

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

Read this short story – the beginning of a tale of a relationship that went wrong. Do you notice anything strange about it? Discuss it with your partner.

Their first meeting was very much an accident. Christine was having her usual evening pint of beer in the pub, and Paul was sitting with two of his boyfriends in the corner. On the way to the lavatory, Paul tripped over Christine's briefcase, jogged her arm, and got beer spilt all over his new trousers. "Oh no!" he cried, "and I only bought them today."



"I'm so sorry," said Christine. "Here, let me buy you a drink."

Paul wouldn't normally have accepted a drink from a stranger, but he didn't want this woman to feel guilty – it was his fault that he had tripped, after all.

"Thanks very much," he said. "I'll have an orange juice."

"Fine," said Christine, and to the barman, "Can I have an orange juice, and another pint of Guinness for me."

Paul found Christine very easy to talk to. He discovered that she was 30, that she'd been to university, that she was a senior engineer in a local car factory, and that she'd just bought her own house. She found out that he was 23, a secretary, and had just left home and was sharing a flat with two girlfriends. It seemed natural that, at the end of the evening, Christine (who was slightly drunk by this time) should invite Paul out to a meal the following weekend.

Within six months they were engaged, and within a year married. After the wedding, he moved into her house, and it wasn't long before their child, Emma, was born. Christine continued working, but Paul, of course, gave up his job to look after their daughter. Everything was fine for a few months, but then Paul noticed that Christine was coming home later and later, and that often she smelt as if she had been drinking. She said that there were problems at work. But when he questioned her more closely, she always made some kind of excuse and went to work. One evening Paul insisted on an explanation, but Christine shouted at him, and Paul spent the night, in tears, in the spare bedroom. A few weeks

later, his friend Peter came round. He immediately noticed that something was wrong.

“Paul,” he said, “what's the matter? Are you eating properly? You've lost so much weight. And your face – I can see you've been crying.”

“Oh Peter,” sobbed Paul, “I'm so unhappy. I can't eat. I'm stuck here all day in this house and I think ... I think Christine's seeing another man.”

“I am sorry,” sympathised Peter. “But I'm sure it will pass. You know that women aren't always faithful, but it doesn't mean anything. Look. you've just got to control yourself. Start eating, stop crying, make yourself attractive to her. She'll soon go off this other man, and then she'll be back and you'll be as happy as you used to be.”

“I know you're right,” said Paul, trying to smile. “I'll try, but it's so difficult...”

(Source: unknown)

TASKS

1. Men and women have always had certain ‘traditional’ roles and activities. Which of them were reversed in this story?
2. Fill in the chart. Tick the roles and activities that are traditionally associated with men and women. Can you think of some more?

	MEN	WOMEN
propose marriage		
go out by themselves		
are more emotional		
are more aggressive		
marry someone younger than themselves		
spend more time with their children		
drink more alcohol		
have better-paid jobs		
own property		
have more sexual partners		

Which of these roles could be attributed to either gender?
Compare your views with your partner.