

Suzette Well, where are, er . . . ?
 Robert They've gone off to shop for dinner. They left me here to meet you.
 Suzette Oh good. Then you'd better show me what's what.
 Robert What's what what?
 Suzette Where everything is.
 Robert Oh, that can wait. It's more important we get to know each other first.
 Suzette (*suspicious*) Get to know each other?
 Robert Yes.
 Suzette Why?
 Robert Well this is going to be one hell of an evening. We must be prepared.
 Suzette Oh, that's no problem, love. Leave all that to me. I can handle everything.
 Robert You can?
 Suzette He told me on the phone what's needed.
 Robert Yes, but—
 Suzette Going to be quite a party then, is it?
 Robert Party isn't the word! Now his wife's here too.
 Suzette His wife?
 Robert She changed her mind at the last minute, you see. She was going to be miles away.
 Suzette Oh, I see. Well, wives usually turn up one way or another. (*She giggles*) Though things would be a lot easier for me if they didn't.
 Robert I'm sure.
 Suzette They do get in the way rather.
 Robert (*bermused*) So it would appear.
 Suzette But don't worry. I can handle wives all right. I get on very well with them usually.
 Robert If you don't mind me saying so, you don't seem very worried by all this.
 Suzette Why should I be? This sort of affair's a doddle for me.
 Robert You mean it's happened before?
 Suzette Of course! It happens all the time. I've had to handle far more difficult occasions than this.
 Robert Really?
 Suzette Yes—family get-togethers. Parties. Weddings even.
 Robert Weddings?
 Suzette Well, I can't just pick and choose to suit myself. I've got to go where the action is, haven't I?
 Robert I suppose so.
 Suzette I've got to make a living.
 Robert Living?
 Suzette Yes.
 Robert (*a light dawning*) Oh, I see. . . . You make a proper . . . er, business of this?
 Suzette Certainly. I don't do it just for fun.
 Robert Oh. Bernard didn't tell me that.
 Suzette What?

Robert He didn't say he actually . . . kept you—on call as it were.
 Suzette He doesn't. I have lots of clients.
 Robert What?
 Suzette He's a new one.
 Robert Good heavens!
 Suzette There's a lot of people to cater for in today's society you know. Girls like me are in big demand.
 Robert They must be.
 Suzette That's why I work through an agency.
 Robert Agency! He found you through an agency!
 Suzette Yes.
 Robert Huh, model indeed. Poor old Bernard.
 Suzette What?
 Robert Nothing. Well I must say, you're very mercenary about it.
 Suzette Naturally. I don't do it for love, dear!
 Robert (*coolly*) Evidently.
 Suzette Right, where do we start?
 Robert Er. . . well, I'd better begin by telling you a few things about myself.
 Suzette Pardon?
 Robert Who I am, and so on.
 Suzette I know who you are. The friend.
 Robert Yes, but . . . well, you ought to know a bit about me.
 Suzette Why?
 Robert This has to be handled carefully. It's a very delicate situation.
 Suzette Delicate?
 Robert Of course! His wife's going to be sitting right here at the same table.
 Suzette Yes?
 Robert And so is Bernard.
 Suzette And so are you?
 Robert Well, yes of course I am, but don't you see—one false move and the balloon could go up.
 Suzette (*her eye-brows going up*) Oh, I see! She's . . .
 Robert Yes!
 Suzette And he's . . .
 Robert Yes!
 Suzette And you're, um . . .
 Robert Pig in the middle.
 Suzette It's *liaisons dangereuses*!
 Robert Very *dangereuse*.
 Suzette Now I understand!
 Robert You take your time.
 Suzette Oh, well don't worry about it, dear. I'm quite used to that sort of thing too. I don't need to know any more than I have to.
 Robert Yes, but that's what I mean. You ought to know the bare minimum—for appearance's sake. Now sit down and listen very carefully.
 Suzette (*bermused*) Right.
 Robert My name is Robert Dubedat.
 Suzette (*dutifully repeating after him*) Dubedat.

Robert I'm an accountant in Paris.
 Suzette Paris.
 Robert I live alone in Montmartre with two cats.
 Suzette Cats.
 Robert I'm divorced once, and I'm thirty-five years old.
 Suzette You don't look thirty-five.
 Robert Really? How old do I look?
 Suzette At least forty.
 Robert Yes, well . . . I've just had the flu. I was Bernard's best man . . .
 Suzette Best man.
 Robert My hobbies are collecting rare stamps and squash.
 Suzette Squash.
 Robert I drive a Citroën, and I had my appendix out six months ago.
 Suzette Why are you telling me all this?
 Robert All what?
 Suzette Your operations and everything.
 Robert Well, you should know where my scars are at least.
 Suzette Scars?
 Robert If we're supposed to be sleeping together.

Pause

Suzette You what?
 Robert Well obviously! I mean we're going to have to share a room.
 Suzette What room?
 Robert (*pointing*) That one.

She goes and peers in

Suzette We're sharing this room together?
 Robert Yes. It's the cow-shed.
 Suzette And that bed?
 Robert Well, only in theory.
 Suzette Theory?
 Robert I'll sleep in the chair. And then sneak over to the piggery.
 Suzette The what?
 Robert The room over there.

She stares at him perplexed

There's no need to sound so surprised at all this.
 Suzette I wasn't planning on staying the night.
 Robert You . . . Oh, I see! You were planning on going home after dinner.
 Suzette Yes. I usually do. Having done the honours.
 Robert Er . . . well, it doesn't matter when you do the honours, but you must stay the night.
 Suzette Why?
 Robert Jacqueline's expecting you to stay. If you rush off after dinner it will raise all sorts of awkward questions.
 Suzette How d'you mean?

Robert Well, you and I have to keep up the pretence. For the sake of their marriage.
 Suzette (*light dawning*) Oh, I see! The delicate situation!
 Robert Yes! (*Puzzled*) Bernard told you all this on the telephone.
 Suzette Yes, but you see I didn't realize you . . . I didn't know that she . . . I didn't quite understand what was going on.
 Robert You didn't?
 Suzette I was a bit slow on the uptake.
 Robert You certainly were.
 Suzette So you want me to pretend to be your, er . . .
 Robert Yes.
 Suzette And then no-one will suspect anything.
 Robert Exactly.
 Suzette I get it now.
 Robert Thank God for that!
 Suzette How will I know what to say?
 Robert Ah. Well I've said a bit about myself. You can say what I've said to you, but otherwise don't say a thing. If anyone says anything say nothing except what I say if they say anything to me.
 Suzette (*after a moment*) I think I'll just keep quiet.
 Robert Are we all agreed then?
 Suzette As long as it's only pretence.
 Robert Well of course—I wouldn't try and take advantage of you.
 Suzette I'll go along with it then. But I'm afraid it's an extra.
 Robert Extra?
 Suzette It's not a usual part of my service—pretending to be someone else's lover.
 Robert No, but—
 Suzette Two hundred francs.
 Robert Two hundred francs!
 Suzette It's a fair enough price—for what's required.
 Robert But surely you want to save the situation, just as much as I do? You don't want to see their marriage bust up, do you?
 Suzette Doesn't really concern me, love.
 Robert Good God, you stony-hearted—
 Suzette Here now, steady on. I mean, I've got my reputation to think of.
 Robert That's the point, isn't it?
 Suzette And a girl has to make a living.
 Robert Well, I've heard of exploiting the market, but—
 Suzette It's not much for a whole charade like that. As well as going to bed with a strange man in a cow-stall.
 Robert I don't believe this.
 Suzette Two hundred francs!
 Robert (*nodding*) Two hundred francs.
 Suzette (*putting her hand out*) Up front.
 Resignedly he takes out his wallet and gives her the money. She hides it down her front