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# BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

## The White Elephant

### 16: Calm!



*Note: This is not a word-for-word transcript*

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**Gordon**

Mary, could you pass me that pan there please?

**Mary**

Yes... of course.

**Gordon**

You've got no customers to serve, Peter?

**Peter**

No... nobody.

**Ceilia**

It's probably the calm before the storm!

**Gordon**

If by that you mean it's going to get busy later, I very much doubt it.

**Ceilia**

Thanks for your vote of confidence Gordon.

[The phone rings]

**Peter**

I'll get that, shall I? "The White Elephant... how can I help you? Ok... yes... at 8 o'clock? Ok... We'll see you then." People... customers... now!

**Ceilia**

Well that's good news isn't it? How many are coming?

**Peter**

Twenty-five! In a bus! In one hour!

**Gordon**

That's impossible. How can I cook for 25 people? I do quality, not quantity.

**Ceilia**

Keep your cool, Gordon. This is our big moment.

**Gordon**

Our big moment? It'll be our big failure. Why did you say 'yes' Peter?

**Mary**

Stay calm! We can do this but you're going to need to let me help you. I'll chop some vegetables and prepare some starters.

**Peter**

But how I am going to write down 25 orders? I've only got a small pad.

**Ceilia**

Well done Mary. See, she's got it all under control.

**Gordon**

Under control! Chopping some carrots will not feed 25 people!

**Mary**

My advice Gordon is to act cool and collected and everything will be ok.

[Phone rings again]

**Gordon**

Somebody answer that phone, I'm going to get some onions.

**Peter**

I'm on it. "Hello... The White Elephant... oh yes... yes... I see... I hope you get it fixed... thanks for letting us know. Bye". That was people from the bus... they've broken down and won't be able to come tonight.

**Mary**

Oh no, that's a shame. We'd better tell Gordon before he blows a gasket!

**Ceilia**

Hmmm... let's not tell him straight away!

## Vocabulary

### **the calm before the storm**

a quiet time before things get very busy or difficult

### **keep your cool**

don't panic / don't get angry

### **stay calm!**

don't panic

### **under control**

sorted out in a calm way

### **act cool and collected**

behave in a calm and composed manner

### **blows a gasket**

suddenly becomes angry

## Questions

1. At the start of the episode, what does Ceilia say to mean it's quiet now but it will get busy later?

(Hint: We're still before the busy part of the day.)

- a) There's a storm coming
- b) It's the calm before the storm
- c) It's the storm before the calm

2. Why does Gordon say he can't cook for 25 people?

(Hint: He doesn't like to rush his cooking.)

- a) Because he likes to spend time cooking quality food, not just lots of food
- b) Because he hasn't got enough carrots in stock
- c) Because he thinks it will take too long

3. What advice does Mary give Gordon about behaving a calm manner?

(Hint: There are no vegetables involved in this answer.)

- a) Be as cool as a cucumber
- b) Act collected and calm
- c) Act cool and collected

## Answers

1. At the start of the episode, what does Ceilia say to mean it's quiet now but it will get busy later?

a) There's a storm coming

(Wrong. That's not quite right. She emphasises it's the stage 'before' the storm...)

**b) It's the calm before the storm**

**(Correct. That's right.)**

c) It's the storm before the calm

(Wrong. That's the wrong way round. Try again.)

2. Why does Gordon say he can't cook for 25 people?

**a) Because he likes to spend time cooking quality food not just lots of food**

**(That's right. He says he cooks quality not quantity.)**

b) Because he hasn't got enough carrots in stock

(That's not correct. He doesn't say that.)

c) Because he thinks it will take too long

(That's not his reason. Try again.)

3. What advice does Mary give Gordon about behaving a calm manner?

a) Be as cool as a cucumber

(This is a good phrase in English, but not the one that Mary uses.)

b) Act collected and calm

(That's not quite right. Try again.)

**c) Act cool and collected**

**(Yes! That's the right expression.)**