

*(Scene - The same. Saturday morning.)*

*(When the curtain rises it is a fine morning. The clock is striking eleven. The French windows are open and music is coming softly from the radio. The tune is "I Cried Far You." JOHN enters briskly left. He is humming, looks happy and good-tempered. He moves to left centre, checks his watch with the clock on the mantelpiece, goes on to the terrace up centre, takes a cigarette from his case and lights it. GUDGEON enters left. He carries a salver with a note on it.)*

**GUDGEON.** *(moving left centre)* A note for you, sir.

**JOHN.** *(moving to right of GUDGEON; surprised)* For me? *(He takes the note.)*

**GUDGEON.** They are waiting for an answer, sir.

**JOHN.** It looks as though it's going to be a fine day,  
Gudgeon.

**GUDGEON.** Yes, sir. There was quite a haze over the downs  
early this morning.

*JOHN reads the note and frowns angrily.)*

**JOHN.** There's no answer, Gudgeon.

**GUDGEON.** *(turning and crossing to the door left)* Very good,  
sir.

**JOHN.** Where is everybody?

**GUDGEON.** *(stopping and turning)* Her ladyship has gone  
down to the farm, sir. The gentlemen have gone out  
shooting, and I believe Miss Harvey and Miss Henrietta  
are in the garden.

**JOHN.** Thank you, Gudgeon.

(**GUDGEON** exits left. **JOHN** moves on to the terrace up centre, re-reads the note, utters an angry ejaculation, crumples the note and puts it in his pocket. **MIDGE** enters right. She carries an armful of dahlias and loose leaves.)

**MIDGE.** (crossing to left of the coffee table) Good morning. (She kneels, takes the vase from the coffee table and starts filling it with the dahlias.)

**JOHN.** Good morning.

**MIDGE.** Gerda up yet?

**JOHN.** No, she had breakfast in bed. She had a headache I told her to lie in for once.

**MIDGE.** I meant to spend the whole morning in bed, but it was so lovely outside that I couldn't.

**JOHN.** Where's Henrietta?

**MIDGE.** I don't know. She was with me just now. She may be in the rose garden.

(**JOHN** exits up centre to right. **LADY ANGKATELL** enters left. She carries a basket of eggs.)

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Music? (She moves to the radio.) Oh no, dear, oh no - no. (She switches off the radio.) Stop! We can't be swinging so early in the day.

**MIDGE.** I wish you'd do these dahlias, Lucy. They defeat me.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** (crossing to the drinks table) Do they, darling? (She puts the basket on the floor left of the drinks table.) What a shame - never mind. (She moves dreamily to the writing table.) Now then, what did I want? Ah, I know. (She lifts the telephone receiver.) Now let me see - ah yes, this thing. (She cradles the receiver first in one arm and then in the other.)

(**MIDGE** stares amazed at **LADY ANGKATELL**.)  
(with satisfaction) Ah! I see what it is. (She replaces the receiver.)

**MIDGE.** What are you doing, Lucy?

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Doing?

**MIDGE.** You seemed to be having a kind of game with the telephone receiver.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Oh, that was Mrs. Bagshaw's baby. *(She looks at MIDGE.)* You've got the wrong vase, darling.

**MIDGE.** *(rising)* What did you say?

**LADY ANGKATELL.** I said you'd got the wrong vase. It's the white vase for dahlias.

**MIDGE.** No, I meant what did you say about somebody's baby?

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Oh, that was the telephone receiver, my pet.

**MIDGE.** *(moving to the drinks table)* I don't wonder that Gerda Cristow nearly has a nervous breakdown every time you talk to her. *(She picks up the white vase and jug of water from the drinks table, moves and puts them on the coffee table.)* What has Mrs. Bagshaw's baby got to do with the telephone receiver? *(She pours some water into the vase and fills it with the dahlias, during the ensuing speeches.)*

**LADY ANGKATELL.** She seemed to be holding it - the baby I mean - upside down. So I was trying this way and that way. And of course I see what it is - she's left-handed. That's why it looked all wrong. Is John Cristow down yet?

**MIDGE.** Yes, he went into the garden to look for Henrietta.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** *(sitting on the sofa at the right end of it)* Oh! Do you think that was very wise of him?

**MIDGE.** What do you mean?

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Well, I don't want to say anything ...

**MIDGE.** Come on, Lucy. Give.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Well, you know, darling, that I don't sleep very well. And when I can't sleep I'm inclined to prowl around the house.

**MIDGE.** I know, half the guests think it's burglars, the other half think it's ghosts.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** Well, I happened to be looking through the passage window. John was just coming back to the house, and it was close on three o'clock.

*(There is a pause. MIDGE and LADY ANGKATELL look at each other.)*

**MIDGE.** *(picking up the jug and vase of dahlias and crossing with them to the drinks table)* Even for old friends who have a lot to say to each other, three in the morning is a little excessive. *(She puts the jug and vase on the drinks table.)*  
One wonders what Gerda thinks about it.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** One wonders if Gerda thinks.

**MIDGE.** *(easing above the sofa)* Even the meekest of wives may turn.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** I don't think Henrietta was sleeping very well either last night. The light was on in her room, and I thought I saw her curtains move.

**MIDGE.** Really, John is a *fool*.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** He's a man who's always taken risks - and usually got away with them.

**MIDGE.** One day he'll go too far. This was a bit blatant, even for him.

**LADY ANGKATELL.** My dear child, he couldn't help himself. That woman just sailed in last night and - grabbed him. I must say I admired her performance. It was so beautifully timed and planned.

**MIDGE.** Do you think it was planned?

**LADY ANGKATELL.** *(rising)* Well, darling, come, come. *(She smiles, picks up the "Daily Mirror" and crosses to the fireplace.)*

**MIDGE.** You may say, in your detached way, she gave a beautiful performance - but it remains to be seen whether Gerda and Henrietta agree with you.