

*[The first part of a two-part short story, first published in TV Times magazine in late-1978/early-1979. This was designed to fill in the gap between when we last saw Thomas and Sarah in the original Upstairs, Downstairs series, and their new spin-off series, Thomas & Sarah – Steve]*

## **WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THOMAS AND SARAH?**

### **THE SPIN OF THE WHEEL**

**BY ALFRED SHAUGHNESSY**

#### **Part 1**

Sarah was muttering as she climbed up the area steps of the house to Eaton Place. "Poor old Edward," she said. They were the same steps she had descended seven years earlier on her way to be interviewed for a position there as underhousemaid.

"What's the matter with Edward?" asked Thomas, following her up to the little iron gate at the top. "He's dead, isn't he?" Sarah said as they gained the street in the warm stillness of a May night, and walked across the pavement to their small, yellow two-seater car standing at the kerb. "He was alive and kicking just now, unless that was his ghost in the Servants' Hall tonight."

Sarah smiled. "Not Edward Barnes, stupid. King Edward."

Thomas Watkins, former chauffeur to the Bellamy family, and Sarah Moffatt, lately the nurserymaid (promoted from underhousemaid) had left Lady Marjorie Bellamy's employ a couple of months earlier but had chosen this particular May evening in 1910 to take their modest Vinot Deguinsand two-seater for a spin from Kilburn to Belgravia and pay a respectful call on their former employers, at the same time looking up their old colleagues in the Servants' Hall.

No longer in domestic service themselves, Thomas and Sarah had earlier that evening driven up to the front door and rang the bell, all dressed up in their Sunday best, so that Edward Barnes, the footman who opened the door, hardly recognised them – until Sarah, four months pregnant and wearing an elaborate hat with flowers attached, greeted him with a cheery "Wotcha, Eddie" and swept past the astonished young footman into the front hall. Thomas followed.

By the time that Edward had closed the front door, the pair of them were up the stairs and into the drawing-room, unannounced, to find a family party in progress to celebrate Lady Marjorie's birthday.

Somewhat shaken by the sudden appearance of two former servants, of whom they thought they'd seen the last, Richard and Marjorie had recovered their poise enough to offer them each a glass of champagne. Lady Prudence smiled artificially at Sarah, while James introduced them to his fiancée, Phyllis Kingsman and Elizabeth made a mild effort to put them at their ease. This proved unnecessary for, by the time Edward had alerted Hudson, the Bellamys' butler, as to the unusual situation developing upstairs and the latter had raced up the stairs two at a time and into the drawing-room hardly concealing his breathless anxiety, Sarah was already perched as bold as brass on the sofa, sipping her champagne and chattering away like a lady of quality.

With his usual diplomacy, Hudson mentioned to her ladyship that perhaps the visitors might care to go down and "see them in the Servants' Hall", which gave Marjorie the cue to agree, rise and edge her unexpected guests towards the door. With Thomas and Sarah gone, the family moved out on to the drawing-room balcony to listen to the distant humming sound of the vast crowds that were gathered that evening outside the gates of Buckingham Palace anxiously waiting for news. For King Edward VII was gravely ill and not expected to last the night.

Downstairs in the Servants' Hall Mrs. Bridges was eyeing Sarah's contours and wondering whether the girl was really married to Thomas. "We've only got their word for it," she thought. Meanwhile, Thomas was describing life at the small garage in Kilburn he'd bought recently with a handsome sum of money Mr. Bellamy had given him to take Sarah away and marry her. Edward and Daisy were listening, impressed, as the Welsh ex-chauffeur told of the small two-seater motor car they'd also acquired and how fast it could go downhill with a following wind. 35m.p.h.! Edward had been on the point of popping out into the street to inspect Thomas's precious machine, when the telephone had rung outside in the passage and, after a few moments, Hudson, who had gone to answer it, returned with a grave expression on his face to inform those assembled round the Servants' Hall table that the King was dead.

After a moment of shocked silence, Hudson had suggested with his unflinching sense of occasion that it might be best if the party now came to an end and everyone dispersed. Thomas and Sarah had taken the hint and, after fond farewells to their former colleagues in the Bellamy household, they had left by the back-door, and were now about to get into their small motor and drive off along the street.

Although it was well after midnight, Sarah, whose jolly evening out had been interrupted by the news of the King's death, did not feel in the mood to return at once to the comparative squalor of Kilburn. Instead she suggested to Thomas that they should run down to Buckingham Palace in the car and join the crowds there. It was only a short spin from Eaton Place into Eaton Square and along past St. Peter's Church to the back of the Palace. "Be some excitement down the Palace," Sarah said. Thomas took a more practical view.

"There'll be nothing to see, except a lot of people standing about gawking; besides jostling with heavy crowds in your condition might not be very wise."

But Sarah persisted and got her way, as she often did. When he'd started up the car and climbed in beside her, she assured Thomas that she felt as strong as an ox, so she was sure the 'little one' inside her must be strong too. Before Thomas had time to contradict this dubious theory, they had reached the stable gates at the back of the late King's residence where they decided to stop and leave the motor at the kerb.

Soon they were encountering throngs of Londoners making their way from the Palace gates towards Victoria and home. But there were still plenty of curious onlookers pressed against the forecourt railings, some of them struggling to read the small framed bulletin which hung there, signed by the Royal doctors and confirming that His Majesty's life had ended peacefully at 11.45p.m. But the great façade of Buckingham Palace was dark and sombre, only one or two lights were still shining in the upper rooms.

Inside the Palace people were moving silently about, members of the Royal Family, equerries, doctors, ladies-in-waiting, pages, servants – all aware that the end had come to a period of tension and anxiety, which had really begun on an icy-cold April day a week or so before.

On that day the King, whose lungs were in poor condition, brought on, some said, by his passion for cigars and his insistence on

smoking them in spite of his doctors' warning, had travelled up from Sandringham for the weekend. On the Sunday morning His Majesty had made his usual tour of the estate, calling at the farms and talking to his employees. In so doing, he had caught a chill, which soon developed into a worse attack of bronchitis than he had so far suffered.

It was only a matter of a few days after his return to London that the heavy strain on his heart; due to his corpulence and restricted breathing brought about a collapse. This forced him to abandon the cares of state and take to his bed, where five doctors came to the conclusion that the end of a reign was dangerously near.

When it was known for certain that the King was dangerously ill, Queen Alexandra, with characteristic thoughtfulness and understanding had sent for Mrs. Keppel, the King's favourite lady over the years, who was thus able to see him for the last time from his bedside.

Soon after Alice Keppel's [sic] visit, news reached the dying King that his two-year-old, 'Witch Of The Air', had won a good race that afternoon at Kempton Park, which brought fleeting sense of happiness to a great royal patron of the turf. So it was with a hazy vision of the Royal colours passing the post in front of the wild cheering of successful punters and loyal subjects that King Edward VII had finally lapsed into a coma from which he never recovered.

Sarah stood against the railings and looking up at the magnificent grey stone building remembered the night a year or so ago, when she ran away from the gamekeeper's cottage on the Southwold estate, made her way back to London racked with labour pains and banged on the basement door of the Bellamys' house to be let in; how she had found all the servants rushing about in a panic, for the King himself was dining at the house that night; and she recalled how kind Lady Marjorie had been after she, Sarah, had lost the baby she was expecting as the result of a secret trip to Paris with James, the son of the house.

"Come on, Sarah. Nothing more to See. Time for home." Thomas took her arm firmly and possessively and interrupted her reverie.

"We'll walk to the car now and drive back to Kilburn."

"Right-oh," said Sarah cheerfully, as she dismissed from her mind the cold sense of shock and emptiness she had felt at the tragic end to her first pregnancy. "Next time, it will

be different," she told herself. "I am no longer a domestic servant. I am the – well, 'friend', or should it be 'lady friend', of Thomas Watkins, Motor Engineer of Star Street, Kilburn and my... 'friend' will look after me."

Suddenly as they reached their two-seater car, tears of anger welled up in her eyes. "It's got to be different next time," she said out loud, so that Thomas paused as he bent down to start up the car and looked at her, puzzled.

"What's got to be different?"

"Nothing."

"Must be something. You said, 'It's got to be different'."

"Doesn't matter," Sarah muttered, annoyed with herself for nearly giving away her private thoughts.

Thomas persisted. "What has got to be different?"

Sarah hadn't wanted to raise the old bone of contention again. Now she had no choice.

"I was just thinking, Tom. By the time the baby's born. I'd like to be Mrs. Watkins, all legal and proper. That's all."

"Oh, that," said Thomas. "We'll have to see about it, won't we?" And he added, "When the time comes," giving the crank handle a mighty wrench. Luckily for both of them any further discussion about their future life together was interrupted by the two-seater's engine spluttering to life, with a clattering sound that precluded further communication. Thomas climbed up into the driving seat beside Sarah, who was visibly shaking and vibrating with every turn of the 12h.p. internal combustion engine that powered the car. When he let in the clutch, the two-seater jerked forward almost throwing Sarah backwards into the dickey-seat, but soon they were chugging proudly up Constitution Hill, making for Hyde Park Corner.

Sarah enjoyed riding in the two-seater. It gave her a slight feeling of superiority to sit there perched up high on the leather-upholstered seat, looking down at the ordinary folk on foot or riding cycles or trotting past in horse-drawn vehicles.

Half way up Constitution Hill Thomas squeezed the rubber horn honking it twice to warn a hansom cab which he was about to overtake. The cabby glanced round, took note of the challenge coming from behind him, looked daggers at Thomas and promptly whipped up his horse into a fast trot. Thomas

replied by pressing his foot on the accelerator pedal, right down to the floorboards so that the two-seater gradually nosed ahead of the hansom and had soon left the enraged cabby well behind, breathing in the fumes from his victor's exhaust. Sarah laughed triumphantly as they circled round Hyde Park Corner and set off up Park Lane in the direction of the Marble Arch and the Edgware Road.

The streets were almost deserted by now, since it was getting on for one o'clock in the morning. All the same, Thomas noted that odd groups of men and women standing round the coffee stalls on the street corners looked cheerful enough, and near the Marble Arch he and Sarah observed a couple of drunken revellers lurching along the pavement singing. Word of mouth news of the King's death had not yet spread very far from the immediate vicinity of the Palace, where onlookers, who had seen the final bulletin posted on the railings, were still dispersing. The nation as a whole would not know its King was dead until it woke the next morning to the black banner headlines of the daily newspapers.

"Wouldn't mind a nice cup of coffee," Sarah shouted against the sound of the motor. They'd just circled the Marble Arch and were about to turn into the Edgware Road. Sarah had spotted a coffee stall on the corner of the Bayswater Road. "Can't we stop a mo and have a nice hot drink?"

"Cold, are you?" Thomas asked.

"Not specially, only it's a bit cooler than it was. Goin' this speed."

"Where then?"

"Where what?"

"Where are we going so stop?"

Sarah pointed to the coffee stall just ahead. "There."

"Don't fancy stopping there, not on that corner," Thomas grunted.

"Why ever not?"

"Haunted, that corner is, with ghosts of dead men!"

"Go on, Tom. Don't make laugh."

"It's not meant to make you laugh." Thomas went driving on down the Edgware Road as Sarah, angry and disappointed, turned round in her seat to look back at the coffee stall they'd passed by.

"I don't get it," said Sarah.

In his own time and very pompously – for he liked to air his knowledge on almost every subject – Thomas explained to Sarah that the coffee stall they'd shunned was on the site of Tyburn Hill, the exact spot almost to within a few yards where dozens of highwaymen and other sundry criminals had been brought in open carts from London's prisons to be strung up and hanged by the neck in front of large cheering, bloodlusting mobs of Londoners.

Sarah shuddered but noticed that the car was slowing down. Thomas had spun out his gruesome discourse, until another coffee stall came into sight, so that he could finish his morbid history lesson and drive up smoothly at the same moment to an alternative place of refreshment.

There were three other customers around the oil-cloth counter. By way of conversation, Thomas said: "Sad about the King, wasn't it?"

The stall holder, Fred, looked up sharply. The others, too, stared at Thomas, who now savoured his moment to the full. "His Majesty died a couple of hours ago. Didn't you know? Just came from the Palace, we have."

The effect was one of shock, as it had been a couple of hours earlier in the Servants' Hall at Eaton Place.

"Poor old Teddie, eh?" It was Maisie, a flowerseller, who spoke first.

"Thought he wouldn't last long," Fred said, shaking his head.

"Had a jolly life anyway; I wouldn't complain," was all another, slightly tipsy customer would contribute.

"God rest his soul," said the third.

After a few further tributes from loyal subjects the matter of King Edward's death was dropped and Thomas and Sarah finished their coffee and turned to go back to their car. Thomas would have made a more effective exit, had he left the coffee stall immediately after imparting the latest news from Buckingham Palace. As it was, he delayed until the subject had been dropped and thereby spoiled his departure.

As Sarah preceded him out from under the awning of the coffee stall, Thomas threw back: "Just thought you'd be interested to know. Good-night."

Once more Thomas cranked up the car, or attempted to. It was not his night. Anxious to impress the watching coffee-drinkers with a smooth getaway, he swung the crankhandle

with casual abandon. But, for once, the car did not respond immediately. Only after several violent turns did the engine ignite and fire. Sarah was already aboard. Thomas, slightly puffed, joined her on the driving seat and the pair of them waved to the little group still hanging about the coffee stall, as they jerked off once more into the night.

On along Edgware Road they drove, the former chauffeur and his pert 'lady friend', enjoying the rush of warm evening air on their faces. The needle of the speedometer showed Thomas that he was now travelling at 30m.p.h. on the flat – a speed, he reflected with some pleasure, whereat, given reasonable weather conditions, he could drive Sarah down to the South Coast, Eastbourne or somewhere like that, in just ever two hours, spend the day beside the sea and return to Kilburn in time for supper...

"Not like them to stop out this late," thought Madge, as she sat sewing in her little room over the garage yard in Kilburn that once bore on a signboard her late husband's name, 'J. Fellowes, Motor Repairs', but now proclaimed: 'Thomas Watkins, Motor Engineer. All Repairs'.

Jack Fellowes had died just over a year ago – at Easter time – and Madge had been obliged to advertise the business for sale. When the 'Mr. T. Watkins' who answered the advertisement came along in person, she'd been surprised and delighted to receive a tall, dark and good-looking Welshman with his young wife, who declared they'd both been in service with well-to-do people in Belgravia and were looking for a garage to buy.

When Mr. Watkins explained he was a former chauffeur aiming to set up in business on his own, Madge had done everything possible to make him purchase the yard.

"My Jack would have liked the place to fall into the hands of a nice, respectable young couple," she'd told them a bit tearfully, and her joy had known no bounds when after completion of the details of sale, Thomas and Sarah had insisted that she should stay on in her room as a rent-free lodger in exchange for looking after the place when they were out and sometimes cooking meals for the three of them. The arrangement was perfect.

Now Madge sat alone, anxiously glancing every now and then at the clock and straining her ears for the clattering sound of the two-seater returning. She'd left the gate open and a light on in the yard. But the hours had ticked

by and there was no sight or sound of them. As one o'clock struck from a distant church and the dock on the mantelpiece chimed the hour almost in unison, Madge took off her steel-rimmed glasses to rest her eyes, for sewing in a dim light at this late hour placed a heavy strain on them. Frail, thin and drawn, with her hair scraped back into a bun, Madge was in her late 50s. Without Tom and Sarah for company, she'd be dreadfully lonely. They were the closest people to her in the whole world now. She loved them as she would have loved her children, had she and Jack ever had any.

And it was a mother's anxiety that Madge was feeling now, as wild fearful thoughts crowded into her mind.

She knew that Tom and Sarah had gone out in the two-seater earlier that evening to drive to Eaton Place and visit their old place of employment. But it was one o'clock in the morning now. Seven hours had passed since they left. Where could they be? What could they be doing – out this late?

Madge began to nod off and was soon asleep in her chair, her sewing sliding off her lap on to the floor beside her. A few moments later a shrill cry pierced the silence of the small hours but there was nobody in the vicinity of the garage to hear it. Madge woke with a start, shaking violently. And there was nobody there to whom she could describe the horrible dream that had just woken her and made her cry out. In her dream, which lasted barely three seconds, Madge had seen a blurred vision of a wheel spinning round, a cartwheel, but all its spokes were people, young men and women crying out as they spun round – among them were Thomas and Sarah. They were screaming at her to get out of the way or she'd be killed. Then the cartwheel spun right through her, cutting her body in half... and then she woke up.

Realising she'd been asleep, Madge checked the clock again, thoroughly upset and frightened. It was a quarter past one. She got up and put a kettle on to make some tea and noticed on the mantelshelf a letter she'd written that afternoon to Mr. Callow, an old friend of Jack's now living in Worthing. It was all ready to post but unstamped. Waiting for the kettle to boil, Madge opened a drawer in her work table, took out a sheet of postage stamps and tore one off to stick on her letter – it was something to do to pass the time. But her hands were still trembling with fright from her nightmare and she ripped the postage stamp in two. "Never mind," she thought, "I'll stick the two halves on the envelope to fit like

pieces of a jigsaw puzzle; and nobody'll say nothing. Mustn't waste a stamp. There." She smiled a little as she examined her handiwork, two halves of King Edward VII's head stuck neatly together on top of the envelope.

But all the King's Horses and All the King's Men couldn't put King Edward VII together again, as Madge had; not down at Buckingham Palace – for the life had gone out of his Majesty's portly body and he was gone for ever. Soon the postage stamps would bear the head of his son, King George the Fifth...

Madge's kettle had boiled now and she was soon stirring her cup of warm, comforting tea and worrying once more about Thomas and Sarah, just as they were reaching the western end of the Edgware Road and passing through Maida Vale. Even fewer carriages, motors or horse-drawn carts were to be seen. The omnibuses and trams had long ceased to run but, as Thomas steered the two-seater down the gentle slope of Shoot-Up Hill into Kilburn High Road, more care had to be exercised. For here the tram lines began, a hazard to be encountered only in the outlying districts of London, causing the motorist some difficulty in steering – for the narrow tyres of a motor car were easily unsettled by tramlines, which in wet weather could often produce a dangerous skid.

"Cor, look at that cart," Sarah suddenly shouted, gripping Tom's arm. "Boltin' by the looks of it."

Thomas looked up from the road immediately in front of him, where he'd been concentrating his eyes on the treacherous tramlines. Some 30 yards ahead of them was a small cart drawn by a shaggy dappled grey horse. The cart, piled high with all kinds of junk, was swaying and clattering along the road at an unusual speed, the horse trotting between the shafts, the driver tugging frantically at the reins and sparks flying from the frenzied mare's hooves as they pounded the cobble stones. In the dim street lighting Thomas and Sarah could barely see the cart's driver but it was instantly plain that the man had lost control and was unable to stop his horse.

"I'll overtake him, if I can," Thomas shouted over the noise of the engine, "get in front of him and force the nag to stop."

"Don't, Tom." Sarah was nervous enough as it was when Tom drove at speed. "You'll never catch it up... don't, Tom... please." But Thomas was never one to shirk a dangerous challenge. Pushing the old bus up to 35m.p.h. in order to overtake horse-drawn cabs and

carriages – especially those driven by stuck-up, sneering cabbies and coachmen with smart and wealthy passengers inside – that was one of Thomas Watkins' favourite pastimes, and here was a chance not only to overtake a horse and cart but also to drive in front of it, force a bolting animal to a standstill, and possibly prevent a nasty accident.

Thomas accepted the challenge. His right boot jammed down the accelerator pedal, the motor car gained speed and began to close up to the back of the junk cart that was bouncing and crashing along the street, shedding its load as it went.

Sarah, her heart in her mouth and holding her breath, could see now that they were in pursuit of a rag, bone and scrap merchant, for the cart was loaded with old bedding and mattresses, pots and pans, iron bedsteads, fenders, even a gramophone with a horn-shaped loudspeaker, and a rusty birdcage. When the two-seater was within a few feet of the cart, a copper kettle jumped off the back and rolled along the street with a metallic clanging sound. Thomas swerved to avoid it. Sarah screamed: "Look out." They missed it by inches. Now Thomas decided the moment of truth had come. He could see the cart's driver more clearly now. He was quite a young lad, about 19 or 20, short, stout with a scarf round his neck and a black flat cap on his rather large head. The lad was fighting a losing battle with his horse, which had now broken into a fast canter.

"Whoa, whoa back, whoa, Patsy..." the lad shouted in vain. Then a most unfortunate thing happened. In forcing open the throttle suddenly by treading on the accelerator pedal, Thomas caused a momentary mistiming of his ignition. The two-seater's engine back-fired. The resultant explosion was like that of a light field-gun going off on a battle-field. Patsy, the carthorse, reared up on her hind legs, whinnied, then put her head down and broke into a smart gallop. Thomas swung his motor car out from behind the speeding cart and tried to overtake.

"You'll never do it," Sarah shrieked in terror. "Tom, no. Stop." But Thomas was determined. By swinging the little car out into the middle of the road, he had committed himself to overtake. There was no turning back. As he drew level with the cart, the terrified lad at the reins became aware of a car alongside of him.

"Hold on, son," Thomas yelled across to him. "I'll get in front of you and make her stop."

"I can't hold her, she's gone mad," shouted back the young driver, still tugging in vain at

the reins and leaning so far back in his seat that he was in constant danger of toppling over backwards into the mass of old boxes, bedding and scrap-iron that made up his varied load.

It was fortunate that the streets were as empty as they were, for the two-seater and the scrap-merchant's cart continued to race along Kilburn High Road side by side or neck and neck, as one might say, neither conveyance gaining on the other.

"She'll tire soon," Thomas yelled out hopefully to Sarah, realising that there was, after all, a limit to any horse's staying power. Some costly days on the racecourse had taught Thomas that lesson.

But Patsy, the young scrap merchant's dappled grey mare, was a stayer and Thomas, while able just to keep his car level with the runaway horse and cart, could not quite achieve enough speed to overtake and swing into position in front of it.

"Don't try, please, Tom," Sarah pleaded. "Let it go. You'll only kill us."

Then it happened. Something so unexpected and quick that Thomas was taken completely by surprise.

There were a number of small side streets leading off to the left of that section of the Kilburn High Road along which they were racing. Suddenly and without warning the scrap merchant's cart turned left. It would be more accurate to say that Patsy turned left and the cart followed. In a flash the two-seater was past it and well ahead. Sarah turned round in her seat to look behind her, as Thomas instinctively began to apply the brakes. Sarah gasped in horror, her eyes staring transfixed at what she saw, for the little cart in swinging suddenly and violently to its left down the side street had cut across the angle of the kerb. Its front near-side wheel hit the pavement hard; the cart, heavily loaded with its merchandise, juddered and rocked and swayed, all three other wheels coming off the road at once, and threw the driver headlong off his seat into the road before overturning completely with a tremendous crash. The runaway mare, thus suddenly and violently jerked to a halt, was lifted bodily into the air by the shafts for a split second. Then she fell heavily on her knees to the cobble-stoned road and rolled over to lie in her harness, a heaving, sweating mass of horse flesh, shocked, exhausted and trapped, with part of the overturned cart across her flanks pinning her to the ground.

The two-seater had finally come to a halt some 50 yards down the street. Sarah was sitting

slumped in her seat, covering her eyes with her hands.

"Is he dead? I can't look, Tom... was he killed, the driver?... Tom!" Thomas did not answer. Instead he jumped down from his driving seat and ran back towards the scene of the accident, his footsteps echoing in the ensuing silence.

Sarah sat there feeling suddenly dizzy. She knew only too well the danger of a sudden shock to an expectant mother – this was just the kind of thing that could bring the baby early. At the same time she was aware with a cold chill of fear down her back that what had happened must be faced and there was no running away from the overturned cart back there.

The young driver was lying very still, half in the gutter close to the overturned cart, as Thomas reached the spot. One wheel of the cart was still spinning and the dappled grey mare was slowly recovering from the shock, pawing the road with her forelegs in an attempt to get up. Thomas instinctively seized the animal's cheekstrap and helped her to her feet, standing at her head for a moment patting her nose and making soothing sounds: "Steady, all right... steady now, there..." He looked round for Sarah, who now crept nervously towards the scene, her hand over her mouth.

"Come over here and hold the horse's head," Thomas commanded. "Look sharp." Sarah advanced, terrified, towards the mare, who seemed none the worse for her fall.

"Take hold of her," Thomas ordered, "and hang on, while I see to this poor chap."

Sarah gingerly moved round to hold the animal's head, as instructed. Thomas bent down and rolled over the lifeless figure of the young driver, whose face was like wax. Thomas peered at the ashen face of the cart-driver dimly lit by the street lamp on the corner. There was no mark on him, no blood, but it was the awkward way the lad was sprawled, one leg bent under the other, and the fact that he appeared not to be breathing that caused Thomas to feel a sudden sick feeling in the pit of his stomach.

"Is he dead?" Sarah almost whispered, as she held on to the mare's head, he [sic] heart throbbing.

"He's not breathing, as I can see," was all Thomas would say. Privately he was wondering about the laws governing manslaughter. What if some passer-by in the street had chanced to see him chasing the runaway cart in his car, thought he was some

foolhardy young motorist showing off! How could he counter such evidence? People were prejudiced against the motorist, some were. Didn't like the smells and the noise, resented the coming of the internal combustion engine. If the lad was dead such a witness could put Thomas behind bars.

"Is he?" Sarah asked again, her voice quivering with anxiety. Thomas said: "I don't know yet. Have to go and find a policeman, call an ambulance and get him to hospital." Thomas looked wildly round the empty, silent street. Still the young driver lay there motionless, like a heap of old clothes.

Thomas reassuringly clasped Sarah's hand and squeezed it and for a few silent seconds stared into her frightened eyes in the chalk white face. She seemed just about to say something but... Just then a sound of heavy footsteps made him turn and peer into the murky darkness down the sidestreet into which the cart had turned before crashing. A torch beam shone and a voice said:

"What's happened here, then?"

With a mixture of relief and apprehension Thomas made out the figure of a police constable coming towards him.

"The cart overturned, officer, rounding the corner. I'm afraid the driver's... well, he's not breathing, as I can see. He's over there." P.C. Brooking went over to examine the crumpled figure. Thomas closed his eyes and waited...

## **PART TWO NEXT WEEK**

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