

ing. She would arrive at my dinner parties, invited by Carl, upsetting my seating arrangements and temper. Her floating tulle and artistically untidy hair fluttered more, to my way of thinking, toward Carl than toward the prospective buyers.

She arrived one night just after the butler had announced dinner, making thirteen at the table and throwing all my guests into confusion. I sat at the head of the table between two bachelor brothers, both in their late seventies and deaf, and shouted polite repartee at them while I prayed inwardly, "Oh, dear God, show me a way to be rid of this viper!"

Surely God had nothing to do with what followed. In fact, the young lady herself inspired it, for as I was leading the ladies toward the drawing room for their after-dinner coffee she complimented me on my new bob, sculptured by Antoine of Paris. In a moment of fiendish glee, I saw my way cleared.

"Antoine showed me how to cut hair," I found myself saying glibly. "I'll gladly bob yours if you like."

Like a fly caught in a spider's web, unsuspectingly she mounted the stairs. Seating herself in front of my long dresser mirror, she faced out into my sapphire-carpeted boudoir. I stood behind her, my back to the mirror, and with my dull manicure scissors cut and snipped her wiry hair into complete and devastating ugliness. "Now, that's fine," I said, and I pushed her toward the stairway. Blissfully she descended into the drawing room, ignorant of her appearance until the surprised expressions on the faces of the guests told her. She rushed to a mirror—ran screaming from the house and never came to The Shadows again.

That night I was scared.

After the guests departed, I had no idea what my husband would say or do. He was sitting on the edge of the bed smoking his cigar when I saw him alone. His bare legs protruded from his knee-length silk nightshirt. As I entered the bedroom he chuckled, but did not look up. He only said, "You're the goddamndest woman I ever saw." And with that he swung into the bed and pulled up the covers, chuckling as he fell asleep. He never mentioned the incident again.