

Reading A

The Never-Never Nest



Characters

Jack

Jill, his wife

Aunt Jane

Nurse

Scene: *The lounge of Jack and Jill's Villa at New Hampstead. The essential furniture consists of a table on which are writing materials, and two chairs. As the curtain rises the lounge is empty, but Jack and Jill come in immediately, followed by Aunt Jane.*

Jill: And this is the lounge.

Aunt Jane: Charming! Charming! Such a cozy little room! And such pretty furniture.

Jack (*modestly*): We like it, you know, handy place to sit in and listen to the radiogram.

Aunt Jane: Oh, have you got a radiogram as well as a car and a piano?

Jack: Why, of course, Aunt Jane. You simply must have a radio set nowadays.

Jill: And it's so nice for me when Jack's away at business. I even make him move it into the kitchen, so that I can listen to it while I cook.

Jack: Sit down, Aunt Jane, You must be tired—and we've shown you everything now.

Jill: What do you think of our little nest, Aunt Jane?

Aunt Jane: I think it's wonderful, my dears. The furniture—and the car—and the piano—and the refrigerator and the radio—what's it—it's wonderful, really wonderful!

Jack: And we owe it all to you.

Aunt Jane: Yes, Jack, that's what's worrying me.

Jack: Worrying you, Aunt Jane?



Aunt Jane: Yes. That cheque I gave you for your wedding present—it was only two hundred pounds, wasn't it? I— didn't put two thousand by mistake?

Jill: Why no, Aunt Jane. What on earth made you think that?

Aunt Jane (*relieved*): Well, that's all right. But I still don't altogether understand.

This house—it's very lovely—but doesn't it cost a great deal for rent?

Jack: Rent? Oh, no, we don't pay rent.

Aunt Jane: But, Jack, if you don't pay rent, you'll get turned out—into the street. And that would never do. You've Jill and the baby to think of now, you know.

Jack: No, no, Aunt Jane. You misunderstood me. We don't pay rent because the house is ours.

Aunt Jane: Yours?

Jill: Why, yes; you just pay ten pounds and it's yours.

Jack: You see, Aunt Jane, we realized how uneconomic it is to go on paying rent year after year, when you can buy and enjoy a home of your own for ten pounds—and a few quarterly payments, of course. Why be Mr. Tenant when you can be Mr. Owner?

Aunt Jane: I see. Yes, there's something in that. Even so, you must be getting on very well to keep up a place like this.

Jill: Oh, he is, Aunt Jane. Why, only last year he had a five shilling rise—didn't you, Jack?

Jack (*modestly*): Of course that was nothing, really. I'm expecting ten this Christmas.

Aunt Jane (*suddenly*): Jack! I've just thought of something. That car—is it yours?

Jill: Of course it's ours.

Aunt Jane: All yours?

Jack: Well, no. Not exactly all.

Aunt Jane: How much of it?

Jill: Oh, I should say the steering wheel—and one of the tyres — and about two of the cylinders. But don't you see, that's the wonderful thing about it.

Aunt Jane: I don't see anything wonderful about it.

Jill: But there is, Aunt Jane. You see, although we could never buy a car outright, we can enjoy all the pleasures of motoring for a mere five pounds down.

Aunt Jane: And the rest by easy instalments, I suppose.

Jill: Exactly.

Aunt Jane: Exactly. And What about The radio-what's it?

Jack: Well, that's the—

Aunt Jane: And the piano?

Jill: Well, of course—

Aunt Jane: And the furniture?

Jack: I—I'm afraid so—

Aunt Jane: I suppose all you own is this leg. *(She points to one)*

Jill: Well, no, as a matter of fact, it's that one. *(She points to another.)*

Aunt Jane: And the rest belongs to Mr. Sage, I suppose?

Jill : Er—Yes.

Aunt Jane: Well. I'm not going to sit on—Mr. Sage's part for any one.

(She stands up.) Now, tell me, how much do all these instalments come to?

Jack: Well, actually—*(He takes out his pocket-book and consults it.)*—actually to seven pounds eight and eight pence a week.

Aunt Jane: Good heavens! And how much do you earn?

Jack: As a matter of fact—er—that is—six pounds.

Aunt Jane: But that's absurd! How can you pay seven pounds eight and eight pence out of six pounds?

Jack: Oh, that's easy. You see, all you have to do is to borrow the rest of the money for the payments from the Thrift and Providence Trust Corporation.

Jill: They're only too glad to loan you any amount you like, on note of hand alone.

Aunt Jane: And how do you propose to pay that back?

Jack: Oh, that's easy, too. You just pay it back in instalments.



Aunt Jane: Instalments! *(She claps her hand to her forehead and sinks back weakly into the chair. Then realizes that she is sitting on Mr. Sage's piece and leaps to her feet again with a little shriek.)*

Jack: Aunt Jane! Is anything the matter? Would you like to lie down?

Aunt Jane: Lie down? Do you suppose I'm going to trust myself in a bed that belongs to Mr. Sage, or Marks and Spencer, or somebody? No, I am going home.

Jill: Oh, must you really go?

Aunt Jane: I think I'd better.

Jack: I'll drive you to the station.

Aunt Jane: What! Travel in a car that has only one tyre and two thingummies! No thank you—I'll take the bus.

Jack: Well, of course, if you feel like that about it....

Aunt Jane *(relenting a little)*: Now, I'm sorry if I sounded rude, but really I'm shocked to find the way you're living. I've never owed a penny in my life—cash down, that's my motto and I want you to do the same. *(She opens her handbag.)* Now look, here's a little cheque I was meaning to give you, anyway. *(She hands it to JILL.)* Suppose you take it and pay off just one of your bills—so that you can say one thing at least really belongs to you.

Jill *(awkwardly)*: Er—thank you. Aunt Jane. It's very nice of you.

Aunt Jane *(patting her arm)*: There! Now I must be going.

Jack: I'll see you to the bus, anyway.

Jill: Good-bye, Aunt Jane—and thanks so much for the present.

Aunt Jane *(kissing her)*: Good-bye, my dear. *(She and Jack go out. Jill looks at the cheque and exclaims 'Ten pounds!' Then she hurries to the table, addresses an envelope, endorses the cheque and slips it inside with a bill which she takes from the bag and seals the envelope. Then she rings the bell. In a moment the Nurse comes in with the baby in her arms.)*

Jill: Oh, nurse. I want you to run and post this for me. I'll look after baby while you're gone.

Nurse: Certainly, madam. *(She hands the baby to Jill, takes the letter, and goes.)*

(A second later Jack comes in again.)

Jack: Well, she's gone! What a tartar! Still, she did leave us a bit on account—how much was it?

Jill: Ten pounds.

Jack (*with a whistle*): Phew! That's great! We can pay off the next two months on the car with that.

Jill: I—I'm afraid we can't—

Jack: Why ever not?

Jill: You see, I—I've already sent it off for something else. Nurse has just gone to post it.

Jack: Well that's all right. Who have you sent it to?

Jill: Dr. Martin.

Jack: Dr. Martin! What on earth possessed you to do that?

Jill (*nearly in tears*): There! Now you're going to be angry with me.

Jack: I'm not angry! But why waste good money on the doctor? Doctors don't expect to get paid anyway.

Jill (*sobbing a little*): Bu—but 'you don't understand —

Jack: Understand what?

Jill: Why; just one more instalment and Baby's Really ours!

(*She is holding out the infant, a little pathetically, as we Blackout.*)

Cedric Mount

About the author

Cedric Mount is an English playwright. He has written in English and French. He wrote many satires during the first half of the twentieth century.

Meanings in context

lounge	: a room in a house that is used for sitting or entertaining guests
radiogram	: an entertainment device that combined a radio and a record player or a gramophone
villa	: a large and luxurious country residence
shriek	: a high loud cry
tartar	: an irritable person



- phew : expressing shock or relief
 motto : a guiding slogan
 pound : the unit of money in the United Kingdom worth 100 pence
 shilling : a British coin in use till 1971
 absurd : not logical
 relent : finally agree to something after initial refusal
 Marks and Spencer: a British multinational retailer of goods
 thingummy : a word used in spoken english when name of the object has been forgotten
 endorse : to put signature on the back of a cheque in order to make it able to be paid to someone

Comprehension

- I. Read the questions or the statements given in column I and say who asked these questions or made these statements to whom and in which context?

	I	II	III	IV
	Questions or statements	Who said	To whom	In which context
i.	What do you think of our little nest, Aunt Jane?			
ii.	No, No, Aunt Jane. You misunderstand me.			
iii.	I'm expecting ten this Christmas			
iv.	They're only too glad to loan you any amount you like, on note of hand alone.			
v.	Aunt Jane! Is anything the matter? Would you like to lie down?			
vi.	Er-thank you. Aunt Jane. It's very nice of you.			
vii.	Good-bye, Aunt Jane— and thanks so much for the present.			

II. Answer the following questions.

1. Choose the correct answer from the options given below each of the following questions.
 - i. Why didn't Jack and Jill pay rent for their house? They didn't pay the rent because
 - (a) they were too poor to pay the rent.
 - (b) they were staying in the house illegally.
 - (c) they had bought the house on instalments
 - ii. How much did Aunt Jane give Jack and Jill as their wedding present?
 - (a) one hundred pounds
 - (b) two hundred pounds
 - (c) one thousand pounds
 - iii. How much did Jack and Jill pay to get a car?
 - (a) five pounds
 - (b) ten pounds
 - (c) five hundred pounds
 - iv. Why did Aunt Jane refuse to lie down on the bed? She didn't lie down on the bed because
 - (a) she was angry with Jack and Jill.
 - (b) the bed did not belong to Jack and Jill.
 - (c) she was in a hurry to leave the house of Jack and Jill.
 - v. Why did Aunt Jane gift a cheque of ten pounds to Jack and Jill?... because
 - (a) Jack and Jill asked Aunt Jane to help them with a cheque.
 - (b) Jack and Jill wanted to repay their loans.
 - (c) Aunt Jane thought that Jack and Jill could make full payments for at least one of their bills.
 - vi. What did Jack intend to do with the ten pounds cheque?
 - (a) He wanted to pay off the instalments to the doctor.
 - (b) He wanted to pay off the instalments for the houses.
 - (c) He wanted to pay off the instalments for the car.



- vii. How many persons were present in the house when Aunt Jane visited Jack and Jill?
- four
 - five
 - six
- Describe Jack and Jill's house and the things that impressed Aunt Jane.
 - Why was Aunt Jane worried about her gift cheque?
 - Why did Jack say that it was better 'to be Mr. Owner than to be Mr. Tenant'?
 - Why did Aunt Jane say that she would take a bus rather than go by Jack's car?
 - What did Jill do with the ten pound cheque presented by Aunt Jane?
 - Many people are in the habit of buying things on instalment? Do you support this trend? Give reasons for your answer.
 - Describe a situation which you find most humorous in the play.
 - What do you understand by the title 'The Never, Never Nest'? Can you suggest a new title?

Vocabulary



- I. Tick (✓) the words which are similar to the words given in bold.
- Charming! Such a **cosy** little room.
 - costly
 - cute
 - comfortable
 - Aunt Jane (*suddenly*): Jack! I've just thought of something. That car—is it yours?
 Jill: Of course it's ours.
 Aunt Jane: All yours?
 Jack: Well, no. Not **exactly** all.
 - immediately
 - completely
 - correctly
 - Now, tell me, how much do all these **instalments** come to?
 - loans
 - full payment
 - part payment

4. Yes, Jack, that's what's **worrying** me.
- (a) surprising
 - (b) irritating
 - (c) troubling
5. Suppose you take it and **pay off** just one of your bills
- (a) give away
 - (b) make full payment
 - (c) pay in instalments

Grammar

Use of 'do', 'does' 'did'

Look at the use of 'do' in the following dialogues:

Jill: What **do** you think of our little nest, Aunt Jane?

Aunt Jane: But, Jack, if you **don't** pay rent, you'll get turned out—into the street.

Jill: Oh, I should say the steering wheel—and one of the tyres — and about two of the cylinders. But **don't** you see, that's the wonderful thing about it.

Aunt Jane: I **don't** see anything wonderful about it.

Aunt Jane: And how **do** you propose to pay that back?

Jack: I'm not angry! But why waste good money on the doctor? Doctors **don't** expect to get paid anyway.

The use of the verb 'do'

'Do' is one of the three auxiliary verbs (be, do, have) in English and is used to make question and negative forms (do + not). Note that we use do with I, we, you, they and plural subjects and does is used with singular subjects.

The use of the verb 'did'

'Did' is the past tense form of the verb *do*. It commonly appears before another verb. When there is an auxiliary verb, the main verb does not need to be marked for tense, because the tense is shown in the auxiliary. Consider the following sentences.

1. Didn't the students like the story?
2. Did you buy the car on instalment?



Remember

The shortened forms *don't*, *doesn't* and *didn't* are used in everyday informal language. The full forms **do not**, **does not** and **did not** are used in more formal situations.

Fill in the blanks in the following conversation with the appropriate form of verbs *do* and *did*.

Jill: Hi Mum. Can you guess who visited us this morning?

Mother: Sorry, I can't.

Jill: Aunt Jane, Mum.

Mother: Jane visited you this morning?

Jill: Yes, she visited us this morning.

Mother: Did she like your house?

Jill: Yes, Mum. She liked our house. But she _____ like the idea of buying it on instalment.

Mother: How silly! She has very old fashioned ideas, I'm afraid.

Jill: Yes, Mum. She has very old fashioned ideas.

Jack: She was rather too worried.

Jill: She even refused to sit on the furniture.

Mother: Why _____ she refuse to sit on the furniture? That's amazing!

Jack: But Aunt Jane was very kind and considerate. _____ you know what she gave us at the time of her departure?

Mother: What _____ she give you?

Jill: A ten pound cheque.

Mother: She gave you a ten pound cheque!

Jill: Yes, yes. A ten pound cheque.

Mother: What _____ you propose to do with that extra money?

Jill: We have spent it already.

Mother: Good heavens, you spent it already! What _____ you do with that money?

Jill: I sent it to Dr. Martins. _____ I do a good thing, Mum?

Mother: To Dr. Martins? Why _____ you send it to Dr. Martin?

Jill: For the last instalment

Mother: Oh, I see. How nice of you! You did the right thing, my dear.

Jill: Thanks, mum.

Project Work

I. Look at the following cartoons.



"Thank you for calling the Weight Loss Hotline, If you'd like to lose half pound right now, press 1 twenty thousand times."



"I'd like to offer you a seven-figure salary - Rs. 15,525.95"

What do you find funny in them? Collect four such funny cartoons from newspapers and magazines and discuss in groups what makes them humorous. Then, present these points to the whole class.

II. Hold a best-joke contest. Have students rate the submitted jokes or read them aloud to determine the level of humour in them.

