

Her Secret Ingredient

Mary Best

DING!

Grace skillfully avoided the oven rack as she clamped her pink polka dot oven mitts on the sides of her pie pan. Afraid her hand might slip, she stole a glance at the living room.

None of her guests had arrived yet.

She set the pie pan on the cooling rack, letting its glass bottom gingerly graze the cold metal that separated the piercing heat from the newly installed teal countertops.

As the ticking of the clock seemed to slow and increase in volume, Grace suddenly dreaded what would begin at 6 p.m. She knew who was coming, and the pressure to exceed her own expectations, despite all of her detailed planning, was so overwhelming she began to sweat uncontrollably.

DING-DONG!

She jumped at the sound of the doorbell. Trying to calm herself down, she imagined who would arrive first and what they would be wearing. But her subconscious got the best of her. She knew who would be coming. It was the one person anyone with an ear for gossip would be appalled to know was in attendance at Grace Potter's dinner party.

Sure enough, there she was. Just like her worst nightmare.

Annie Davis was as innocent as one could look in the new Christian Dior.

But Grace knew what she'd done.

Annie was followed by other prominent housewives in the community, and Grace threw yet another marvelous dinner party. But her nerves inflamed again once the second last guest had left. It was just her and Annie in the house now.

Annie bravely asked where Mr. Potter was that evening, even though Grace had already told everyone he was away on business.

Annie began to sweat.

Grace turned her attention to the pie, still sitting on the cooling rack.

"Oh, goodness." she laughed. "I forgot to serve our other pie."

Annie politely asked for a slice.

Everything was going according to plan.

Grace watched Annie devour her slice, and exactly as she predicted, Annie smiled and tiptoed over to Grace.

“What’s your secret ingredient?”

“Bastard.” Grace whispered.

Annie looked confused.

“But you liked it didn’t you?”

Annie nodded slowly. She knew she shouldn’t have stayed too long.

Grace’s voice stiffened. “Of course you did. You liked him too much while he was still alive.”

As Annie understood what Grace had actually meant, she regretted every second she even looked at Mr. Potter. Her back suddenly found a wall, and her heart met a silver steakknife.