

## A Stranger in Woodend

On Saturday, 31st October, 1964, a man arrived in the village. It was late in the evening. He was looking for some-where to stay the night. He knocked at a door and a woman opened it.

'Good evening, madam,' the man said. 'I'm sorry it's so late. But can you help me, please? Is there a hotel in this village? I want to stay here tonight.'

The woman laughed. 'A hotel? Here in Woodend? No, sir, I'm afraid there isn't.'

'What a pity,' said the man. 'I'm a stranger here. And I want to see your village tomorrow.'

The stranger was very polite. He was tall and had dark hair. And he had strange green eyes.

'Perhaps Mrs Harrison can help you,' the woman said. 'She has a room. Perhaps you can stay with her. Wait a minute. I'll get my coat, and I'll take you there.'

The woman took the stranger to Mrs Harrison's house. Mrs Harrison gave him a room for the night. He was very glad. It was the last night of October and it was cold.

The next day was Sunday. The man looked round the village. He was very interested in the history of the village. He met some of the villagers and asked them their names.

But he did not visit the church. That was unusual. The church in Woodend was the most beautiful building in the village. But the stranger was not interested in it. He did not go to church that night with all the villagers. It was the first Sunday evening of November.

When the villagers came out of the church, the man had

gone. They had all liked him. The ladies had thought he was very good-looking.

A few weeks later, he came back. It was the first Sunday in December. The villagers were coming out of church. It was cold and dark.

'Hello,' he said. 'I'm back again. It's nice to see you all once more.' His next words surprised everyone.

'Perhaps you can help me,' he said. 'I'm looking for a house. I want to buy a house here.'

'Here?' someone said. 'But why here? There's no work in Woodend for a young man. All the young people leave the village. They find work in Lidney, the nearest town.'

'I'll get a job somewhere,' the stranger said. 'Perhaps in Lidney.'

Then one of the villagers told him about old Mr Smith's house. Mr Smith had died in the summer. His house was empty. It was for sale. The house was on the corner of Main Street and Church Lane.

'I'll ask about the house tomorrow,' said the young man. 'Perhaps I'll be lucky. Goodbye. I'll see you soon.'

The villagers watched him leave. They all saw his car. It was very big and luxurious. He looked rich.

A few days later, Mr Smith's house was sold. And in the middle of December, the young stranger arrived. He moved into the house and worked very hard. He fixed the roof. He repaired broken windows. He painted and decorated. He changed the whole house.

But there was a big surprise for the villagers. On the morning of Monday, 21st December, they saw a big sign on the front of the house. And on the sign were these words:

THE CORNER SHOP Proprietor: Dave Slatin

## The Village Meeting

The villagers could not believe it. A shop in Woodend! Everybody talked about it. There was once a shop in Woodend, but it had closed twenty years ago.

Some people wanted the shop, but others did not. The villagers met in the evening in the village hall. Everybody was there. Everybody was interested in the new shop.

'The Corner Shop is a good idea,' someone said. 'We need a village shop. We won't need to go to Lidney.'

Then Mrs Harrison spoke. She liked the stranger, Dave Slatin.

'I agree,' she said. 'A village shop is a good idea. It's too quiet here. Woodend needs a shop.'

'Nonsense,' said Miss Brown. She was the village school-teacher. 'Lidney is not far away. There are lots of shops there.'

Soon everybody was shouting. Then Mr Hart spoke. He was a very big man, with a loud voice.

'Listen, everybody!' he shouted. 'We've never had trouble in this village before. We've always been quiet and happy. Now this shop is causing trouble.'

'Let Mr Slatin speak,' someone said. 'It's his shop. Let him speak.'

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said Dave Slatin. 'I don't want to cause any trouble. I'm still a stranger in your village. But I want to be one of you. I want to be your friend. I like the people of Woodend!'

He smiled and a few people clapped. They liked him.

'The Corner Shop will sell lots of things,' he went on. 'It

will sell food and things for the house. Everything will be cheap, I promise!'

Everybody was listening carefully.

'And I have another idea,' he continued. 'I'll sell village products.'

'What do you mean by "village products"?' asked Miss Brown.

'I'll tell you, Miss Brown,' he said. 'I know that you make beautiful bread and cakes.'

Miss Brown smiled. Yes, she did make bread and cakes. Everyone knew that.

'And you, Mr Hart, I've seen your flowers. You grow beautiful flowers.'

Now Mr Hart smiled. Yes, his flowers were beautiful. Everyone knew about them.

'And Mr Everett makes pots,' someone said.

'And Mrs Davies makes dolls,' said another voice.

'And I do paintings of the village,' said old Miss Lucy Gray.

'Yes,' said Dave. 'You can all do something. You villagers are clever. You make lots of things. We can sell them to the tourists. In the summer, Woodend can make a lot of money!'

'But what about the money?' said Mr Hart. 'How will you pay us?'

'That's a good question,' said Dave. 'And here's the answer. You'll bring your things to me and I'll sell them for you. I'll keep some of the profit. You'll have the rest.'

'What a good idea!' said Miss Brown.

'Yes, I agree!' said Mr Hart.

All the villagers agreed. Everyone in the village was happy with Dave Slatin's plan.

*The Corner Shop* opened on Monday, 4th January, 1965. Soon the shop was busy and Dave needed an assistant.

The new assistant in *The Corner Shop* was Anna. She started work in late January.