

MELLERSH. But I want to speak to you about the company you're keeping.

LOTTY. Well, I assure you, Mellersh ...

MELLERSH. Lady Caroline Bramble? Really, Charlotte.

LOTTY. Well, I ...

MELLERSH. You've been very clever, my dear!

LOTTY. Clever?

MELLERSH. I have planned precisely what I should say.

LOTTY. Oh, but you mustn't disturb Lady Caroline.

MELLERSH. I shall be the soul of discretion.

LOTTY. This isn't a business trip, Mellersh.

MELLERSH. No, but ...

LOTTY. Mellersh! (*Costanza enters with a towel and bath brush.*)

COSTANZA. *Bagno pronto, Signore.* ("The bath is ready, sir.")

LOTTY. I'll prepare your things. (*She gets his bag, leaves his hat.*)

MELLERSH. Thank you.

LOTTY. And be careful with the bath, Mellersh. It's very old. You mustn't turn the fire on until ...

MELLERSH. (*Impatiently.*) Thank you, Charlotte. (*Lotty exits. Mellersh starts for the villa, but Costanza blocks the entrance.*) *Bag-no pron-to*, you say?

COSTANZA. *Bagno pronto.*

MELLERSH. Very well, then. Thank you. *Grat-zee.*

COSTANZA. *Il bagno è molto vecchio e pericoloso, Signore.* ("The bath is very old and dangerous, sir.")

MELLERSH. *Pericoloso?*

COSTANZA. (*Nodding.*) *Sì. Bagno pericoloso.* (*Mellersh thinks, huffs, takes out his phrase book, thumbs through it. Costanza rolls her eyes, enunciates.*) *Pe — ri — co — lo ...*

MELLERSH. Yes, yes. *Pericoloso.* (*Finds it.*) Dangerous. Dangerous? A bath?

COSTANZA. *Sì. Bagno "booma!"*

MELLERSH. *Bag-no booma?* Good Heavens, I'm a big boy, thank you very much. I can surely take care of myself in a bath.

COSTANZA. (*Emphatically.*) *No, no! Bagno "booma," Signore! Deve stare molto attento!* ("You must be very careful.")

MELLERSH. Very well, *bag-no booma, bag-no booma.* (*He snatches the towel and brush.*) Now, shoo! Go on! (*Costanza scurries onto the terrace.*) *Grat-zee, Sig-norina.* (*He enters the villa.*)

COSTANZA. (*Curtsying sarcastically.*) "*Sig-norina!*" (*She huffs, bites her knuckle, clears the tea service, muttering. Lotty enters from*

*the villa, looking for Mellersh's hat.)*

LOTTY. (*Aglow.*) Oh, Costanza! *Paradiso, Costanza. Paradiso!*

COSTANZA. (*Humoring her.*) Sì, sì, Signora. *Paradiso!* (*Under her breath.*) *Inferno!* ("Hell!") (*Caroline enters from the villa, dressed for dinner, looking for Frederick.*)

LOTTY. Caroline! You are beautiful!

CAROLINE. Have you seen a man?

LOTTY. It's Mellersh! He's arrived!

CAROLINE. Oh, Lotty, good!

LOTTY. It's just as I saw it! But look here. Don't pay Mellersh any mind if he asks you a lot of questions.

CAROLINE. Questions?

LOTTY. With Mellersh, it's best to just say "marvelous," and leave it at that.

CAROLINE. I really am happy for you.

LOTTY. Thank you, Caroline! I can't wait for you to meet him! I am about to burst! (*There is an explosion from within the villa, followed by a pained wail. Clouds of steam pour forth. Mellersh runs out clad only in a small towel. The ladies stand, stunned, unnoticed.*)

MELLERSH. Damn that bath!

COSTANZA. *Bagno pericoloso! Bagno "booma!"* (*Mellersh spins, fumbles.*)

MELLERSH. (*To Costanza.*) Woman!

LOTTY. Mellersh! (*He spins.*)

MELLERSH. Charlotte!

LOTTY. This is most inappropriate, Mellersh.

MELLERSH. I could say as much!

CAROLINE. (*With great formality.*) I don't believe we've met.

MELLERSH. (*Spinning, aghast.*) Ah! Ha! No! No ... No, we haven't. I ... I'm afraid I used unpardonable language.

CAROLINE. (*Trying not to laugh.*) I thought it most appropriate. (*Lifting her hand, making the most of it.*) Lady Caroline Bramble.

MELLERSH. (*Smiling weakly at her hand.*) How do you do? (*Clears his throat, launches into what he had prepared, as if nothing were wrong.*) I had so been looking forward to our meeting. Mellersh Wilton, family soli ... (*He attempts to extend his hand, but the towel slips.*)

COSTANZA. Ah!

MELLERSH. Oh! (*Mrs. Graves enters from the villa.*)

MRS. GRAVES. (*Gasping, catching an eyeful.*) Oh!

MELLERSH. (*Surrounded.*) Good God!

CAROLINE. Mr. Wilton, may I introduce Mrs. Clayton Graves.  
MRS. GRAVES. The pleasure is all mine!  
LOTTY. Now you've met nearly everyone, Mellersh!  
MELLERSH. How fortunate. *(To Mrs. Graves.)* How do you do?  
*(His towel slips again, exposing his backside. The ladies gasp, smiling. Costanza quickly covers Mellersh with his hat.)*  
COSTANZA. *Signore.* *(He takes the hat.)*  
MELLERSH. *Grat-zee.* *(He covers himself haphazardly with the hat and towel and inches toward the villa. The ladies can barely contain their laughter.)* Well ... well, this has been nice, but ... but you ... you ... you will ... perhaps another time would be ... *(With sudden formality, placing his hat on his head, bowing.)* Excuse me, ladies. *(He bolts into the villa. The ladies laugh. Wilding runs from the villa.)*  
WILDING. Ladies, ladies. I am sorry. I should have tended to that heater immediately.  
MRS. GRAVES. "In the flesh," indeed, Mrs. Wilton! *(Rose and Frederick run from the villa, straightening themselves.)*  
ROSE. Lotty? What on earth?  
LOTTY. Oh, it was only Mellersh, Rose.  
CAROLINE. *(To Frederick.)* There you are! *(Frederick clutches Rose.)*  
LOTTY. He's arrived!  
WILDING. I suppose I had better make some introductions. Mrs. Graves, Mrs. Wilton, Lady Caroline, allow me to introduce Mrs. Arnott's ... *Mister Arnott.* *(Frederick smiles helplessly.)*  
ROSE. Say hello, Frederick.  
FREDERICK. *(Managing only a weak squeak.)* Hello!  
MRS. GRAVES. *(Knowingly.)* You look flushed, my boy. One mustn't get too much sun too soon. Isn't that right, Lady Caroline? *(Caroline is frozen. She looks at Rose, who is beaming. She looks at Frederick.)*  
CAROLINE. *(With complete grace.)* Yes, Mr. Arnott. We must find you a hat. *(The sound of piano music, Albéniz's "Suite Española No. 1 — Granada." Lights down.)*