

Paul went home. The little brown house was small and poor. But it was always clean and tidy. Paul lived alone with his mother. His father was dead.

That evening, his mother watched him.

'What's happened, Paul?' she asked. 'Why are you so happy?'

'It's nothing, Mother,' said Paul.

His mother smiled. He's in love, she thought.



The next day, Paul and Maria met again by the river. Maria looked sad, but Paul did not notice. He took her hand.

'Maria,' he said, 'I am poor now, but one day I am going to be a famous writer.' Maria said nothing.

'Will you marry me, Maria? Say yes. We will be so happy, and . . .' he stopped.

Maria looked at him for a moment. There were tears in her eyes. Slowly, she shook her head. Then she turned and ran away.



'Maria!' shouted Paul. But Maria had gone.

Paul went home slowly. He did not understand Maria.

What is wrong? he thought. She loves me, doesn't she?

His mother was waiting for him. She saw his face.

Poor boy, she thought. The girl doesn't love him.