

PAUL Good evening, Mrs Hunter. Is your husband in?

FRANCES Er, yes.

PAUL Good. (*Noticing PETER*) Oh, good evening. Mr Hunter. (*Coming into the room*) I wouldn't normally bother you like this but you are rather inviting trouble.

PETER Trouble? (*Moving so as to reveal BRIAN*)

PAUL (*noticing BRIAN hovering in a corner*) Ah, Mr Runnicles. May I ask how long you've been here sir?

BRIAN About four and a half years.

FRANCES Quarter of an hour, that's all.

PAUL Ah, well, I suppose you must be the culprit then.

BRIAN Culprit? No!

PAUL Yes, one of you's left the side door wide open: I could see it across the street.

PETER (*with obvious relief*) Oh, that's all... (*Hastily*) I mean that's always happening and—and it isn't good enough, Brian.

FRANCES No, Peter's told you before: we've got to keep that door closed. This is bank property after all.

PAUL Exactly, my dear. You will be more careful in the future, won't you, Mr Runnicles?

BRIAN Yes, yes, I will—yes. Yes, well—if that's all I think I'll be off. (*He starts edging towards the front door*)

FRANCES Won't you have a drink with us now you're here, Superintendent?

PAUL That's very nice of you, Mrs Hunter. But I don't think I really ought to as I am on duty.

FRANCES Oh, what a pity.

PAUL Still, as I'm not driving perhaps I could just have a small double.

FRANCES Gin or whisky?

PAUL I'd prefer vodka, if you've got it. Doesn't hang on the breath.

*The intercom buzzer to the front door sounds.*

FRANCES Answer that, will you, Brian?

BRIAN *has no option as PETER disappears into the kitchen.*

BRIAN *(into the intercom)* What? Oh, yes... Good evening. Can I help you?

MAN'S VOICE *(offstage)* G.P.O. special delivery 'ere. Parcel for Mr Frances Hunter.

BRIAN *(aghast)* What again!

MAN'S VOICE *(offstage)* I beg your pardon.

BRIAN *(crumbling)* Frances—they've sent some more—I mean there's some more that they've sent—that is there's a parcel—downstairs—there's a parcel downstairs with a man.

FRANCES Must be another wedding present! Pop down and sign for it, will you, Brian?

BRIAN Yes, yes... *(Into the intercom)* I'll be right down. *(He clicks off the intercom and realizes)* No, no, no, no, no.

PETER *(coming out of the kitchen with a new bottle of vodka)* Pop down and sign for it, Brian, there's a good chap.

BRIAN Pardon?

FRANCES Pop down and sign for it, Brian.

BRIAN What do you want me to do?

PAUL They want you to sign for a parcel!

BRIAN I haven't got a pencil.

PAUL The postman will have one, they always do.

BRIAN Oh—yes—yes—that's it then, yes. Excuse me, I've got to go and sign for a parcel...

BRIAN *exits to the hall.*

Superintendent PAUL *turns to PETER as he brings over a drink for him.*

PAUL Anything the matter with Mr Runnicles? He seems in a bit of a state tonight.

PETER Yes, well, it's his new girl friend, you see—she's a little cracker—a queen—a beauty queen—and she's having dinner at his flat tonight.

FRANCES *picks up a plate of sandwiches.*

PAUL What's he doing here then?

FRANCES (*putting down the plate of sandwiches*) Bread! He found he'd run out of bread. So he came round here to borrow a loaf and—and—I expect you're pretty busy at the moment, aren't you, Superintendent?

PAUL (*sipping his drink*) No more than usual, Mrs Hunter.

PETER Aren't you? Only we were reading about you in the paper tonight.

PAUL Oh, the pornography case? Well, where there's somebody selling there's somebody buying and that's how we catch them.

FRANCES I suppose that sort of thing could be an accident—you know, inertia selling. People getting things they haven't asked for.

PAUL That's what they always say, Mrs Hunter—when we catch them. But if they're innocent, why don't they come to us in the first place?

PETER (*the light dawning*) Of course! I mean of course that's what they should do. They'd be all right then, wouldn't they?

PAUL Naturally.

PETER Well, in that case...

PAUL A man's always innocent until he's proved guilty. That's why we have a thorough investigation to prove it.

FRANCES What—that he's innocent?

PAUL No, that's he's guilty.

*The study door opens and ELEANOR comes out followed by BROMHEAD.*

ELEANOR Thank you Leslie.

BROMHEAD You leave your stockbrokers to me, my dear.

ELEANOR I'm so glad you like the look of my industrials.

BROMHEAD (*seeing PAUL*) Hello, Vernon. This is a surprise. (*He laughs*) Not an official call, I hope.

PAUL No— (*With a look at PETER*) —I was just passing so I thought I'd pop in.

BROMHEAD Allow me to introduce Peter's mother, Mrs Eleanor Hunter. (*To ELEANOR*) This is Superintendent Paul, my dear.

ELEANOR How do you do, Superintendent.

PAUL (*turning on his own kind of charm*) How nice to meet you, Mrs Hunter. It's a great pleasure. Are you...

BROMHEAD (*hastily*) Well, I'd better be off. Can I give you a lift, Superintendent?

PAUL Thanks, I'll be glad of it.

BROMHEAD I'll see you at seven-fifteen, my dear.

ELEANOR If you're going to be here at seven-fifteen, Leslie, I'd better get myself ready. (*She picks up her handbag and nearly knocks over the flowers*) Oh, how silly of me. Good-bye—good-bye.

FRANCES Yes, it's six-thirty; you've got less than an hour.

ELEANOR I'll soon throw myself together.

*ELEANOR sails off up the stairs with her flowers.*

PAUL (*to FRANCES*) Good-bye, Mrs Hunter. Goodbye—er—Peter. Thanks for the dr—hospitality.

PETER Not at all. Most interesting talking to you.

PETER *opens the door and discloses BRIAN standing nervously outside trying to make out he has not got a parcel behind his back.*

BROMHEAD Not still rehearsing your entrance for *George and Margaret*, are you, Runnicles?

BRIAN No, no, sir—I just went downstairs and now—now I've come up again.

PAUL Mind what you get up to with your little queen tonight.

BRIAN My little queen!

PAUL (*nudging him*) And don't use all the bread tonight, either. You may feel like a couple of slices in the morning.

BROMHEAD That's a good old-fashioned remedy, Runnicles. Better than ointment. Slap a bread poultice on it.

BROMHEAD *and PAUL go out, closing the door behind them.*

BRIAN Slap a bread poultice on it, my little queen? What're they talking about? And what am I supposed to be suffering from? I insist upon knowing.

PETER Never mind about that now. Let's have a look at that parcel.

BRIAN (*giving it to him*) You're welcome to it. I'm not having anything to do with this one.

PETER (*to FRANCES*) It looks like the same writing. Is it?

FRANCES (*taking the parcel*) Yes, it is: green ink again.

PETER But why've they sent us more photographs. I'm not going to pay... My God, they must've presented the cheque.

FRANCES What—already?