

GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER

by Todd Kreidler

BASED ON THE SCREENPLAY GUESS WHO'S COMING TO DINNER
BY WILLIAM ROSE

ACT ONE

Scene One

(The lights fade up on the Drayton house on a mid-Wednesday in spring, 1967. A house on a hill in San Francisco, the home feels like a sanctuary, the interior painted by the sun. There are no dark corners in this open floor plan.)

From the front entrance, a high-ceilinged foyer, then a step down to a sunken living room of contemporary elegance. Works of modern art are on display. Encased behind glass doors, the formal dining room looms, with a round table. Offstage are CHRISTINA's home office and MATT's study. Also off are the kitchen and an entryway to the parlor. The staircase that winds up to the bedrooms may or may not be seen.

A terrace wraps the house, offering a jaw-dropping view of the red suspension bridge. Down from the terrace, a desert garden of flowering cacti.

It is nearing lunch as TILLIE prepares for the arrival of an important guest. The doorbell rings. TILLIE answers. HILARY rushes in carrying a large parcel.)

HILARY. Could you— In my car are the easels. I'll take care of the paintings. Please don't touch the paintings—you're not insured by the gallery. I'll take care of the paintings. But if you could . . . the easels. Will everything be ready? You do know how important Mr. Cazalet is, don't you?

TILLIE. Good afternoon to you too, Mrs. St. George.

HILARY. *(Sniffing the air:)* Mmm . . . You made one of those sinful pies, didn't you? You're wonderful, Tillie.

(She begins to unwrap the parcel. TILLIE exits into the kitchen.)

I do hope Christina tells you that every day. If you worked for anyone but the Draytons, I would steal you, Tillie. Steal you all for myself. The easels are in—

(She realizes she's left alone. CHRISTINA enters from her office.)

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TILLIE
HILARY

CHRISTINA

CHRISTINA. Hello Hilary.

HILARY. When were you last at the Cazalets'?

CHRISTINA. Not since Charles remarried and moved out to Napa. Old friends never survive new wives.

HILARY. I worked a charity there last month. You should see their new foyer. All Italian marble. The entire foyer . . . not a stone from Danby! This painting suits him.

(HILARY uncovers the painting, a contemporary pastoral landscape.)

CHRISTINA. Where's the new William T. Wiley?

HILARY. Mr. Cazalet loves the Renaissance. This won't be a shock.

CHRISTINA. Charles claims he's ready to join the twentieth century.

HILARY. We can't force three centuries down his throat at once. Here's a spoon.

CHRISTINA. Get the Wileys.

HILARY. I'll keep this handy in case he chokes.

(TILLIE enters from the kitchen.)

TILLIE. *(To CHRISTINA:)* When should lunch be served?

CHRISTINA. Shortly after Mr. Cazalet arrives.

HILARY. Good . . . We'll have him eat first. Show the paintings. Finish with dessert.

CHRISTINA. At the least Charles will learn to appreciate Tillie's blueberry pie.

HILARY. *(To TILLIE:)* Would love if you could write out the recipe for me. Give me all your little secrets.

(The phone rings.)

CHRISTINA. Hilary, hide that fuddy landscape and get out the new Wiley paintings.

(HILARY exits.)

TILLIE. *(Answering:)* Hello, Drayton residence . . . Hold on, Miss Hutten . . . *(Looks to CHRISTINA, who shakes her head.)* I'm sorry but Mr. Drayton's gone for the day . . . All I know is he shouldn't be bothered . . . I will. *(Hangs up.)*

CHRISTINA. *(To TILLIE:)* I appreciate all the extra fuss you've given our lunch meeting. You earned the night off.

TILLIE. Glad I won't be here. Don't want to be around tonight after Mr. Drayton gets whooped again by the Monsignor.

CHRISTINA. Matt started golfing to calm down.

TILLIE. Only time he's peaceful is sleeping.

CHRISTINA. Not even then. *(Begins to exit.)* I need to put out a call to Sao Paulo before it gets too late there.

(CHRISTINA exits to her office. TILLIE exits then re-enters to finish setting up for lunch. HILARY returns bobbling three easels.)

HILARY. Do you know Mr. Cazalet owns 75 percent of San Francisco? He has enough to buy the rest but that would be greedy. Think . . . Soon he'll be standing right here. It will be inspiring to be so near a great man.

TILLIE. If you want to be near greatness, go stand by Mr. Drayton's door. But don't bother him.

HILARY. Matt with the newspaper is quite impressive. But Mr. Cazalet has 23 on his house staff and I'm certain at least a dozen for the apartment in New York. Oh you don't know, Tillie, Charles Cazalet is one of the most charming, philanthropic—

TILLIE. This year Charles Stetson Cazalet III ranked one down from Rockefeller's grandson. Number 19 on Forbes List. He's rich. Big deal.

(A voice calls from offstage.)

MATT. *(Offstage.)* Tillie! Tillie, did you pick up that call? Tillie . . .

(MATT enters from the stairs.)

Who was on the phone?

TILLIE. Joey didn't call.

MATT. Was it the paper? What did they want?

TILLIE. Your clubs are waiting in your trunk. Now get going. Don't make the Monsignor wait. You make him wait, he'll get mad and play better.

MATT. Who called?

TILLIE. It wasn't Joey. Now get going. Leave that telephone alone. You don't need to pick up nothing in your hands today but them clubs.

MATT. You shouldn't be lifting my clubs.

TILLIE. If you don't get going, I'm gonna lift them out to the course and play with the Monsignor myself. The newspaper don't need you