

a few days . . . (He reads from his manuscript.) "At this joyous season of the year, when in the hearts of men—" I can't cut that.

MAGGIE. Isn't it curious? There was Lorraine, snug as a bug in somebody's bed on the Normandie—

WHITESIDE. (So busy with his manuscript.) "Ere the Yuletide season pass—"

MAGGIE. (Quietly taking manuscript out of his hands.) (Crossing R. to him, then back to C.) Now, Sherry dear, we will talk a bit.

WHITESIDE. Now look here, Maggie. Just because a friend of mine happens to come out to spend Christmas with me— (The door-bell rings.) I have a hunch that's Beverly. Maggie, see if it is. Go ahead—run! run!

(JOHN enters up L. to exit off L.) (MAGGIE looks at him—right through him, in fact. Then she goes slowly toward door L. "Magpie"—from BEVERLY. We hear her voice at the door: "Beverly!" Then, in clipped English tones: "A large, moist, incestuous kiss for my Magpie!")

(WHITESIDE, roaring.) Come in here, you Piccadilly pen-pusher, and gaze upon a soul in agony. (JOHN exit up L.) (BEVERLY CARLTON enters L., crosses to C. arm in arm with MAGGIE. Very confident, very British, very Beverly Carlton. He throws his coat over newel-post, MAGGIE puts his hat on table back of couch.)

BEVERLY. Don't tell me how you are, Sherry dear. I want none of the tiresome details. I have only a little time, so the conversation will be entirely about *me*, and I shall love it. Shall— (Eases R.) I tell you how I glittered through the South Seas like a silver scimitar, or would you rather hear how I frolicked through Zambesia, raping the Major-General's daughter and finishing a three-act play at the same time? (Crosses to MAGGIE L.) Magpie dear, you are the moonflower of my middle age, and I love you very much. Say something tender to me.

MAGGIE. Beverly, darling.

BEVERLY. That's my girl. (Turning to WHITESIDE.) Now then. Sherry dear, without going into mountainous waves of self-pity, how are you? (A quick nod of the head.)

WHITESIDE. I'm fine, you presumptuous Cockney . . . Now, how was the trip, wonderful? (MAGGIE sits arm of sofa.)

BEVERLY. (Crosses R., then U.L.) Fabulous. I did a fantastic amount of work. By the way, did I glimpse that little boudoir butterfly, La Sheldon, in a motor-car as I came up the driveway?

MAGGIE. You did indeed. She's paying us a Christmas visit.

BEVERLY. Dear girl! They do say she set fire to her mother, but I don't believe it . . . Sherry, (*Sits on stool R.C.*) my evil one, not only have I written the finest comedy since Molière, but also the best revue since my last one, and an operetta that frightens me it's so good. I shall play it for eight weeks in London and six in New York—that's all. No matinees. Then I am off to the Grecian Islands . . . Magpie, why don't you come along? Why don't you desert this cannon-ball of fluff and come with me?

MAGGIE. Beverly dear, be careful. You're catching me at a good moment.

WHITESIDE. (*Changing the subject.*) Tell me, Beverly, did you have a good time in Hollywood? How long were you there?

BEVERLY. (*Rises, crosses to C.*) Three unbelievable days. I saw everyone from Adrian to Zanuck. They came, poor dears, as to a shrine. I was insufferably charming and ruthlessly firm in refusing seven million dollars for two minutes' work.

WHITESIDE. What about Banjo? Did you see my wonderful Banjo in Hollywood?

BEVERLY. I did. He gave a dinner for me. I arrived, in white tie and tails to be met at the door by two bewigged butlers, who quietly proceeded to take my trousers off. I was then ushered, in my lemon silk drawers, into a room full of Norma Shearer, Claudette Colbert, and Aldous Huxley, among others. Dear, sweet, incomparable Banjo. (*Crossing to couch, he puts his arm about MAGGIE'S shoulder.*)

WHITESIDE. I'll never forget that summer at Antibes, when Banjo put a microphone in Lorraine's mattress, and then played the record the next day at lunch.

BEVERLY. (*Crossing C.*) I remember it indeed. Lorraine left Antibes by the next boat.

MAGGIE. (*Half to herself.*) I wish Banjo were here now.

BEVERLY. (*Back to MAGGIE.*) What's the matter, Magpie? Is Lorraine being her own sweet sick-making self?

MAGGIE. You wouldn't take her to the Grecian Islands with you, would you, Beverly? Just for me?

WHITESIDE. Now, now. Lorraine is a charming person who has gallantly given up her own Christmas to spend it with me.

BEVERLY. (*Crosses to C.*) Oh, I knew I had a bit of dirt for us all to nibble on. (*He draws a letter out of his pocket.*) (*Again library doors are opened and the DOCTOR'S head comes through, D.R.*)

BRADLEY. Mr. Whiteside.