

Jacqueline (*starting to lay cutlery*) I'm very grateful for all you're doing.
 Brigit 1 (*helping, and polishing the cutlery*) Oh, it's nothing at all, I enjoy this—the knives and forks and spoons.

Jacqueline Nothing to do with the spoons. I wanted to thank you for helping us out—for having agreed to act as a screen.

Brigit 1 A screen?

Jacqueline Yes. Because nobody knows that you're his niece—and when I say "nobody", I'm sure you know exactly who I mean.

Brigit 1 Yes . . .

Jacqueline And nobody doubts for a minute that you're not Robert's mistress—that's what I mean by your being a screen. I can't thank you enough.

Brigit 1 Well, I've been called a lot of things in my time.

Brigit 2 enters from the kitchen with four napkins in rings

Brigit 2 I've found the napkins, madam. Can you imagine where I found them . . . ?

Jacqueline (*laying the napkins in place*) No idea. The main thing is you *did* find them. Now what else do we need? Ah! the glasses. (*To Brigit 1*) Do you know where they are?

Brigit 1 No. But I'll find them wherever they are.

Jacqueline Thank you. I'm going to leave everything to you. (*To Brigit 2*) You can finish arranging all that with her.

Brigit 2 Very good, madam.

Jacqueline I'm going to change.

Jacqueline exits down R

Brigit 2 Now look—I simply can't go on taking your place.

Brigit 1 (*picking up the napkins and removing the rings*) But I've gone and taken yours.

Brigit 2 In what way?

Brigit 1 (*sitting and folding the napkins in fancy shapes*) Well, you've been introduced as the new maid, and as there can't be two new maids . . .

Brigit 2 But you were here first, and you're the real one.

Brigit 1 Yes. I know that. But it's only those who are in the know who actually know . . .

Brigit 2 But it's nothing to do with you—not really. So why are you letting yourself go along with it all? Why do you let yourself be pushed about?

Brigit 1 I'm not being pushed about by nobody. No-one pushes me about unless they're prepared to pay for it. I'm simply earning my living. What the rest of you get up to is none of my business, is it? After all, I'm not here to reform the world. I'm only temporary. Just passing through. A spectator, if you know what I mean. But whatever you're up to my dear, I hope you're not going to start blowing the cover now, or knocking over the screens—because I'm one of the screens and I'm getting very well paid for it.

Bernard enters, wearing a dress shirt and the trousers of his dinner jacket

Bernard Nothing wrong, is there?

Brigit 1 Everything's fine.

Brigit 2 Everything's not fine. For a start . . .

Brigit 1 Yes, for a start, she wants me to own up to being the temporary.

Bernard But she can't! And she won't!

Brigit 1 It would be a bit difficult now—it's all rolling along so smoothly.

(She replaces the napkins)

Brigit 2 Speak for yourself. I don't find it smooth at all.

Bernard But my darling, everything will sort itself out in a flash. You'll see. Just answer one question Simply yes or no.

Brigit 1 Just like the television.

Bernard Not a bit like the television.

Brigit 1 Are there any prizes?

Bernard Double the going rate—arms and legs—you name it.

Brigit 1 Then I'm ready . . .

Bernard Quickly then. Here's the question. Would you mind sleeping tonight in the little bedroom beside the kitchen?

Brigit 1 For another arm and a leg, I'd sleep in the fridge . . . An arm and a leg at the going rate, that is.

Bernard You've got it. It's a deal. *(To Brigit 2)* There you go. You two can change rooms later. *(To Brigit 1)* But not a word to my wife.

Brigit 1 Why not?

Bernard Because it's just not normal that the maid—this Brigit here—sleeps in the best bedroom, while you—my best friend's best friend—look, let's not get into all that again. If it's too complicated for you, don't worry about it—just do it. *(Looking at the table)* Have you finished with all this?

Brigit 1 No. We need glasses.

Bernard Glasses . . .

Brigit 1 So does she go and look for them, or do I go?

Bernard You go.

Brigit 1 So I'm back to being the new maid?

Bernard No. You're a guest who just happens to be helping.

Brigit 2 Because I'm the new maid.

Brigit 1 *(picking up the cutlery tray)* Got it, dear. That's exactly what I told you a moment ago, but you wouldn't believe me. Right, so now all that's sorted out—I'm going to hunt up the glasses. Won't be a tick . . .

Brigit 1 exits to the kitchen

Bernard There, you see, darling, all worked out—expensively, but rather neatly. You're going to have the most beautiful bedroom and an enormous comfortable bed.

Brigit 2 And you'll arrange everything else? That I can be with you all evening and all through the night?

Bernard I swear it.

Brigit 2 And do you love me?

Bernard You know I do. How could you ask such a question?

Brigit 2 I thought you'd gone off me a bit.