

FISH SLICE

The scene and dress is reminiscent of the 'Pride and Prejudice' era. Mrs Emma Chalfont, a finely attired young woman of noble blood, is getting ready to go out, looking for something in the drawing room when there is a knock at the door

Emma: Come in

[Martha comes in, a humble servant]

Martha: Oh, good morning madam, sorry to trouble you like.

E: What is it Martha?

M: Sorry to trouble you like this madam.

E: Yes, yes, what do you want?

M: Humblest apologies madam; I delve deep into the pit of apology and pull out the finest lump my tender frame can manage, and offer it up to you madam.

E: OK Martha. Accepted. What is it you require?

E: I was wondering madam whether you had in your possession, on your person or in your 'environ-generale', the fish-slice madam.

E: The what?

M: Fish-slice madam.

E: I really don't know. What is it?

M: A kitchen utensil madam, used primarily in dealings with fish.

E: Cooked or uncooked?

M: That depends.

FISH SLICE

E: On what?

M: On exposure to sustained sources of heat madam.

E: Yes, I would have thought that was obvious.

M: To an educated soul as yourself, ors to an enlightened one as me-self, yes. But not to all and sundry. Certainly not everyday farming folk.

E: Yes, well....

M: Unless they's fish farmers of course. In which case it would be blindingly clear.

E: What does this 'fish slice' look like?

M: I'm not sure madam, seeings as it's gone missing and I haven't seen its little face for a few days now.

E: What's it likely to have done, grown a beard?

M: No madam. It's a girl fish slice.

E: Even some girls have problems with facial hair Martha.

M: Not Susan.

E: Susan?

M: That's her name madam.

E: Who's name?

M: Fish slice.

E: Susan the fish slice.

M: Yes madam. Sue for short, but only for them that is really close to her. Like meself.

E: I see. So tell me Martha when and where did you last see ... Susan?

FISH SLICE

M: She were on Percy on Sunday evening.

E: Percy?

M: Frying pan.

E: And have you troubled to ask Percy where she went after she was with him?

M: Oh yes indeed madam, we had a long chat after breakfast the other day, but he was reluctant to divulge any information. Between you and me, I thinks they was having some kinds of relationship which is strictly banned under kitchen rule number 7 - "utensils must not engage in inter-relations in the kitchen".

E: Well maybe you could offer to let Percy off any due punishment if he'll divulge Susan's whereabouts. A 'pan amnesty', for information.

M: Do you really think so madam?

E: Yes, Martha. Now forgive me but I must be getting along as I have an appointment at 4.30 in Heckton and to be late would only encourage bad talk from the Wilmslows.

M: Yes madam, of course.

E: Hurry along now Martha.

M: Yes madam. I'm so sorry to have...

E: Don't start all that delving business again.

M: No, of course. Thank-you madam, my mind's much more rested now. [Her own mini soliloquy] I think, nay I dare even to hope, that with Percy's information we can find Susan and once again fish will be served and eaten without the terror of improper utensil usage in this fine

FISH SLICE

country house and beacon of English
aristocracy.

E: Yes. Now please go Martha.

M: Maam [exits]

E: [Picks up phone] Henry? Hello, it's Emma.
How's the grouse? Good. You know Martha
from kitchens. She's on to us. Have her
shot will you. Thanks. [She pulls out a
fish slice]. Oh Susan, who would have
thought there was something fishy going on
with you and Percy. Do you get it Susan?
Fishy. Fishy wishy wishy [exits to manic
laughter]