Group: 1, 6

Characters: June, Mrs. Stanley, Sarah, Mrs. Dexter (read by June), Mrs. McCutcheon (read by Sarah)

JUNE (At phone)Yes?… Yes, that’s right.

MRS. STANLEY Who is it?

MISS preen (Enters DR Crosses L) I—I’ll get them right away. ... He wants some Players’ Club cigarettes.

mrs. Stanley Players’ Club?

JUNE (Still at phone)Hello… Yes, I’m waiting.

MRS. STANLEY Tell me, Miss Preen, is he—are they bringing him out soon?

MISS PREEN (Wearily)We’re getting him out of bed now. He’ll be out very soon… Oh, thank you. (miss preen starts off r)

MRS. STANLEY Oh, I’m so glad. He must be very happy.

JUNE (At phone)Two o’clock? Yes, I think he could talk then. All right. (She hangs up)Well, who do you think that was? Mr. H. G. Wells from London.

MRS. STANLEY (Wild-eyed)H. G. Wells? On our telephone?

(The door-bell again)

JUNE (Crosses L to door L. Exit)I’ll go. This is certainly a *busy house.* (Meantime sarah, the cook, has come from dining-room up r with a pitcher of orange juice—Entrance cue: door-bell)

SARAH I got his orange juice.

MRS. STANLEY Oh, that’s fine, Sarah. Is it fresh?

SARAH Yes, ma’am. (The VOICE roars once more: “You move like a broken-down truck horse!”)

SARAH (Beaming)His voice is just the same as on the radio. (She disappears into dining-room as JUNE returns from entrance hall, L, ushering in two friends of her mother’s, mrs. dexter and MRS. MCCUTCHEON
One is carrying a flowering plant, partially wrapped; the other is holding, with some care, what turns out to be a jar of calf’s-foot jelly)

ladies (Enter l. Cross to c) Good morning.

MRS. STANLEY (To them)Girls, what do you think? He’s getting up and coming out this morning!

MRS. mccutcheon`You don’t mean it!

MRS. dexter Can we stay and see him?

MRS. STANLEY Why, of course—he’d love it. (june enters l. Crosses to stairs) Girls, do you know what just happened?

JUNE (Departing upstairs)I’ll be upstairs, Mother, if you want me.

MRS. STANLEY What?… Oh, yes. June, tell your father he’d better come down, will you? Mr. Whiteside is coming out.

JUNE Yes, Mother. (She exits upstairs)

mrs. dexter Is he really coming out this morning? I brought him a plant—do you think it’s all right if I give it to him?

MRS. STANLEY Why, I think that would be lovely.

mrs. mccutcheon And some calf’s-foot jelly.

MRS. STANLEY Why, how nice! Who do you think was on the phone just now? H. G. Wells, from London. And look at those cablegrams. (The ladies cross l) He’s had calls and messages from all over this country and Europe. The *New York Times*—and Felix Frankfurter, and Dr. Dafoe, the Mount Wilson Observatory —I just can’t tell you what’s been going on, I’m simply exhausted.

(Crosses R, sits chair RC)

mrs. dexter (Crossing to Mrs. Stanley r) There’s a big piece about it in this weeks’ *Time.* Did you see it?

MRS. STANLEY No—really?

mrs. mccutcheon (Crosses r, gives mrs. dexter calf’s-foot jelly, reads from Time) Your name’s in it too, Daisy. Listen: “Portly Sheridan Whiteside, critic, lecturer, wit, radio orator, inti­mate friend of the great and near great, last week found his cele­brated wit no weapon with which to combat an injured hip. The Falstaff Ian Mr. Whiteside, trekking across the country on one of his annual lecture tours, met his Waterloo in the shape of a small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs. Ernest W. Stanley, of Mesalia, Ohio. Result: Cancelled lectures and disappointment to thousands of adoring clubwomen in Omaha, Denver, and points West. Further result: The idol of the air waves rests until further notice in home of surprised Mr. and Mrs. Stanley. Possibility: Christmas may be postponed this year.” What’s *that* mean?

MRS. STANLEY (She takes magazine: reads)“A small piece of ice on the doorstep of Mr. and Mrs.. . . “Think of it!

mrs. mccutcheon (Crosses L to sofa dl, sits)Of course if it were *my* house, Daisy, I’d have a bronze plate put on the step, right where he fell. (mrs. dexter eases back of couch)

MRS. STANLEY Well, of course, I felt terrible about it. He just never goes to dinners anywhere, and he finally agreed to come here, and then *this* had to happen. Poor Mr. Whiteside! But it’s going to be so wonderful having him with us, even for a little while. Just think of it! We’ll sit around in the evening, and discuss books and plays, all the great people he’s known. And he’ll talk in that wonderful way of his. He may even read “Goodbye, Mr. Chips” to us.

(MR. Stanley, solid, substantial—the American business man—is descending stairs C)

Group: 3, 4, 6

Characters: Mrs. Stanley, Mr. Stanley, Whiteside

WHITESIDE (RC, quietly to maggie) I may vomit.

MRS. STANLEY (With a nervous little laugh) Good morning, Mr. Whiteside. I’m Mrs. Ernest Stanley—remember? And this is Mr. Stanley.

STANLEY (Coming to DC) How do you do, Mr. Whiteside? I hope that you are better.

WHITESIDE Thank you. I am suing you for a hundred and’fifty thousand dollars.

STANLEY How’s that? What?

WHITESIDE I said I am suing you for a hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

MRS. STANLEY You mean—because you fell on our steps, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE Samuel J. Liebowitz will explain it to you in court. Who are those two harpies standing there like the kiss of death?

WHITESIDE And now, Mrs. Stanley, I have a few small matters to take up with you. Since this corner druggist at my elbow tells me that I shall be con­fined to this moldy mortuary for at least another ten days, due entirely to your stupidity and negligence, I shall have to carry on my activities as best I can. I shall require the exclusive use of this room, as well as that drafty sewer which you call the library. I want no one to come in or out while I am in this room.

STANLEY What do you mean, sir?

MRS. STANLEY (Stunned)We have to go up the stairs to get to our rooms, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE Isn’t there a back entrance?

MRS. STANLEY Why—yes.

WHITESIDE Then use that. I shall also require a room for my secre­tary, Miss Cutler. Let me see. I will have a great many incoming and outgoing calls, so please do not use the telephone. I sleep until noon and must have quiet through the house until that hour. There will be five for lunch today. Where is the cook?

STANLEY Mr. Whiteside, if I may interrupt for a moment—

WHITESIDE You may not, sir. Will you take your clammy hand off my chair? You have the touch of a sex-starved cobra! (This last to miss preen as she arranges his pillow.)… And now will you all leave quietly, or must I ask my secretary to pass among you with a baseball bat?

(MRS. dexter and MRS. MCCUTCHEON are beating a hasty retreat, MRS. DEXTER’S gift still in her hand.)

STANLEY (Boldly—line cue: “use the phone.”) Now look here, Mr. Whiteside—

WHITESIDE There is nothing to discuss, sir. Considering the damage I have suffered at your hands, I am asking very little. Good day.

STANLEY (Controlling himself, crosses L, exit L) I’ll call you from the office later, Daisy.

WHITESIDE Not on this phone, please. (Stanley gives him a look, but goes.)

Group: 1, 4

Characters: Whiteside, Maggie

WHITESIDE Oh, well! Let’s get down to work. (He hands her the armful of holly)Here! Press this in the Doctor’s book, (maggie places holly on sofa. He picks up the first of a pile of letters.)I see no reason why I should endorse Maiden Form Brassieres. (He crumples up letter and drops it)

MAGGIE (Who has picked up little sheaf of messages from table back of sofa.)Here are some telegrams.

WHITESIDE (A letter in his hand.)What date is this?

MAGGIE December tenth, (maggie sits sofa.)

WHITESIDE Send a wire to Columbia Broadcasting: “You can schedule my Christmas Eve broadcast from the New York studio, as I shall return East instead of proceeding to Hollywood. Stop. For special New Year’s Eve broadcast will have as my guests Jascha Heifetz, Katharine Cornell, Schiaparelli, the Lunts, and Dr. Alexis Carrel, with Haile Selassie on short wave from England. White­side.”

MAGGIE Are you sure you’ll be all right by Christmas, Sherry?

WHITESIDE Of course I will.. . . Send a cable to Mahatma Ghandi, Bombay, India. “Dear Boo-Boo: Schedule changed. Can you meet me Calcutta July twelfth? Dinner eight-thirty. Whiteside.” Wire to editor of the *Atlantic Monthly.* “Do not worry, Stinkie. Copy will arrive. Whiteside.”… Arturo Toscanini. Where is he?

MAGGIE I’ll find him.

WHITESIDE “Counting on you January 4th Metropolitan Opera House my annual benefit Home for Paroled Convicts. As you know this is a very worthy cause and close to my heart. Tibbett, Rethberg, Martinelli, and Flagstad have promised me personally to appear. Will you have quiet supper with me and Ethel Barrymore after­wards? Whiteside.” (Phone rings, maggie crosses back of whiteside to phone DR) If that’s for Mrs. Stanley, tell them she’s too drunk to talk.

MAGGIE (At phone DR)Hello… What?… Hollywood?

WHITESIDE If it’s Goldwyn, hang up.

MAGGIE Hello Banjo! (Her face lights up)

WHITESIDE Banjo! Give me that phone!

MAGGIE Banjo, you old so-and-so! How are you, darling?

WHITESIDE Come on—give me that!

MAGGIE Shut up, Sherry!… Are you coming East, Banjo? I miss you… Oh, he’s going to live.

WHITESIDE Stop driveling and give me the phone.

MAGGIE (Cue: “Stop driveling” cut in. Hands him phone—stands back of wheelchair.)In fact, he’s screaming at me now. Here he is.

WHITESIDE (Taking phone.)How are you, you fawn’s behind? And what are you giving me for Christmas? (He roars with laugh­ter at banjo’s answer.)What news, Banjo, my boy? How’s the picture coming?… How are Wacko and Sloppo?… No, no, I’m all right… Yes, I’m in very good hands. I’ve got the best horse doctor in town… What about you? Having any fun?… Playing any cribbage?… What? (Again laughs loudly.)*…* Well, don’t take all his money—leave a little bit for me.… You’re what?… Having your portrait painted? By whom? Milt Gross?… Not really?… No, I’m going back to New York from here. I’ll be there for twelve days, and then I go to Dartmouth for the Drama Festival. You wouldn’t understand… Well, I can’t waste my time talking to Hollywood riff-raff. Kiss Louella Parsons for me. Good-bye. (He hangs up and turns to Maggie. Maggie puts phone on table DR) He took fourteen hundred dollars from Sam Goldwyn at cribbage last night, and Sam said “Banjo, I will never play garbage with you again.”

MAGGIE (Crossing l to Lc) What’s all this about his having his portrait painted?

WHITESIDE M-m, Salvator Dali. (miss preen enters dr) That’s all that face of his needs—a Surrealist to paint it.… What do *you* want now, Miss Bed Fan? (maggie crosses to table back of couch)

Group: 1, 2, 4

Characters: Jefferson, Maggie, Whiteside

JEFFERSON (Crossing to her, back of couch.) Good morning, Mr. Whiteside. I’m Jefferson, of the Mesalia Journal.

WHITESIDE (Sotto voce, to maggie.) Get rid of him.

MAGGIE (Brusquely)I’m sorry—Mr. Whiteside is seeing no one.

JEFFERSON Really?

MAGGIE So will you please excuse us? Good day.

JEFFERSON (Not giving up)Mr. Whiteside seems to be sitting up and taking notice.

MAGGIE I’m afraid he’s not taking notice of the Mesalia Journal. Do you mind?

JEFFERSON (Sizing up maggie) You know, if I’m going to be insulted I’d like it to be by Mr. Whiteside himself. I never did like carbon copies.

WHITESIDE (Looking around; interested)M-m, touched if I ever heard one. And in Mesalia too, Maggie dear.

MAGGIE (Still on the job)Will you please leave?

JEFFERSON (Ignoring her. Crosses to C. MAGGIE crosses to RC) How about an interview, Mr. Whiteside?

WHITESIDE I never give them. Go away.

JEFFERSON Mr. Whiteside, if I don’t get this interview, I lose my job.

WHITESIDE That would be quite all right with me.

JEFFERSON Now you don’t mean that, Mr. Whiteside. You used to be a newspaper man yourself. You know what editors are like. Well, mine’s the toughest one that ever lived.

WHITESIDE You won’t get around me that way. If you don’t like him, get off the paper.

JEFFERSON Yes, but I happen to think it’s a good paper. William Allen White could have got out of Emporia, but he didn’t.

WHITESIDE You have the effrontery, in my presence, to compare yourself with William Allen White?

JEFFERSON Only in the sense that White stayed in Emporia, and I want to stay here and say what I want to say.

WHITESIDE Such as what?

JEFFERSON (Crossing to below couch l) Well, I can’t put it into words, Mr. Whiteside—it’d sound like an awful lot of hooey. But the Journal was my father’s paper. It’s kind of a sentimental point with me, the paper. I’d like to carry on where he left off.

WHITESIDE Ah—ahh. So you own the paper, eh?

JEFFERSON That’s right.

WHITESIDE Then this terrifying editor, this dread journalistic Apocalypse is—you yourself?

JEFFERSON In a word, yes.

WHITESIDE (Chuckles with appreciation)I see.

MAGGIE (Annoyed, starts off R) In the future, Sherry, let me know when you don’t want to talk to people, I’ll usher them right in. (She goes into library dr)

WHITESIDE Young man… Come over here. I suppose you’ve written that novel?

JEFFERSON (Eases R) No. I’ve written that play.

WHITESIDE Well, I don’t want to read it. Ah, do these old eyes see a box of goodies over there? Hand them to me, will you?

JEFFERSON (Crossing dr to small desk table)The trouble is, Mr. Whiteside, that your being in this town comes under the head­ing of news. Practically the biggest news since the depression. So I just got to get a story. (Crossing to L of Whiteside As he passes candy.)

WHITESIDE (Examining candy) M-m, pecan butternut fudge.

(miss preen, on her way to kitchen with empty plate on tray, from library r stops short as she sees whiteside with candy in his hand. She leaves doors open)

MISS PREEN (Crossing dr) Oh, my! You mustn’t eat candy, Mr. Whiteside. It’s very bad for you.

WHITESIDE (Turning)My Great-aunt Jennifer ate a whole box of candy every day of her life. She lived to be a hundred and two, and when she had been dead three days she looked better than you do *now.* (He swings blandly back to his visitor as he eats a candy)What were you saying, old fellow? You were about to say?

JEFFERSON (As miss preen makes a hasty exit up r) I can at least report to my readers that chivalry is not yet dead.

WHITESIDE We won’t discuss it.… Well, now that you have won me with your pretty ways, what would you like to know?

JEFFERSON (Crossing in a step to whiteside) Well, how about a brief talk on famous murders? You’re an authority on murder as a fine art.

WHITESIDE My dear boy, when I talk about murder I *get* paid for it. I have made more money out of the Snyder-Gray case than the lawyers did, so don’t expect to get it for nothing.

JEFFERSON Well, then, what do you think of Mesalia, how long are you going to be here, where are you going, things like that.

WHITESIDE Very well. (A) Mesalia is a town of irresistible charm; (B) I cannot wait to get out of it, and (C) I am going from here to Crockfield, for my semi-annual visit to the Crockfield Home for Paroled Convicts, for which I have raised over half a million dollars in the last five years. From there I go to New York. Have you ever been to Crockfield, Jefferson?

Group: 1, 2, 4

Characters: June, Richard, Whiteside

JUNE (C) Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. This makes things much pleasanter. And I think the tie is very pretty.

RICHARD Well, now that we’re on speaking terms, Mr. Whiteside, I don’t mind telling you that I have been admiring all your ties.

WHITESIDE Do you like this one?

RICHARD I certainly do.

WHITESIDE It’s yours. (He takes it off and tosses it to him.)

RICHARD (Crosses r) Oh, thank you.

WHITESIDE Really, this curious legend that I am a difficult person is pure fabrication… Ice-skating, eh? Ah, me! I used to cut figure eights myself, arm in arm with Betsy Ross, waving the flag behind us.

JUNE It was wonderful on the ice today. Miss Cutler and Mr. Jefferson were there.

WHITESIDE Maggie? Ice-skating?

RICHARD Yes, and she’s good, too. I got a marvelous picture of her.

WHITESIDE Were they still there when you left?

RICHARD I think so.

JUNE Yes, they were.

RICHARD Mr. Whiteside, mind if I take a picture of you? I’d love to have one.

WHITESIDE Very well. Do you want my profile? (He indicates his stomach)

JUNE (Starting up stairs)I’m afraid you’re done for, Mr. Whiteside. My brother is a camera fiend, (whiteside, slightly startled, turns his head sharply, and in that instant Richard clicks camera.)

RICHARD Thank you, Mr. Whiteside. I got a great one. (He and june go upstairs as Maggie enters from hallway. They call “Hello, Miss Cutler!” as they disappear upstairs.)

Group: 1, 2

Characters: Bert, Maggie, John, Sarah

JOHN (To tree, then DR) Well, I guess that’s all there are, Miss Cutler. They’re all under the tree.

MAGGIE Thank you, John.

SARAH My, I never saw anyone get so many presents. I can hardly wait to see what’s in ‘em.

JOHN When’Il Mr. Whiteside open them, Miss Cutler?

MAGGIE (Rises, crosses to table back of sofa with papers—first switching on lights)Well, John, you see Christmas is Mr. Whiteside’s personal property. He invented it and it belongs to *him.* First thing tomorrow morning Mr. Whiteside will open each and every present and there will be the God-damnedest fuss you ever saw!

SARAH (Turns on C lamp and crossing to R of tree. JOHN crosses to L of tree. Then bending over packages.)My, look who he’s got presents from! Shirley Temple, William Lyon Phelps, Billy Rose, Ethel Waters, Somerset Maugham—my, I can hardly wait for *tomorrow,* (maggie crosses R to DR desk. Sits.)(The door­bell rings. JOHN departs for door L, switching on lights on his way. SARAH comes downstage.)My it certainly is wonderful. And Mr. Whiteside’s tree is so beautiful, too. Mr. and Mrs. Stanley had to put theirs in their bedroom, you know. They can hardly *undress at night.* (It is BERT JEFFERSON who enters L)

BERT Good evening, John.

JOHN Good evening, Mr. Jefferson, Merry Christmas.

BERT Hello, Maggie. Merry Christmas, Sarah.

SARAH Merry Christmas, Mr. Jefferson, (Sarah disappears into dining-room. JOHN exits up L)

BERT (Crossing to c) (Observing pile of packages under tree) Say, business is good, isn’t it? My, what a little quiet blackmail and a weekly radio hour can get you. What did his sponsors give him?

MAGGIE They gave him a full year’s supply of their product— Cream of Mush.

BERT Well he’ll give it right back to them, over the air.

MAGGIE (Rises, crosses to couch with papers)Wait until you hear tonight’s broadcast, old fellow. It’s so sticky I haven’t been able to get it off my fingers since I copied it.

BERT (To c) I’ll bet.… Look, I’ll come clean. Under the in­fluence of God knows what I have just bought you a Christmas present.

MAGGIE (Surprised, crossing to him)Why, Mr. Jefferson, sir.

BERT Only I’d like you to see it before I throw away my hard-earned money. Can you run downtown with me and take a look at it?

MAGGIE (To him)Bert, this is very sweet of you. I’m quite touched. What is it? I can’t wait.

BERT A two years’ subscription to Pic, Click, and Look and Listen. Say, do you think I’m going to tell you? Come down and see.

MAGGIE (Crosses R, then to L to get coat)All right. (She calls into library)Sherry! I’m going out for a few minutes. With Horace Greeley. I won’t be long. (She goes into hallway for her coat and hat.)

Group: 1, 4

Character: Whiteside, Lorraine

WHITESIDE *Merry Christmas to you, Miss Stanley, and thank you.* (She glides out of the room, up R.)(In hallway, as JOHN opens door, we hear a woman’s voice, liquid and melting: “This Is the Stanley residence, isn’t it?” “Yes, it is.” “I’ve come to see Mr. Whiteside. Will you tell him Miss Sheldon is here?”)Lorraine! My Blossom Girl!

LORRAINE (Coming into view. Enter l to up l) Sherry, my sweet! ((Crossing r to him—wasting no time) Oh, darling, look at that poor sweet tortured face! Let me kiss it! (She does) You poor darling. How drawn you are. Sherry, my sweet, I want to cry.

WHITESIDE All right; You’ve made a very nice entrance, dear. Now relax.

LORRAINE But, Sherry, darling, I’ve been so worried. And now seeing you in that chair…

WHITESIDE This chair fits my fanny as nothing else ever has. I feel better than I have in years, and my only concern is news of the outside world. So take off that skunk and tell me everything. How are you, my dear?

LORRAINE (Crossing l to sofa)(Removing a cascade of silver fox from her shoulders)Darling, I’m so relieved. You look perfectly wonderful—I never saw you look better. My dear, do I look a wreck? I just dashed through New York. Didn’t do a thing about Christmas. Hattie Carnegie and had my hair done, and got right on the train. (Sits arm of couch. Uses her compact.)And the Norman-die coming back was simply hectic. Fun, you know, but simply exhausting. Jock Whitney, and Cary Grant, and Dorothy di Frasso —it was *too* exhausting. And of course London before that was so magnificent, my dear—well, I simply never got to bed at all. (Rises. Crosses to C.)Darling, I’ve so much to tell you I don’t know where to-start.

WHITESIDE Well, start with the dirt first, dear—that’s what I want to hear.

LORRAINE (Sits on stool)Let me see. Sybil Cartwright was thrown right out of Ciro’s—it was the night before I left. She was wearing one of those new cellophane dresses, and you could absolutely see Trafalgar Square. And Sir Harry Montross—the painter, you know —is suing his mother for disorderly conduct. It’s just shocked *everyone.* And oh! before I forget: Anthony Eden told me he’s going to be on your New Year’s broadcast, Sherry, and Beatrice Lillie gave me a message for you. She says for you to take off twenty-five pounds right away and send them to her by parcel post. She needs them.

WHITESIDE I’ll pack ‘em in ice… Now come, dear, what about you? What about your love life? I don’t believe for one moment you never got to bed at all, if you’ll pardon the expression.

LORRAINE Sherry dear, you’re dreadful.

WHITESIDE What about that splendid bit of English mutton, Lord Bottomley? Haven’t you hooked him yet?

LORRAINE Sherry, please. Cedric is a very dear friend of mine.

WHITESIDE Now, Blossom Girl, this is Sherry. Don’t try to pull die bedclothes over my eyes. Don’t tell *me* you wouldn’t like to be Lady Bottomley, with a hundred thousand pounds a year and twelve castles. By the way, has he had his teeth fixed yet? Every time I order Roquefort cheese I think of those teeth.

LORRAINE Sherry, really!… Cedric may not be brilliant, but he’s rather sweet, poor lamb, and he’s very fond of me, and he does represent a kind of English way of living that I like. Surrey, and London for the season—shooting-box in Scotland—that lovely old castle in Wales. You were there, Sherry—you know what I mean.

WHITESIDE Mm. I do indeed.

LORRAINE Well, really, Sherry, why not? If I can marry Cedric, I don’t know why I shouldn’t. Shall I tell you something, Sherry? I think, from something he said just before I sailed, that he’s finally coming around to it. It wasn’t definite, mind you, but—don’t be surprised if I *am* Lady Bottomley before very long.

whitesiDe Lady Bottomley! Won’t Kansas City be surprised! However, I shall be a flower-girl and give the groom an iron tooth­pick as a wedding present. Come ahead, my blossom,—let’s hear some more of your skulduggery.

Group: 1, 4, 5

Character: Beverly, Maggie, Whiteside

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 moon-flower 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 UL) 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 Rc) my evil one, not only have I written the finest comedy since Moliere, 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, DR.)

BRADLEY Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE No, no, not now. Go away.

(DOCTOR withdraws DR, closing doors.)

BEVERLY Have you kidnapped someone, Sherry?

WHITESIDE Yes, that was Charley Ross ... Go ahead. Is this something juicy?

BEVERLY (To stool L of wheelchair—sits)Juicy as a pomegranate. It is the latest report from London on the winter manoeuvres of Miss Lorraine Sheldon against the left flank—in fact, all flanks—of Lord Cedric Bottomley. Listen: “Lorraine has just left us in a cloud of Chanel Number Five. Since September, in her relentless pursuit of His Lordship, she has paused only to change girdles and check her oil. She has chased him, panting, from castle to castle, till he finally took refuge, for several week-ends, in the gentlemen’s lava­tory of the House of Lords. Practically no one is betting on the Derby this year; we are all making book on Lorraine. She is sailing tomorrow on the Normandie, but would return on the Atlantic Clipper if Bottomley so much as belches in her direction.” Have you ever met Lord Bottomley, Magpie dear? (Rise to c)

MAGGIE No, I haven’t, (he goes immediately into an impersonation of His Lordship. Very British, very full of teeth, stuttering)“Not v-v-very good shooting today, blast it. Only s-s-six partridges, f-f-four grouse and the D-D-Duke of Sutherland. Haw, haw.”

WHITESIDE (Chuckling)My God, that’s Bottomley to his very bottom.

BEVERLY (Still in character)“R-r-ripping debate in the House today. Old Basil spoke for th-th-three hours. D-d-dropped dead at the end of it. Ripping. Haw!” (Eases L.)

MAGGIE You’re making it up,

BEVERLY No one sounds like that.

WHITESIDE It’s so good it’s uncanny… Damn it, Beverly, why must you race right out of here? I never see enough of you, you un­grateful moppet.

BEVERLY (Crosses R to whiteside) Sherry darling, I can only tell you that my love for you is so great that I changed trains at Chicago to spend ten minutes with you and wish you a Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas, my lad My little Magpie, (maggie rises to c)

Group: 4, 6

Character: Harriet, Whiteside

HARRIET (To c) Merry Christmas, Mr. Whiteside.

WHITESIDE Oh!… Merry Christmas, Miss Stanley.

HARRIET (Nervously)I’m afraid I shouldn’t be seen talking to you, Mr. Whiteside—my brother is terribly angry. I just couldn’t resist asking—did you like my Christmas present?

WHITESIDE I’m very sorry, Miss Stanley—I haven’t opened it. I haven’t opened any of my presents yet.

HARRIET Oh, dear, I was so anxious to—it’s right here, Mr. Whiteside. (She goes to tree)Won’t you open it now?

WHITESIDE (As he undoes string)I appreciate your thinking of me, Miss Stanley. This is very thoughtful of you. (He takes out gift—an old photograph)Why it’s lovely. I’m very fond of these old photographs. Thank you very much.

HARRIET I was twenty-two when that was taken. That was my favor­ite dress… Do you really like it?

WHITESIDE I do indeed. When I get back to town I shall send you a little gift.

HARRIET Will you? Oh, thank you, Mr. Whiteside. I shall treasure it—(She starts to go)Well, I shall be late for church. Good-bye. Good-bye.

WHITESIDE Good-bye, Miss Stanley. (As she goes out front door Whiteside’s eyes return to gift. He puzzles over it for a second, shakes his head. Mumbles to himself— “What is there about that woman?” Shakes his head again in per­plexity.)

Group: 4, 5

Character: Banjo, Whiteside

BANJO Whiteside, I’m here to spend Christmas with you. Give me a kiss.

WHITESIDE Get away from me, you reform school fugitive. How did you get here anyway?

banjo (c) Darryl Zanuck loaned me his reindeer. Whiteside, we finished shooting the picture yesterday and I’m on my way to Nova Scotia. Flew here in twelve hours—borrowed an airplane from Howard Hughes. Whiteside, I brought you a wonderful Christmas present. (He produces a little tissue-wrapped package. Crosses to whiteside) This brassiere was once worn by Hedy Lamarr. (Drop­ping it in Whiteside’s lap.)

WHITESIDE Listen, you idiot, how long can you stay?

BANJO Just long enough to take a bath. I’m on my way to Nova Scotia. Where’s Maggie?

WHITESIDE Nova Scotia? What are you going to Nova Scotia for?

BANJO I’m sick of Hollywood and there’s a dame in New York I don’t want to see. So I figured I’d go to Nova Scotia and get some smoked salmon… Where the hell’s Maggie? I want to see her… What’s the matter with you? Where is she?

WHITESIDE Banjo, I’m glad you’re here. I’m very annoyed at Maggie. Very!

BANJO What’s the matter? (whiteside rises, crosses to L) Say, what is this? I thought you couldn’t walk. (Crossing to C.)

WHITESIDE Oh, I’ve been all right for weeks. That isn’t the point. I’m furious at Maggie. She’s turned on me like a viper. You know how fond I am of her. Well, after these years she’s repaying my affection by behaving like a fishwife.

BANJO What are you talking about?

WHITESIDE (A step l) But I never believed for a moment she was really in love with him.

BANJO In love with who? I just got here—remember? (business of pointing to himself.)

whItEsidE (Pace l) Great God, I’m telling you, you Hollywood nitwit. A young newspaper man here in town.

BANJO Maggie finally fell—well, what do you know? What kind of a guy is he?

WHITESIDE (Crosses to him)Oh, shut up and listen, will you?

BANJO Well, go on. What happened?

WHITESIDE (Pacing L) Well, Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here and visit me.

BANJO Old hot-pants—here?

WHITESIDE (Back to BANJO) Now listen! This young fellow, he’d written a play. You can guess the rest. He’s going away with Lorraine this afternoon. To “rewrite.” So there you are. Maggie’s in there now, crying her eyes out. (Crosses to sofa—sits.)

BANJO (Crosses l) Gee!… Say, wait a minute. What do you mean Lorraine Sheldon happened to come out here? I smell a rat, Sherry—a rat with a beard.

Group: 4, 6

Character: Miss Preen, Whiteside

WHITESIDE Just give him some breakfast, Sarah. He’s harmless. (whiteside barely has a moment in which to collect his thoughts before library doors are opened and MISS preen emerges. She is dressed for the street and carries a bag.)(She plants herself to l of whiteside, puts down her bag and starts drawing on a pair of gloves)And just what does this mean?

miss preen (C) It means, Mr. Whiteside, that I am leaving. My address is on the desk inside, you can send me a check.

whItesidE. You realize, Miss Preen, that this is completely un­professional?

MISS PREEN I do indeed. I am not only walking out on this case, Mr. Whiteside, but I am leaving the nursing profession. I became a nurse because all my life, ever since I was a little girl, I was filled with the idea of serving a suffering humanity. After one month with you, Mr. Whiteside, lam going to work in a munitions factory. From now on anything that I can do to help exterminate the human race will fill me with the greatest of pleasure. If Florence Nightin­gale had ever nursed you, Mr. Whiteside, she would have married Jack the Ripper instead of founding the Red Cross. Good day. (She goes UL.)