

MAGGIE. (*Her face aglow, crossing to him.*) Sherry, Bert read his play to me this afternoon. It's superb. It isn't just that play written by a newspaperman. It's superb. (*To him.*) I want you to read it tonight. (*She puts it in his lap.*) It just cries out for Cornell. Will you send it to her, Sherry? And will you read it tonight?

WHITESIDE. No, I will not read it tonight or any other time. And while we're on the subject of Mr. Jefferson, you might ask him if he wouldn't like to pay your salary, since he takes up all your time.

MAGGIE. (*She is on her knees, gathering up debris L. of wheelchair.*) Oh, come now, Sherry. It isn't as bad as that.

WHITESIDE. I have not even been able to reach you, not knowing what haylofts you frequent.

MAGGIE. (*Crossing to back of sofa with box of debris.*) Oh, stop behaving like a spoiled child, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. Don't take that patronizing tone with me, you flea-bitten Cleopatra. I am sick and tired of your sneaking out like some love-sick high-school girl every time my back is turned.

MAGGIE. Well, Sherry—I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head. (*Taking off hat and putting it on table back of couch.*)

WHITESIDE. Stop acting like Zazu Pitts and explain yourself.

MAGGIE. (*To C.*) I'll make it quick, Sherry. I'm in love.

WHITESIDE. Nonsense. This is merely delayed puberty.

MAGGIE. No, Sherry, I'm afraid this is it. You're going to lose a very excellent secretary.

WHITESIDE. You are out of your mind.

MAGGIE. Yes, I think I am, a little. But I'm a girl who's waited a long time for this to happen, and now it has. Mr. Jefferson doesn't know it yet, but I'm going to try my darnedest to marry him. (*Ease L.*)

WHITESIDE. (*As she pauses.*) Is that all?

MAGGIE. Yes, except that—well—I suppose this is what might be called my resignation, as soon as you've got someone else.

WHITESIDE. (*A slight pause.*) Now listen to me, Maggie. We have been together for a long time. You are indispensable to me, but I think I am unselfish enough not to let that stand in the way where your happiness is concerned. Because whether you know it or not, I have a deep affection for you.

MAGGIE. (*Ease R.*) I know that, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. That being the case, I will not stand by and allow you to make a fool of yourself.

MAGGIE. I'm not, Sherry.

WHITESIDE. You are, my dear. You are behaving like a Booth Tar-
kington heroine. It's—it's incredible. I cannot believe that a girl
who for the past ten years has had the great of the world served up
on a platter before her, I cannot believe that it is anything but a
kind of temporary insanity when you are swept off your feet in
seven days by a second-rate, small-town newspaper man.

MAGGIE. (*To him.*) Sherry, I can't explain what's happened. I can
only tell you that it's so. It's hard for me to believe, too, Sherry.
Here I am, a hard-bitten old cynic, behaving like True Story Maga-
zine, and liking it. Discovering the moon, and ice-skating—I keep
laughing to myself all the time, but there it is. What can I do about
it, Sherry? I'm in love.

WHITESIDE. (*With sudden decision.*) We're leaving tomorrow.
Hip or no hip, we're leaving here tomorrow. I don't care if I
fracture the other one. Get me a train schedule and start packing.
I'll pull you out of this, Miss Stardust. I'll get the ants out of those
moonlit pants.

MAGGIE. (*Crosses L.*) It's no good, Sherry. It's no good. I'd be back
on the next streamlined train.

WHITESIDE. It's completely unbelievable. Can you see yourself, the
wife of the editor of the Mesalia Journal, having an evening at
home for Mr. and Mrs. Stanley, Mr. and Mrs. Poop-Face, and the
members of the Book-of-the-Month Club?

MAGGIE. (*Crosses R.*) Sherry, I've had ten years of the great figures
of our time, and don't think I'm not grateful to you for it. I've
loved every minute of it. They've been wonderful years, Sherry.
Gay, and stimulating—I don't think anyone has ever had the fun
we've had. But a girl can't laugh all the time, Sherry. There comes
a time when she wants—Bert Jefferson. You don't know Bert,
Sherry. He's gentle and he's unassuming, and—well, I love him,
that's all. (*Ease L.*)

WHITESIDE. I see. Well, I remain completely unconvinced. You are
drugging yourself into this Joan Crawford fantasy, and before you
become completely anesthetized I shall do everything in my power
to bring you to your senses.

MAGGIE. (*Wheeling on him.*) Now listen to me, Whiteside. I know
you. Lay off. I know what a devil you can be. I've seen you do it to
other people, but don't you dare do it to me. Don't drug *yourself*
into the idea that all you're thinking of is my happiness. You're
thinking of yourself a little bit, too, and all those months of break-
ing in somebody new. I've seen you in a passion before when your

life has been disrupted, and you couldn't dine in Calcutta on July twelfth with Boo-Boo. Well, that's too bad, but there it is. (*Crosses to stairs.*) I'm going to marry Bert if he'll have me, and don't you dare try any of your tricks. I'm on to every one of them. So lay off. That's my message to you, Big Lord Fauntleroy. (*And she is up the stairs.*) (*Left stewing in his own juice, WHITESIDE is in a perfect fury. He bangs arm of his chair, then slaps at manuscript in his lap. As he does so, the dawn of an idea comes into his mind. He sits perfectly still for a moment, thinking it over. Then, with a slow smile, he takes manuscript out of its envelope. He looks at title page, ruffles through the script, then stops and thinks again. His face breaks out into one great smile. He reaches for phone receiver.*)

WHITESIDE. (*In a lowered voice, meanwhile discarding cables from basket until he finds right one.*) Long distance, please. I want to put in a Transatlantic call. (*He looks at cablegram again for confirmation.*) Hello. Transatlantic operator? . . . This is Mesalia 1-4-2. I want to talk to Miss Lorraine Sheldon—S-h-e-l-d-o-n. She's on the Normandie. It sailed from Southampton day before yesterday. (*Door-bell.*) Will it take long? . . . All right. My name is Whiteside . . . thank you.

(*He hangs up. He goes back to manuscript again and looks through it. JOHN then ushers in DR. BRADLEY.*)

BRADLEY. (*Offstage.*) Good evening, John.

JOHN. Good evening, Doctor. (*Exits swinging-door U.L.*)

BRADLEY. (*Crosses to R.*) (*Heartily as usual.*) Well, well! Good evening, Mr. Whiteside!

WHITESIDE. Come back tomorrow—I'm busy.

BRADLEY. (*Turning cute.*) Now what would be the best news that I could possibly bring you?

WHITESIDE. You have hydrophobia.

BRADLEY. (*Laughing it off.*) No, no . . . Mr. Whiteside, you are a well man. You can get up and walk *now*. You can leave here tomorrow.

WHITESIDE. What do you mean?

BRADLEY. (*Ease R.*) Well, sir! I looked at those X-rays again this afternoon, and do you know what? I had been looking at the wrong X-rays. I had been looking at old Mrs. Moffat's X-rays. You are perfectly, absolutely well!

WHITESIDE. Lower your voice, will you?

BRADLEY. What's the matter? Aren't you pleased?