

'Seeing the light'. (On the theme of 'The Collection') – 498 words.

Since the passing of Edward, her beloved husband, Audrey could count on the fingers of one hand the number of visitors she received each week. The Year 2000 might have signalled the start of a New Millennium for many, but for Audrey, it reminded her of all the things she had left behind in the previous century. Loneliness had even driven her to sending herself some of the old love letters that Edward had written to her when they were both filled with the passion of youth.

Edward had been the one person who had allowed Audrey to escape from the repressive childhood of restrictions, where her father's rules were everything and Audrey had to listen to her father's favourite cliché, 'One day you'll see the light', almost on an hourly basis.

Receiving Edward's love letters gave Audrey an opportunity to converse with the postwoman, Daisy, who was kind enough to go beyond the statutory exchange of 'Hello. How are you?', to spend some time with the solitary widow. They were Audrey's best minutes of the week.

'Knock! Knock! Knock.' Who was paying Audrey a visit at that time of night?

'I'm here to collect the money for the rent. You're late this month. I've come to get it now, so that you don't go over the time limit and have to pay extra.' Audrey didn't recognise him, but she blamed her memory.

'I usually write a cheque, and put it in the post.'

'Look, I'm here to do you a favour. You can say 'No', but, if you do, it'll cost you. Take my advice and you'll make a saving. Cash only, of course. I can wait here while you get it.'

Audrey didn't believe in cards. Her father had told her they weren't real money. Audrey had stored a collection of cash locked securely in a bottom drawer of a chest at the top of the stairs. Retreating, Audrey moved back into her house. At least she had received a visit, and it was saving her money. Taking her time to mount the stairs, Audrey opened the drawer and took out the just the right amount, writing the figure taken, and the amount left, on the piece of paper that sat under the elastic band at the top of the stash.

What was that creaking sound?

Surely... At that moment, Audrey felt a hand sliding down her arm. What?...

Then instinct got the better of her.

Panicking, Audrey swung around in blind fear, knocking over the lamp on top of the drawers. It crashed into the intruder, rendering him unconscious as he landed in an untidy pile at the bottom of the stairs.

Such untidiness would certainly have provoked Audrey's father's ire.

Audrey dialled the three numbers she had always wanted to avoid. Audrey's visitor had come to collect something, but he was about to be collected himself.

He had 'seen the light', but not, perhaps, as Audrey's father had suggested.

'Hello. Police, fire or ambulance?'