

BRIDGET. If ya don't mind me sayin', t'aint nothin' normal 'bout you and Mrs. B. Use up all your vases that way. Have to put your flowers in soup tins.

EDWARD. Whither the mistress of the manor? Hiding in her boudoir, weeping tears of regret?

BRIDGET. Francin' about in the garden, sir.

EDWARD. Wearing one of her preposterous hats, I presume.

BRIDGET. Looks like a pillow what's losin' its stuffin'.

EDWARD. I'm certain her hat is very fashionable, Bridgit. Sorel Bennett is always *a la mode*.

BRIDGET. More's the pity. It's big as a tent.

EDWARD. To shield her from the sun's rays. She's obsessed with preserving her youth. Last month, before rehearsals began, she injected monkey glands.

BRIDGET. You're jokin'!

EDWARD. With Mrs. Bennett, there is never a need to joke. She traffics in self-parody.

BRIDGET. I told her t' pick some greens for salad. Put her t' work, I did.

EDWARD. A fresh salad before dinner would be superb, Bridgit.

BRIDGET. Not before dinner, sir – that is dinner. It's all we have – and a tin of sardines.

EDWARD. (*to appease her*) Salad and sardines sounds a poem, Bridgit – an absolute poem.

BRIDGET. Flattery won't cut any ice with me, sir.

EDWARD. (*suddenly anxious*) I trust the bar trolley is fully stocked?

BRIDGET. What do I look like – a maid?

EDWARD. (*confused a beat, then*) You do, rather. Have I been suffering under a misconception?

BRIDGET. (*heads to the bar trolley and picks up the bottle into which he emptied the vial*) I'm not one to grouse, sir; but the furniture needs dustin' and the floors need sweepin' and the silver needs polishin'. And I've yet to read this week's *Tittle Tattle!*

EDWARD. Don't fidget, Bridgit. I promise we will have a peaceful week-end, unless Sorel launches into one of her venomous attacks on my writing, in which case, I shall murder her with an axe.

BRIDGET. Do it outside. Axes make an awful mess. A fortnight ago, in –

EDWARD. A peace offering. (*hands her a copy of The Tittle Tattle*) Picked it up at Maidenhead when I changed trains.

BRIDGET. Me *Tittle Tattle!* Much obliged, Mr. B. Imagine what kinds of horror might've happened without me knowledge. (*She plops down on the couch, and digs into the paper, flipping the pages.*)

EDWARD. I'm sure the editors would be delighted to learn that your patronage is so – fanatical.

BRIDGET. Can't miss an issue, sir – what with all these wives and husbands and mistresses and lovers and bits on the side nowadays shootin' and poisonin' and stabbin' and stranglin' each other.

EDWARD. I was unaware that parlors across London were strewn with the bodies of thwarted paramours. The only men and women I've seen on parlor floors are dead drunk.

BRIDGET. Who said London? All this is happenin' right here in the village.

EDWARD. In Cookham? That must reduce the population considerably.

BRIDGET. (*with relish*) Just yesterday, a wife done her husband in with a carvin' knife through the back at dinner. Dead as mutton, he was.

EDWARD. Before or after dessert?

BRIDGET. After, sir.

EDWARD. Well, that shows some courtesy, at least. But it does seem a bit untidy. I'm certain it quite ruined his jacket.

BRIDGET. And soiled the carpet. These wives don't bother to think when they set to skewerin' their husbands that