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SF PERUSALS

# BUTTER IN A LORDLY DISH

by Agatha Christie

SAMUEL FRENCH

samuelfrench.co.uk

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*BUTTER IN A LORDLY DISH* was first performed on the BBC Radio Light Programme on Tuesday 13 January 1948 and produced by Martyn C. Webster. The cast was as follows:

**SIR LUKE ENDERBY K.C.** . . . . . Richard Williams
**LADY ENDERBY** . . . . . Lydia Sherwood
**JULIA KEENE** . . . . . Rita Vale
**SUSAN WARREN** . . . . . Thea Wells
**MRS. PETTER** . . . . . Dora Gregory
**FLORRIE PETTER** . . . . . Jill Nyasa
**HAYWARD** . . . . . Janet Morrison
**A PORTER** . . . . . David Kossoff

## CHARACTERS

**SIR LUKE ENDERBY K.C.**
**LADY ENDERBY**
**JULIA KEENE**
**SUSAN WARREN**
**MRS. PETTER**
**FLORRIE PETTER**
**HAYWARD**
**A PORTER**

## Scene One

*(The confused noises of a London street are heard. "Star," "Standard," "The News." A distant door opens and bangs and street noise fade.* **FLORRIE** *calls in a clear cockney accent.)*

**FLORRIE**. Hi, Mums?

**MRS. PETTER**. That you, Florrie?

**FLORRIE**. Yes.

*(A door opens.)*

**MRS. PETTER**. Hello dear.

**FLORRIE**. *(Sniffs.)* Is my nose telling me there's somethin' good for tea?

**MRS. PETTER**. Fish and chips.

**FLORRIE**. H'm, good.

*(The door closes.)*

Oh drat! What's all these suitcases doing here? Doesn't half clutter the place up.

**MRS. PETTER**. It's Mrs. Keene's things.

**FLORRIE**. Oh, the lodger. She going away?

**MRS. PETTER**. Yes, but she's not going to take these with her – only one small case.

**FLORRIE**. Why?

**MRS. PETTER**. Because she's not certain yet where she'll be. She'll let us know where she wants all this sent.

**FLORRIE**. Seems peculiar to me – going away and not knowing where she's going.

**MRS. PETTER**. What do you mean?

**FLORRIE**. I'll bet she's off for the weekend with someone.

**MRS. PETTER**. Now don't talk like that. It's not nice.

**FLORRIE**. All right, but if you ask me, there's something fishy about our Mrs. Keene.

**MRS. PETTER**. Now stop it, Florrie. She's a very nice lady. Always speaks so pleasant.

**FLORRIE**. That's the kind that gets things from shops without paying for them. Confidence tricksters, they call them. Mind she pays you before she waltzes off.

**MRS. PETTER**. She has paid me, right up to tomorrow and a bit over for leaving the cases and sending them on. So you ought to be ashamed of yourself for being so suspicious.

**FLORRIE**. All right – but I know what I know.

**MRS. PETTER**. What do you know?

**FLORRIE**. Well, it was last week. I was going along from Park Lane into Berkeley Square and there was a party on at one of those big houses, you know, cocktails and sherry and all that.

**MRS. PETTER**. Well!

**FLORRIE**. Well, who should I see coming out with a tall, handsome man but our Mrs. Keene. Dressed up to the nines, fox furs and one of those flyaway black velvet hats. I will say she looked a treat, but it's odd, you'll admit.

**MRS. PETTER**. What?

**FLORRIE**. Going to swell society houses all dressed up and lodging here with us just off the Pimlico Road. It doesn't fit, somehow.

**MRS. PETTER**. And I suppose you've got some far-fetched notion to account for it.

**FLORRIE**. If you ask me, she's in with one of those gangs of society burglars.

**MRS. PETTER**. The nonsense you talk.

**FLORRIE**. She goes along to places and finds out where the stuff is kept, and when the house is likely to be empty, and passes the word on to the gang.

**MRS. PETTER**. And if you ask me, you go too much to the pictures! Gangs, indeed!

**FLORRIE**. Well, gangs aren't only on at the pictures. You read about them in the newspapers, too.

**MRS. PETTER**. Nonsense.

**FLORRIE**. Come off it, Mum, you like a nice little bit of crime yourself.

**MRS. PETTER**. Talking of crime, is that an evening paper you've got there?

**FLORRIE**. Yes.

**MRS. PETTER**. Is the verdict out on that taxi driver case?

**FLORRIE**. No, not yet. Just the judge's summing up.

**MRS. PETTER**. Oh!

**FLORRIE**. You know, I don't see what use judges are. They don't seem to say anything useful or tell the jury what they ought to do.

**MRS. PETTER**. How'd you mean?

**FLORRIE**. Well, listen to this, "Whereas Sir Luke has stated in the case for the prosecution", etcetera, etcetera, "In which case the prisoner is undoubtedly guilty – but at the same time you must take into account the contention of the defence, that the prisoner had not the necessary knowledge to," etcetera, etcetera, "In which case you will have no alternative but to acquit the accused." Why doesn't he tell them if the prisoner's done it or not?

**MRS. PETTER**. Perhaps he doesn't know.

**FLORRIE**. Well, he's the judge, isn't he? Fancy if you had weather forecasts like that.

*(She speaks in an exaggerated voice.)*

If the weather improves tomorrow, it will be warm and sunny. If, on the other hand, the depression spreads, it will be wet and cold.

**MRS. PETTER**. Might as well have a weather forecast like that, for all the good they are. Ruined my best hat last Sunday, listening to what they said.

**FLORRIE.** Now, I like a man like Sir Luke Enderby, the one who was prosecuting. Gave it to the jury hot and strong, he did. Beautiful it was, especially that bit about doing their duty, however painful, and how people like the prisoner were a menace to society.

**MRS. PETTER.** I remember Sir Luke Enderby in that blonde on the beach murder.

**FLORRIE.** Yes, that's the man.

**MRS. PETTER.** All about those poor girls being lured to their death by a sadistic murderer. That was a good murder, that was. I don't like this taxi murder so much.

**FLORRIE.** No, it's a bit dull.

**MRS. PETTER.** But of course, he did it all right.

**FLORRIE.** Yes, but he looks such an insignificant little chap. Now Garfield, the blonde on the beach murderer, he was really good looking.

**MRS. PETTER.** Now you be careful, Florrie.

**FLORRIE.** Why?

**MRS. PETTER.** That's what all those poor girls thought – they let him pick them up as easy as easy. You be careful of these flash, good looking fellows that try to pick girls up.

*(A knock at the door is heard.)*

**FLORRIE.** That must be Mrs. Keene.

*(She calls.)*

Come in!

*(The door opens.* **JULIA** *speaks in a charming voice.)*

**JULIA.** Good evening, Mrs. Petter.

**MRS. PETTER.** Good evening, Mrs. Keene.

**JULIA.** Good evening, Florrie.

**FLORRIE.** Evening.

**JULIA.** I wonder if I might use your telephone Mrs. Petter?

**MRS. PETTER.** Why, certainly, Mrs. Keene. Come in.

**JULIA**. Thank you.

**MRS. PETTER**. Do you want the book?

**JULIA**. No, I know the number.

*(There is a slight pause.)*

It isn't foggy outside, is it, Florrie?

**FLORRIE**. Just a bit – not much.

*(***JULIA** *is heard dialling.)*

**JULIA**. It will be all right in the country, I hope.

**MRS. PETTER**. You going to the country?

**JULIA**. Just for the weekend.

**MRS. PETTER**. Well, I'll just – come on, Florrie.

*(The door closes.)*

**JULIA**. Hullo? Is that nineteen Chishold Gardens?... Can I speak to Sir Luke Enderby please?... Oh, I see... No, no message... No name...

*(Her voice fades as we flip to the other side of the call.)*

I'll ring again later...

*(There is a click as* **HAYWARD** *replaces the receiver. His voice is elderly and rather gloomy.)*

**HAYWARD**. No message. No name. She'll ring again later. Another of them!

*(The front door bell is heard ringing.)*

There's the front door. First the telephone, then the door! If it's not one thing, it's another.

*(The front door opens and the sound of a London residential square is heard.* **SUSAN** *is a brisk young woman with an astringent manner.)*

**SUSAN**. Good afternoon, Hayward.

**HAYWARD**. Good afternoon, Miss Warren.

*(The front door closes.)*

**HAYWARD**. Lady Enderby isn't in yet, but she's expecting you.

**SUSAN**. Oh, that's all right. Sir Luke's still at the Old Bailey, I suppose?

**HAYWARD**. Yes madam, will you come in to the drawing room?

*(There is a slight pause. They are heard moving through the house.)*

**SUSAN**. How's the rheumatism, Hayward?

**HAYWARD**. It's been bad lately, what with the telephone and answering the door.

**SUSAN**. Oh I'm sorry.

**HAYWARD**. These large houses are very inconvenient. I said to her ladyship only yesterday, how different it would be if we could have a nice flat.

**SUSAN**. A nice flat wouldn't take all Lady Enderby's nice things.

**HAYWARD**. Ye-e-es, her ladyship has got some nice things. She's out at the sale rooms this afternoon.

**SUSAN**. Oh, so that's where she is! There'll be even more lovely things presently. No hope of that nice flat, Hayward.

**HAYWARD**. No.

**SUSAN**. It's more likely to be an even larger house.

**HAYWARD**. Oh, don't suggest that, madam. Would you care for the evening paper?

**SUSAN**. No thanks. I'll amuse myself with a book.

**HAYWARD**. Right, madam.

**SUSAN**. What's this one? *Ogden on Criminal Jurisprudence*. That's Sir Luke's, I suppose.

**HAYWARD**. Yes.

**SUSAN**. A bit heavy for me.

*(The front door opens and closes. Someone is heard approaching.)*

**HAYWARD.** That's either her ladyship or Sir Luke.

**SIR LUKE.** Well, well, look who's here!

**SUSAN.** Hello Luke.

**SIR LUKE.** Lovely to see you, Susan. Where's Marion?

**SUSAN.** At the sale rooms.

**SIR LUKE.** That will mean more Buhl cabinets and Aubusson carpets and Chinese bronzes! *(Quietly.)* Any telephone messages for me, Hayward?

**HAYWARD.** A lady rang up just now, sir. She didn't leave her name or a message.

*(***SIR LUKE** *speaks rather falsely.)*

**SIR LUKE.** I wonder who that could be.

**SUSAN.** *(Ironically.)* I suppose you couldn't possibly guess.

**HAYWARD.** Shall I bring in tea, sir?

**SIR LUKE.** Yes, please.

**HAYWARD.** Thank you, sir.

*(The door closes softly.)*

**SUSAN.** Do you encourage them to ring you up here?

**SIR LUKE.** I don't know what you mean!

**SUSAN.** Come off it, darling. I mean your various lady friends.

**SIR LUKE.** Aren't you well aware, Susan, that you're the only girl I've ever loved?

**SUSAN.** I'm aware that you're never at a loss for an answer! How did the case go?

**SIR LUKE.** The case?

**SUSAN.** Haven't you just come from the Old Bailey?

**SIR LUKE.** Oh, that. Guilty. Couldn't have been any other verdict. Why the jury wanted to stay out two hours and a half, I can't imagine.

**SUSAN.** No indeed. After your masterly speech the jury should have brought him in guilty without bothering to leave the box!

**SIR LUKE.** After all, he did shoot the taxi driver.

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