

SCENE FIVE

STELLA
STANLEY:

Naw, naw. At the Four Deuces.

STEVE:

That rutting hunk! [*He looks around the corner a bit timidly, then turns with affected boldness and runs after her.*]

BLANCHE:

I must jot that down in my notebook. Ha-ha! I'm compiling a notebook of quaint little words and phrases I've picked up here.

STANLEY:

You won't pick up nothing here you ain't heard before.

BLANCHE:

Can I count on that?

STANLEY:

You can count on it up to five hundred.

BLANCHE:

That's a mighty high number. [*He jerks open the bureau drawer, slams it shut and throws shoes in a corner. At each noise Blanche winces slightly. Finally she speaks*] What sign were you born under?

STANLEY [*while he is dressing*]:

Sign?

BLANCHE:

Astrological sign. I bet you were born under Aries. Aries people are forceful and dynamic. They dote on noise! They love to bang things around! You must have had lots of banging around in the army and now that you're out, you make up for it by treating inanimate objects with such a fury!

[*Stella has been going in and out of closet during this scene. Now she pops her head out of the closet.*]

STELLA:

Stanley was born just five minutes after Christmas.

BLANCHE:

Capricorn—the Goat!

STANLEY:

What sign were you born under?

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BLANCHE:

Oh, my birthday's next month, the fifteenth of September; that's under Virgo.

STANLEY:

What's Virgo?

BLANCHE:

Virgo is the Virgin.

STANLEY [*contemptuously*]:

Hah! [*He advances a little as he knots his tie*] Say, do you happen to know somebody named Shaw?

[*Her face expresses a faint shock. She reaches for the cologne bottle and dampens her handkerchief as she answers carefully.*]

BLANCHE:

Why, everybody knows somebody named Shaw!

STANLEY:

Well, this somebody named Shaw is under the impression he met you in Laurel, but I figure he must have got you mixed up with some other party because this other party is someone he met at a hotel called the Flamingo.

[*Blanche laughs breathlessly as she touches the cologne-dampened handkerchief to her temples.*]

BLANCHE:

I'm afraid he does have me mixed up with this "other party." The Hotel Flamingo is not the sort of establishment I would dare to be seen in!

STANLEY:

You know of it?

BLANCHE:

Yes, I've seen it and smelled it.

STANLEY:

You must've got pretty close if you could smell it.

BLANCHE:

The odor of cheap perfume is penetrating.

STANLEY:

That stuff you use is expensive?

BLANCHE:

Twenty-five dollars an ounce! I'm nearly out. That's just

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a hint if you want to remember my birthday! *[She speaks lightly but her voice has a note of fear.]*

STANLEY:

Shaw must've got you mixed up. He goes in and out of Laurel all the time so he can check on it and clear up any mistake.

[He turns away and crosses to the portieres. Blanche closes her eyes as if faint. Her hand trembles as she lifts the handkerchief again to her forehead.]

[Steve and Eunice come around corner. Steve's arm is around Eunice's shoulder and she is sobbing luxuriously and he is cooing love-words. There is a murmur of thunder as they go slowly upstairs in a tight embrace.]

STANLEY *[to Stella]*:

I'll wait for you at the Four Deuces!

STELLA:

Hey! Don't I rate one kiss?

STANLEY:

Not in front of your sister.

[He goes out. Blanche rises from her chair. She seems faint; looks about her with an expression of almost panic.]

BLANCHE:

Stella! What have you heard about me?

STELLA:

Huh?

BLANCHE:

What have people been telling you about me?

STELLA:

Telling?

BLANCHE:

You haven't heard any—unkind—gossip about me?

STELLA:

Why, no, Blanche, of course not!

BLANCHE:

Honey, there was—a good deal of talk in Laurel.

STELLA:

About you, Blanche?

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BLANCHE:

I wasn't so good the last two years or so, after Belle Reve had started to slip through my fingers.

STELLA:

All of us do things we—

BLANCHE:

I never was hard or self-sufficient enough. When people are soft—soft people have got to shimmer and glow—they've got to put on soft colors, the colors of butterfly wings, and put a—paper lantern over the light. . . . It isn't enough to be soft. You've got to be soft *and attractive*. And I—I'm fading now! I don't know how much longer I can turn the trick.

[The afternoon has faded to dusk. Stella goes into the bedroom and turns on the light under the paper lantern. She holds a bottled soft drink in her hand.]

BLANCHE:

Have you been listening to me?

STELLA:

I don't listen to you when you are being morbid! *[She advances with the bottled coke.]*

BLANCHE *[with abrupt change to gaiety]*:

Is that coke for me?

STELLA:

Not for anyone else!

BLANCHE:

Why, you precious thing, you! Is it just coke?

STELLA *[turning]*:

You mean you want a shot in it!

BLANCHE:

Well, honey, a shot never does a coke any harm! Let me! You mustn't wait on me!

STELLA:

I like to wait on you, Blanche. It makes it seem more like home. *[She goes into the kitchen, finds a glass and pours a shot of whiskey into it.]*

BLANCHE:

I have to admit I love to be waited on . . .

[She rushes into the bedroom. Stella goes to her with the glass. Blanche suddenly clutches Stella's free hand with a moaning sound and presses the hand to her lips. Stella is embarrassed by her show of emotion. Blanche speaks in a choked voice.]

You're—you're—so good to me! And I—

STELLA:
Blanche.

BLANCHE:
I know, I won't! You hate me to talk sentimental! But honey, believe I feel things more than I tell you! I won't stay long! I won't, I promise I—

STELLA:
Blanche!

BLANCHE [hysterically]:
I won't, I promise, I'll go! Go soon! I will really! I won't hang around until he—throws me out...

STELLA:
Now will you stop talking foolish?

BLANCHE:
Yes, honey. Watch how you pour—that fizzy stuff foams over!

[Blanche laughs shrilly and grabs the glass, but her hand shakes so it almost slips from her grasp. Stella pours the coke into the glass. It foams over and spills. Blanche gives a piercing cry.]

STELLA [shocked by the cry]:
Heavens!

BLANCHE:
Right on my pretty white skirt!

STELLA:
Oh... Use my hanky. Blot gently.

BLANCHE [slowly recovering]:
I know—gently—gently...

STELLA:
Did it stain?

BLANCHE:
Not a bit. Ha-ha! Isn't that lucky? [She sits down shaking,

taking a grateful drink. She holds the glass in both hands and continues to laugh a little.]

STELLA:
Why did you scream like that?

BLANCHE:
I don't know why I screamed! [continuing nervously] Mitch—Mitch is coming at seven. I guess I am just feeling nervous about our relations. [She begins to talk rapidly and breathlessly] He hasn't gotten a thing but a goodnight kiss, that's all I have given him, Stella. I want his respect. And men don't want anything they get too easy. But on the other hand men lose interest quickly. Especially when the girl is over—thirty. They think a girl over thirty ought to—the vulgar term is—"put out." . . . And I—I'm not "putting out." Of course he—he doesn't know—I mean I haven't informed him—of my real age!

STELLA:
Why are you sensitive about your age?

BLANCHE:
Because of hard knocks my vanity's been given. What I mean is—he thinks I'm sort of—prim and proper, you know! [She laughs out sharply] I want to deceive him enough to make him—want me...

STELLA:
Blanche, do you want him?

BLANCHE:
I want to rest! I want to breathe quietly again! Yes—I want Mitch . . . very badly! Just think! If it happens! I can leave here and not be anyone's problem . . . [Stanley comes around the corner with a drink under his belt.]

STANLEY [blawing]:

Hey, Steve! Hey, Eunice! Hey, Stella!
[There are joyous calls from above. Tripped and drums are heard from around the corner.]

STELLA [kissing Blanche impulsively]:
It will happen!

BLANCHE [doubtfully]:
It will?