

## ACT II

*The same. That night, after dinner*

*As the CURTAIN rises, there is a distant rumble of thunder. The dinner table has been cleared away. It is now dark outside and the lamps in the living room are alight. The front door is open*

*Robert and Bernard are discovered together. Both have discarded their jackets and it is plainly very warm. Robert is fanning himself with a record sleeve*

**Robert** (*sitting by the fireplace with a pile of records*) Which do you prefer? Funky rock or blues?

**Bernard** (*standing at the front door*) I never know the difference. Anyway, you can leave the music for the moment.

**Robert** But Jacqueline asked me to choose—to put something on the record player.

**Bernard** (*moving to the kitchen door*) It's far too hot for dancing. (*He opens the door, looks in, then closes it again*)

**Robert** I agree. There's going to be a storm.

**Bernard** (*shutting the front door*) You said that before, but it hasn't happened.

**Robert** Before I was speaking metaphorically—but now you can feel it coming. It's frightfully muggy and close.

**Bernard** All that food and drink—I don't think I could dance to save my life.

**Robert** But you suggested it in the first place, old man!

**Bernard** Yes, old chap, but only as a pretext to get the dinner table and things cleared away—so that you and I could have a couple of minutes together to work out a solution.

**Robert** Solution? How can there be a solution to the mess you're in?

**Bernard** The mess we're both in—and I'm very worried about Brigit.

**Robert** Which Brigit?

**Bernard** My Brigit. She's been desperate ever since she arrived, and I just can't abandon her now.

**Robert** She did have rather a lot to drink at dinner.

**Bernard** It's her birthday.

**Robert** I know. But isn't it dangerous? Alcohol loosens the tongue and all that . . . And there's something I have to tell you—

**Bernard** Oh, nothing else is important. I must be with her tonight—just the two of us alone together. So as soon as they come back yawn, say you're tired, say you have to go to bed.

*Brigit I enters from the kitchen with a large glass of crème de menthe and ice. She is wearing her apron*

**Brigit 1** Would either of you gentlemen like coffee?

**Bernard** I'd love some. How about you, old man?

**Robert** Fine—but I'm supposed to be sleepy. Won't keep me awake, will it?

**Bernard** Might keep you on your toes—metaphorically. *(To Brigit 1)* He'll have coffee too.

**Brigit 1** Right. *(She moves towards the kitchen)*

**Bernard** Brigit!

**Brigit 1** Yes?

**Bernard** Have you finished the washing up?

**Brigit 1** Getting on.

**Bernard** How's it going?

**Brigit 1** Not too bad—only three plates and half a dozen glasses broken so far.

**Bernard** Mind you don't give anything away.

**Brigit 1** If I give anything away, it'll only be because I don't know as much about everything as what you two do. I'm only passing through. I get a bit lost now and then.

**Bernard** You're doing very well. Just keep it like that.

**Brigit 1** Don't you worry, sir. I'll hang in there. And what about the coffee? You still want it?

**Robert** Yes, please.

**Brigit 1** Right you are, Uncle. Two coffees it is. Won't be a tick.

*Brigit 1 exits to the kitchen*

**Bernard** What did she say?

**Robert** That she won't be a tick.

**Bernard** No. I'm asking why she called you "uncle"?

**Robert** Uncle? Did she?

**Bernard** I heard her. She called you "uncle".

**Robert** I expect that's because she's a temporary. I mean, if they're hopping from one house to another, here one day another family the next, it must be very difficult for them. I expect they get confused. *(He puts the records away, retaining one)*

**Bernard** I just hope she remembers why we're paying her. She's being paid Lord knows how many times the going rate, plus half-a-dozen arms and legs, in order to pass herself off as your mistress.

**Robert** I'm sure she understands that. By the way, how much is an arm and a leg these days?

**Bernard** How should I know?

**Robert** You're in insurance.

**Bernard** We'll work it out later. That's only money—but I'm still puzzled as to why she called you "uncle".

**Robert** Well, old man—that's exactly what I wanted to tell you. What happened is . . .

*Brigit 1 pops back from the kitchen with a tray of clean glasses and her crème de menthe glass*