

ROGERS. Dinner is at eight o'clock, sir. *(Pauses.)* In a quarter of an hour. I think tonight dressing will be optional.

BLORE. *(Familiarly.)* Got a good place, here.

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, sir.

BLORE. Been here long?

ROGERS. Just under a week, sir.

BLORE. Is that all? *(Pause.)* So I don't suppose you know much about this crowd that's here?

ROGERS. No, sir.

BLORE. All old friends of the family?

ROGERS. I really couldn't say, sir.

BLORE. Oh, well - Oh, Rogers -

ROGERS. Yes, sir?

BLORE. Rogers, do you think you could put some sandwiches and a bottle of beer in my room at night? I get an 'el of an appetite with this sea air.

ROGERS. I'll see what I can do, sir.

BLORE. Rogers - I'll see you won't lose by it. Where's my room?

ROGERS. I'll show you, sir.

BLORE. Good, I can do with a wash and brush up straightaway.

(BLORE exits to the hall with ROGERS. MRS. ROGERS enters from the dining room. She picks up glasses and tidies. ROGERS quickly enters from the dining room with tray of eight glasses.)

Start

MRS. ROGERS. Oh, there you are, Rogers. You ought to clear these dirty glasses. You're always leaving the dirty work to me.

(MRS. ROGERS takes glasses off the tray and ROGERS puts on the dirty ones.)

Here I am with a four-course dinner on my hands and no one to help me. You might come and give me a hand

with the dishing up. Who was it that you were talking to, by the way?

ROGERS. Davis. South African gentleman. No class if you ask me – and no money either.

MRS. ROGERS. I don't like him – Don't like any of 'em much. More like that bunch we had in the boarding house, I'd say.

ROGERS. Davis gives out he's a millionaire or something. You should see his underwear! Cheap as they make 'em.

MRS. ROGERS. Well, as I said, it's not treating us right. All these visitors arriving today and the maids not coming till tomorrow. What do they think we are?

ROGERS. Now, then – Anyway, the money's good.

MRS. ROGERS. So it ought to be! Catch me going into service again unless the money was good.

ROGERS. Well, it is good, so what are you going on about?

MRS. ROGERS. Well, I can tell you this, Rogers. I'm not staying any place where I'm put upon. Cooking's my business! I'm a good cook –

ROGERS. (*Soothingly.*) First rate, old girl.

MRS. ROGERS. But the kitchen's my place and housework's none of my business. All these guests! I've a good mind to put my hat and coat on and walk out now and go straight back to Plymouth.

ROGERS. (*Grinning.*) You can't do that, old girl,

MRS. ROGERS. (*Belligerently.*) Who says I can't? Why not, I should like to know?

ROGERS. Because you're on an island, old girl. Had you forgotten that?

MRS. ROGERS. Yes, and I don't know as I fancy being on an island.

ROGERS. Don't know that I do, either, come to that. No slipping down to a pub, or going to the pictures. Oh, well, it's double wages on account of the difficulties. And there's plenty of beer in the house.

MRS. ROGERS. That's all you ever think about – beer.

ROGERS. Now, now, stop your nagging. You get back to the kitchen or your dinner will be spoilt.

MRS. ROGERS. It'll be spoilt anyway, I expect. Everybody's going to be late. Wasted on them, anyway. Thank goodness, I didn't make a soufflé.

(VERA enters from the hall.)

Oh, dinner won't be a minute, Miss. Just a question of dishing up.

(MRS. ROGERS exits to the dining room.)

VERA. Is everything all right, Rogers? Can you manage between the two of you?

ROGERS. Yes, thank you, Miss. The Missus talks a lot, but she gets it done.

(ROGERS exits to the dining room as EMILY enters from the hall, having changed.)

VERA. What a lovely evening!

EMILY. Yes, indeed. The weather seems very settled.

VERA. How plainly one can hear the sea.

EMILY. A pleasant sound.

VERA. Hardly a breath of wind – and deliciously warm. Not like England at all.

EMILY. I should have thought you might feel a little uncomfortable in that dress.

(VERA doesn't take the point.)

VERA. Oh, no.

EMILY. *(Nastily.)* It's rather tight, isn't it?

VERA. *(Innocently.)* Oh, I don't think so.

(EMILY sits and takes out her knitting.)

EMILY. You'll excuse me, my dear, but you're a young girl and you've got your living to earn.

VERA. Yes?

EMILY. A well-bred woman doesn't like her secretary to appear flashy. It looks, you know, as though you were trying to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

VERA. And would you say I do attract them?

EMILY. That's beside the point. A girl who deliberately sets out to get the attention of men won't be likely to keep her job long.

VERA. (*Laughing.*) Ah! Surely that depends on who she's working for?

EMILY. Really, Miss Claythorne!

VERA. Aren't you being a little unkind?

EMILY. (*Spitefully.*) Young people nowadays behave in the most disgusting fashion.

VERA. Disgusting?

EMILY. (*Fanatically.*) Yes. Low-backed evening dresses. Lying half naked on beaches. All this so-called sunbathing. An excuse for immodest conduct, nothing more. Familiarity! Christian names - drinking cocktails! And look at the young men nowadays. Decadent! Look at that young Marston. What good is he? And that Captain Lombard!

VERA. What do you object to in Captain Lombard? I should say he was a man who'd led a very varied and interesting life.

EMILY. The man's an adventurer. All this younger generation is no good - no good at all.

VERA. You don't like youth - I see.

EMILY. (*Sharply.*) What do you mean?

VERA. I was just remarking that you don't like young people.

EMILY. And is there any reason why I should, pray?

VERA. Oh, no - (*Pauses.*) but it seems to me that you must miss an awful lot.

EMILY. You're very impertinent.

VERA. I'm sorry, but that's just what I think.

end