sort of like it. It does make the rooms look *lived in*. By more than me. Or look as if there's been a rave or an argy-bargy - both implying other people present, for a while, anyway... for better or worse...

Or, at the very least, now it looks like the occupant doesn't keep tidying up... or putting things back... or *curating* the place...

And the windows are still wide open.

- all table-tops, kitchen-tops, shelves, cup-boards sprayed with heavy-duty bleach... curtains, carpets and cushions sprinkled with DDT... all potential landing-sites creosoted... all doors periodically slammed to cause disorientating noise plus discombobulating air-pressure...

- hot-tap and kettle kept on to maintain unhealthy humidity... windows (and fridge) thrown open to create conflicting chill-factor... hair dryer put on full-blast-instant-activation setting, deployed on top of micro-wave - door ajar+dial on max. - and trained on waste-bin, in sniper-mode...

- double-sided cellotape strung from lights and door handles... further tape plus electrified trip-wires from my gilt-framed cub-badges on mantelpiece to U-bend under kitchen sink... yet more from dishwasher to TV (via standard lamp)... from coffee table to cooker and back by way of pelmets and hi-fi (playing Barry Manilow non-stop)...

In short, from floor to ceiling, in both theatres of war - lounge and kitchen alike, all was one glutinous jungle... one endless, sticky web...

For a herd of bull elephants on a must - for a barrage of supernovas hurtling through space- for a Saturday-night conga at the Salford Lads' Club - and yes, even for a cheeky little fly flitting uninvited round someone else's habitat - there could be no escape.

So. Sorry and all that, matey, but this was - this is -

THE END

And silly, perhaps, but I bowed my head and stood there in silence.

After all, a life is still -

*Zzzzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzzzz...*

*Stop it, she's only another human being...*

Then I think no. *Oh no, she's not.* Madame Domestos is a space invader. *My space.* She's on an anti-me mission.

Granted she *seems* French, and local, apparently. But in fact she comes from the Old Country. Every Friday afternoon she crosses the Channel on her magic carpet - Ewbanking it as she goes, no doubt - straight to me here in Dinard, all the way from the little village of Cleanliness, which is next to Godliness, deep in Middle England.

Over there she belongs to a commune of traditional Chars - females with fixed smiles and fixed principles concerning hygiene and healthy-living - and anything you care to mention... No-nonsense dames with sharp shining faces instantly spotlighting neglected corners... with penetrating eyes trained to see dust under carpets - and everywhere else...

There nothing ever changes. The sun always radiates pure Vitamin D and the air always smells of ozone - plus Pledge and elbow grease - all serving to vitalize a clean and commonsense society where everyone organizes everyone else - strictly for their own good, of course..

... Off-duty, the Ladies keep focussed wringing out ragged dish cloths... wire-wooling aged chip pans... or giving some flea-bitten old dog a thorough carbolicking... Personally, I feel I've been there.

...So when I retake my flat late on Friday afternoon - and I leave it a good hour after she's gone, to let the flat calm down, as well - I'm always a trifle apprehensive. Trembling all over, in fact.

Did she find something in the fridge ? Was the toilet... well, you know... Did she open a window - again ? Are there issues around my bedroom... ? Has she left a note ?

Is she still there ... ?

So I come in - and *dither*... Meaning I sort of know I oughtn't to be doing the things I'm doing, and so I sort of *do* them and *don't* do them - at the same time, if you follow me... Dithering is what I do best, sort of.

I check the taps are turned off - by turning them on first, and then off... Then I sweep the carpets just to be certain there's no fluff 'n stuff - which there isn't...

Try the windows - and shut them tight. Except they're already shut - very tight, so opening them to make sure they're shut can be quite a struggle...

Then I approach the fridge door and take a sideways look at the message-pad- usually with my eyes closed...

Finally - fingers crossed - I'm under the bed.

...*All clear!*

No messages. Nothing. And no one. Just me - in my flat.

Which is looking nicely *comme il faut*, I must say. All surfaces clear. Chairs and sofa clutter-free - all cushions sitting there nicely plumped up. And nothing where it shouldn't be.

Though, frankly, all this is really down to me - isn't it ? Before I went out. Still, at least she's not changed things round. (And I'm sure she'd like to change *everything* round, *me* included. Maybe what I'm doing is just paying her not to...)

And in that terrible silence I felt my eyes misting up again. After all, a life is... well, a life, as Buddha -

*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz...*

**Noooooooooooo!**

*And it's on my ear now - perched on it - just zzzzzzzzzing!*

*Right. Tomorrow I buy an axe -*

*If I ever get out of this hell-hole...*



But that isn't quite how it turned out.

At first, yes, I *did* react. Instant lock-down plus martial law in sitting-room and kitchen - with other rooms sealed and cordoned-off. As you do ..

Given what I was confronted by - ie terrorism from an indestructible force, an enemy *literally* within - *targeted on me personally as a home-alone, vulnerable adult* - I consider my initial response restrained and proportional. I *didn't* call the police. Or the vicar, for example.

Instead, I simply coped, with -

- all chairs pulled back to open up a viable combat zone... sofa eased out from the wall to afford surveillance-cover... heavy Sundays rolled-up and strategically positioned for rapid-reaction...

me... Unmoved...

Even when I run back in with the aerosol - and wave it -

No reaction.

*You know what's coming, don't you ?* I'm shouting now. My voice is shaking - and the knees too, a wee bit. But I'm shielded behind the door so I can safely put my hand round and show the aerosol again - *I'm counting to three -*

(- *A hundred* and three, in the event...)

Response ? Nil.

My squirt was a tsunami - literally. I emptied the can. And threw it in.

Then I closed the door and went and sat quietly in the loo. I was drained and my eyes were running. Some of the spray must have blown back. Plus the emotion.

...So I hope I didn't look too triumphant when I returned to the scene, with the lavatory brush and a handful of toilet roll - for the body - and an extra length round my nose and mouth.

The room was still. Of course it was. Dead quiet. But I could sense the smell of death in the air - even through my Andrex.

I could hardly bare to imagine those final moments - the shock (and awe)... the wild, despairing attempt at flight... the final, crazy death-spin...

Anyway, now it's sit-down time...



. ..And I must have dozed off.

Because the next thing I know is... a buzzzzzzing !

*Zzzzzzzzzzzz...*

First thought – *tinnitus !* Second thought – *at last !*

Because it's no surprise. Over the years I must have listened to a skipful of rubbish. You do when you're mainly talking to yourself - as a teacher, for example. You develop a taste for it - a craving. Even now I can still - voluntarily - turn on the BBC for another dollop of codswallop - and get into yet another row with myself.

Why do we do it ? What have I got against our ears ?

*Zzzzzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzzzzz...*

So this buzzing has to be *fight-back*. The old ears have had enough. *Right*, they say (and I can hear them saying it) *if we can't count on you giving us a bit of peace and quiet - in retirement - then we're going it alone...*

*Oh well*, I'm thinking, *fair enough. Everything's DIY over here...*

*Zzzzzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzzzzz...*

And off we go again.... My tinnitus.

Well, at least what I've got has a decent name. Better than *boils*

or *piles* or *the runs*. *Tinnitus*. Sounds Latin, doesn't it? *Tinnitus* – a -  
*um*. Classy.

So I'm just googling it when -

*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz.*

No, not me. *Ex*-ternal this time. The front door - ie the postman. Though *he's* a *she*, I've discovered - so I usually try a little tête-à-tête. Except I can't help wondering if she takes me for a flirt, because I do tend to flash a smile now I know for definite she's a she. Which is why I also do a little cough while I'm smiling, so she *could also* think I'm wincing with a bad throat... Romances can begin with pity, I've heard. (All eggshells, isn't it, with a fledgling relationship?)

*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz.*

*Bonjour, monsieur. Une lettre.*

*Bonjour. Merci. (BIG SMILE) Si vous êtes intéressé, j'ai un peu de tinnitus aujourd'hui.*

*Oui ? (PAUSE) Bonne journée, monsieur...*

...Didn't seem too concerned did she? Maybe she thought I was joking – wrong-sized smile possibly. But thinking back, she was no different when she delivered my birthday card.

Even so, being rebuffed like that - especially when I'd given him (as I thought then) a packet of Wills Whiffs last Christmas - well, it rather took the wind out of my sails...

I withdraw my hand slowly and sadly. To tell the truth, I'm glad I didn't take the chain off the door - if that's where reaching out to

people gets you -

*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz...*

Now it's -

*It can't be ! Tinnitus up my nose ? Hooters don't buzz !*

*Zzzzzzzzz... Zzzzzzzzz...*

No, not *in* my nose – it's *on* my nose.

I've not got tinnitus. *I've got a fly !*

*A fly ! In here ! In my own home !*

No, Madame D ! There are foreign bodies and foreign bodies. And I haven't room for an au pair.

I reach for the phone -

*... unauthorised subletting ... relationship terminated ... marigolds in the post...*

But I never get the chance - Because it's sitting there. On the receiver. Staring at me...



...I'd like to forget the next few minutes. Hysteria isn't easy to watch. And I *was* watched - throughout. Not only by myself.

The scream I forgive myself for. A small flat... Me on my own... An intruder... And this one so... *brazen*. Just *there*. Looking at