

David That'll be Jen. *(He moves to the kitchen door)* And Mum—be nice, eh?
For my sake.

David goes indoors

Mrs Hinson *(calling after him)* I was going to make you a nice rice pudding!
(She glowers) Trust her to spoil it.

Michael moves to take a peek over the fence

Mrs Hinson *(catching him)* Can I help you?

Michael Oh—yes—good-afternoon, Mrs—umm. *(He stands on tiptoe)*
Sorry to disturb you—what I should have said—just in case you—umm
—it's fancy dress. Tonight. The party.

Mrs Hinson *(down her nose)* Oh yes?

Michael Yes. Actually, we're having a theme. For the fancy dress. Famous
couples in reverse.

Mrs Hinson Oh yes?

Michael By that I mean the chap takes the part of the female of the pair and
the wife or girlfriend or whatever takes the part of the male.

Mrs Hinson Oh yes?

Michael So if you think of a famous couple like, say—

Mrs Hinson Roy Rogers and Trigger.

Michael Roy Rogers and Trigger . . . The girl will take the part of Roy
Rogers and the chap will take the part of—Trigger. *(He frowns. There's
something not quite right here)* Anyway. Just wanted to keep you informed
—sorry to disturb you.

Mrs Hinson I say—. *(She moves nearer the fence)* I had a milkman once
called Bracegirdle. No relation by any chance, was he?

Michael Ummm . . .

Mrs Hinson His mother kept rabbits under their kitchen table.

Michael Really?

Mrs Hinson That's how it stuck in my mind.

Michael Sorry—what did?

Mrs Hinson *Bracegirdle.*

Michael Oh—yes—right. I'll let you get on then. Well done. *(He goes back
to erecting the barbecue)*

*Mrs Hinson looks towards the house and moves nippily to take up her walking
frame so that she is slowly moving towards her washing as:*

*Jennifer appears in the french windows. She's in her late 30s, attractive
middle-class and wears good casual clothing. She carries a large bunch of cut
flowers. She watches Mrs Hinson, preparing herself for what she clearly sees
as an ordeal*

Michael *(to himself; suddenly)* Bracegirdle, what's she on about, Bracegirdle?
*(He goes to the fence and gets on tiptoe to speak to Mrs Hinson, but he sees
Jennifer and goes back to his work, still trying to work out what she was on
about)*

Jennifer Hello Mum. How are you? Nice to see you.

Mrs Hinson Nice to see you, dear.

They kiss without quite touching. They are so "nice" to each other it hurts

Jennifer (*holding out the flowers*) I brought you some flowers.

Mrs Hinson Oh you shouldn't have, they'll only die.

Jennifer Oh, they'll be all right if you don't breathe on them—I'll put them in a vase for you, shall I?

Mrs Hinson Yes please, dear, thank you. And you've been getting some shopping for me, I understand.

Jennifer David's bringing it in now.

Mrs Hinson He's a good boy, my David. (*She beckons Jennifer closer and speaks in a manner more mouthing than actually saying the words. This is her way of talking "delicate"*) I think he looks very tired.

Jennifer Do you?

Mrs Hinson You know—mentally. I think he could do with a good holiday myself. It must be a terrible strain, being executive. Still, you're a great help to him. I know you are. When you're fit. (*She suddenly remembers and indicates the deckchair*) Sit down, dear, you look exhausted.

David appears in the kitchen doorway, holding a box of provisions

David I'll put this stuff away, all right? (*He starts to go inside—clearly wanting to stay out of the way*)

Jennifer Put these in acid for your mother, will you, darling? (*She puts the flowers on top of the box and smiles flatly at him*)

David inwardly groans and takes the box into the kitchen

Mrs Hinson (*calling*) And put the kettle on, will you Son?

Jennifer (*calling*) Not for me, thanks.

Mrs Hinson Oh no, you prefer something stronger, don't you dear? Ask David to have a look in the sideboard, there might be a droppa port or something left over from Christmas.

Jennifer (*smiling sweetly*) I'll try to manage without, but it was a lovely thought, thanks Mum.

They "smile" at each other

Mrs Hinson (*sitting "painfully"*) I would have visited you in hospital but David intimated that he'd rather see you all to himself:

Jennifer Yes, he can be very forceful. (*She sits in the deckchair*)

Mrs Hinson (*"delicate" again*) He never told me what it was, you know. Didn't want to worry me, I expect. Something internal, was it dear?

Jennifer Vaguely.

Mrs Hinson Yes, it's usually internal with a woman. (*Very confidentially*) Mine was internal, you know.

Jennifer (*"impressed"*) No I didn't.

Mrs Hinson That was before all these drugs of course. (*She sucks in the air dramatically, re-living the moment*) I could have gone either way. Apparently the entire profession was dumbfounded. Now then—(*she struggles to her feet and collects the frame*) you make yourself comfortable

while I see how my David's getting on in the kitchen. You know what they're like—helpless and hopeless. *(She starts to move towards the kitchen)* He shouldn't have to be in the kitchen, a man in his position.

Mrs Hinson exits

Once Mrs Hinson is out of her view Jennifer's smile fades. She reaches into her handbag and takes out a packet of cigarettes. She is sorely tempted but she is trying to give up. She makes the effort and shoves the packet back again as:

Roma comes out of the kitchen and goes directly to the food

Michael finishes erecting the barbecue

Michael There.

Roma Oh that's smashing, Mike, well done.

Michael Now then, where to put it.

Roma We should certainly keep it away from—*(she indicates and, quietly:)* next door. Over here somewhere, d'you think? *(She indicates the other side of the garden)*

Michael *(wheeling the barbecue around)* Here—no, as you were, round the side out of everyone's way. *(He indicates the side of the shed)*

Roma Oh that's much better, Mike, a really good idea—well done.

Michael wheels the barbecue round the shed and out of sight as:

Roma moves to look at the food

Mike, I really am terribly worried about the meat.

Michael reappears

Michael The what?

Roma The chops. And the sausages. They're still stuck together as hard as rock—they won't defrost in time, I know they won't.

Michael comes to have a look in the boxes

Michael *(prodding the meat in the box with his finger)* Mmm.

Roma And the cheese. It's completely solid.

Michael *(prodding the cheese in the box)* Mmm.

They stand looking down at the boxes for a moment

Okay, so here's the way I see it. We give it another quarter of an hour and then—*(he takes up one of the boxes and drops it from a height of about three inches back onto the table. He looks hopefully into the box)* we gently drop it and—with any luck—the vibration will—shake it apart. Okay? *(He briefly kisses her brow)* Don't worry about it. *(Looking at his watch)* Now then—wine.

Michael exits

Roma remains looking down at the food, unconvinced

Roma *(calling after him)* What about the cheese? I mean, you can't vibrate cheese to pieces, surely?