

NINIAN. Hello, kitten! Ask him what! What do you want to ask him?

LULU. I—I think I was wondering what kind of pies you like best.

NINIAN. That's easy. I like your kind of pies best. The best ever. Every day since I've been here I've seen you baking, Mrs. Bett.

LULU. Yes, I bake. What did you call me then?

NINIAN. Mrs. Bett—isn't it? Every one says just Lulu, but I took it for granted.... Well, now—is it Mrs. or Miss Lulu Bett?

LULU. It's Miss.... From choice.

NINIAN. You bet! Oh, you bet! Never doubted that.

LULU. What kind of a Mr. are you?

NINIAN. Never give myself away. Say, by George, I never thought of that before. There's no telling whether a man's married or not, by his name.

LULU. It doesn't matter.

NINIAN. Why?

LULU. Not so many people want to know.

NINIAN. Say, you're pretty good, aren't you?

LULU. If I am it never took me very far.

NINIAN. Where you been mostly?

LULU. Here. I've always been here. Fifteen years with Ina. Before that we lived in the country.

NINIAN. Never been anywhere much?

LULU. Never been anywhere at all.

NINIAN. H...m. Well, I want to tell you something about yourself.

LULU. About me?

NINIAN. Something that I'll bet you don't even know. It's this: I think you have it pretty hard around here.

LULU. Oh, no!

NINIAN. See here. Do you have to work like this all the time? I guess you won't mind my asking.

LULU. But I ought to work. I have a home with them. Mother too.

NINIAN. But glory! You ought to have some kind of a life of your own.

LULU. How could I do that?

NINIAN. A man don't even know what he's like till he's roamed around on his own.... Roamed around on his own. Course a woman don't understand that.

LULU. Why don't she? Why don't she?

NINIAN. Do you? (LULU *nods*.) I've had twenty-five years of galloping about—Brazil, Mexico, Panama.

LULU. My!

NINIAN. It's the life.

LULU. Must be. I—

NINIAN. Yes, you. Why, you've never had a thing! I guess you don't know how it seems to me, coming along—a stranger so. I don't like it.

LULU. They're very good to me.

NINIAN. Do you know why you think that? Because you've never had anybody really good to you. That's why.

LULU. But they treat me good.

NINIAN. They make a slavey of you. Regular slavey. Damned shame *I* call it.

LULU. But we have our whole living—

NINIAN. And you earn it. I been watching you ever since I've been here. Don't you ever go anywhere?

LULU. Oh, no, I don't go anywhere. I—

NINIAN. Lord! Don't you want to? Of course you do.

LULU. Of course I'd like to get clear away—or I used to want to.

NINIAN. Say—you've been a blamed fine-looking woman.

LULU. You must have been a good-looking man once yourself.

NINIAN. You're pretty good. I don't see how you do it—darned if I do.

LULU. How I do what?

NINIAN. Why come back, quick like that, with what you say. You don't look it.

LULU. It must be my grand education.

NINIAN. Education: I ain't never had it and I ain't never missed it.

LULU. Most folks are happy without an education.

NINIAN. You're not very happy, though.

LULU. Oh, no.

NINIAN. Well you ought to get up and get out of here—find—find some work you *like* to do.

LULU. But, you see, I can't do any other work—that's the trouble—women like me can't do any other work.

NINIAN. But you make this whole house go round.

LULU. If I do, nobody knows it.

NINIAN. I know it. I hadn't been in the house twenty-four hours till I knew it.

LULU. You did? You thought that.... Yes, well if I do I hate making it go round.

NINIAN. See here—couldn't you tell me a little bit about—what you'd *like* to do? If you had your own way?

LULU. I don't know—now.

NINIAN. What did you ever think you'd like to do?

LULU. Take care of folks that needed me. I—I mean sick folks or old folks or—like that. Take *care* of them. Have them—have them want me.

NINIAN. By George! You're a wonder.

LULU. Am I? Ask Dwight.

NINIAN. Dwight. I could knock the top of his head off the way he speaks to you. I'd like to see you get out of this, I certainly would.

LULU. I can't get out. I'll never get out—now.

NINIAN. Don't keep saying "now" like that. You—you put me out of business, darned if you don't.

LULU. Oh, I don't mean to feel sorry for myself—you stop making me feel sorry for myself!

NINIAN. I know one thing—I'm going to give Dwight Deacon a chunk of my mind.

LULU. Oh, no! no! no! I wouldn't want you to do that. Thank you.

NINIAN. Well, somebody ought to do something. See here—while I'm staying around you know you've got a friend in me, don't you?

LULU. Do I?

NINIAN. You bet you do.

LULU. Not just my cooking?

NINIAN. Oh, come now—why, I liked you the first moment I saw you.

LULU. Honest?

NINIAN. Go on—go on. Did you like me?

LULU. Now you're just being polite.

NINIAN. Say, I wish there was some way—