



Cushioning the Blow

We thought it best to leave the cat with Ted along with Grandma, when we went away. No sooner were we home from holiday than, bluntly, he announced the cat was dead. “Listen!” I said. “Bad news is better told obliquely — like this: ‘Bess went climbing on the roof and fell. Her legs and back were gone. They tried to save her but she was too old.’” Ted — who’s direct but not a thoughtless man — was chastened (so he said) and mortified. “Don’t worry, Cousin Edward,” I replied, “we all drop clangers. By the way, how’s Gran?” “Not great,” he said. “In fact, to tell the truth, last night she went out climbing on the roof...”