

**Jacqueline** Well, well—had it all beautifully organized between you, didn't you?

**Bernard** Had we known you weren't going to the old buz—your mother's we'd have consulted you, naturally.

**Jacqueline** Naturally. Terrific!

*Bernard goes to Robert and leads him gently back to a chair*

**Bernard** There, that wasn't so bad, was it? (*He takes his hat*) You see, Jacqueline's fine about it. So you can forget this stupid appointment in Paris. Just relax here while we go and do the shopping.

**Robert** (*trying to rise*) Can't I come with you?

**Bernard** (*pushing him back*) No, no, you must wait for Suzy. She'll be here any moment. He must be here to welcome her, mustn't he, darling?  
**Jacqueline** (*acidly*) Oh yes, he must be here to welcome her. Well—now that the weekend is going to be a major social event, there are a few more things I'll have to add to the list. (*Hissing at Robert*) Like rat poison and so on!

*She marches into the kitchen*

**Bernard** There you are, you see—no problem.

**Robert** (*weakly*) No problem.

**Bernard** Though I must say, she didn't take it quite as well as I expected. There's quite a moral side to Jacqueline underneath.

**Robert** (*heading for the drinks*) I need another drink.

**Bernard** Help yourself, old man. (*He picks up the suitcase*) You won't be needing this now. (*Taking the case back to bedroom*) I can rely on you to do your stuff, can't I, Robert?

*Bernard goes into the bedroom*

**Robert** Why not? It's poetic justice, I suppose.

*Bernard returns*

**Bernard** Eh?

**Robert** Nothing. (*He indicates the vodka bottle*) Get plenty of this stuff while you're out. It's going to be a long night.

**Bernard** Attaboy! (*He claps him on the shoulder*)

*Jacqueline enters with the list and a shopping bag*

**Jacqueline** Right, we'd better hurry. (*She hands the bag to Bernard*) Is lover boy staying or going?

**Bernard** Oh, he's staying. He's going to telephone and cancel his appointment while we're at the shops. Aren't you, Robert?

*Robert nods dumbly*

Let's go then.

*Bernard goes out*

**Jacqueline** (*to Robert, between her teeth*) Bastard! No wonder you didn't want me to know you were coming!

**Robert** It's not what you think, Jacky, I promise.

**Jacqueline** Then what is it?

**Robert** I can't explain right now, but just try to remember this—she won't be what she seems.

**Jacqueline** She's a transvestite?

**Robert** No, no... it's simply that... she's... I'm... he's... (*He is lost for an explanation*) Oh God!

**Jacqueline** He won't help you.

**Robert** Angel, listen—

**Jacqueline** Don't angel me. Keep your angels for your Suzy floozy! (*She goes to the door*) Bastard!

*She storms out*

**Robert** Well, that's that. (*He bashes the woodworm again in a fit of despair, then sobers. He downs his vodka and looks around and comes to a decision*)

*He goes to his room. He returns with the suitcase*

*He gets his hat, puts it on his head and is about to open the front door when the bell rings. He leaps back like a startled rabbit. He looks round desperately then tiptoes towards the kitchen. The bell rings again. He sighs, drops the suitcase and goes to the front door still wearing the hat. He opens the door*

*Suzette stands there with a big shopping bag*

**Suzette** Is this the right house?

**Robert** It is.

**Suzette** Oh, good. (*She steps in*) Good-evening.

**Robert** Good-evening.

**Suzette** I'm Suzy.

*He stares at her nonplussed*

Don't look so surprised. Aren't I what you expected?

**Robert** Not at all.

**Suzette** Oh?

**Robert** (*hastily*) I mean, I'm not at all surprised, no. Er... you got here quickly.

**Suzette** I got a lift.

**Robert** Oh—I see.

**Suzette** You going out?

**Robert** Pardon?

**Suzette** You've got your hat on.

**Robert** (*taking it off*) Oh, no, I, er... (*He shakes hands*) How do you do. I'm Robert.

**Suzette** Robert?

**Robert** Bernard's, er...

**Suzette** Oh yes—his friend! You're staying the weekend.

**Robert** That's right.

**Suzette** Yes. I know about that.

**Robert** Yes.

**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** (*bemused*) 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** (*bemused*) 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*