

SIDE #1

(Script pages: Middle of p. 7 – top of p. 9)

Mrs. Stanley (Daisy), Mrs. Dexter and Mrs. McCutcheon

(Add Mr. Stanley on page 2)

(with June)

We are at the beginning of the play. Sheridan Whiteside has yet to emerge from the Library, where he is being tended to by his newly acquired nurse, Miss Preen, and the local doctor, Dr. Bradley. There is a general buzz within the household, around the town — and, indeed, all over the planet — that Sheridan Whiteside, the world-famous man of letters, friend of Hollywood royalty and hob-nobber with the global power elite, has been holed up for several days in the Stanley's library with a broken hip. The anticipation has reached excruciating levels as the emergence of the Great Man is, apparently, imminent. Being in such proximity to illustriousness, and at the epicenter of this event of historical significance, qualifies as perhaps the most profound and memorable moment in Daisy's life. She is beside herself with star-struck excitement, as are so many in the town — at least, those who have not yet been on the wrong end of Sheridan Whiteside's verbal abuse. This moment, two friends of Daisy's drop by in the hopes of catching a glimpse of the great Whiteside; June, Daisy's 20-ish daughter, answers the door.

JUNE ushers two friends of her mother's, MRS.DEXTER and MRS. MCCUTCHEON, in from the entrance hall, L. 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: Good morning!

MRS. STANLEY: 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)

MRS. STANLEY: 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

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just can't tell you what's been going on, I'm simply exhausted.
(Crosses R., sits chair R.C.)

MRS. DEXTER: (Crossing to MRS. STANLEY R.) There's a big piece about it in this week's "Time." Did you see it?

MRS. STANLEY: No — Really?

MRS. MCCUTCHEON: (Crosses R., gives MRS. DEXTER the calf's-foot jelly, reads from "Time" Magazine). 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 Falstaffian 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 the 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 D.L., 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 businessman — is descending stairs C.)

STANLEY: Daisy, I can't wait any longer. If Mr. Whiteside — ah, good morning, ladies.

LADIES: Good morning.

MRS. STANLEY: (Rises, crosses C.) Ernest, he's coming out any minute, and H.G. Wells telephoned from London, and we're in *Time*. Look. (She hands Time to Stanley.)

STANLEY: (As he hands magazine back to her.) I don't like this kind of publicity at all, Daisy. When do you suppose he's going to leave?

MRS. STANLEY: Well he's only getting up this morning — after all, he's had quite a shock, and he's been in bed for two full weeks. He'll certainly have to rest a few days, Ernest.

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STANLEY:

Well, I'm sure it's a great honor, his being in the house, but it *is* a little upsetting — phone going all the time, bells ringing, messenger boys running in and out —