

"Won't you come into the living room?" Enrico asked. Before we had time to sit down, the bell rang again; again Enrico went to open the door, and amid repeated stamping of feet and complaints about the extraordinarily cold weather I again heard a man's voice:

"Congratulations."

It went on this same way until all our guests had arrived. Every single man congratulated Enrico. He accepted the congratulations readily, with no embarrassment or show of modesty, with no words, but with a steady grin on his face.

My inquiries received either no answer at all or such evasive replies as: "Ask your husband," or: "Nothing special. He is a smart guy. That's all," or: "Don't get excited. You'll find out sometime."

I had nothing to help me guess. Enrico had mentioned nothing worthy of notice, and nothing unusual had happened, except, of course, the preparations for the party. And those did not involve Enrico and provided no ground for congratulating.

I had cleaned house all morning; I had polished silver. I had picked up the electric train in Giulio's room and the books in Nella's. If there is a formula to teach order to children, I have not found it. I had run the vacuum, dusted, and sighed. All along I was making calculations in my mind:

"Half an hour to set the table. Half an hour to spread sandwiches. Half an hour to collect juices for the punch. . . . I must remember to make tea for my punch soon, so that it will have time to cool. . . . And if people start coming by eight, we'll have to start dressing by seven-thirty, and eating dinner by" So I had calculated my afternoon schedule backward from the time the company would arrive up to when I should set myself to work.

A Homemaker's Schedule

My schedule was upset, as schedules will be. While I was baking cookies in the kitchen, the house had gone surprisingly quiet, too quiet to contain Giulio and his two girl friends who had come to play. Where were they? Into what sort of mischief had they got themselves? I found them on the third-floor porch. The three angelic-looking little children were mixing snow with the soil in the flower pots and throwing balls at our neighbor's recently washed windows. Precious time was spent in scolding and punishing, in seeing what could be done to placate our neighbor.

So at dinner time Enrico found me hurrying through the last preparations, absorbed in my task and even less than usually inclined to ask questions
