

We hear the sound of a car returning in the driveway. Tommy gets up and goes to the window to investigate.

Nee-nee? Nee-nee? (*Calling*) NINA!

Nina enters with her c.d.'s.

Nina What is it?

Tommy A car.

Nina What?

Tommy Your dad, I think he's back.

Nina Dad! He can't be.

She goes to look.

Oh my god, he is! What's he...

Tommy ... I'll go.

Tommy makes to leave. Nina stops him.

Nina No, he'll see you.

Tommy The window.

Nina No, he'll see you there too.

Tommy Then what are we going to do?

Nina Go into my room and hide.

Tommy Where?

Nina Under my bed.

Tommy Under your bed?

Nina Yes, hurry, hurry – Tommy.

Tommy What?

Nina Your bag.

Tommy Yes.

Tommy takes his bag and exits S.L. Nina sneaks a look through the window.

Nina Dressing gown. Slippers.

She hurriedly removes her shoes as she exits S.L. She re-enters putting on her slippers and dressing gown. She hangs up the discarded hat and coat and then sits on the sofa pretending to study. Harold enters S.R..

Dad? You're back.

Harold Yes.

Nina But why?

Harold I had a phone call... the hotel... there was a fire.

Nina A fire! In the hotel?

Harold Yes, started in the kitchens apparently.

Nina How terrible. But what about the school reunion?
Harold Postponed. It's been rescheduled for next Thursday.
Nina Thursday, I see.
Harold Oh well, c'est la vie, as they say.
Nina Yes.
Harold Never mind, a good excuse for an early night. Hard at study?
Nina Oh, yes, yes.
Harold Good, good.

Harold notices the whisky bottle.

What's that?
Nina It's German, Dad.
Harold No, that!
Nina Ah –
Harold Are you drinking, Nina?
Nina Ah – yes... just a little.
Harold Nina!

Harold takes the bottle and sniffs it.

It's whisky! You're drinking whisky, Nina.
Nina A small drop, Dad, very small.
Harold Nina! And who with? There are two glasses.
Nina Er, yes it's... it's... Madame Lapierre.
Harold What!
Nina Madame Lapierre.
Harold Madame Lapierre?
Nina Yes. She's arrived.
Harold Here!
Nina Yes.
Harold Madame Lapierre?
Nina Yes.
Harold When?
Nina Just after you called me.
Harold But –
Nina She's arrived early.
Harold Extremely early.
Nina Yes.

Harold An entire day early.

Nina Yes... she got the days confused... We've been talking a little... She's very nice... She brought some whisky... from France. We've just been having a little drink.

Harold I see... My goodness, she's here.

Nina Yes, yes she is... she's here.

Harold Well... where is she?

Nina Madame Lapierre?

Harold Yes, where is she?

Nina Oh – um, upstairs... getting unpacked – and changed Dad. Better not go up.

Harold I see. Did you show her to her room?

Nina Yes... yes.

Harold Good. Well, well, well, well, well. This is unexpected.

Nina Yes, yes it is.

Harold Well ... I'll ah... I'll just put the car in the garage and then I'll be ready to meet her.

Nina Right, Dad, you do that.

Harold Right.

Harold exits S.R.

Nina Oh god! Oh god!

Nina calls upstairs.

(Calling) Tommy? Tommy? Tommy come here.

Tommy enters.

Tommy Has he gone?

Nina No.

Tommy No!

Nina No, he's putting the car in the garage.

Tommy What!

Nina I've told him Madame Lapierre has arrived.

Tommy Who?

Nina Madame Lapierre... the French au pair... the woman who's coming here tomorrow, remember?

Tommy She's arrived?

Nina No!

Tommy No, but –

Nina Dad saw the whisky glasses. I couldn't tell him you were here, could I. So...

Tommy So?

Nina ... you will have to pretend to be Madame Lapierre.

Tommy What?

Nina You can do it Tommy.

Tommy Me, pretend to be ...

Nina You want to be an actor don't you, Tommy?

Tommy Yes, but –

Nina Here's your big chance.

Tommy But I –

Nina Don't argue, we've no choice – if you love me.

Tommy Yes, but –

Nina No buts. Now listen, go upstairs to my dad's room – listen, Tommy.

Tommy Your dad's room?

Nina Yes, look in his wardrobe, there're still some of Mum's old clothes in there and a wig that she used to wear. Put them on. Then go into my room and put on some make-up. Try to be convincing.

Tommy I can't.

Nina You must. Tommy! And when you're ready, come downstairs.

Tommy I –

Nina It can't be that difficult.

Tommy It won't work.

Nina We've no choice. Hurry.

Tommy This is crazy. Crazy!

Nina GO.

Tommy exits S.L.

Oh god!