

**Robert** Excellent.

**Suzette** Cordon bleu.

**Jacqueline** Really? Well, in that case . . .

**Suzette** Good. At last I can get back to something I understand!

*Suzette goes into the kitchen*

**Jacqueline** (to Robert) Such class! Congratulations, Robert.

*Jacqueline follows her off*

**Robert** Wonderful! I'm now the cook's lover.

**Bernard** (sniggering) You've hooked a cook.

**Robert** It's not funny, Bernard! This is a disaster.

**Bernard** Considering the situation, I think we're managing quite well.

*The doorbell rings*

**Robert** } (together) So far.  
**Bernard** }

*Bernard goes to open the front door*

*Suzanne enters wearing a chic dress and a beautiful coat. She is carrying a small suitcase*

**Suzanne** (coolly to Bernard) Good-evening.

*She hands him the suitcase, walks straight past him, and embraces an astonished Robert*

Darling!

**Bernard** No, no—not now! Jacqueline's in the kitchen.

**Suzanne** (breaking from Robert) Oh, sorry. (She holds out her hand) Good-evening.

*Robert stands frozen in a state of stunned shock*

**Bernard** Robert, meet Suzanne.

**Robert** (hoarsely) How d'you do.

**Suzanne** (shaking Robert's hand formally) How d'you do. (She embraces Bernard) Darling!

**Bernard** That's better! Happy birthday, angel. (He takes her coat)

**Suzanne** Careful with my coat.

**Bernard** Don't worry. I know how much it cost. What took you so long?

**Suzanne** This medieval place. There was only one taxi at the station, and some chauvinist pig barged past me and pinched it.

**Robert** Ah, sorry—that was me. If I'd realized —

**Suzanne** Oh, what a shame! We could have shared it.

**Robert** (with feeling) That would have saved a great deal of trouble.

**Bernard** Never mind—listen carefully, angel. For reasons which I haven't time to explain, we've had to change the plan.

**Suzanne** Change the plan?

**Bernard** Yes. You're no longer his lover.

**Suzanne** I'm not.

**Bernard** No.

**Suzanne** Why not?

**Bernard** He's already got a lover.

**Suzanne** Who?

**Robert** The cook.

**Suzanne** The cook?

**Bernard** She's no longer the cook.

**Suzanne** What is she?

**Bernard** She's you.

**Suzanne** Me?

**Bernard** What you were supposed to be.

**Suzanne** So who am I?

**Bernard** What she was supposed to be.

**Suzanne** What's that?

**Robert** The cook.

**Suzanne** Ah. (*Outraged*) I'm the cook!

*Jacqueline enters from the kitchen in time to hear the last sentence*

**Jacqueline** So, you're here at last!

**Suzanne** Pardon?

**Jacqueline** Do you know what time it is?

**Suzanne** (*looking at her watch*) Er ...

**Jacqueline** We were expecting you nearly an hour ago.

**Suzanne** You were?

**Jacqueline** Yes. What happened to you?

**Suzanne** I missed the, er ...

**Bernard** Bus!

**Suzanne** Bus?

**Bernard** Bus.

**Suzanne** Bus.

**Jacqueline** That's no excuse. The agency should have made sure you were here on time.

**Suzanne** Agency?

**Jacqueline** Bon Appetit.

**Suzanne** Thank you.

**Jacqueline** The catering agency! Isn't that who sent you?

**Bernard** Of course it was.

**Suzanne** Oh ... yes, of course it was.

**Jacqueline** Well, it's not good enough. I've got guests having to help me in the kitchen!

**Suzanne** Er ...

**Bernard** Don't get angry, darling.

**Suzanne** I'm not angry, I just ...

*Bernard gestures frantically*

Oh.

**Bernard** She's here now anyway, darling. And we're very glad to see her. Everything's back to normal.

**Robert** Hah!

**Bernard** (*glaring at him*) So let's get on and enjoy the evening, eh?

**Jacqueline** (*cooling down*) Very well. Come this way, Miss, er . . .

**Bernard** Suzy.

**Jacqueline** Suzy.

*Jacqueline turns towards the kitchen, then sees Suzanne's coat which Bernard is still holding*

What a beautiful coat. Is that yours?

**Suzanne** Er . . .

**Bernard** No! It's Suzy's . . . er, Suzette's. (*To Robert*) Isn't it?

**Robert** Yes, yes, Suzette's.

**Bernard** I was just about to hang it up.

**Jacqueline** (*looking at the label*) Chanel! It must have cost the earth!

**Bernard** (*with feeling*) Twenty thousand francs.

**Jacqueline** What?

**Bernard** Er . . . Robert paid twenty thousand francs for it. A birthday present for Suzette. Wasn't it, Robert?

**Robert** Um . . . yes.

**Jacqueline** (*livid*) Well happy birthday, Suzette!

**Bernard** Yes, happy birthday, Suzette.

**Suzanne** (*aghast*) Yes, happy birthday, Suzette!

*Suzette comes out of the kitchen wearing a large apron*

**Suzette** No, I'm a virgo.

*They stare at her*

Er . . . how do you want the artichokes done?

**Jacqueline** Oh, you can leave those now. The cook's here.

**Suzette** The cook?

**Jacqueline** Yes, at long last. So you can give her the apron.

**Suzette** But—

**Bernard** That's all right, Suzy—just give Suzy here your apron, so she can take over.

**Suzanne** Well thank you very much. This *is* going to be a wonderful evening.

**Jacqueline** I beg your pardon?

**Suzanne** Er . . . you can leave it to me, madam, to make it a wonderful evening.

**Jacqueline** Good. Carry on then. We're having artichokes and sauce velouté, followed by cheese soufflé, then veal à la crème and raspberry pavlova.

**Suzanne** We are?

**Jacqueline** Yes.

**Suzanne** (*looking at Bernard*) And I'm cooking it?

**Bernard** Ahem . . . yes.

*Suzanne splutters with laughter*

**Jacqueline** You're cordon bleu, aren't you?

**Suzanne** No, I'm vegetarian.

**Suzette** (*sighing*) That's just the sort of menu I love.

**Bernard** To eat.

**Suzette** Oh yes, to eat as well—but really I prefer—

**Bernard** Look, Suzy, why don't you take your coat and hang it up in your room? (*He puts it round her shoulders*)

**Suzette** (*wide-eyed*) My coat?

**Bernard** Yes. The coat Robert gave you.

**Suzette** Robert ... ?

**Robert** Yes, yes—your birthday present—for being so charming and cooperative. (*Ushering her towards bedroom 2*) Hang it up where it won't get damaged.

**Suzette** Well, thank you very much. I might enjoy tonight after all. (*She does an exaggerated walk to bedroom 2 wearing the coat*)

**Suzanne** (*furiously*) I'm glad someone might!

*Suzanne exits to the kitchen with the apron. Suzette exits to the bedroom*

**Jacqueline** (*looking after Suzanne*) She seems rather bad-tempered.

**Bernard** Well, so would you be, if you'd missed your bus and then been verbally assaulted by your employer.

**Jacqueline** I had every right.

**Bernard** Not wise to get on the wrong side of the cook, darling.

**Jacqueline** Why?

**Robert** She might poison us.

**Bernard** (*muttering*) She might too.

**Jacqueline** What?

**Bernard** Er ... he's right too—she might.

**Jacqueline** Nonsense. (*Looking after Suzanne*) She's also rather glamorous to be a cook.

**Bernard** (*winking at Robert*) Yes, not bad looking.

**Jacqueline** A bit over the top—a touch tarty perhaps.

**Bernard** Tarty?

**Jacqueline** I'd have thought she could have found easier ways to earn a living.

**Bernard** Steady on!

**Robert** The hooker at the cooker—ha, ha.

*Bernard glares at Robert*

**Jacqueline** Well that's better than a model with a waddle!

*Jacqueline marches off into the kitchen*

**Robert** Oh my God, what a mess!

**Bernard** Listen, Robert—we've got to find a way to sort this out ...

**Robert** That's astute of you.

**Bernard** I think we can get through the evening all right without Suzanne blowing her top. As long as she knows the sleeping arrangements are OK.