

Part Five: Multiple Choice (Page 1, 2)

Read the following newspaper article and then answer questions 1-6 on the next page. Give only one answer to each question.

HOME COMFORT

It was a lazy Sunday afternoon, the lull before the storm of Monday morning madness of alarm clocks, traffic jams and deadlines. The clock struck three and Rebecca's elbow still rested on the arm of the tapestry-covered sofa. With her fingertips she began caressing the rough piping that ran along its seams. Simultaneously, the toes of her left foot moved back and forth across the edges of the sheepskin rug. This action Rebecca found comforting; it reminded her of being at home as a child when she used to sit in the family sitting room, her toes playing with the fringes of another kind of rug. Her mother would snap at her to stop it, so of course she did it all the more.

Rebecca had a sudden whiff of the glue that Katy was applying to make one of her artistic creations. Her daughter was seated on a cushion right in the middle of the room, looking like an island, surrounded by a sea of cardboard cut-offs, sequins, felt-tip pens, and pristine sheets of white A4 paper that she had disobediently pinched from her father's study. She really should be working at the kitchen table, Rebecca thought, but I don't have the appetite for the outburst that might happen if my genius-daughter-at-work is disturbed. Every three minutes and 50 seconds Katy got up to replay Kylie Minogue's version of 'The Locomotion'.

"Why don't you listen to the CD all the way through, Katy?" her dad said, who was sprawled out on the other sofa. "You'd like the other songs as well."
"Nah, too boring."

Rebecca glanced at David and then said, "I could do with something to perk me up." Her words trailed off with a heavy sigh, and then a yawn. It was the first in a series of hints that she would like him to get up and make her a cup of tea.

On the lamp table next to the sofa, she noticed a letter that had been delivered a week ago, advertising exercises classes and a slimming club. She had kept it on the table as a reminder, or perhaps to conjure up the same kind of magical effect that people believe in when they splash out on membership to a fancy gym without going near the place more than once every two months.

"Have you seen this flyer?" she said to her husband. "Just the thought of going for a workout makes me want to go and lie down." Once more she didn't get a response. "Who's going to make the tea then?" was her third and most blatant attempt to get a drink before she died of thirst.

He stood up. "I suppose it's my turn. Again." He went off into the kitchen while Rebecca, the victor, snuggled a bit further into the sofa. Charlie, who'd been asleep on the sheepskin rug, now started up with his own brand of baby chatter. He was attempting to cover the whole repertoire of vowel sounds this afternoon, like a singer performing warm-up exercises. Then, occasionally, he jammed his fingers into his mouth to make a sound approaching an elongated 'w'.

He lay underneath a baby gym, which consisted of a tubular frame in patriotic colours of red, white and blue and a top bar, from which dangled two clowns, one on a swing and one in a position that Rebecca thought was called a pike. (It was a long time ago that she had achieved her gold star award in the trampoline.) Once Charlie made eye contact with Rebecca, his happy babbling began to turn into a grizzle.

"Does Charlie want feeding again?" Rebecca asked in the baby voice that irritated them all, herself included. She bent down to scoop her son up.

"Mum, he doesn't want feeding again. You've only just fed him," Katy said.

"I'll try – just in case he's hungry." In the kitchen she warmed through the mush of potatoes and broccoli that Charlie liked and took it back through to be with Katy.

Luckily, the baby was actually ready for a feed, which meant that Rebecca not only saved face with her daughter, but showed that she had no need to feel guilty about sending her husband to make the tea. David walked back in the sitting room that very minute, her cup of Earl Grey with its delicate scent of bergamot wobbling in its saucer. In his other hand he clutched a large mug. Rebecca gave him a warning look that dared him not to put the cups down on the oak blanket box that served as their coffee table. Its surface was already scarred by two rings where hot drinks had been carelessly placed directly onto it.

"Thanks. You're a treasure." She settled down to feed Charlie, knowing that her tea would be the perfect temperature to drink in one go by the time he had had enough.

"Where's Katy got to?" David said, after a few minutes. The answer came from upstairs as they heard the sound of their older child passing through the curtain in the doorway of her bedroom. It was like those beaded curtains that used to be in fashion when Rebecca was a child, but instead of beads this one was formed from a dazzling collection of pink, purple and silver shimmering plastic squares. She couldn't remember which one of them had named it the 'jingle-jangler' but it was very apt.