

## NORTH HANGER LANE ALLEY

It's a grey gloomy Monday morning in west London. The autumn rain is pouring down. Cat Morland stands at the bus stop just ahead of the Hanger Lane gyratory that intersects Western Avenue. Having walked up the alley from St Augustine's, she is wet through. Hal is standing beside her constantly checking his watch. Cat glances at Hal.

'Where's this bloody bus this morning?' he says shaking his head.

'Have we met before?'

Hal turns to Cat. 'You do seem familiar.'

'The Roxy. That's it, the Roxy in Ealing Broadway. You were there Saturday night.'

'That DJ did like his T.Rex. Got a bit sick of it to be honest. My name is Henry, Henry Tilney, but you can call me Hal.'

'Catherine Morland, but friends call me Cat. I was there with my boring boyfriend, John.'

'I didn't notice, sorry.'

'Why would you. I was a bloody wallflower, and John was acting like my grandad. You know, penning me in. Keeping watch! I think he likes my best friend Isabella more than me. She can 'ave him. Good riddance!'

'Sounds fun. Do you live down the Alley?'

'Not exactly. I'm staying with family friends called the Allens whilst I complete my training at Central Middlesex Hospital.'

'I live down the Alley. Got a flat of my own. Top floor so I can see right across to the Hoover building!'

Laughter breaks out just as the rain starts to ease off.

'At last! The 83! This is my bus. Well, it's been nice talking to you Hal. I hope we meet again.'

'You take care Cat. Do give my regards to your grandad!'

Cat gave Hal a wave from her seat on the bus. The conductor rang the bell, and the bus pulled away. Hal blew her a kiss.

(A modern sequel to *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen).