

A Slice of the Seventies

**Book One of
The Mug Trilogy**

Joy Mutter

Contents

A fortuitous meeting	3
Another isle	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Acting up	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Interviews of various kinds	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Hang ‘em high!	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Living in sin	Error! Bookmark not defined.
New housemates	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Amsterdam delights	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Ch ... Ch ... Ch ... Ch ... Changes	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Introduction to Sheffield.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Shock	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Steve	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Books by Joy Mutter	Error! Bookmark not defined.
About the Author	Error! Bookmark not defined.

A fortuitous meeting

‘Budge up! God, it’s packed in here this afternoon,’ boomed the striking girl with long, thick, tawny hair after strolling into the cramped, trendy Sidewalk café which was situated up a narrow side street in St Helier, Jersey.

Without bothering to wait for a reply, the newcomer confidently flung her tall frame next to the younger, deeply tanned, lanky girl, squashing her up against the boldly-patterned, sombre, orange and green wall. The café’s latest customer had long talons that were unconventionally coated in black nail varnish. She wore flowing, vintage, eccentric clothes with strings of beads and tinkling bells strung around her neck that made the other dark-blond girl feel underdressed in her flared, denim jeans and cream, cheesecloth top.

Until that moment, Mug had been sitting at the only table with a free seat, trying to blend in with the cool kids, but feeling like a social leper. She awkwardly flicked her long, baby-fine, poker-straight hair behind her ears. Remembering that they were rather large, she hurriedly covered them up again with a curtain of hair.

She summoned up courage, saying, ‘Be my guest. My name’s Mug. I’ve seen you in here a few times, but you’re usually sitting with the girls from my old school, so we’ve not had a chance to chat. I don’t have much to do with them these days.’

For months, Mug had intended talking to this intriguing, new arrival, but the opportunity had never cropped up. Now was her chance, and besides, she had been brought up well enough to know that it would seem rude to ignore her.

She gave the newcomer a large, mental tick for smelling strongly of her favourite, pungent patchouli oil perfume. Mug would sometimes follow pedestrians who wore that scent whilst on her aimless rambles through St Helier, the capital of Jersey, largest of the French-flavoured Channel Isles and her home for all of her sixteen years. Someone who wore patchouli

oil would surely be someone on her wavelength.

Teachers had deemed the notorious Sidewalk café to be off-limits to all pupils when Mug had attended her first, all-girl, rigidly old-fashioned, fee-paying school. This ban had only served to make it all the more attractive to many pupils. Prefects from her former, draconian school would sometimes patrol it after school hours in order to check that no rebellious girls were lurking inside. Now that she was a pupil at a mixed, more free-thinking State's school, the fear of punishment had vanished, but as she slouched at a table, trying to look moodily mysterious, the delicious thrill of revolution still tingled down her spine.

As usual, Mug had walked into the Sidewalk alone. The other two girls at her table were strangers to her, too deep in conversation concerning boyfriend dramas to pay her any heed. All she wanted was to hang out where the beautiful people congregated, free to revel in the edgily progressive, sexually-charged music playing on the wall-mounted juke box. The top-volume 45s sounded more dangerous than the dull, cheesy, mainstream music that the average cafés pumped out.

Several of Jersey's bad boys congregated in the Sidewalk. They were the 'faces' of the island, not that any of them ever saw fit to approach her, a fact which depressed her now she was attempting to regain the life of a normal teenager. She feared and suspected that tales of what had recently befallen her had spread to every islander, rendering her off-limits, deemed to be too much damaged trouble to waste any time on.

The café was a magnet to most of Jersey's rebellious youth, with several notoriously bad girls lounging about nonchalantly, some caked in Pan Stik foundation to cover up adolescent facial eruptions. Contrary to what many who listened to the rumours might have thought, Mug did not consider herself to be one of those bad girls. She was merely a self-conscious spectator, too uncomfortable to break into the established groups, fearing rejection because of her recent infamy. She now felt excluded from the company of the average,

conformist teenager. This was why, although as yet friendless in the Sidewalk, she eventually hoped to make allies.

‘Hi! I’m Vanessa and I actually already know your name. This place is really jumping today, isn’t it? I guess it’s because school finished a few weeks ago, thank God, although I’m bored out of my brains, to be honest. I’m like a fart in a bottle, just can’t seem to settle, but I guess that’s understandable,’ the charismatic, slightly older girl said, hinting at a mystery she was eager to divulge.

‘Why’s that?’ Mug asked brightly, picking up on the fact that Vanessa wanted to be quizzed on the reason for her unrest.

‘Well, soon I’m off to the Isle of Wight music festival with my friend Christine Tippler. We can’t wait. It’s going to be epic. Jimi Hendrix is playing, along with loads of other incredible musicians,’ Vanessa replied, wriggling in her seat at the thought, which made her beads clatter on the sticky, plastic table top.

‘God, you lucky buggers,’ Mug gasped. ‘Hendrix’s latest album blew me away. It’s always playing full blast on my record player. My folks recently split up. Our house has been split in two, with me, my mum and my young sister living in one half and my bloody father living in the other part of the house with his young mistress and my brother. Dad’s living room is beneath my bedroom. It’s a constant battle between his Frank Sinatra, Tom Jones and my Hendrix and Zeppelin. We both crank it up to drown out the other’s music. He drives me crazy! The music war is his fault entirely as he’s the one who tries to antagonise me by cranking up the volume. I just respond.’

‘Sounds like a bizarre living arrangement. It must be tough on you,’ Vanessa said, sipping her Coke pensively, concern showing in large, green eyes from under her dark, bushy eyebrows that added to her striking, unconventional appearance.

‘To be honest it’s been a really stressful few years for me and my family,’ Mug replied. ‘Christine is also a good mate of

mine, even though she's a couple of years ahead of me at my new school. I'm far more involved with sixth formers than with my own form, even though I'm a couple of years younger. I once stayed at her house after we had a night out at the Watersplash disco at St Ouen's Bay and had to share her single bed. I spent most of that night clinging to the edge, trying not to roll into the centre, because she was naked. I felt slightly awkward ha!'

'Yes, that sounds like just the sort of thing that Christine would do,' Vanessa chuckled. 'She's Mother Nature personified. I used to see you around school when you still went there. It's odd we never talked, although you were a couple of years below me.'

'I'm relieved not to be attending that school any more, with it's stupid habit of checking if pupils are wearing regulation, grey bloomers and making us kneel down so that they could measure skirt lengths with a ruler. As you might have heard, my old school asked me to leave,' said Mug.

'I picked up on some gossip but don't know how much of it is true. What on earth did you do to deserve to be expelled?' Vanessa enquired whilst making sure that her booming voice was quiet enough so that only Mug could hear.

Not knowing how to avoid telling the truth, and also wanting to confide in someone for the first time since it had all happened, with an equally hushed voice, Mug replied, 'I ended up being raped on my fourteenth birthday by a twenty-one-year-old stranger. All I had intended was to try to help out my best friend.'

Whilst not quite knowing why she was divulging such personal information, now the story telling had begun, it was hard not to continue. The juke box music was loud and the other teenagers were making sufficient noise to ensure only Vanessa heard her words.

'How on earth did such an awful thing happen?' Vanessa drew closer and asked in a whisper, intrigued and shocked in equal measure.

Mug continued, 'Well, my best friend was staying at my place as a fourteenth birthday treat, before my parent's divorce. She nagged me to sneak out with her on the night before my birthday so she could meet up with her boyfriend. Her parents are very strict and strongly disapproved of him. I must have been nuts, but I felt really sorry for her and she wouldn't give up pleading with me, telling me how much in love they were. My dad was badly pissing me off even more than usual. He's an aggravating bully who has constantly antagonising me for years. Hardly a day has gone by without him instigating a row so that he could hit me.'

'What a bastard!' Vanessa said vehemently.

'I stupidly agreed to my friend's demands and we sneaked out that evening to meet her boyfriend, a very long-haired bad boy I'd only met once before. He's a bit thick, didn't make a great impression on me but my mate was completely besotted with him. Alarming, as well as her monosyllabic boyfriend being sat in the passenger seat of the beat up Cortina, sitting in the driving seat was a much older, brooding, good-looking guy who I'd never before clapped eyes on,' said Mug.

'What the hell were you thinking? You should never have stepped into that car. Yes, you're right, you really must have lost your bloody mind,' Vanessa blurted out. The two other girls sitting at their table glanced up, but straightaway went back to discussing their boyfriends.

Mug replied, blushing through her tan, 'Yes, I know, I was totally insane not to run. Christ only knows what possessed me to agree to her plan. I had no interest in going on a double date, never even having had a boyfriend. I was just trying to help out my best friend. I didn't even know whether she and he had ever had sex before, as she and I had never mentioned sex. To me, she was just a sweet, rather slow girl. Mind you, thinking back, she was pretty well developed for her age, with enormous boobs.'

'I know what you mean. She always reminded me of a docile cow when I saw her around school, not in a bad way,

but she was definitely bovine in appearance. I'd never spoken to her but if I had, I'm sure she'd speak really slowly,' chipped in Vanessa.

Mug continued, 'Being totally naive, I thought I was helping her to embark on a romantic tryst but it turns out she had already had sex with fifteen different guys by the age of fifteen, unbeknownst to me. A woman police officer later told me about my friend's reputation. I, on the other hand, had never even been kissed, let alone had sex, having no interest whatsoever in losing my virginity, as several of my classmates had already done. For almost two years following that night, I was too freaked out to have anything to do with boys. It's only in the past few months that I've felt strong enough to even contemplate the idea of dating.'

'Going back to that actual night, what happened next? It's just as well the juke box is turned up loud,' said Vanessa as Black Sabbath pounded their eardrums.

'Probably most of the kids in here have already heard about what happened. Jersey's a small island, a gossip's heaven,' Mug replied. 'Getting back to my sordid little tale, the stranger drove us to a seedy doss house in town, not far from here actually. Alarm bells rang in my head when my pal disappeared with her boyfriend, leaving me with the dodgy stranger, who had remained almost silent until we were alone. Being tall with muscles and a bad attitude, he forced himself on me, despite me begging him not to. The low-life actually aggressively complained how I owed him petrol money, as a pathetic excuse to force me into having sex.'

'You're kidding me! He expected you to have sex with him as payment for him driving you to the scene of the crime? What a fucking bastard!' said Vanessa whilst struggling to keep her voice's volume down to a discrete level.

'No words are bad enough to describe him but I'm kicking myself now for being such a fool for agreeing to help my friend, or should I say ex-friend, in the first place. Long story short, he raped me, despite me struggling and begging him not

to. After he'd raped me, without protection, he just upped and silently left the room, leaving me a blubbing wreck. It was left to another guy, called Dave, to comfort me. He was staying at the squat and was very kind to me. He thought my rapist was an animal for raping someone so young after they'd resisted. Dave even drove my friend and I home later that night,' Mug said.

'You were lucky not to be up the duff. I take it you didn't fall pregnant?' asked Vanessa.

'No I didn't, thank God. My family GP also said, in front of my mother, that I was lucky not to be pregnant. I'll never know how my mate and I managed to clamber back into my house without being caught. We had to scale a wall and scramble along the roof to enter my bedroom window. My parent's suspicion was understandably aroused after I fell asleep at my birthday party the next day, with all my family and relatives looking on, puzzled as to why I was so exhausted.'

'Oh Jesus! I'm not surprised they wondered what was up. Falling asleep at your fourteenth birthday party? It'd almost be comical if your tale hadn't been so grim,' Vanessa said, stifling an inappropriate giggle.

'It all became even worse, if that's possible, after my dear friend discussed what had happened with a mate, whose mother, on overhearing their conversation, rang my friend's parents, who in turn phoned my parents. It was before my parent's divorce, so my dad, who always hated me anyway as he's crazy, drove me to the police station. I was forced to give the police a full statement in front of him,' Mug said, grimly staring ahead at the wallpaper as she relived the experience.

'How gross! That must have been so mortifying,' said a wide-eyed Vanessa, hardly believing her ears, yet sympathetic to the younger girl's plight.

'Yes, the whole experience was traumatic, especially the examination by an elderly police doctor. It was almost as bad as the rape. He acted like I had planned to have sex, which

couldn't have been further from the truth. My old school thought it would be best for everyone if I left, so that's how I ended up at the same school as Christine. I actually prefer the new school. It's more modern, mixed, has better teachers and facilities. My dad always resented paying fees for my first school, so he was glad to be spared having to pay fees now I'm at a State's school. My mum was the only one who had wanted me to go to the first, posh school, because she'd been educated there. I never asked or wanted to go there. My brother and sister both go to state schools, as did my father,' Mug replied.

'I must admit, I have already heard a few rumours about you and your friend's spot of bother. She left the island to be educated on the mainland, didn't she? Yes, I thought so. The scandal spread like wildfire round my school,' Vanessa replied, confirming Mug's fears that the whole island must be discussing the rape. She would surely forever be an outcast.

She had since spent a horrendous couple of years trying to live down her shame, beating herself up for mindlessly bringing it all upon herself for sneaking out of the family home that evening, an act which was totally out of character. She was always a serious minded, quiet, diligent scholar who never set out to cause trouble. Completing school work gave her an excuse to stay in her bedroom, to avoid having to be in her father's antagonistic presence, so she had always gained reasonable school grades.

Never seeing her best friend again did not bother her at all, after discovering she did not know her as well as she thought. Her rapist was apparently jailed, for raping a minor. Although an unemotional woman, her mother had at least been more understanding than her aggressive father. Her mother never mentioning the rape ever again.

However, her father appeared to hate his eldest daughter with even more passion than before. He even used the rape as an excuse for his own adulterous, bullying behaviour, despite him being adulterous from when Mug was a baby, according to her mother. Over the course of their sixteen-year marriage, he

had managed to reduce his wife to a husk through his behaviour, causing her to suffer three nervous breakdowns. Her last breakdown was serious enough for her to be admitted to a nursing home, where she was hooked up to electrodes so that parts of her memory could be incinerated. The doctors also offered Mug ECT treatment, such was her condition after the rape and divorce, but she luckily refused.

Mug had borne the brunt of her six-foot four-inch father's violence even before the rape horror, being the sole target of his tormenting and violence, never her brother or sister. She never witnessed any of her father's physical violence to her mother, only emotional bullying and belittling rudeness. It was a relief that he was now out of the house, or partially out of it. As Mug had told Vanessa, her large, coastal, family home was now split in half, with her father living one side with his mistress and his son.

Mug's mother had not made her two youngest children aware of the full story behind the divorce, but she had confided maybe too much to Mug. Without knowing the full story behind the divorce, her brother, eighteen months younger than Mug, had been hoodwinked by their father, a skilled liar and mischief maker, into taking his side and rejecting his mother and two sisters. He stole Mug's coin collection and some silverware before disappearing from their lives for several years. He later wised up to his father, but never was close to Mug again, refusing to elaborate, when she asked, on what lies his father had told him about her. After the split, she lived in the other half of the rambling, traditional granite, Jersey house, opposite a relatively unfrequented beach, with her damaged mother, her rather spoilt eight-year-old sister and the adorable family golden retriever.

'To lighten the mood and change the subject isn't it a shame that Christine and Archie have split up?' Vanessa chimed in, much to her new friend's relief.

She had never before talked to anyone about her expulsion, or the reason for it, except for making the police statement in

the presence of a female police officer and her glaring father, whose bulky frame threatened violence. Vanessa had the sort of face she felt comfortable confiding in, despite the eccentric black nails and freaky clothes. Once Mug had uncorked her bottled up, recent past, she had found it impossible to resist pouring it out all over the girl. This charismatic, confident eighteen-year-old inspired her confidence. So much hurt could not be contained forever.

‘I feel really sorry for poor Christine. She hasn’t any clue why Archie ended so suddenly with her,’ Mug agreed. ‘She’s still devastated, loving him the way she does. She even showing me how she casts white witch love spells to attempt to magic him back to her. Sadly it doesn’t seem to be working. I’ve heard rumours he’s even dabbling with heroin. Such a waste of an intelligent guy if that’s true,’ Mug said, fiddling with the sugar sachets in the bowl in front of them. ‘His parent’s home is a mile or so along the coast road from me,’ she continued. ‘After school, I sometimes pop round to his house with a dozen or so six-formers, even though I’m only in the upper fifth. The older kids seem to accept me more than those of my own age. We sit around, spouting our own poetry, listening to music and smoking the odd joint.’

‘Cool! I’m also quite a pot head, ha! Nothing much else to do on this dumb island, especially in winter or if it’s too cold and wet to hit the beach. I’ll soon be old enough to legally drink in pubs as it’s my eighteenth in a few weeks,’ said Vanessa, grinning at the exciting prospect.

‘I’ve another couple of years to wait until I can legally drink,’ Mug replied, sighing.

‘Love the idea of your poetry recitals at Archie’s house. Maybe I should come along too, even though I’m at a different school to all of you. Writing poetry is one of my favourite hobbies. I must have a photographic memory because I can recite all types of poetry,’ Vanessa said, and to prove the point, rattled off a large chunk of Dante’s ‘Inferno’.

Mug replied, ‘Archie probably wouldn’t mind if you came

along to our next gathering. It's not just about reciting poetry and short stories. We've started to put together an underground magazine called 'The Voice' to try to change a few things in this sick world. It'd be cool to have your input. We mostly just chill out. We wet ourselves laughing at that new 'Monty Python's Flying Circus' show, especially as we'd been smoking dope. Archie knows all the druggies on the island. He's such a legend, isn't he? I smoked my first joint round at his place. Archie once stuck that 'Derek and Clive' LP on the record player. You know. Peter Cooke and Dudley Moore's record. That Jayne Mansfield's crabs joke is a bit much, ha!

'Ha! Yes, that crab joke is gross but still makes me laugh,' agreed Vanessa, then quoting a long chunk from Monty Python's dead parrot sketch.

After laughing at Vanessa's rendition, Mug continued, 'Sadly, since Archie dumped Christine a couple of months ago, she doesn't hang out at his house anymore, meaning I've not seen her around as much. That's why I knew nothing about the two of you planning to travel to the Isle of Wight festival.'

'It's been great to finally chat to you. Reckon we must be kindred spirits or something, ha! This may seem a bit random, but what are the chances of you coming to the festival with Christine and me? Sounds like you could do with a fun time, after all you've said. It promises to be an awesome experience,' said Vanessa, fishing around inside her fringed, tapestry shoulder bag for something. 'Here's a leaflet with a list of all the amazing groups and artists that'll be on stage. We just pay at the gate.'

As Mug eagerly scanned the cream and purple leaflet, with its cartoon illustration of a moustachioed drummer with very bushy eyebrows, hands aloft gripping drum sticks, she gasped with excitement on recognising so many legendary musician's names. 'What? The Who and the Doors are playing, as well as Hendrix? The typeface is so chunky that I can hardly read some of the names. It'd be unbelievable to see Free, Joni Mitchell, Leonard Cohen, Chicago, Sly and the Family Stone,

Richie Havens, oh wow and Family too! I just love their 'Burlesque' song. There are so many other epic musicians on this leaflet. I'd give a kidney to see them all, but I seriously doubt my mum will let me accompany you.'

'It's worth a try. You've got nothing to lose. Let's just tell your mum we've known each other for years. That'd strengthen our case. I'll tie my hair back and wear really conventional clothes, without this black nail varnish so as not to freak her out. I reckon Christine should come along too when we ask your mum. Strength in numbers, ha! Don't fret, we'll both look and act the part of responsible travelling companions. That'll put your mum's mind at rest. I'm quite looking forward to playing the role but in actual fact, I do have a sensible head when needed. Together, the three of us can cope with any bother over there. To keep costs down, we'll have to hitch, once we've caught the ferry to the mainland. Three of us would be safer than two, so I have an ulterior motive for asking you ha!' Vanessa cheekily admitted.

'Oh, cheers! So, you only want me there to make up numbers and make it safer for you two? Ha!' joked Mug, hoping this was not the case.

'Don't be daft. I think you're cool. You know Christine and she's a very cool mate of mine, so you must be too. If I didn't think we'd be safe, we'd be daft to even think of travelling to the festival,' Vanessa said with authority.

'Well, you and this leaflet have really sold it to me,' admitted Mug. 'It says here that the festival starts on the 28th August. That's only a couple of weeks away, so it's best we ask my mum's permission soon. To give us time to brief Christine, why don't we meet at, say, five o'clock on Friday, here at this café, then all catch the bus out to my house on the East coast of the island, to save you the hassle of looking for my address? Do you think Christine will be okay with me crashing the party, so to speak?'

'I'm sure she'll be fine with you coming along, but I'll check,' Vanessa replied.

‘That’s great. Don’t know about you, but I’m getting a numb bum sitting here. Fancy a walk around town to chat some more about the trip?’ Mug asked.

‘Yes, sure, but let’s wait until ‘All Right Now’ has finished playing. It’s one of my favourites. Just think, if our plans work, we might all be listening to Free playing this live in a couple of weeks, not just on this naff juke box,’ Vanessa replied, tossing her luxuriant hair. ‘Isn’t it funny to think how, an hour or so ago, we’d never even spoken. Now, with luck and a fair wind, we’ll soon be having the time of our lives together on another island!’

‘Couldn’t have put it better myself. I’m so glad you walked into this café and sat here, plus, thank you God for making sure there was only one vacant seat in the place, next to me,’ Mug agreed, although still trying to keep a lid on her excitement, fearing it would be most unlikely for her mother to allow her to embark on such a potentially dangerous adventure.

When Mug brought Vanessa and Christine back to her house, their appearance was very different to their usual out of school, bohemian selves, looking more like the demure prefects that they actually both were. They always acted respectfully and studiously within school hours, saving the liberating pleasures of self expression through clothes and makeup for their leisure time. On that balmy, early evening, both girls had tamed their wild hair by scraping it back into pony tails, their faces were devoid of makeup, with not a freaky garment to alarm.

They played their parts to perfection and, as they were eighteen years old, her mother naively assumed that her eldest offspring would be safe in their sensible care. The girls hid from her the fact that their rough plan was to spend days away from the safety of Jersey, revelling in the company of many thousands of mostly drug guzzling, sexually predatory strangers, many older and wilder than their comparatively inexperienced selves. Unlike Mug, Vanessa and Christine had both had boyfriends. Her only contact with the opposite sex

was through rape.

She never could quite understand what had possessed her usually protective, relatively straight-laced mother to allow her to attend such a possible den of iniquity as the Isle of Wight pop festival. Maybe she so easily granted permission due to having a head full of more pressing matters, after the acrimonious divorce and ensuing battle with her ex for withheld maintenance money. The broken, stressed and distracted woman tended not to fully inhabit the real world following the emotional turmoil. Mug had felt, although entirely sympathetic to her, that her quietly glamorous, well-bred mother had been detached from her for years. The strong sedatives and night potions the family doctor had prescribed further divorced her from reality.

Music festivals were relatively new to Britain, but her daughter was surprised that her mother seemed unaware of any of the tales publicised after the 1969 Woodstock festival, which had been held the previous year. Maybe she wanted her daughter to be drawn out of the depressed state she had slumped into after her rape trauma and testifying against her father, at her mother's request, in her parent's divorce. Out of her three children, she had only used Mug for support, once asking her to witness a letter she had rescued from a waste bin, sent to her husband from an unknown, Portuguese woman who he had a fling with whilst travelling the world to take professional photographs for Kodak. Never having divulged information of her husband's adulterous ways to Mug's siblings, which probably accounted for why her brother, John, sided with his father after the divorce, being unaware of the full story, as was the equally shielded Jane. Back then, Jane, at eight years old, was naturally too young to be told the reality of the situation. John was very like their father, actively provoking Mug after the divorce by such actions as spraying water through her bedroom window. She felt under attack in her own home.

Mug wondered whether her mother so easily gave

permission for the trip just because she wanted one less person to worry about for a week whilst trying to piece her mangled life together as a divorced mother. She never stated her reasons, but the upshot of her conversation with the three girls was that she gave her permission with barely a struggle and few provisos.

‘Well, that went amazingly well. Has Hell frozen over? I can’t quite believe she actually agreed to me going. Well done you two! You made a nice job of convincing her,’ Mug said, as she waited to see her two grinning friends off at the bus stop, with sea spray crashing over the sea wall ten feet away.

‘Your mum’s great, and so was her cooking. Bless her, with her little hostess trolley! We’ll make sure you’re safe. We weren’t kidding,’ said Christine, taking her hair out of the pony tail then teasing it back into its dandelion head wildness. ‘Ah, that’s better.’

‘The sooner I can change these clothes, the happier I’ll be, although it was well worth dressing like a librarian for a few hours,’ said Vanessa, also freeing her locks from its rubber band. ‘Have you enough money for our time away, Mug? I never even thought to ask.’

Mug replied, ‘I’ve saved a tenner from my holiday job at the fancy goods shop in town. I’ll be paid again on Friday and so I should just about have enough. It’s lucky that Friday is my last work day. I’d already given my notice in a couple of weeks ago, to leave time for fun before I start school again. It’s perfect timing. Talking of perfect timing, here’s the bus.’

‘Let’s meet after work tomorrow in the Sidewalk to plan out the trip in more detail. We finish work at de Gruchy’s department store at six, don’t we Vanessa, so we’ll meet Mug at six fifteen,’ said Christine.

‘I’ll pack an extra sandwich to eat at work beforehand, which frees up more money for our trip,’ suggested Mug.

‘Good idea! We should all do that,’ agreed Vanessa, as the bus drew up beside them.

‘I’m so excited now mum’s agreed I can go! See you both

tomorrow,' Mug hollered as her friends stepped on board the bus, which chugged off, leaving her beaming on the short walk across the road and into her mother's half of the house.

Noticing the lights blazing on her father's side of the house, her smile faded. That night, lying in bed and picking pink threads out of her bedspread as was her habit, she listened to her father's Sinatra records booming annoyingly beneath her. She hoped that her mother did not have a change of heart.

Leaning over one side of the bed, she slipped her new Hendrix LP out of its psychedelic sleeve, placed it reverently onto her battered, red and cream Dansette record player, cranking the volume up, to drown out her father's booming, syrupy Sinatra.

She yearned for a break, far away from the tension of living in such close proximity to the man that continued to damage her life on a daily basis. Hoping not to endure yet another nightmare where she imagined he was climbing with menace through her bedroom window, she lost consciousness. That night, she was spared the horror of the creepy vision, thoughts of happier times ahead with her two friends and the otherworldly sounds of genius Jimi's guitar mercifully blocking out the terrors.