

Strangely enough, or perhaps not strangely at all, Betty Bevan looked very much as Mrs. Sunbury must have looked at her age. She had the same sharp features and the same rather small beady eyes, but her lips were scarlet with paint, her cheeks lightly rouged and her short black hair permanently waved. Mrs. Sunbury took in all this at a glance, and she reckoned to a penny how much her smart rayon dress had cost, her extravagantly high-heeled shoes and the saucy hat on her head. Her frock was very short and she showed a good deal of flesh-coloured stocking. Mrs. Sunbury, disapproving of her make-up and of her apparel, took an instant dislike to her, but she had made up her mind to behave like a lady, and if she didn't know how to behave like a lady nobody did, so that at first things went well. She poured out tea and asked Herbert to give a cup to his lady friend....

Betty insecurely perched a piece of bread-and-butter and a scone on her saucer and Mrs. Sunbury talked affably about the weather. She had the satisfaction of seeing that Betty was getting more and more ill-at-ease. Then she cut the cake and pressed a large piece on her guest. Betty took a bite at it and when she put it in her saucer it fell to the ground.

"Oh! I am sorry", said the girl, as she picked it up.

"It doesn't matter at all, I'll cut you another piece", said Mrs. Sunbury.

"Oh, don't bother, I'm not particular. The floor's clean".

"I hope so", said Mrs. Sunbury with an acid smile, "but I wouldn't dream of letting you eat a piece of cake that's been on the floor".

W. Somerset Maugham