

(Scene: The living room of the country home of Edward and Sorel Bennett. It is very messy. The room is decorated with comfortable furniture including a sofa with pillows, a small end table with a drawer, a few chairs and lamps, and a carpet. The front door is downstage right. French windows are upstage, leading to a garden. A staircase upstage left ascends to the bedrooms, and Edward's study. There is a service door beneath the stairway leading to the kitchen, and to the root cellar. Paintings, a mirror, and a clock adorn the walls. Also in the room are a bookcase, a gramophone, a closet or hat rack, and a bar trolley with liquor, glasses, and an ice bucket.)

(At rise, BRIDGIT is angrily picking up the mess. JACK enters from the front door in his chauffeur's uniform. He has a solid build, and moves with a brisk, cheerful bounce.)

JACK. (sneaks up behind her and gives her a hug) ARGHH!
BRIDGIT. Scared me half to death, Jack! Where've you been?

JACK. Wipin' down the Bentley. It's splashed all over with mud. What ya mutterin' to yerself?

BRIDGIT. The missus ought t' give me fair warnin' when she's comin'! Thinks she can pop in and out anytime she pleases, she does.

JACK. (Flops down on the sofa and relaxes. With no bitterness:) 'At's the way the world is designed, luv – the rich in their proper place, tellin' me and you what to do.

BRIDGIT. The larder's empty and there's no time t' go t' the village. I've yet t' buy me Tittle Tattle, even.

JACK. They've 'ad another row, they 'ave – a real whopper.

BRIDGIT. Then it won't be long till himself shows up, too. Lager, lad?

JACK. Thank you kindly.

(BRIDGIT exits to the kitchen. JACK speaks louder so she can hear.)

The skies opened up when me and Mrs. Bennett was motorin' 'ere. 'Ad to pull over and put up the canopy till it cleared.

(BRIDGIT reenters with a glass of lager.)

Where's Mrs. B now?

BRIDGIT. In the garden, if you please – assuming the role of lady of the manor. Depend on it, she's up to something this week-end.

JACK. Like clockwork, whenever she gets a poor notice in the Daily Mail –

BRIDGIT. – I best prepare for a performance here in Cookham.

JACK. Newspaper didn't take kindly to Mr. Bennett's writin' neither. Nasty business. So they tussled. *(acts out the fight)* 'E was 'ollerin' like a madman, and she lammed into 'im – whack! – right 'cross the kisser. Then 'e tosses 'er to the floor. She crawls on her knees, grabs an Oriental vase and 'urls it smack at 'is 'ead. Tiny pieces flyin' everywhere.

BRIDGIT. Those vases cost a pretty penny. They should throw pickle-jars at each other.

JACK. Then she's out the door, sayin' she quit the show. Never comin' back.

BRIDGIT. That old trick?

JACK. The fight was a good deal livelier than the play.

BRIDGIT. Atrendin' the theatre, are ya lad?

JACK. Front row of the stalls. But I got the elbow from the bloke beside me when I started in snorin'. Society women sippin' cocktails make me drowsy.

BRIDGIT. Get enough of that on the job, we do. If I ever attend the theatre –

JACK. Come to town, and I'll ask Mr. B for two tickets.

BRIDGIT. Me mum saw a show once, with a lass fallin' over a cliff. That's something I'd like to see!

JACK. Even before the dust settled, I was readyin' up the Bentley. Damn that downpour. Got me work cut out, alright. She needs to be all shirry when I take 'er for a spin tonight.

BRIDGIT. *(playfully)* And what kind o' sinful thing has yourself got planned?

JACK. This fine evenin' I'll be goin' down to 'Igh Street with a lovely young lass who shall remain nameless.

BRIDGIT. Clara, the redhead.

JACK. I swear, Bridgit – you got the keenest mind in Cook'am.

BRIDGIT. T'ain't nothin'. Last time you come down, I spied a long red hair on ya collar. Here 'tis. *(She opens the drawer and pulls out a long strand of red hair.)* You can do better than her, Jack.

JACK. Randy old 'en – you want me all to yourself.

BRIDGIT. Lookatcha lyin' about. You lack the steam to be keepin' up with the likes of me.

JACK. I'm saltin' it away for tonight.

BRIDGIT. Watch out for these modern women. *(looks around)* Now where's me ball of yarn?

JACK. If I can hide me lady in town from me bird in Cook'am, and keep all of 'em from learnin' about me lass in Kent, I should manage to keep this loaf of bread on me shoulders.

BRIDGIT. Pace yourself, lad. Too many lasses – that's askin' for trouble.

(JACK jumps up, puts his arms around BRIDGIT's waist and lifts her in the air.)

JACK. You're the only one I want.

BRIDGIT. *(squeals and giggles)* Devil! Put me down!

JACK. Squealin' like a lass of sixteen, you are!

(JACK puts BRIDGIT down.)