

PETER No. They found out about his wife's Tupperware parties.  
What in God's name made you think of such a thing?

FRANCES *shakes her head, goes to the studio couch and sits down on it.*

FRANCES I wanted to help us, that's all—to get a house of our own with a garden.

PETER But we've only been married three and a half weeks!  
We're very lucky to get a nice flat like this from the start.

FRANCES I know—but it's not ours. Who wants to live on top of their work with buzzers buzzing all the time?

PETER Oh, darling, you do exaggerate...

*The bank buzzer buzzes three times, FRANCES reacts.*

PETER *jumps to the bank intercom and answers it.*

Yes?

BRIAN *(offstage)* Sorry to intrude again but Superintendent Paul's arrived early. He's due in court at o-ten-hundred.

PETER Right, right. I'm just coming down. *(He hangs up and hurries over to FRANCES)* Don't worry, darling. We'll get the house and garden without your Scandinavian glass. *(He pulls her up and kisses her)* It was very thoughtful of you, anyway. Forget all about it. I'll see you at lunch. *(He kisses her)* 'Bye.

PETER *exits to the hall.*

FRANCES 'Bye, darling.

FRANCES *goes into the bathroom. Through the open door we hear her running a bath. FRANCES comes out of the bathroom. A buzzer sounds by the front door. FRANCES hurries and picks up the bank phone.*

Hello? Hello?

FRANCES *realizes it is on the front door not the bank telephone. She hangs the phone up and answers the intercom.*

Hello? Who is it?

ELEANOR *(offstage)* It's me, Frances.

FRANCES Who?

ELEANOR Me, of course, darling, Eleanor.

FRANCES *(astounded)* Eleanor! What? *(Hastily)* I mean what a nice surprise.

ELEANOR *(offstage)* Don't bother to come down, darling. Just release the door.

FRANCES Oh—oh, yes, of course.

FRANCES *switches off the intercom and presses a button by the side of it. She then goes running into the bathroom to switch off the bath. As she goes, she mutters to herself.*

How dare she! How dare she! Half past nine in the morning!

*She is now in the bathroom. The water goes off. She reappears and runs across into the main bedroom.*

*(as she goes)* It's a bit bloody much... I've no chance at all now.

FRANCES *is now in the main bedroom. There is a knock at the front door. FRANCES comes rushing out of the main bedroom, still dressed only in the dressing-gown.*

I'll tell her—I'll definitely tell her. *(She opens the door all smiles)* Hello, Eleanor. How lovely to see you so early.

ELEANOR HUNTER *enters. She is an extremely elegant, sophisticated woman in her fifties—one who has been well preserved by the West End beauty salons for years. Everything about her is in immaculate taste and expensive. When she is about she likes to do most of the talking—not because she is gushing or feather-brained*

*but simply because she is a very bad listener. To her snobbery is quite natural. She is carrying a small overnight valise and a bouquet of flowers.*

ELEANOR Hello, darling. *(She kisses FRANCES on the cheek)*  
My dear, you look radiant. How nice of you both to invite me so soon.

FRANCES Not at all.

ELEANOR I thought I might be in the way until Peter said you were insisting. It really is sweet of you.

FRANCES Not at all.

ELEANOR Of course I wouldn't have been quite so early but for my driver. My dear, thirty minutes from Chelsea! I'm sure the man thought he was Graham Hill—but he was nowhere near as good-looking unfortunately. *(Holding out the bouquet)* I've bought you a few flowers.

FRANCES How very kind. They're lovely.

ELEANOR *(suddenly noticing FRANCES' strange dress)* My dear, I haven't interrupted you in the middle of anything, have I?

FRANCES No, no—I was thinking of having a bath, that's all.

ELEANOR I always have mine first thing in the morning.

FRANCES So do I usually—I'd better put these in water.

*FRANCES goes into the kitchen carrying the flowers.*

ELEANOR *(looking around her)* So this is the flat I've heard so much about? My dear, it's charming.

*FRANCES pushes up the kitchen hatch and puts the flowers in a vase, adding water from the sink.*

Absolutely charming. Hooray for Habitat and Heals! And it's so much easier to run than a house and garden and everything. And I'm sure there's masses of room for the time being.

FRANCES Yes, it's very nice while there are just two of us.

ELEANOR No hurry there, is there, darling? You did promise you wouldn't make me a grandmother until I look at least forty-six. (*Indicating the stairs*) Do those lead to my room?

FRANCES What?

ELEANOR My lovely bedroom Peter was telling me about.

FRANCES Oh, yes, that's right.

ELEANOR Is my bathroom upstairs as well?

FRANCES No— (*Indicating*) —the bathroom's there.

ELEANOR Oh—well never mind. Don't bother about me, darling. I'll just fetch the rest of my things.

*ELEANOR exits to the hall.*

FRANCES (*to herself*) The rest?

*ELEANOR reappears carrying two more smart suitcases— one of which is truly enormous.*

Good God—I mean good gracious. Can I give you a hand?

ELEANOR (*going upstairs*) No, thank you, darling. I'll just unpack these for now.

FRANCES Unpack? Oh... (*Light-heartedly*) Well, I must say you seem to have enough there for a fortnight.

ELEANOR (*pausing half-way up the stairs with the two smaller cases in either hand*) My dear, I couldn't possibly impose on you for as long as that. Besides my Health Farm have definitely promised me a room by the end of next week.

*ELEANOR sweeps off upstairs.*

*FRANCES stands there aghast. She just cannot believe what she has heard. Then it dawns; she has heard it. She rushes to the bank phone, and buzzes furiously.*

FRANCES Hello, hello.