

SCARLET. I prefer Kipling myself.

(Offering a basket of dinner rolls to MUSTARD:)

Do you like Kipling, Colonel?

MUSTARD. *(Helping himself:)* Sure, I'll eat anything.

(Then:)

So, who is our host? Is this where he sits?

WADSWORTH. *(Pouring wine:)* All in good time, sir.

(As YVETTE serves soup to PEACOCK—)

PEACOCK. What is that smell? It's something . . . familiar.

YVETTE. Shark's fin soup.

PEACOCK. *(Gleefully:)* My favorite!

COOK. *(Deliberately:)* I know.

[MUSIC CUE #11]

(With the music sting, COOK/PEACOCK exchange a sinister glance.)

YVETTE. Bon appetit!

(YVETTE and COOK exit. The GUESTS sip their soup. PEACOCK slurps.)

PEACOCK. *(Slurping slightly—muttering:)* This is delicious.

(Slurping louder now—under her breath:)

Oooh, this is yum yum yummy yum yum yum.

(Finally, she slurps so intensely it causes her to choke a bit as the GUESTS stare.)

PEACOCK. *(Recovering—then, all in nearly one breath, as WADSWORTH pours wine:)* Well, I guess I'll break the ice, I mean, I'll be the one to get the ball rolling, I mean, I'm used to being a hostess; it's an integral part of my life as the wife of a . . .

(Declining wine with a gesture, carrying on talking without pause:)

Oh, I forgot we're not supposed to say who we really are. But, oh well, I mean, I have no idea what we're doing here, but I'm very intrigued and oh, my, this soup is delicious isn't it?

(The GUESTS stare at her, bewildered.)

GREEN. I know who you are.

PEACOCK. You do?

GREEN. I work in Washington.

PLUM. Washington?

(To PEACOCK:)

So you must be a politician's wife, Mrs. Peacock?

PEACOCK. *(With renewed confidence:)* Yes, I am.

SCARLET. *(Cheekily:)* Who's your husband? Maybe I know him.

PEACOCK. I . . . well, he's . . .

(Deflecting:)

Mrs. White, you've been awfully quiet. What does your husband do?

WHITE. Nothing.

PLUM. Nothing?

WHITE. Well, he . . . just lies around on his back all day.

PEACOCK. How lazy!

SCARLET. *(With snark:)* Not necessarily.

(Thunder/lightning. GREEN spills his drink all over SCARLET's chest.)

GREEN. *(Mopping up SCARLET's chest with his napkin:)* Sorry, sorry—I'm afraid I'm a little accident-prone.

SCARLET. *(Relishing his discomfort:)* That'll be five dollars, Mister.

GREEN. *(Awkwardly mortified:)* Sorry?!

PEACOCK. *(Tapping him on the shoulder:)* Mr. Green—what do you do in Washington?

GREEN. Oh, I'd better not say. I like to follow the rules.

PEACOCK. *(Frustrated:)* Well, if I wasn't trying to keep the conversation going, then we would just be sitting here in an embarrassed silence.

PLUM. Are you afraid of silence, Mrs. Peacock?

PEACOCK. *(Anxiously:)* Yes. No. Why?

PLUM. In my professional opinion, it seems you suffer from what we call "pressure of speech."

MUSTARD. Is that an official diagnosis?

WHITE. Are you a doctor, Professor?

PLUM. In psychological medicine.

WHITE. Do you practice?

PLUM. (*Laced with shame:*) Not anymore.

(*Then:*)

I currently work for the government.

WHITE. Ah, another politician.

PLUM. Not exactly. I do research for U-NO WHO.

WHITE. (*Genuine:*) Who?

PLUM. (*Explaining:*) A branch of the United Nations Organization: the World Health Organization.

WHITE. (*Putting it together:*) Ahh. "U-NO WHO." (*Explaining to the table:*) It's an acronym.

MUSTARD. (*From the other side of the table—densely:*) I have a sister who was a gymnast.

PLUM. (*Flummoxed by MUSTARD:*) You are a *real* colonel, aren't you?

MUSTARD. (*Officiously:*) I am, sir.

SCARLET. Aren't you gonna mention the coincidence that you also live in Washington, D.C., Colonel?

MUSTARD. How did you know that?

SCARLET. (*With a twinkle:*) Oh, I've seen you before.

GREEN. So, Miss Scarlet, does this mean that you live in Washington, too?

SCARLET. (*With a sly smile:*) Sure do.

PEACOCK. Does anyone here not live in Washington?

(*They ALL look at each other, putting together the coincidence.*)

PLUM. (*Fearfully:*) Oh. Then, is this about the Red Scare?

GREEN. I'm not a Communist! I'm a Republican.

(*Thunder.*)

(*MUSTARD stands, fed up.*)

MUSTARD. Wadsworth, we've had about enough of this! Where's our host, and why have we been brought here?!

(*The doorbell rings. They look out.*)

WADSWORTH. Ah, speak of the devil. Pardon me, please.

(*WADSWORTH exits through the door.*)