

~~BERNARD~~ ~~Well, if you want to be technical I suppose you could say we were engaged. Yes.~~

~~ROBERT~~ ~~Then you're going to get married.~~

~~BERNARD~~ ~~No.~~

~~ROBERT~~ ~~Bernard, you're always doing this to me. Look. If you're engaged, you're going to get married. It's not only technical, it's logical! Isn't it?~~

~~BERNARD~~ ~~It is not. And anyway, why do you want to get married? Do you love this girl?~~

~~ROBERT~~ ~~I don't know. I'm not raving mad about her. I don't write poems or refuse to eat or any of that sort of thing. But it would be nice. I mean, think of the social advantages. They're not to be sneezed at, are they?~~

BERNARD I can't think of *one*. Still if you must get married, get married my way.

ROBERT Your way?

BERNARD Polygamy.

ROBERT Polygamy?

BERNARD It's the ideal life- pleasure, variety...it's fabulous. You ought to try it.

ROBERT Polygamy? You mean lots of wives?

BERNARD Not wives, fiancées. You have all the advantages of married life with none of the drawbacks. Fiancées are much more friendly than wives. And you don't need all that many. I do very well with three.

ROBERT Three?

BERNARD Three is the ideal number. Less than three would be monotonous. More than three would be terribly tiring. Three is the dream.

ROBERT But it's immoral.

BERNARD Immoral? But my dear Robert, they all think they're the only one. *They* don't think it's immoral, so why should I? You've all the pleasures of the harem, but right here in the middle of Paris.

ROBERT They say you have your hands full with one woman, but three!

BERNARD Not me.

ROBERT Three fiancées?

BERNARD The whole secret is order. I am organised- beautifully organised.

ROBERT But Bernard- isn't it incredibly complicated?

BERNARD Not in the least. All you need is a timetable.

ROBERT A timetable?

BERNARD A special kind of timetable. An airline timetable.

ROBERT What, to get out in a hurry?

BERNARD Not at all. Look- here it is. The timetables of all the major routes- all in one volume.

ROBERT One volume.

BERNARD You understand?

ROBERT Yes.

BERNARD You don't really, do you?

ROBERT No.

BERNARD But it's so simple, a child could see it. Someone just had to think of it. My three fiancées are all air hostesses.

ROBERT All three?

BERNARD Yes.

ROBERT Air hostesses?

BERNARD All three.

ROBERT Don't be barmy! Three air hostesses.

BERNARD That's the trick. And they're all fantastic girls.

ROBERT Fantastic. If T.W.A was anything to go by, they're devastating.

BERNARD And the other two are just as good. Of course they are. You see, they're all tried and tested.

ROBERT They've been what?

BERNARD They're hand-picked through the admissions procedures of the different companies. In every respect! Physical, moral, intellectual. So, all the work's done for me. I'm choosing from a pool which has already been super-sifted. Not bad, is it?

ROBERT Yes. Yes. Not bad.

BERNARD The only thing is that I have to pick them from different airlines and with different routes – so they don't meet, you see.

ROBERT Ah, yes. Alright. It all seems very well in theory, but I'd be curious to see how it works out in practice.

BERNARD And you will, couldn't be simpler. Gloria, my American, the one you've seen... Well, she takes off in ten minutes... and in a quarter of an hour Gabriella lands.

ROBERT Gabriella?

BERNARD My Italian. A beautiful kitten - she'll be here for lunch.

ROBERT Lunch? That's cutting it a bit close, isn't it? I mean the other one was only just here for breakfast.

BERNARD Yes, it is a bit touch and go today. But today's an exception. Gabriella is in transit. Normally it's perfectly straightforward. Two days Gloria, two days Gabriella, and two days Gretchen.

ROBERT Gretchen?

BERNARD That's my German.

ROBERT That's your German. It's an international harem.

BERNARD Exactly. Look. (*indicating globe.*) Gretchen gets in from Stuttgart this evening; at the same time, Gabriella will be on her way to Caracas, and Gloria will be in San Francisco- you see the beauty of it?

ROBERT Perpetual motion.

BERNARD Pure mathematics. Everything designed, organised, regulated and working to the precise second. The earth revolves on its axis and my fiancées wheel above the earth. One this way. One that. One towards the sun. One towards the moon. And eventually they all,

in turn, come home to me. It's geometrical, my dear Robert. So precise as to be almost poetic. And here I live in the middle of a perfect example of polygamous family life. I don't just change women, I change my diet as well. It's like living in a restaurant. So there's no chance of ever getting bored. Either in the dining room or the bedroom. It's perfect.

~~ROBERT Remarkable! Quite remarkable.~~

~~BERNARD Things are going a bit awry with Gloria. She does eat the most extraordinary things. Apart from that, though, flawless. I tell you, it's a dream.~~

~~ROBERT But Bernard, how do you find them?~~

~~BERNARD I've a friend who works in the travel agency at Orly Airport and he knows all the air hostesses. They talk to him. They tell him their secrets— and if he thinks they might be lonely, well, he introduces them to me.~~

~~ROBERT Does he really?~~

~~BERNARD He might help you. After all he's a friend of mine, I'm a friend of yours. I'll give him a ring.~~

~~ROBERT Oh no! This sort of thing's not for me. No. I'm not the type. It's all right for you. You've got the talent, the flair.~~

~~BERNARD That's got nothing to do with it. The timetables are the timetables. You just have to follow them.~~

~~ROBERT No! No! Not now — I'll have to think about it for a couple of years. But what happens if they get switched to a different route?~~

~~BERNARD Impossible. It's all been worked out. It's all on a schedule. Mathematical — marvellous!~~

~~BERTHA *(entering and indicating ROBERT)* Will your friend be here for lunch?~~

~~ROBERT No. No.~~

~~BERNARD Yes.~~

~~ROBERT I don't want to upset your arrangements.~~