

MILLIE. Oh, don't encourage him! Mrs. Sunderson. Bob goes on with those zingers all day at the office!

BOB. I've got a million of them!

NORMA. He does, he really does!

(The kitchen door opens, revealing JIM BAXTER.)

JIM. I'm not missing anything good, am I?

NORMA. Goodness no, darling! Bob's telling jokes!

JIM. Oh, golly! Let me know when it's over.

(Laughter all around.)

Hey Millie, where are you folks keeping your olives?

MILLIE. Icebox.

JIM. Terrific.

NORMA. Darling, I do wish you'd let me help.

JIM. And reveal my secret recipe? Now stay put, prepare your tastebuds! Six Baxter Specials, comin' right up!

MILLIE. (As JIM returns to the kitchen.) Please, everyone, eat up. If there's any of Norma's canapés left over, I'll eat every single one!

THEODORE. Kitty, I insist you acquire the recipe for our cook. How I adore potted meat.

NORMA. The secret is Spry vegetable shortening! It is! I'd be lost without my three-pound can of Spry on the shelf, for anything from potted meats to light, fluffy biscuits, every time!

MILLIE. I wish I'd had Spry when I was suffering the curse of Bride's Biscuits!

BOB. So do I!

MILLIE. Oh, you!

JIM. (Back again.) Hey Millie, got any seltzer?

MILLIE. Under the sink.

JIM. How 'bout sardines?

MILLIE. No, sorry.

JIM. That's okay. I'll make do.

(JIM exits.)

BOB & MILLIE. Sardines.

THEODORE. What is in a Baxter Special, Mrs. Baxter?

NORMA. I'm honestly not sure, Mr. Sunderson. I usually set mine aside and use it to varnish furniture.

KITTY. Oh, Norma, you don't!

NORMA. I do! I really do!

BOB. Perhaps I should give Jim a hand.

MILLIE. Yes, darling, I think that's best.

THEODORE. Oh no, Martindale, you're not leaving me here in the hen house! I'll get a repair on my Tom Collins, in case that Baxter special takes the enamel off my teeth.

(THEODORE and BOB exit to the kitchen.)

KITTY. Your Bob is so debonair, Mildred.

MILLIE. Oh, please, it's Millie to friends.

KITTY. And you call me Kitty! How fun! Oh, yippee! Millie, and Kitty, and... Norma. Mm. I know! We'll call you Normie!

NORMA. Oh, I don't know about that.

KITTY. I'm good at naming things! The Washington Society Matron's League? I came up with the name for our annual Bazaar last year!

MILLIE. What'd you name it?

KITTY. The Washington Society Matron's League Spring Fling. Because it's in the *spring*, and *fling* rhymes with that!

NORMA. Well. Aren't you horribly clever?

KITTY. Yes, but this year we're moving it to July, and I'm in such a pickle. Nothing good rhymes with summer. Maybe we'll just call it the Spring Fling and hope no one notices.

MILLIE. I find with a proper diversion, people will overlook anything.

NORMA. Cigarette, girls?

KITTY. Oh, yes, thank you, Normie!



*(KITTY takes a cigarette, which she puts in her purse.)*

NORMA. Kitty? Dear? Would you like me to light it?

KITTY. Oh, I don't smoke. But I try to keep one handy in case someone else wants one.

MILLIE. Isn't that just adorable? Norma, I'll have one.

KITTY. Oh, let me!

*(KITTY produces the cigarette from her purse and offers it to MILLIE. MILLIE takes it. KITTY rises and heads for the hall.)*

MILLIE. Looking for the powder room, Kitty?

KITTY. No, I try not to be around smoke when I'm wearing fur. It's such a devil getting the odor out.

MILLIE. Well, let me take your wrap. I'll put it in the closet.

KITTY. No, this is everyone's favorite wrap on me. I'll just stand in the bedroom until you've finished.

NORMA. Or we could just...not...smoke.

KITTY. Oh, thank you, Normie, I don't want to be any trouble.

NORMA. So. Kitty. How long have you and Mr. Sunderson been married?

KITTY. Since nineteen thirty-one. So, almost twenty years.

MILLIE. That's so marvelous! Can you picture what we'll be like with our boys after all that time?

NORMA. I can't, Millie. I really can't.

KITTY. We met at church. Teddy was heaven-sent! I had no prospects, Father was threatening to put me in a convent or typing school. I don't think I'd have met the requirements for either. How about you?

MILLIE. I don't know, you might do well in typing school.

KITTY. Not that, you goose! How'd you girls meet your husbands?

MILLIE. Well, I met Bob through Norma.

KITTY. You don't say!

NORMA. Millie and I have been girlfriends for years. When I first moved to D.C., we shared a room –

MILLIE. At the Susan B. Anthony. She was in secretarial school, I was working at a darling luncheonette –

NORMA. Then I started at the Department of State, moved to a little apartment, and asked Millie to be my roommate. When I learned my new boss was an eligible bachelor, naturally I thought of her.

KITTY. It's a wonder you didn't grab him for yourself!

NORMA. You know Department rules, Kitty. No courting among the ranks. Besides, I already had my hands full with our would-be bartender by then. Jim was living with his mother, and he kept throwing away his handkerchiefs after our dates because they had lipstick on them. A few months in, he asked me to marry him. Said it was cheaper than buying all those new handkerchiefs.

MILLIE. That is adorable! I have never heard that story.

KITTY. I'm so surprised you continued to work after you married, Normie.

NORMA. Well, I told Jim I'd resign if my working troubled him. But I take such pride in our efforts. It's my duty as an American to identify threats to our way of life. When your country calls, you answer.

MILLIE. I'm glad my country's letting me stay home. Heaven knows I've enough to keep me busy.

KITTY. And it's such a lovely home, Millie. All that's missing is the pitter-patter of little feet!

NORMA. My word, Millie! What are you using on this desk to get such a brilliant shine?

MILLIE. Foster's Furniture Creme! It gives a glorious sheen without waxy residue, and with its patented long-lasting gleam, Foster's cut my cleaning time in half!

NORMA. Well, it's simply divine, isn't it Kitty?

KITTY. Oh, it is!