DAN
&
BETTY

"Good home wanted for," let's see… yeah, I know, "young-at-heart pedigree terrier. Excellent watchdog and loyal friend. P.S. Piano included if interested, but no obligation."

Betty

When I call to Peggy in the morning, she's sitting at the kitchen table, knitting.

The first time in years.

Indiana is playing with the ball of wool and she's scolding him one second and laughing at him the next.

I make myself a cup of tea and sit down with her.

I tell her about Dan.

Dan

I'm in the middle of writing my new notice, getting all excited about my new approach, an all-out offensive and Martha proud of me, when my doorbell rings.

BETTY. Am I like the bad penny that keeps showing up? Don't answer that.
DAN. No, you're grand, I'm just doing up a new notice for himself. Trying to make him sound a bit …
BETTY. Sexier?
DAN. *(Laughs.)* Well, I suppose. I'm going to make lots of copies and put them up in shops and places — not just the vet's.
BETTY. You're really determined, aren't you?
DAN. Well you know what they say — if you want something to happen, you have to make it happen.
BETTY. Good for you. Would you like some help?
DAN. Well …
BETTY. I could read over your new notice for you if you'd like?

I've found homes for enough kittens over the years, so I can lend you my unique expertise.
DAN. Well, I suppose … Actually yeah, that would be great. Come in and I'll stick the kettle on.
BETTY. Have you thought about a photo at all?
DAN. Yeah, but he's not the most handsome of dogs, is he? No offence, Chap.
BETTY. Oh, poor Chapatti.
DAN. Now, I'll read out what I have — I've taken some liberties with the facts, but … are you alright, Betty? *(Pause. Betty is looking up at something.)*
BETTY. What's that, Dan?
DAN. That? Oh that — well, it's a —
BETTY. It's a noose.
DAN. No it isn't. A noose doesn't look like that.
BETTY. Then why's it hanging from that wooden beam?
DAN. It's a thing for — I use it for — look, Chapatti's dog food, the dry stuff — he's always trying to get at it, aren't you, Chap? I tie it to the rope and pull it up there so he can't reach it. It's mad watching him jumping up to try and get it, isn't it, Chap? You should see him. Here, look, I'll just …
BETTY. It's alright.
DAN. It — no, I usually put it in a plastic bag first. Now. Go on, Chap. Go on, show Betty. Go on, Chap. "Not a performing seal" — I should put that on his notice. You see he isn't hungry, Betty — he's just eaten.
BETTY. That's where you're going, isn't it, Dan? That's where you're travelling to.
DAN. What are you talking about?
BETTY. Just tell me. *(Pause.)*
DAN. I'm going to wherever Martha is, alright? I'm going to wherever Martha is … I'm sorry, Betty, but … it's got nothing to do with you. I want to be with her, that's all there is to it.
BETTY. She's dead.
DAN. She's somewhere, she has to be somewhere. She was so full of life — that energy, that magic, it can't all just disappear. It has to go somewhere — you said so yourself about Prudence. Her energy had to go somewhere.
BETTY. Is this what she wants?
DAN. Who cares what she wants? I spent my life doing what she

wanted, keeping that promise, never protecting her. What good did it to her?
BETTY. What good? She knew she was loved. She knew she was safe when she was with you. You couldn't stop her getting sick.
DAN. I could have stood up for her.
BETTY. She didn't want you to. You think you were weak, but you respected her wishes — that takes strength. That's how much you loved her — blaming yourself for a life *she* chose.
DAN. I *still* love her. I want to be with her, Betty. Just the two of us. No husband, no family — finally. It's the only way. *(Pause.)* She's waiting for me, I know she is. She can't move on without me.
BETTY. She certainly had a problem moving on with you when she was alive.
DAN. What's that meant to mean?
BETTY. She could have left her husband if she'd really wanted to.
DAN. She had kids.
BETTY. Maybe that's just an excuse. How do you know? How do you know she's not waiting for him?
DAN. Don't make me laugh.
BETTY. He visited her grave, didn't he? That must mean he felt something for her.
DAN. Yes, guilt. Or rage. Or fear.
BETTY. Or love.
DAN. I know how she felt about me.
BETTY. But you don't know how they felt about each other.
DAN. I think you should go.
BETTY. What's the point of throwing your life away?
DAN. I don't have a life without her.
BETTY. You could have a lovely life. You could have me in it.
DAN. You?
BETTY. I like you, Dan. I think we could be friends. It could never be like what you had with Martha, of course it couldn't. But we could be … we could just be friends. I know your heart's broken, but you've had something in your life that I'd kill for. You've loved and you've been loved, passionately. I never had that and now that I'm the mad woman with the cats I know I never will. I think it's wonderful, in a way, that you want to die for her. It's the most romantic thing I ever heard and I almost envy her. But I don't envy her. Because I'm alive. And by and large I think that's a better thing to be. *(Pause.)*
DAN. You're not the mad woman with all the cats, Betty.

BETTY. Oh what if I am? At least I'm not boring. I wouldn't mind, but the only reason I called was to invite you to dinner … Are you sure that noose will do its job? I wouldn't fancy putting my neck in that.
DAN. Yeah, well I didn't know how to tie it. I know what it's meant to look like, but … I was thinking of getting a book out of the library on how to tie knots, only I think I left my library card in an old suit I gave to Oxfam.
BETTY. You didn't think to look it up online?
DAN. I'm not great with computers.
BETTY. Oh Dan, you really are a bit of a disaster, aren't you?
DAN. I'm not changing my mind, Betty. I'm sorry, but I'm not.
BETTY. Well then, would you like to join me for dinner tonight? Or do you have other, more permanent plans?
DAN. Dinner would be lovely. Betty —
BETTY. Eight o'clock, Dan. You know where I live.

Betty

I call to Peggy and tell her the whole story.
And then I tell her my plan.

Dan

I open up one of my black bin bags and take out my suit and my white shirt.
I iron the shirt and the tie and the trousers.
I find the shoe polish in another bag and I polish my shoes.
I take my time with all of it.
I enjoy doing it.
It isn't a chore.
I look well.
I look as good as I looked the day of the funeral.
No, that's not true.