

This month's content

LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER *by Roald Dahl*

At the time of the pandemic the cooperative work fostered by the eTwinning project Twin Library has had a slowdown but surely not a lockdown.

After a slight delay due to reorganisation of school and everyday life, here we are again with the fourth issue of our Twin Bulletin, this time dedicated to a funny detective story by the British writer Roald Dahl.

The participating classes read the story, discussed about the main themes and characters and worked in international groups to write down the missing dialogues.

Here is the complete, Twin version of the story. In the new text you will notice some parts in italics, that are the result of our cooperative work.

They were interpreted and recorded in different audio files, which you can open by clicking on the links you will see in some sections of the text.

Thank you to all teachers and students who cooperated in this challenging activity!

Enjoy reading.... and listening!

The Twin Library Team

"And above all, watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who don't believe in magic will never find it."
— Roald Dahl



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LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER

Twin version

THE room was warm and clean, the curtains drawn, the two table lamps alight--hers and the one by the empty chair opposite. On the sideboard behind her, two tall glasses, soda water, whisky. Fresh ice cubes in the Thermos bucket. Mary Maloney was waiting for her husband to come home from work. Now and again she would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself with the thought that each minute gone by made it nearer the time when he would come.

I can't wait to hold my Patrick in my arms after a long day of work ...This is my favorite moment of the day. Have I already prepared everything? The table is set, I have hung out the clothes and the house is in order. Perfect! Maybe to pass the time it would be better if I started sewing.

There was a slow smiling air about her, and about everything she did. The drop of the head as she bent over her sewing was curiously tranquil.

Oh! I can't wait to hold my baby in my arms... I can't wait for my son to be born! You too can't wait to see your little dad? Patrick should come back now ...

Her skin--for this was her sixth month with child--had acquired a wonderful translucent quality, the mouth was soft, and the eyes, with their new placid look, seemed larger, darker than before.

To make it more pleasant for him to return home I will prepare his usual glass of whisky, and one for myself, but not too strong. I love him so much! Since I met him, between me and him was love at first sight, I would do everything for him and he would do everything for me. He is always in my thoughts. I have already planned our future, our life will be perfect, together forever.

When the clock said ten minutes to five, she began to listen, and a few moments later, punctually as always, she heard the tyres on the gravel outside, and the car door slamming, the footsteps passing the window, the key turning in the lock. She laid aside her sewing, stood up, and went forward to kiss him as he came in.

"Hullo, darling," she said. "Hullo," he answered. She took his coat and hung it in the closet. Then she walked over and made the drinks, a strongish one for him, a weak one for herself; and soon she was back again in her chair with the sewing, and he in the other, opposite, holding the tall glass with both his hands, rocking it so the ice cubes tinkled



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against the side.

For her, this was always a blissful time of day. She knew he didn't want to speak much until the first drink was finished, and she, on her side, was content to sit quietly, enjoying his company after the long hours alone in the house. She loved to luxuriate in the presence of this man, and to feel-almost as a sunbather feels the sun that warm male glow that came out of him to her when they were alone together. She loved him for the way he sat loosely in a chair, for the way he came in a door, or moved slowly across the room with long strides. She loved the intent, far look in his eyes when they rested on her, the funny shape of the mouth, and especially the way he remained silent about his tiredness, sitting still with himself until the whisky had taken some of it away.

"Tired, darling?" "Yes," he said. "I'm tired." And as he spoke, he did an unusual thing. He lifted his glass and drained it in one swallow although there was still half of it, at least half of it, left. She wasn't really watching him but she knew what he had done because she heard the ice cubes falling back against the bottom of the empty glass when he lowered his arm. He paused a moment, leaning forward in the chair, then he got up and went slowly over to fetch himself another. "I'll get it!" she cried, jumping up. "Sit down," he said.

When he came back, she noticed that the new drink was dark amber with the quantity of whisky in it. "Darling, shall I get your slippers?". She watched him as he began to sip the dark yellow drink, and she could see little oily swirls in the liquid because it was so strong. "I think it's a shame," she said, "that when a policeman gets to be as senior as you, they keep him walking about on his feet all day long." He didn't answer, so she bent her head again and went on with her sewing; but each time he lifted the drink to his lips, she heard the ice cubes clinking against the side of the glass. "Darling," she said. "Would you like me to get you some cheese? I haven't made any supper because it's Thursday." "No," he said.

"If you're too tired to eat out," she went on, "it's still not too late. There's plenty of meat and stuff in the freezer, and you can have it right here and not even move out of the chair." Her eyes waited on him for an answer, a smile, a little nod, but he made no sign. "Anyway," she went on, "I'll get you some cheese and crackers first." "I don't want it," he said. She moved uneasily in her chair, the large eyes still watching his face. "But you must have supper. I can easily do it here. I'd like to do it. We can have lamb chops. Or pork. Anything you want. Everything's in the freezer." "Forget it," he said. "But, darling, you must eat! I'll fix it anyway, and then you can have it or not, as you like."

She stood up and placed her sewing on the table by the lamp. "Sit down," he said. "Just for a minute, sit down." It wasn't till then that she began to get frightened. "Go on," he said. "Sit down." She lowered herself back slowly into the chair, watching him all the time with those large, bewildered eyes. He had finished the second drink and was staring down into the glass frowning. "Listen," he said, "I've got something to tell you." "What is it, darling? 'What's the matter?'" He had become absolutely motionless, and he kept his head down so that the light from the lamp beside him fell across the upper part of his face, leaving the chin and mouth in shadow. She noticed there was a little muscle moving near the corner of his left eye.



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Patrick: "This is going to be a bit of a shock to you, I'm afraid..."

Mary: "What happened Patrick?"

Patrick: "I've been thinking about something and I've decided that I should tell you right away. I don't want to pretend I feel the same way I did in the past, especially now that our baby is going to be born. I hope you understand and will not get angry with me."

Mary: "So, you want to break up with me? I can't believe this, you know I'm pregnant!"

Patrick: "I know it's kind of a bad time to be telling you, but I think this is the best for both of us."

Mary: "Are you kidding me? How exactly is this good for me? Please, don't do this to me Patrick, I can't accept it"

Patrick: "I'm sorry Mary, I didn't want to hurt you and I wanted us to stay friends"

Mary: "FRIENDS?" she said ironically. "We are now strangers!"

Patrick: "I'll give you some money so you can take care of yourself and the baby. You and the baby are still very important to me, even though you may think the opposite... But there needn't really be any fuss. I hope not anyway. It wouldn't be very good for my job."

Mary: "I DON'T WANT ANYTHING FROM YOU!" I gave you all my love and now you're treating me like you have never cared about me. Now get out of my house, you let me down Patrick!" she said and started to cry.

Patrick: "If that's what you want, I'll do it. But I want you to know that you really hurt me with your words. Anyway, if you need something, you know you can always call me, whenever you want."

Her first instinct was not to believe any of it, to reject it all. It occurred to her that perhaps he hadn't even spoken, that she herself had imagined the whole thing. Maybe, if she went about her business and acted as though she hadn't been listening, then later, when she sort of woke up again, she might find none of it had ever happened.

"I'll get the supper," she managed to whisper, and this time he didn't stop her. When she walked across the room she couldn't feel her feet touching the floor. She couldn't feel anything at all--except a slight nausea and a desire to vomit. Everything was automatic now--down the stairs to the cellar, the light switch, the deep freeze, the hand inside the cabinet taking hold of the first object it met. She lifted it out, and looked at it. It was wrapped in paper, so she took off the paper and looked at it again. A leg of lamb. All right then, they would have lamb for supper. She carried it upstairs, holding the thin bone-end of it with both her hands, and as she went through the living-room, she saw him standing over by the window with his back to her, and she stopped.

"For God's sake," he said, hearing her, but not turning round. "Don't make supper for me. I'm going out." At that point, Mary Maloney simply walked up behind him and without any pause she swung the big frozen leg of lamb high in the air and brought it down as hard as she could on the back of his head. She might just as well have hit him with a steel club. She stepped back a pace, waiting, and the funny thing was that he remained standing there for at least four or five seconds, gently swaying. Then he crashed to the carpet.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of the shock. She came out slowly, feeling cold and surprised, and she stood for a while



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blinking at the body, still holding the ridiculous piece of meat tight with both hands. All right, she told herself. So I've killed him. It was extraordinary, now, how clear her mind became all of a sudden. She began thinking very fast. As the wife of a detective, she knew quite well what the penalty would be. That was fine. It made no difference to her. In fact, it would be a relief. On the other hand, what about the child? What were the laws about murderers with unborn children? Did they kill them both--mother and child? Or did they wait until the tenth month? What did they do? Mary Maloney didn't know. And she certainly wasn't prepared to take a chance. She carried the meat into the kitchen, placed it in a pan, turned the oven on high, and shoved it inside. Then she washed her hands and ran upstairs to the bedroom. She sat down before the mirror, tidied her face, touched up her lips and face. She tried a smile. It came out rather peculiar. She tried again. "Hullo Sam," she said brightly, aloud. The voice sounded peculiar too. "I want some potatoes please, Sam. Yes, and I think a can of peas." That was better. Both the smile and the voice were coming out better now. She rehearsed it several times more. Then she ran downstairs, took her coat, went out the back door, down the garden, into the street. It wasn't six o'clock yet and the lights were still on in the grocery shop.

Mary: [Hullo Sam](#). (Now, I have to stay calm and pretend that everything is fine as usual. I have to be polite and courteous, but not too much, so as to avoid causing any suspicion.)

Sam: Welcome Mrs Maloney, good evening. How are you?

Mary: I'm fine, thank you. And you?

Sam: Not very well. At least, I feel better than yesterday. Yesterday I received some baskets with fresh fruit. But my son, who usually helps me with them, stayed at home. So, I had to carry everything myself. And now, I'm very tired, my back hurts...

Mary: Oh I'm so sorry. Have you been to the doctor yet?

Sam: Not yet. But enough about me. How can I help you? Sorry if I bother you with my problems...

Mary: (Mmm, he noticed that I'm in a hurry. I hope he is not too suspicious, otherwise I will have to kill him as I did with my husband.) Oh, you don't bother me at all... I asked you out of sheer interest. By the way I want some potatoes, tomatoes, carrots and a can of peas. Patrick doesn't want to eat out tonight because he is really tired, even though we usually eat out on Thursdays. And I don't have any vegetables in the house.

Sam: Then how about meat, Mrs Maloney?

Mary: No, I already have some, thanks. I got a nice leg of lamb in the freezer. I don't like cooking it frozen, Sam, but I have the chance to try it this time. Will it be all right?

Sam: Personally, I don't believe it makes any difference. Would you like these Idaho potatoes?

Mary: Yes please, that'll be fine. Two of those.

Sam: Anything else? How about afterwards? What are you going to give him for afterwards?

Mary: Well, what would you suggest, Sam?

Sam: A dessert would be perfect after the meal. What about a slice of cheesecake



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Mary: (If I accept this slice of cake, I will make him happy and less suspicious, because I will look like a caring wife). Perfect, he loves it. Thank you, Sam.

Sam: So, how is Patrick?

Mary: (Oh no! He asked me how he is. I have to tell him that Patrick is fine, or else he will think that I killed him. But I have to be calm, otherwise he will see that I am stressed). He is fine, as usual. He is a little tired though, as I said before.

Sam: It's been such a long time since I last met him. We should meet up as soon as possible.

Mary: Yes, we should! That would be great, but not these days. He is ill. Working all day in difficult conditions has this consequence on his health.

Sam: I understand, being a policeman is tough. Send him greetings from me!

Mary: Okay, I will. I have to go now, it was nice talking to you.

Sam: Goodnight Mrs Maloney, and thank you.

Mary: (It looks as if he hasn't suspected anything. It was just a false alarm, I can go now safely.) Goodbye Sam!...

And now, she told herself as she hurried back, all she was doing now, she was returning home to her husband and he was waiting for his supper; and she must cook it good, and make it as tasty as possible because the poor man was tired; and if, when she entered the house, she happened to find anything unusual, or tragic, or terrible, then naturally it would be a shock and she'd become frantic with grief and horror. Mind you, she wasn't expecting to find anything. She was just going home with the vegetables. Mrs Patrick Maloney going home with the vegetables on Thursday evening to cook supper for her husband. That's the way, she told herself. Do everything right and natural. Keep things absolutely natural and there'll be no need for any acting at all.

Therefore, when she entered the kitchen by the back door, she was humming a little tune to herself and smiling. "Patrick!" she called. "How are you darling?" She put the parcel down on the table and went through into the living room; and when she saw him lying there on the floor with his legs doubled up and one arm twisted back underneath his body, it really was rather a shock. All the old love and longing for him welled up inside her, and she ran over to him, knelt down beside him, and began to cry her heart out. It was easy. No acting was necessary. A few minutes later she got up and went to the phone. She knew the number of the police station, and when the man at the other end answered, she cried to him, "Quick! Come quick! Patrick's dead!" "Who's speaking?" "Mrs Maloney. Mrs Patrick Maloney." "You mean Patrick Maloney's dead?" "I think so," she sobbed. "He's lying on the floor and I think he's dead." "Be right over," the man said. The car came over quickly, and when she opened the front door, two policemen walked in. She knew them both--she knew nearly all the men at that precinct--and she fell right into Jack Noonan's arms, weeping hysterically. He put her gently into a chair, then went over to join the other one, who was called O'Malley, kneeling by the body. "Is he dead?" she cried. "I'm afraid he is. What happened?"

Mary: "I don't know what happened. I was at the grocer's and when I came back, I found him dead on the floor. I can't believe it! I'm so shocked".



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Noonan: "Look O'Malley, there is a small patch of congealed blood on the dead man's head. I'm going to check if the doctor and the detectives have arrived. We need to collect as many clues as we can".

Noonan: "They're finally here! I'm gonna have a talk with them to let them know what happened".

Mary: "Ooooh, Max how are you? It's nice to see you".

Max: "I'm fine. I'm here just to take some photos, you need to calm down. Everything is going to be alright".

Takis: "I'm going to collect the fingerprints from the crime scene".

Max: "Now, Mrs Maloney I want you to tell me one more time what happened. Don't worry, nobody is suspecting you. We just want to make sure that you didn't forget to mention anything".

Takis: "What was his behaviour like when he came back home? Did you notice anything strange?"

Noonan: "Did he seem frustrated or maybe anxious?"

Mary: "Nooo, he was just tired, so I wanted to make him a nice meal because he wasn't in the mood to eat out! I asked him what he wanted and then I decided to go to the grocer's to get the ingredients. I got some vegetables and a slice of cheesecake. It was my Patrick's favourite... You can ask Sam, I asked him for advice and he helped me choose the vegetables".

Takis: "Did you make supper anyway?"

Mary: "Ooooh yes, it's actually still in the oven cooking. Dear God, I almost forgot!"

Max: "Mary, one last question. Which grocer did you go to?"

Mary: "I went to the grocer at the end of the street. His name is Sam. I have known him for a long time and he is always kind to me".

Max: "Ok Mary, wait here please..."

The other detective ran immediately to the grocery shop indicated by the woman. The grocer was still at the counter, and let the policeman in as soon as he saw him, because he had noticed in what a big hurry the officer was.

After that, he asked, trying to keep himself calm:

Sam: "Good evening, sir. Please tell me, what can I do for you?"

Policeman: "I'm afraid I have to ask you some questions about a terrible fact recently happened: Mr Patrick Maloney was killed about an hour ago. We knew that his wife, Mrs Mary Maloney, came to this shop to buy something for dinner, approximately at the same time. Could you confirm that? Has she really been here lately?"

Sam: "Yes, of course I can confirm it" said the grocer.

Policeman: "And what was she like? I mean, was she calm, sad, terrified...?" continued the policeman, while he was starting taking notes.

Sam: "I don't know, she was... natural, was like any normal lady who goes to a grocery shop to buy something for dinner.

Policeman: "And what did she buy?"

Sam: "Just two potatoes, a can of peas and a cheesecake for her husband, sir."



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Policeman: "Can you imagine what could have happened, while she was at this shop? Please, try to concentrate: every piece of advice, even the less important one, could help us to find the killer."

Sam: "Let me think... No, I can't remember anything. Sorry, I think I'm quite shocked."

Policeman: "Don't worry and thank you for your help. That's all for now, but please remain available for other questions."

Sam: "I'll do. You're very welcome sir. Goodbye."

Policeman: "Goodbye."

Max: "Mary, we talked to him and your alibi is valid".

After a while, the photographer and the doctor departed and two other men came in and took the corpse away on a stretcher. Then the fingerprint man went away. The two detectives remained, and so did the two policemen.

Noonan: Mrs Maloney, would you like to leave the house while we investigate? At your sister's house? Or to my wife's house that can take care of you for the night?

Mary: No, I don't want to move from here now. Actually I feel safer here

Noonan: Then hadn't you better lie down on the bed?

Mary: No, I'd like to stay right there where I am, in this chair. It's not what I need now. The policemen started searching.

Charlie: What you think about this story? Do you think she is an accomplice?

Noonan: No, I don't think so. She has a good alibi. But we have to understand who could be the guilty.

Charlie: We know that the weapon had to be heavy to cause him a hard blow like that. So it can't be far from here and I think that the killer had taken the first thing which he saw.

Noonan: Precisely for this reason we cannot suspect his wife. She's pregnant, so she could not have raised the weapon.

Charlie: I agree with you. But he had to be a known person and whom he would never have suspected because there are no signs of burglary.

Noonan: To find the culprit we have to find the weapon.

Charlie: Of course, but where is it? We have looked everywhere without finding it.

Noonan: Maybe the murderer has taken it with him. Or maybe he has hidden it!

Charlie: But where?

Noonan: I don't know...

Charlie: I'm really tired, we have been searching for hours and it seems as if it were impossible to find.

Noonan: You're right. You have said that there are no signs of burglary and he didn't kill himself. It's a really strange situation, but I'm tired too.

Charlie: Tomorrow will be another day and we can think better about this.

Noonan: You are right but we can't leave it that way, we have to find something in a little sense.

Charlie: Do you have any ideas for the moment?

Noonan: Am I honest? I have nothing clear.

Charlie: Listen to me and let's take a little break.



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So they left her there while they went about their business, searching the house. Occasionally one of the detectives asked her another question. Sometimes Jack Noonan spoke to her gently as he passed by. Her husband, he told her, had been killed by a blow on the back of the head administered with a heavy blunt instrument, almost certainly a large piece of metal. They were looking for the weapon. The murderer may have taken it with him, but on the other hand he may've thrown it away or hidden it somewhere on the premises. "It's the old story," he said. "Get the weapon, and you've got the man."

Later, one of the detectives came up and sat beside her. Did she know, he asked, of anything in the house that could've been used as the weapon? Would she mind having a look around to see if anything was missing a very big spanner for example, or a heavy metal vase. [They didn't have](#) any heavy metal vases, she said. "Or a big spanner?" She didn't think they had a big spanner. But there might be some things like that in the garage. The search went on. She knew that there were other policemen in the garden all around the house. She could hear their footsteps on the gravel outside, and sometimes she saw the flash of a torch through a chink in the curtains. It began to get late, nearly nine she noticed by the clock on the mantel. The four men searching the rooms seemed to be growing weary, a trifle exasperated.

"Jack," she said, the next time Sergeant Noonan went by. "Would you mind giving me a drink?" "Sure I'll give you a drink. You mean this whisky?" "Yes, please. But just a small one. It might make me feel better." He handed her the glass. "Why don't you have one yourself," she said. "You must be awfully tired. Please do. You've been very good to me." "Well," he answered. "It's not strictly allowed, but I might take just a drop to keep me going." One by one the others came in and were persuaded to take a little nip of whisky. They stood around rather awkwardly with the drinks in their hands, uncomfortable in her presence, trying to say consoling things to her. [Sergeant Noonan](#) wandered into the kitchen, came out quickly and said, "Look, Mrs Maloney. You know that oven of yours is still on, and the meat still inside." "Oh dear me!" she cried. "So it is!" "I better turn it off for you, hadn't I?" "Will you do that, Jack. Thank you so much." When the sergeant returned the second time, she looked at him with her large, dark, tearful eyes. "Jack Noonan," she said. "Yes?" "Would you do me a small favour--you and these others?" "We can try, Mrs Maloney." "Well," she said. "Here you all are, and good friends of dear Patrick's too, and helping to catch the man who killed him. You must be terribly hungry by now because it's long past your supper time, and I know Patrick would never forgive me, God bless his soul, if I allowed you to remain in his house without offering you decent hospitality. Why don't you eat up that lamb that's in the oven? It'll be cooked just right by now." "Wouldn't dream of it," Sergeant Noonan said. "Please," she begged. "Please eat it. Personally I couldn't touch a thing, certainly not what's been in the house when he was here. But it's all right for you. It'd be a favour to me if you'd eat it up. Then you can go on with your work again afterwards." [There was](#) a good deal of hesitating among the four policemen, but they were clearly hungry, and in the end they were persuaded to go into the kitchen and help themselves. The woman stayed where she was, listening to them through the open door, and she could hear them speaking among themselves, their voices thick and



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sloppy because their mouths were full of meat.

"Have some more, Charlie?" "No. Better not finish it." "She wants us to finish it. She said so. Be doing her a favour." "Okay then. Give me some more." "That is the hell of a big club the guy must've used to hit poor Patrick," one of them was saying. "The doc says his skull was smashed all to pieces just like from a sledge-hammer." "That is why it ought to be easy to find." "Exactly what I say." "Whoever done it, they're not going to be carrying a thing like that around with them longer than they need." One of them belched. "Personally, I think it's right here on the premises." "Probably right under our very noses. What you think, Jack?"

And in the other room, Mary Maloney began to giggle.



ROALD DAHL (1916 - 1990)



Roald Dahl was born a British writer who became famous for writing children's books during his long literary career.

In 1953 he published a quite successful collection of short stories under the title *Someone Like You*.

Among his most famous works we can find *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (1964), *The BFG (The Big Friendly Giant)* (1982) and *Matilda* (1988).

His children's books have been also criticised because of the harsh revenge of the little protagonists against the adult wrongdoers.

He wrote several television and movie scripts and many of his books were adapted for the screen.

Dahl is also known for his nine collections of short stories.

Lamb to the Slaughter was written in 1953 and first published in *Harper's Magazine*. Later it was inserted into the best-selling collection *Someone Like You*.