

THE DINNER PARTY

MARIETTE. I know. Never never never never. I heard.

YVONNE. God, I hate marriage. The loving isn't worth the misery.

MARIETTE. The sex isn't worth all the bother.

YVONNE. Do you know of *anyone* who's happily married?

MARIETTE. Yes. Two pandas in the London zoo.

YVONNE. I like you, Mariette.

MARIETTE. I like you to, Yvonne.

YVONNE. Too bad they didn't invite just six women. We could have gotten along so well.

(The door opens and GABRIELLE enters. She is elegant, striking looking, dressed smartly and brimming with confidence. It's hard not to like her.)

GABRIELLE. Last one here, I hope. If not, I'll make a re-entrance.... Hello. Gabrielle Buonocelli.

YVONNE. You must be number six.

GABRIELLE. Am I? Did I win a door prize?

MARIETTE. The sixth guest, she means.

GABRIELLE. I *know* what she meant. And you're Mariette Levieux.

MARIETTE. Why, yes. Have we met?

GABRIELLE. No. We're meeting now. Are you related to *Charles* Levieux?

MARIETTE. He was my father.

GABRIELLE. Was?

MARIETTE. He died five year ago.

GABRIELLE. I'm sorry. I dated him when I was seventeen. I hope that doesn't offend you.

MARIETTE. No, but it might offend my mother.

GABRIELLE. I understand. I offended my mother, too.... Your father was a true gentleman. Nothing happened, I can vouch for that. I even kept the voucher. *(To YVONNE.)* And this pretty little thing must be Yvonne.

YVONNE. Yes. Yvonne Fouchet.

GABRIELLE. Was you father *Bernard* Fouchet?

YVONNE. No.

GABRIELLE. Good. Then we don't have to get into all that....
And where are the three little mice?

MARIETTE. If you mean the men, they're sitting at the bar.

GABRIELLE. If they were men, they'd be sitting in here.

YVONNE. They wanted to leave, but we're all waiting for you.

GABRIELLE. Am I that important?

MARIETTE. You are if this dinner party was your idea.

YVONNE. Is it? I mean you *did* know Mariette's name and mine.
And you asked where the men were and not *who* they were.... You
don't seem surprised by anything.

*(GABRIELLE pours champagne for MARIETTE and YVONNE and
hands it to them. She then pours her own.)*

GABRIELLE. There are no surprises in life. Just corroboration of
what you suspected.... Yes. I did know who was going to be here and
why. As to who thought of this dinner party, I can tell you that as
well.... It was Andre Bouville's wife.

MARIETTE. His wife? He said she was dead.

GABRIELLE. Yes, it was a request from the grave. They were
her last words.

YVONNE. She said, "Please, let's have a dinner party" and then
died?

GABRIELLE. Well, perhaps not her *very* last words. She lin-
gered on for another six months but didn't say anything worth quot-
ing... I *do* know the actual invitations were sent by Paul Gerard.

MARIETTE. But why would she include us? We didn't know
her.

GABRIELLE. The Greeks say the dead have their reasons.

*(She pours herself some champagne as MARIETTE and YVONNE
look at each other puzzled.)*

MARIETTE. If she couldn't come, why would she still have it?

GABRIELLE. They also say, even if you're dead, once you book
it it's bad luck to cancel.

THE DINNER PARTY

MARIETTE. If I'm not too impertinent, may I ask why *you're* here?

GABRIELLE. To look after the late Madame Bouville's interests.

(She begins to cross to her d'ouvres.)

YVONNE. What interests? What could be left between Andre and his ex-dead wife?

GABRIELLE. His unfulfilled remorse.

YVONNE. But isn't it too late to give it to her now?

GABRIELLE. Yes, but it could be put into an account and given to some other deserving dead wife.

YVONNE. She's strange, don't you think?

MARIETTE. Tell me about it.

YVONNE. Ask how she died.

GABRIELLE. You girls won't like hearing it.

YVONNE. I know. Tell it anyway.

GABRIELLE. Andre drove a stake through her heart.... He was in a foul mood that day.

YVONNE. Are you saying he's a murderer.

GABRIELLE. Well, people who do business with him think he is. *(Looks at her watch.)* Do you think we should call the boys in?

MARIETTE. I'm sorry, but has this murder been reported to anyone?

GABRIELLE. Yes, I just reported it to you....

YVONNE. I'm really having trouble with this.... Why did he kill her?

GABRIELLE. Oh, she was unfaithful to him.... And he couldn't forgive her.

YVONNE. It doesn't sound like he did.

GABRIELLE. On the other hand, he was unfaithful to her ... but she *did* forgive him.

YVONNE. If you ask me, I think they deserved each other.

GABRIELLE. Don't judge them. Love is not an emotion shared only by the best people.... The unscrupulous are as entitled to love as anyone else.

MARIETTE. You seem to have extraordinary sympathy for two