

Robert But what if she turns up while you're in the village? While I'm all on my own?

Bernard *(taking his driving gloves and glasses from the hat stand)* She will turn up while you're on your own. I told her to catch the five-ten.

Robert Now, just a minute . . .

Jacqueline enters with her handbag and a shopping-basket

Jacqueline I'm ready, but if you want to stay with Robert, darling, I can probably manage on my own.

Bernard No, no. I wouldn't dream of it. Lots of things to carry, and it'll be faster if we both go.

Jacqueline But what's he going to do all on his own?

Bernard He can do what he likes. Watch television. Look at the garden. Ring his client and tell him to use the staircase. Whatever—the main thing is he's *not* leaving. Are you, old chap?

Robert I—I think I'll have another drink. *(He goes to the fire)*

Bernard Help yourself. See you later. *(To Jacqueline)* Come along, darling.

Bernard exits through the front door, leaving it open

Jacqueline Right away, darling. *(She turns to Robert)* I've just one thing to say to you.

Robert To me?

Jacqueline Yes, to you. I think you're the most despicable, underhand, scheming philanderer I've ever met. I despise you. I hate you. How could you?

Robert But, Jacqueline—darling . . .

Jacqueline Don't you ever "darling" me again. Save that for Brenda.

Robert Brigit. Actually, the name's Brigit.

Jacqueline I don't care! How could you? How dare you? I hate you!

Jacqueline exits by the front door, slamming it after her

Robert Oh dear. *(He goes to the barometer, which points at "rain", and taps it)* "Outlook Rain." I might have guessed. *(He goes to the fire and pours himself a drink. He looks at his watch and then at his suitcase, then downs his drink. He goes to the suitcase, puts on his hat, picks up the case and goes to the front door)*

The doorbell rings

Robert returns and exits down L. A cry of annoyance escapes him, and he returns without the hat and case

The doorbell rings again. He goes and opens the front door

Brigit stands in the doorway. She carries a large straw shopping-basket filled with unshapely parcels

Brigit Have I come to the right place?

Robert I'm afraid you have . . .

Brigit Well, that's all right then. Pleased to meet you. Good evening.

Robert Good evening.

Brigit I'm . . .

Robert Brigit.

Brigit That's right. I've come to help out.

Robert I know . . .

Brigit Just temporary—a couple of days.

Robert If you can keep it up that long.

Brigit No problem. Can I come in?

Robert Oh, certainly. Please—I didn't think you'd get here so quickly.

Brigit (*coming down into the room*) I nearly didn't get here at all—no sign of a taxi and then I'd gone and missed the bus.

Robert Really?

Brigit Yes. So I started out to walk and then some bloke came along and gave me a lift in his car.

Robert Really?

Brigit Lucky, eh? I didn't want to lug this much further, I can tell you. Can I put it down now?

Robert Oh, yes. Please do put it down.

Brigit (*sitting in the armchair with her bag on her lap*) Anyway—I hopped in the car and this bloke dropped me at the door. Much quicker in the long run than coming by bus. That's why I got here so quickly.

Robert Good.

Brigit So where is she?

Robert Where's who?

Brigit Herself. The lady of the house.

Robert She's not here. That's to say, she's gone out with himself—I mean gone out with Bernard. Shopping. She made a list.

Brigit So who are you?

Robert Me? Well, I'm Robert—Bernard's friend. Robert . . .

Brigit Pleased to meet you, I'm sure.

Robert I must get one thing clear from the beginning. And you've got to believe me. I had nothing to do with this whole preposterous idea.

Brigit What idea?

Robert Of getting you to come down here.

Brigit I was told to come on the telephone.

Robert Certainly you were. I know you were. But I have to tell you, that I find Bernard's whole approach totally despicable.

Brigit Really?

Robert I find the whole thing distasteful.

Brigit Really?

Robert Definitely. I mean, do you understand what you're letting yourself in for? It's not going to be easy, you know.

Brigit Really?

Robert Please don't keep saying "really". It's going to be jolly hard work.

Brigit (*rising*) Well, we'd better get going then, hadn't we? Where is it?

Robert Where's what?

Brigit The kitchen.

Robert What do you want to do in the kitchen?

Brigit Oh, if it's all going to be so difficult, I'd better look around and see

what's what, and what's where. Get stuck right in. I mean, what about the vegetables?

Robert I don't know about the vegetables. I'm sure it's very nice of you to want to help . . .

Brigit All part of the service.

Robert Very nice. But I tell you what . . .

Brigit What?

Robert I don't know where the kitchen is.

Brigit Well, let's look around and perhaps we'll find it. (*She opens the bedroom door down R*) Not in there.

Robert Do you really think you should go poking about? It's not our house, you know.

Brigit I know it isn't.

Robert Then maybe it would be better if we waited till they came back.

Brigit Just as you like—but I can't just hang around here chatting. If you won't let me find the kitchen, maybe you won't mind if I get the gear on.

Robert What gear?

Brigit For getting on with the job—where can I get undressed?

Robert Undressed?

Brigit Sure. Why not. I haven't lugged all this stuff with me just for the fun of it, you know.

Robert No?

Brigit No way.

Robert But surely you don't have to start getting undressed now?

Brigit Why not?

Robert We don't have to start pretending immediately.

Brigit Pretending what?

Robert Well—you know.

Brigit No. I'm sorry. I don't know.

Robert I'm Robert.

Brigit You said that before.

Robert I'm Bernard's friend.

Brigit I know who you are.

Robert Then you know what we have to do.

Brigit Do I?

Robert To begin with, there are lots of things you've got to know about me.

Brigit Really?

Robert Where I live, for instance. How I live.

Brigit Why have I got to know about that?

Robert It's essential. How much has Bernard told you?

Brigit About what?

Robert About me.

Brigit Nothing at all.

Robert He must be raving mad. He should have briefed you—put you in the picture.

Brigit But it was all decided very quickly.

Robert I know that. But I didn't know anything at all until twenty minutes ago. So we've got to work fast.