



Learn English Through Stories

Adapted and modified by

Kulwant Singh Sandhu

<https://learn-by-reading.co.uk>

The Rescue of Pluffles

For a while, they played it cool—her and his cousin May.

Smooth, stylish, and polite, they were perfect rivals.

But no guy's fight could ever match the ruthless drama of a women's showdown.

Mrs. Hauksbee could be kind to other women when she wanted. This story proves it—believe as much as you like.

Pluffles was a rookie officer in the “Unmentionables” regiment, greener than a lime. He was naive all over, like a baby bird still sprouting feathers. Worse, he had way too much cash for his own good, thanks to his rich dad. Pluffles' mom doted on him, almost as clueless as her son, and she bought every word he said.

Pluffles' problem? He didn't listen to others. He trusted his “own judgment,” which was about as sharp as a spoon. This got him into messes more than once. But his biggest screw-up happened in Simla, when he was twenty-four.

True to form, he leaned on his so-called judgment and ended up wrapped around Mrs. Reiver's finger, trailing her like a puppy.

Mrs. Reiver wasn't just bad news—she was a walking red flag. Her only redeeming quality was her wardrobe. From her fake hair to her sky-high heels, she was trouble, not playful like Mrs. Hauksbee, but cold and calculated. No one ever caught her in a scandal; she was too selfish for that. She was the rare exception proving most Anglo-Indian women were as decent as their sisters back in England.

Mrs. Hauksbee and Mrs. Reiver despised each other. They were too smart to clash openly, but their trash-talk was legendary. Mrs. Hauksbee was upfront—mischievous, sure, but real. Mrs. Reiver? Pure self-interest. And at the start of the Simla season, poor Pluffles fell into her trap. She went all-in to snag him, and Pluffles, thinking he was a genius, got played.

I've seen guys tame wild horses, drivers handle stubborn ponies, even trainers break rowdy dogs—but Mrs. Reiver's takedown of Pluffles topped them all. He

fetched, carried, and waited on her like a trained pet. He showed up for dates she'd blow off, took dances she'd never planned to give, and stood freezing on windy hills waiting for her to maybe show up for a ride. He hunted down rickshaws in pouring rain, in a flimsy suit, then walked beside them like a servant. She spoke to him like dirt, ordered him around like a chef, and he took it all—and paid for it, too.

Maybe Pluffles thought this was cool, like it made him a big shot. No one bothered to clue him in. The season was too fun for meddling, and sticking your nose in someone's mess never ends well.

Pluffles' boss, the Colonel, should've yanked him back to the regiment when he saw the spiral. But Pluffles was engaged to a girl in England from his last trip home, and the Colonel hated married rookies. He laughed off Pluffles' drama as "good training." It wasn't. It drained Pluffles' bank account—his bills at Hamilton's were jaw-dropping—and turned a decent kid into a pathetic wannabe. He fell in with a shady crowd, too.

Then Mrs. Hauksbee stepped up. She played her game solo, knowing people would talk smack about her, all for a girl she'd never met—Pluffles' fiancée, set to arrive in October with her aunt for the wedding.

By August, Mrs. Hauksbee knew it was go-time. Like a rider sensing a horse's next move, she could predict how a guy like Pluffles would crash and burn with someone like Mrs. Reiver. She figured he'd ditch his engagement just to please Mrs. Reiver, who'd keep him on a leash as long as it suited her.

Mrs. Hauksbee went in for the kill, stealing Pluffles right under Mrs. Reiver's nose. Their battle—call it the Seven Weeks' War—lasted, well, seven weeks. It was a masterclass in strategy, fought step by step. A full play-by-play would fill a novel, but you get the vibe. It was epic, and Pluffles was the prize.

People gossiped hard about Mrs. Hauksbee, not knowing her real goal. Mrs. Reiver fought back, partly because Pluffles was useful, mostly because she loathed Mrs. Hauksbee. Pluffles? No clue what he thought. The guy wasn't big on thoughts, and the few he had made him cocky.

Mrs. Hauksbee's plan was simple: "The kid's gotta be saved, and the only way is to treat him right." She treated him like a grown-up, not a lapdog. Bit by bit, Pluffles drifted from Mrs. Reiver to Mrs. Hauksbee, who didn't make him chase

rickshaws or beg for scraps. After Mrs. Reiver's bootcamp, he loved the change.

Mrs. Reiver had trained him to shut up about himself and hype her up. Mrs. Hauksbee flipped the script, earning his trust until he spilled about his engagement, calling it "dumb kid stuff" like he was some hotshot. Over tea, as he rambled in what he thought was suave, Mrs. Hauksbee saw her opening.

She'd dealt with guys like him before—young, full of themselves, destined to bloat into boring officers. She switched to mom-mode, her voice soft but her words brutal. She laid into his stupidity, his small-time thinking, how he'd made himself a joke. She even called out his flirty vibe with her, saying he'd chase her if she let him. Coming from anyone else, it'd have crushed him. But her warm, almost churchy tone just made him feel sorry—like he'd let down someone important.

Gently, she stripped away his ego, like dismantling an umbrella before fixing it. She told him marriage would save him, painting a sweet picture of his future wife leaning on his "genius" judgment—a guy with nothing to regret. How she sold that without laughing, only she knew. She wrapped it up with sappy nods to his parents and why he should take his bride home.

Then she sent him off to "think about it." Pluffles left, sniffing, trying to look tough.

Mrs. Hauksbee smirked.

What Pluffles planned to do about his engagement, only Mrs. Reiver knew, and she never spilled. Probably wanted it trashed for kicks.

Pluffles had more chats with Mrs. Hauksbee over the next few days, all steering him toward doing the right thing. She kept him close, even talking him out of heading to Bombay for the wedding. "Who knows what could go wrong?" she said. "India's no place for a guy like you."

When his fiancée and her aunt finally arrived, Pluffles—with Mrs. Hauksbee's help sorting his mess—was ready. They tied the knot, and Mrs. Hauksbee exhaled when the "I dos" were done.

Pluffles took her advice and left India. He quit the army, and now he's raising fancy cows behind green fences somewhere in England. Word is, he's doing alright. He'd have crashed and burned out here.

So, if anyone talks trash about Mrs. Hauksbee, tell them about the Rescue of Pluffles.

Comprehension

Question 1: Who is Pluffles, and what is his role in the story?

Question 2: Why does Pluffles get into trouble in Simla?

Question 3: What is Mrs. Reiver's main flaw according to the narrator?

Question 4: How does Mrs. Hauksbee differ from Mrs. Reiver in her approach to Pluffles?

Question 5: What motivates Mrs. Hauksbee to intervene in Pluffles' situation?

Question 6: What is the "Seven Weeks' War" in the story?

Question 7: How does Mrs. Hauksbee change Pluffles' behaviour?

Question 8: Why does the narrator say Pluffles would have "crashed and burned" in India?

Question 9: What happens to Pluffles after he marries his fiancée?

Question 10: What does the story suggest about Anglo-Indian society in Simla?

Answers

Answer 1: Pluffles is a naive, wealthy rookie officer in the "Unmentionables" regiment, manipulated by Mrs. Reiver until Mrs. Hauksbee rescues him for his fiancée.

Answer 2: He trusts his poor judgment, falling under Mrs. Reiver's manipulative control, which leads him to act foolishly and spend beyond his means.

Answer 3: Mrs. Reiver is selfish and calculating, lacking any genuine kindness or mischievous charm, unlike other Anglo-Indian women.

Answer: Mrs. Hauksbee treats Pluffles kindly, like a grown-up, and guides him maternally, while Mrs. Reiver orders him around like a servant.

Answer 5: She wants to save Pluffles' engagement for his fiancée's sake and to outmanoeuvre her rival, Mrs. Reiver.

Answer 6: It's the seven-week rivalry between Mrs. Hauksbee and Mrs. Reiver as they compete to control Pluffles' loyalty.

Answer 7: She gains his trust, critiques his foolishness gently, and encourages him to honour his engagement, steering him toward maturity.

Answer 8: His naivety and susceptibility to manipulation would have led to financial ruin and social disgrace if he stayed.

Answer 9: He quits the army, leaves India, and raises cattle in England, living a stable life.

Answer 10: It portrays a competitive, gossip-driven society where social manoeuvring and manipulation are common, especially among women.