

its own sake—but they have a warm and healthy relationship and this cannot help but colour the breakfast-time conversation which is otherwise very matter of fact. It is not so much what is said and done but the way it is said and done. FRANCES, who wears only an attractive dressing-gown, and PETER are both sun-tanned. FRANCES is distracted for a moment by the hatch.

What is the matter with that thing? It seems to be taking on a life of its own.

PETER Must be something to do with the counterweights. I'll try and fix it tonight. *(He goes to pour himself another mug of coffee)*

FRANCES Don't move, darling. There's a thread caught on your tiepin. *(She moves in very close to him and frees the clip)*

PETER My God, look at the time. *(He comes out of the kitchen carrying his mug of coffee)* Now have I got my keys with me? Yes. Frances, where did I put my briefcase?

FRANCES Where you left it on Friday night.

PETER Where I left it on... Oh, yes. *(He picks up the briefcase and checks the contents)*

FRANCES meanwhile comes out of the kitchen with the tiepin.

FRANCES I can't think why you bother to bring it upstairs at all. I mean you never get round to opening it until Monday morning, do you?

PETER I don't suppose I do—and I can't think why.

The hatch starts to creep down.

(indicating the hatch) Darling.

FRANCES *(pushing the hatch up)* You will see to this thing tonight, won't you, darling?

PETER *(gulping his coffee)* Yes, yes I will.

FRANCES Oh, and the waste disposal needs greasing and that speaker thing— (*Indicates the door intercom*) —needs fixing, I think it's got a loose connection.

PETER Now I know why I never get round to opening my briefcase.

FRANCES So do I... (*Looking at the tiepin*) This tiepin's got an inscription on it. (*Reading*) *Ex nihilo* what?

PETER "*Ex nihilo, nihilfit.*" It's the bank motto: From nothing, nothing comes.

FRANCES It sounds like a permanent credit squeeze. (*As she puts the tiepin on*) Why's Mr Bromhead got a gold tiepin when yours is only silver?

PETER Because he's a district branch manager and I'm only a sub-branch manager, that's why.

FRANCES Well, I think it's ridiculous—having this sort of class distinction in a bank. You haven't had your toast, Peter.

PETER I haven't got time.

FRANCES Yes, you have. I'll get it for you. (*She turns and goes back into the kitchen*)

PETER You haven't forgotten my mother's coming to lunch, have you, darling?

FRANCES No, darling.

PETER Good. Now you know she won't expect anything special—as long as it's all vegetarian. By the way, I don't think it's at all likely—but it is just possible she may want to stay the night.

FRANCES *bangs a cup and saucer on the sink.*

(*hesitantly*) Are you all right, darling? Did you hear what I said?

FRANCES (*appearing in the kitchen doorway with a plate of toast*) Yes, I heard what you said. You said your mother is staying the night.

PETER No, no, I didn't, darling. What I said was she...she...she might—just might—want to stay the night. I mean I don't think it's in the least likely but it is just possible. She may be too tired to go back to Chelsea.

FRANCES (*firmly and knowingly*) You mean Fulham and you mean she's staying the night.

PETER Well, even if she is, we'll still be on our own. She'll be quite happy upstairs, she told me so.

She just sits and looks at him. He flounders on.

I mean she won't want anything special... I mean she can have the Teasmaid just for one night, can't she?

She still sits and looks at him.

I mean it's not as if she's any trouble and we never use the electric blanket or the radio at night, anyway, and—and—and where are you going, darling?

FRANCES (*turning to the kitchen*) I'm going to get the Kenwood mixer, darling. She might like that as well.

PETER (*injured*) Now there's no need to be like that about it...

FRANCES (*turning back to him*) But we've only been back ten days!

The hatch on the counter shoots down suddenly unaided.

Oh, damn the hatch! You really must fix the wretched thing!

PETER I will, Frances, I definitely will. I'll do it tonight.

FRANCES Then just see that you do.

The bank buzzer sounds loudly.

PETER Hello?

BRIAN 'Morning, Peter. Don't want to intrude on the happy couple...

PETER That's all right, Brian. I was just coming down.

BRIAN (*offstage*) You do know your first appointment's at o-nine-thirty?

PETER I know—Superintendent Paul—about the police sports and social club. Thanks, Brian.

BRIAN (*offstage*) Not at all, not at all. That's what I am here for. Thank you. Good morning.

There is a click and PETER hangs up.

FRANCES Does that nosey-parker have to be so formal and pedantic every morning.

PETER You know Brian—does everything by the book. If Head Office told him to lose his virginity, he'd do it in triplicate.

FRANCES Actually, I think he's been a bit upset since you were promoted.

PETER Nonsense. He offered to be my best man, didn't he?

FRANCES Offered? Insisted! His toast to the bridesmaids had everything in it but a change in the bank rate.

PETER It wasn't that bad. I've heard worse. I can't remember exactly when but I must have heard worse. Look, I've got to get down to the bank, darling. (*He kisses her*) I'll see you at lunchtime. (*He kisses her again*)

FRANCES Aren't you going to kiss me good-bye?

PETER Yes, of course.

They go into a longer kiss.

(breaking away) Please, darling! I must get downstairs.

As PETER goes to the front door and opens it, FRANCES goes towards the bathroom and then turns casually.