

## PART D: PROSE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Read the following selection and answer the questions on pages 12 to 16 in the examination booklet.

Adapted from **Hindspring**

by Margaret Drabble

*Emily Palmer is sent by her family to check the house of her missing grandmother, Frieda, in Exmoor (England). She stays the night in her grandmother's house.*

- 1 When she wakes, it is already mid-morning. In the far distance she can hear a strange howling, as of wild animals. She opens the tall deep windows and leans out over the low ledge to listen. A howling, a yaffling, a baying.
- 2 As she carefully descends the rotten stairs to go down to load the car, the howling and baying are nearer and there are other curious, unexpected noises—can that be the blowing of horns, and the hoofs of horses, and the grinding of gears? Suddenly the whole landscape is alive around her, as turbulence gathers about her, rushes towards her, thunders and crashes towards her and the house. She runs into the big front ground-floor room where she had slept, where the large window still stands open, and she sees in amazement that the whole of the hillside is pouring towards her in violent turmoil. Trees toss and bend, stones and rocks bounce and roll and splinter at her, a whole avalanche descends towards her, and just as she begins to make sense of this mighty upheaval, a red deer leaps the urned parapet, and crashes across the lawn, and clears the window-sill, and bounds into the arms of Emily Palmer.
- 3 The hounds stream after her, and Emily dashes to bar the window, as the deer takes refuge behind the table, putting her hoof through the back of a painting, knocking a clock and an expensive glass vase to the floor. The hounds throw themselves at the window, in full cry, howling and yelping and lathering, dozens of them, or so it seems to the hind<sup>1</sup> and to Emily. Emily spreads her arms against the window, and screams. “Stand back, stand back!” she cries into the garden. The hounds leap, then falter, and across the lawn, hoofs cutting the grass, come the horses and the riders, steaming, angry, hot-blooded, maddened by the chase. The riders in the vanguard reign in their mounts when they see the hounds, when they see Emily at the window, but more and more horses crash down the hillside beside them through the bracken, through the rhododendrons, almost tumbling over one another in the pursuit. Soon the lawn is thick with steaming, snorting steeds and horsemen and dogs, gathered as suddenly, and as improbably, as if they had dropped from the heavens. They yelp and throng.
- 4 The hind trembles with terror, and Emily is exultant with indignation. She is fearless. As some kind of calm obtains amongst the huntsmen, Emily opens the window and leans out.

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<sup>1</sup> hind: female red deer

- 5 “What are you doing?” she demands, in a voice as firm and as clear as a bell. Her hair flames with its own light, and those who were to tell the tale swore that she appeared as an avenging angel. Terror now fills the huntsmen, for who is this maiden, what is she doing here, and where is their quarry? “Away with you!” cries Emily. “This is my grandmother’s property!”
- 6 The scene is majestic, ridiculous. The hounds are subdued, and the Master of the Stag hounds approaches to offer a gallant apology. He touches his hat with his whip, he bows like a gentleman. But still he wants his deer. The house and the lawn may belong to her and her grandmother, but the hind belongs to him.
- 7 Emily cannot believe her ears. The scene descends into bathos<sup>2</sup>. She is angry.
- 8 “Are you suggesting I let this poor creature out to those murdering monsters?” she yells. “You must be mad! I’ll have you all for trespass! And get those dogs off my roof!”
- 9 For two of the hounds in their excitement have taken the short cut, and jumped from the path above on to the guttering: now they perch nervously, not sure how they got there or how to get off again.
- 10 “Get off, get away, get off!” repeats and exhorts Emily. “You have no right to come here, and I grant the beast sanctuary!”
- 11 She is worried about what the beast is up to, behind her: she has heard the crashing of glass, but dare not look round to examine the damage. She must confront these intruders until they sound the retreat. She knows nothing of stag hunting, she knows neither its rules nor its seasons; she does not know that at this season of the year the hunted deer will be a female and therefore, fortunately, unantlered. But she does know that she must stand her ground. That is the role that has been given to her, and she will not betray it. She is the heroine of the chase, the protectress of the deer at bay. It is a fine role, and one she knows she looks good in: nevertheless she is surprised when a chap in helmet, lifted goggles and leathers drives his motorbike on to the lawn and into the middle of the *mêlée* and starts to take her photograph. The grass is a sea of mud by now, but then one couldn’t have said it was very well kept in the first place. Can the chap on the motorbike be a friend and an ally? Is he, by any happy chance, a hunt saboteur?
- 12 Not quite, it proves, but he is good enough for her purposes. He is a press photographer, and he has been following the stag hounds for an article about the League Against Cruel Sports. He cannot believe his luck. This will be the picture of the decade, of the century. It will be reproduced until there are no more hunts and no more hinds and no more hunted, until the moors and woodland are no more. Emily and the hind have made his fortune. He snaps and snaps, as Emily stands there in the window, until he realizes that other cameras are beginning to emerge from the leafage, from the woodwork; hunt followers, even hunters, appear to be equipped with all kinds of photographic apparatus, and the scene is transformed from panic and chaos into a photo-opportunity, as lights flash, lenses dilate, buttons are pressed, dogs whine, horses stamp and snort. Nobody wants to miss out, but our professional photographer is not keen to share his prize, and also wakes up to the fact that he badly needs a shot of the deer indoors as well as a shot (which he hopes he has got) of it leaping in panic over the window-sill. So he runs forward and rushes across the mangled grass and the one-time herbaceous borders and yells at Emily: “Let me in! Let me in!”

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<sup>2</sup> bathos: *absurdity*

- 13 Emily hesitates, takes in the features of his face, likes what she sees, and opens a pane. He scrambles over, less elegantly than the hind, which is cowering at the other end of the room immobile with shock.
- 14 “*Western Press*,” says the young man, who is almost as young as Emily herself.
- 15 “Emily Palmer,” says Emily, dazed.
- 16 They gaze at one another, astonished. The young man lifts his camera at her, lets it fall. He is open, eager, unwary. He has learnt no guile. Is he, perhaps, the one she has been hoping to meet?
- 17 “Sorry,” he says, apologizing for his professional reflex.
- 18 “That’s OK,” says Emily. She is panting slightly, with excitement. Her nostrils are dilated, her colour high, her eyes brilliant.
- 19 “Are you all right?” asks the young man.
- 20 “*I’m* all right,” says Emily. “But I don’t know about him.”
- 21 She indicates the trembling beast, at which she dares not look: she is afraid it is damaged, injured, will have to be put down.
- 22 “*Her*,” says the young man. “It’s a hind.”
- 23 The manner in which he says this convinces Emily that she has found a friend, and she bursts into tears of shock and relief.
- 24 “A hind?” she weeps. “Do they chase hinds?”
- 25 “You bet they do. Hinds in calf, hinds with calf. In December they only chase hinds.”
- 26 “Is she all right?” asks Emily.
- 27 “I’ll have a look,” says the young man. “Do you mind if I take a picture while I do it?”
- 28 Emily is busy shutting and bolting the windows against the milling confusion of the thwarted throng. The young man kneels gently by the frightened animal, speaks to her quietly, then flashes at her. The beast jerks in alarm, then quivers into stillness.
- 29 “Don’t do that,” says Emily.
- 30 “Sorry,” says the young man.
- 31 The hind seems to be in one piece, but they agree that they will have to keep her indoors until the crowd has gone. Emily says she is afraid the poor thing will die of fright, but the young man says he thinks she will recover. What next? Shall Emily go out and parley?<sup>3</sup>
- 32 “We’ll have to get rid of them,” says Emily. “Can’t I tell them just to get off my property?”

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<sup>3</sup> parley: *negotiate*

- 33 “Not as easy as all that,” says the young man, beginning to look around him with interest, taking in not only the beautiful maiden but also the bizarre décor of the house she inhabits. “The horses can get out, but there’s been an accident in the drive. An Isuzu’s gone over the edge and a lot of other stuff is stuck behind it. It’s a scene there, I can tell you. It’ll take hours to clear.”
- 34 Emily is beginning to calm down, and the animal too seems less distressed. The young man (who has declared himself to be Jim from Bristol) allows her to think that he shares her anti-hunt feelings, although he had set out on the day’s chase as a neutral observer. He offers to go out and negotiate with the Master of the Staghounds, and, if Emily will permit him, on his return to take some more pictures. Emily assures him that she can deal with the Master herself, and climbs over the window-sill to do so, leaving Jim in charge of the hind. She confronts them all, boldly. She tells them roundly that they are trespassing, that she gathers they have blocked her drive, and that she is about to ring the police.
- 35 The undifferentiated mass of black-jacketed, white-stocked, fawn-breeched, red-nosed, hair-netted, khaki-jacketed, black-booted folk begins to mumble, then, retreat. Emily tosses her golden mane and scrambles back over her window-sill.
- 36 Jim says it would be better to ring a national paper than the police. He wants to sell the story, and so should she. They compromise: they will ring the press, and the police, and a vet, and Emily will make them both a cup of coffee.