

Bernard But—but . . .

Jacqueline It's fine—I can look after you both now. We'll have a lovely time. *(She picks up the phone)* I'll just ring that agency to tell them we'll be one more.

Bernard No, no—don't call them!

Jacqueline But they'll want to know we're three now.

Bernard They know already. I mean, I—I told them we would supply the food, so it doesn't matter how many there are.

Jacqueline You were going to give Robert frozen cannelloni?

Bernard No, I was going to nip into the village and get something special, but—

Jacqueline Fine—we can do that now. No problem.

Bernard No . . . yes . . . Oh dear. I . . . *(He wanders about distraught)*

Jacqueline What's the matter?

Bernard Nothing, nothing. I'm delighted. It's—it's just . . .

Jacqueline Is there something you haven't told me?

Bernard No, of course not. I've just got to get used to the different plan, that's all.

Jacqueline Well, why don't you take my case back upstairs for me, while I get things ready in the kitchen for the girl?

Bernard *(dazed)* Yes . . . right . . . *(He picks up the suitcase, and goes to the stairs. He stops at the bottom)* Are you sure your mother doesn't need you?

Jacqueline Quite sure.

Bernard Oh God . . .

Jacqueline What?

Bernard Oh good. *(He turns back to the stairs)*

Jacqueline *(In the kitchen doorway)* By the way, Robert just phoned too. He's on his way.

*Bernard stumbles on the bottom stair*

Bernard *(grinning at her feebly)* Oh, good. *(He turns away)* Oh, God.

*Bernard goes on up the stairs*

*Jacqueline watches him until he is out of sight, then goes to the mirror and preens herself. The doorbell rings. She hurries to the front door and opens it*

*Robert enters with a suitcase, wearing a hat*

Robert Darling!

Jacqueline Darling!

*He takes off his hat and puts down his case*

Robert Thank God, you're still here.

Jacqueline Wild horses wouldn't move me. *(She goes to kiss him)*

Robert *(stopping her with his hat between them)* Where's Bernard?

Jacqueline Upstairs.

Robert Where's your mother?

Jacqueline In bed with flu.

Robert Where are you tonight?

Jacqueline In bed with you.

Robert My angel!

*They go to kiss again. He stops*

This is crazy, you know.

Jacqueline He invited you, not me.

Robert We'll have to be so careful.

Jacqueline I'll find a way. Oh, I'm so glad I found out you were coming.

Robert You were the only reason I did!

*Finally he embraces her, the hat between them. A door closes upstairs*

Jacqueline He's coming!

*He picks up his suitcase again. She puts his slightly battered hat on his head and pushes him back out of the front door. He appears to be just entering*

*Bernard comes down the stairs*

Robert Hallo!

Bernard You're here!

Jacqueline Just.

Robert Only just. *(He takes his hat off. He shakes hands)* How are you?

Bernard Terrific! How was Hong Kong?

Robert Terrific! It's er . . . it's so good to see you both. Thank you for having me . . . inviting me at such short notice.

Bernard Oh, we see so little of you.

Jacqueline Far too little.

Robert Well, that's nice. *(He looks round)* Lovely house.

Bernard Of course, you haven't seen it yet.

Robert No.

Bernard Quite small, but ideal for weekends. Less than two hours from Paris. Jacqueline did it all.

Robert *(to her)* So attractive.

Bernard She has such an eye.

Robert A beautiful eye.

Bernard Have you decided where he's sleeping, darling?

Jacqueline Um . . . more or less.

Bernard *(indicating guest bedroom 1)* You see you could either have that room . . . *(more enthusiastically indicating bedroom 2)* or this room.

Robert Er . . .

*Robert sees Jacqueline signalling behind Bernard's back at bedroom 1*

Well then, that room.

Bernard *(dismayed)* Oh, are you sure? This room's—

Robert *(taking his case)* Yes, that'll be fine.

Bernard Right. It's the cow-shed!

Robert What?

Bernard This was an old farm building once, you see, before we converted it. This was the main barn. We're upstairs in the loft—where the hay-

making goes on—ha, ha. The kitchen's the old dairy, with the dining-room next door in the hen-house—and the other spare bedroom is the piggery.

Robert I'm glad I didn't choose that.  
 Jacqueline (*opening the door to bedroom 1*) No, this is nicer. Lovely big bed.  
 Robert (*peering in*) Lovely.

*Robert carries his case into the room*

*Jacqueline provocatively presses against him as he squeezes past her. Bernard glances at his watch while Jacqueline is not looking, and peers out of the window*

Jacqueline (*murmuring*) And don't lock your door tonight.

Bernard (*turning*) What?

Jacqueline (*turning to him*) Er . . . we've got to shop for more tonight.

Bernard Ah—yes.

Jacqueline I'd better make a list. What were you planning for dinner?

Bernard I, er . . . hadn't really thought.

Jacqueline You hadn't thought? Oh we must plan a nice meal. Is this

Suzette girl a good cook?

Bernard Cordon bleu, they said. And she serves it all, and washes up afterwards.

Jacqueline You were going to do yourselves proud!

Bernard Well, you know how Robert likes the little extras in life.

Jacqueline Yes. Well then, you can come with me.

Bernard Me? You don't need me.

Jacqueline Yes, I do.

Bernard What for?

Jacqueline To pay the bill.

Bernard But . . .

Jacqueline And carry the bags.

Bernard Ah.

Jacqueline And we must hurry—it's getting late.

*Jacqueline goes into the kitchen*

Bernard (*frantically*) Oh, God! Oh, hell!

*Robert appears from bedroom 1*

Robert Very nice for a cow-shed, I must say.

Bernard (*grabbing him urgently*) Quickly, Robert. We've got to think fast here.

Robert Eh?

Bernard I need your help, old son.

Robert What's wrong?

Bernard (*going to the bar*) Have a drink.

Robert (*sitting*) Already?

Bernard You're going to need it. Usual vodka and tonic?

Robert Plenty of tonic, please.

Bernard Same old Robert. (*Pouring two vodkas*) How long have we known each other, Robert? Fifteen years?

Robert Must be.

Bernard Don't see enough of each other.

Robert No.

Bernard But that doesn't stop us remaining good friends, does it?

Robert No, indeed.

Bernard (*bringing the drinks*) That's why we know we can rely on each other in a crisis.

Robert Certainly. What crisis?

Bernard Hold on to your hat, Robert.

Robert My hat?

Bernard (*sitting beside him on the sofa*) There's something you didn't know about this weekend.

Robert What?

Bernard Jacqueline wasn't supposed to be here.

Robert I know, she . . . no, I didn't know that, no.

Bernard She was going to go and stay with her mother. Much against her wishes.

Robert Her mother's?

Bernard No, Jacqueline's.

Robert Why?

Bernard She doesn't like leaving me on my own.

Robert Ah.

Bernard But there was something she didn't know.

Robert What?

Bernard I wasn't.

Robert You weren't what?

Bernard Going to be on my own. Know why?

Robert I was coming.

Bernard No, not . . . well yes, but that came later. And that didn't matter, because you'd provide a good alibi anyway.

Robert Alibi?

Bernard Yes.

Robert What for?

Bernard The reason I wasn't going to be on my own.

Robert (*puzzled*) Do you think you could elucidate a little?

Bernard You see, Robert, some time ago I met this girl.

Robert Really?

Bernard Superb. A model. Knock-out!

Robert Really?

Bernard Don't sound so surprised.

Robert No, no—it's just . . .

Bernard I fell for her—hook, line and sinker.

Robert Really?

Bernard And she fell for me.

Robert *Really?*

Bernard Please don't keep saying really like that!