

THE UNINVITED GUEST

Chapter One

The dining room table was set for four people. Angela had beautifully arranged some flowers in a vase as a centrepiece. Wine glasses sparkled, dishes gleamed and all that was needed was the guests to arrive and the food to be enjoyed.

Angela loved trying out new recipes. Her husband, Ted, loved eating them, which accounted for his rapidly expanding waistline. The couple they had invited, Sally and Art, were good friends of theirs. Art was the cook in his household and liked to show off his culinary skills at every opportunity. Consequently, reciprocal dinners were planned each month and now they had become something of an event as Angela and Art tried to out-do each other.

“Have you chilled the white wine, Ted?” asked Angela mentally crossing off her list of things to do.

“Yes, darling,” he replied, “Don’t worry, I’ve got it all under control.”

The horde 'oeuvres were ready and the main dish of sunflower-encrusted lamb, was cooking in the oven. A divine aroma was gently wafting from the kitchen into the dining room, causing Ted’s mouth to water. He decided to sample some of the pate as he was starving.

“Don’t touch that!” Angela screeched.

“I’m hungry,” retorted Ted, “What can I nibble on then?” He gave her a lecherous look. Angela made a face.

“Have a piece of cheese,” she suggested and then cheekily blew him a kiss. She glanced quickly around the kitchen. The salad was ready; it just needed its dressing. The roasted asparagus and tomatoes were waiting to be reheated; the individual dishes of scalloped potato gratins were in the oven bubbling away. The mango-coconut cake was already baked and its accompanying yogurt-lime cream topping was in the fridge.

“I think we have time for a quick drink,” suggested Angela, “Pour me a white wine, please, darling.”

“Forget the drink,” said Ted as he put his arms around Angela’s waist. “How about a quick you-know-what?” As he leaned in for a kiss, the doorbell rang. Ted swore. He reluctantly released his wife and headed for the door. Upon opening it he found Sally and Art outside on the step clutching bottles of wine and some chocolates. They looked extremely uncomfortable.

The reason for their nervousness became apparent as Ted realized another individual was with them.

“Hello!” Ted greeted his friends with pleasure. “Come in!”

Angela appeared at his side. Her eyes opened wider in shock as she zeroed in on the unexpected guest.

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