

ashamed of his earlier panic, but he still hardly liked to commit himself so definitely. "I'll see how things go. If a suitable chance arises . . ."

"You should go and see him first thing. Go a little early."

"See who? The manager?"

"Yes, or the boss, or whoever it is."

"The manager is the boss, unless you mean the chairman of directors. Or the chief accountant is my immediate boss. The manager never gets there until about 10."

"You could go and see him then."

"Not then. That's when he goes through the correspondence. Besides, at 10 I'm always helping the shipping clerk. We run things to a system. Goodness knows how many times he had explained all this."

"Well, I don't care when you go as long as you go quickly and get our £3 back." Anyone would think he was going to get his head chopped off.

He didn't like her airy way of cutting across all their arrangements. After all, there was a certain business etiquette. And it was so damnably easy for her to be right and wise about the money. She didn't have to do the job. "I'll go if the opportunity arises," he said. He saw she was going to speak again. "It should arise," he added.

"All right, dear." She bent over her knitting. She hoped the baby would grow into a big, strong man.

AS it happened, however, the next morning the manager went down to the store, where an accident had occurred to one of the workmen, and in the afternoon, of course, he was busy on his monthly statement for the directors. Les cursed himself for forgetting about that. It would be a bad time to disturb the boss. He looked round at the others in the office, trying to identify the thief. As he scrutinised them he became aware of their teeming private interests that developed and grew, apart from the firm. He noticed other things, too—the office-boy had a new pair of slacks, and one of the typists had had her hair permed. He remembered that the shipping clerk was paying off a baby car, that the wife of another spent a good deal of time in hospital. Every one of them could use an extra £3, but which was the thief? They all knew the office system, they knew he had charge of the cash. He watched them as he worked, but none seemed to be taking a guilty interest in him. It was baffling and rather unreal.

After a worrying lunch-hour, he screwed up his courage and went in to see the accountant.

"Oh, there you are Wilson." The accountant raised his seamed, dry face. "This is what I wanted to see you about." He began turning over some papers.

His heart bumped. "You wanted to see me?"

"Yes, didn't the boy tell you? Never mind. Look. Here you have £105/13/3, and here you have £109/13/3. Luckily the books balance. It looks like an error in dictation. The £4 is not missing, but you must be very careful. We had a case of that once before, a few months ago. We must remember that it's not our own money we are administering."

Les swallowed. "Yes, Mr. Donald." This was not what he had been preparing himself for; he couldn't think straight. He found himself back at his desk.

(continued on next page)



"Mothers-in-law?"

Thank goodness for them"

IT HAPPENED DURING A "BRIEF" VISIT



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OH, MY DEAR, IT'S EASY TO SEE YOU'RE NOT USING PHOSPHATE BAKING POWDER.

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A TIN OF PHOSPHATE BAKING POWDER PLEASE WHAT BRANDS MAKE IT?

ALL LEADING BRANDS MAKE IT, MADAM - AND IT'S ALMOST HALF THE PRICE OF OTHER TYPES!

PHOSPHATE BAKING POWDERS ARE A BOON. I DELIBERATELY LET THIS MIXTURE STAND AN HOUR, AND IT ACTUALLY IMPROVES THE RESULTS!

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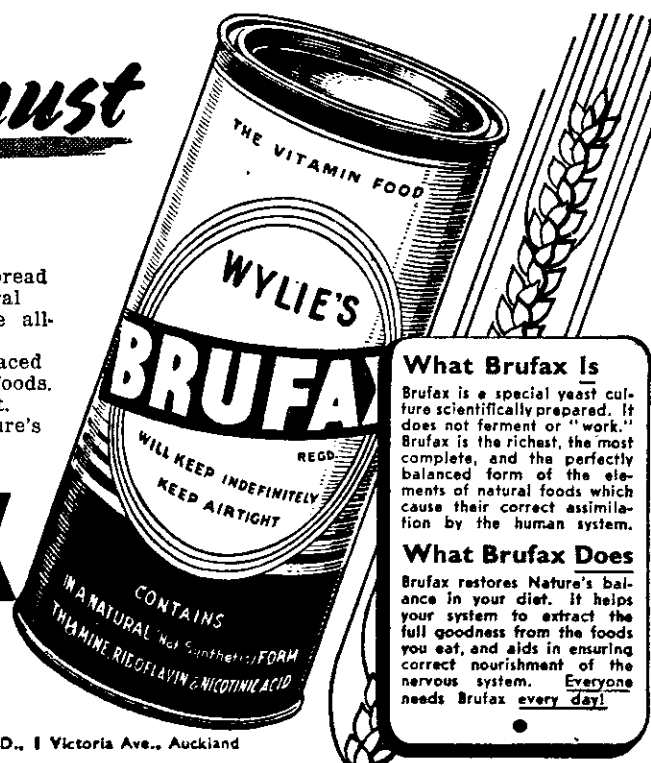


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