

Terry Tufty and Halle Riser have dinner together in Chicago

8 March 2021

Vocabulary

Sugarcoat: to make (something difficult or distasteful) appear more pleasant or acceptable.

Frantic: marked by fast and nervous, disordered, or anxiety-driven activity.

Cab: taxi (taxicab)

Hostess (in a restaurant): a woman in charge of a public dining room who seats diners

Elevator: a cage or platform and its hoisting machinery for conveying people or things to different levels.

A pregnant pause: A pause that gives the impression that it will be followed by something significant.

Terry had decided not to approach Halle in the hospital but to meet her as planned at her favorite Sushi restaurant.

It was a gloomy evening but there were still a lot of people walking around the city. Terry took a cab from his hotel to the restaurant. The *Magnificent Mile Sushi House* is situated on the ninety third floor of the John Hancock Center. Halle had told him that there were superb views of the Chicago skyline, including the famous Willis Tower and Lake Michigan.

Terry's taxi cruised along Michigan Avenue and dropped him outside Hancock Tower just before 7 p.m. Halle had asked him to meet her in the restaurant and so he took the elevator to the ninety third floor. He was greeted by a young hostess who seated him at the bar.

He observed that the restaurant was already surprisingly busy. He ordered a gin and tonic and chatted with the barman.

Halle arrived at 7:15 looking tired and worried.

Terry greeted her with a hug and told her how much he had missed her. She seemed genuinely happy to see him but also a little preoccupied. They ordered their food and Terry poured Halle a glass of California Merlot. The view from the restaurant was definitely worth seeing, especially as the sun set and the city lights became visible.

Terry was desperate to find out who the doctor was who was talking to Halle at the hospital but, of course, he couldn't ask her directly.

They both described their frantic schedules and what they had done since leaving *Squirrels' Wood* then, all of a sudden, Halle started to cry bitterly. Heads all around the restaurant turned. Terry got up quickly and put his arms around her. This seemed to console her and her sobbing subsided.

"Halle, tell me what is upsetting you. You don't seem your usual self, is your work getting you down?"

Halle was quiet for a moment and then she replied, "No, it's not that. Its just thatI have got used to the exhaustion. I have not been feeling too well, for the last couple of months, physically, that is. Two weeks ago I mentioned it to the head of my department and she arranged for me to have a consultation with one of the gynecologists. I met with him this afternoon to hear the results. I was so emotional and sort of fell apart. He ended up taking me for a coffee in the hospital canteen. I wish you could have been with me this afternoon. I needed you so much."

Terry swallowed hard. He felt guilty and disgusted with himself for not trusting Halle and losing those precious moments.

After a pregnant pause Halle continued. "Terry, I don't want to sugarcoat this, but....."

Questions for discussion

1. Should Terry have felt guilty for not having gone over to see Halle earlier in the afternoon?
2. Does Halle, necessarily, have bad news? What do you think is troubling her?
3. Imagine this is in an episode of *Tufty Radio Theatre* and complete Halle's sentence in as dramatic a way as possible.
4. Describe your perfect restaurant (food, location, ambiance, menu).
5. What is your favorite foreign city and why?

The pronunciation challenge

I take it you already know
of tough and bough and cough and dough.
Others may stumble, but not you,
On hiccough, thorough, lough and through.
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,
To learn of less familiar traps.

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird.
And dead – it's said like bed, not bead.
For goodness sake, don't call it deed!
Watch out for meat and great and threat.
They rhyme with suite and straight and debt.

A moth is not a moth in mother,
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,
And here is not a match for there,
Nor dear and fear for pear and bear.
And then there's dose and rose and lose
Just look them up – and goose and choose.

And cork and work and card and ward.
And font and front and word and sword.
And do and go, then thwart and cart.
Come, come I've hardly made a start.

A dreadful language? Man alive,
I'd mastered it when I was five!

Attributed to T S Watt, 1954

	janvier	fevrier	mars
Intermédiaire / avancé lundi	11, 18, 25	1, 8	1, 8, 15, 22, 29