

Robert exits to the bedroom down L

Bernard You can't do this to me. And even if you do go, I'm still going to have to tell Jacqueline about you and Brigit.

Robert enters, wearing his hat, with his case

Robert I've never even met the wretched woman!

Bernard Now's your chance. I mean, put yourself in my shoes, old man. I'm not going to tell my wife that Brigit's *my* girl-friend, am I?

Robert That's your problem. You tell her what you like. It's nothing to do with me. But I insist you don't involve me. You can't go telling her she's my mistress when I'm not going to be here. No tales behind my back . . . It wouldn't be right.

Bernard Whether you're here or up your escalator, I'm not going to change my story now.

Robert You'll have to—I refuse to have anything to do with such a sordid and complicated tissue of lies—and if you say “why not”, so help me, I'll punch you right on the nose!

Jacqueline enters from the kitchen with the roses properly arranged

Jacqueline (*putting the vase on the table*) My darlings! We simply don't have anything! Isn't it frightful living in a house when you don't actually live there all the time—if you know what I mean. You always think everything's there, and when you arrive for the week-end it isn't there at all.

Robert Well, you don't have to trouble on my account, because I'm going.

Jacqueline Going? What do you mean, going?

Bernard Yes, I can't think what's come over him, but he absolutely insists . . .

Jacqueline But whatever for?

Robert I've just explained it all to Bernard. There's this client of mine in town. I'd forgotten all about him. Absolutely essential that I return at once, otherwise he won't get down till Monday.

Jacqueline It's ridiculous.

Bernard That's just what I've been saying.

Jacqueline But, Robert dear, we were so looking forward to having you here. (*To Bernard*) Have you say anything to upset him?

Bernard Only “why not”.

Jacqueline What?

Robert Please stop. Never mind . . .

Jacqueline But I do mind. Terribly. Please, for me—forget your client and stay.

Robert Absolutely impossible.

Jacqueline But everything's ready. I've planned a marvellous little dinner—just for the three of us.

Bernard For four.

Jacqueline For three—but there's certainly enough to eat if you men want to eat for four.

Robert No . . .

Bernard Nothing to worry about. Jacqueline's made a list . . .

Jacqueline You're not on a diet, or anything like that, are you?

Robert No.

Bernard There you are, then.

Robert Not at all. There's really no point in going on and on, because I'm leaving.

Bernard It's not going to make any difference, you know.

Jacqueline What on earth are you two talking about?

Bernard Oh, it's just that Robert is so old-fashioned . . .

Robert I'm not old-fashioned.

Bernard Of course you are. So silly in this day and age . . .

Robert Where's my hat? (*He goes to the hat stand looking for his hat*)

Bernard There you are, you see. Can't go without his hat. Old-fashioned.

And as shy as a schoolboy. (*To Jacqueline*) You see, what did I tell you?

Jacqueline You haven't told me anything. One moment he's here for the week-end, next moment he wants to go. You say he's old-fashioned and shy—why is he suddenly shy? He's never been shy before.

Robert I'm not shy . . . (*He goes to the fire, still looking for his hat*)

Bernard Of course you are. Just because you've had to confess the truth about your private life—your intimate life.

Jacqueline What intimate life?

Robert Don't listen to him.

Bernard He's told me all about this—this liaison.

Jacqueline What liaison?

Robert I forbid you to listen, Jacqueline.

Bernard You see—just look at him! A bundle of nerves! Can't bring himself to speak of it in front of you . . .

Robert But I never said anything . . .

Bernard It's too late denying it now. If you wanted to keep it all a secret you shouldn't have said anything. Not that it's any business of mine.

Your private life is your private life. That you've got a mistress is nothing to do with me.

Jacqueline A mistress!

Robert No, no . . .

Bernard You see, darling—he just can't bring himself to say anything in front of you. It's ludicrous—I mean, why make a drama out of it? We weren't born yesterday. We know all about the way we live now, don't we?

Jacqueline I don't know. I suppose—that's to say . . .

Bernard Of course we do. Come on Robert don't be coy. Just tell her what you told me a moment ago.

Robert I told you nothing.

Bernard Yes you did—all about your girl-friend.

Jacqueline My God . . .

Bernard He's got a girl-friend.

Jacqueline He told you that?

Bernard Just before you came in—what was her name? Bertha? Bernadette? Brenda?