

SIDE #10

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Expressman, Whiteside, Miss Preen, John

It is Christmas Eve. Whiteside's plot to destroy Maggie's romance with Bert Jefferson has been put into motion; he has lured Lorraine Sheldon to Mesalia from London with the promise of the lead role in Bert's play, which, he has assured her, is tailor-made for her. In this scene, left alone in the living room, Whiteside has just called the local hotel where Lorraine will be staying to see if she has arrived yet. She has not, and he must play the waiting game. Now that he knows his hip is perfectly healthy, and tired of sitting for almost three weeks, he rises tentatively from his wheelchair and indulges in a little jig – at that moment, MISS PREEN enters, and he scurries back to his wheelchair and confronts her guiltily.

(MISS PREEN enters, carrying a basin with a hot-water bag and an inhalator.)

WHITESIDE: (Annoyed.) What do you want, coming in like that? Why don't you knock before you come into a room?

MISS PREEN: (Crossing down to R. of wheelchair.) But — I wasn't coming in. I was coming out.

WHITESIDE: Miss Preen, you are obviously coming *in* this room. That is true, isn't it?

MISS PREEN: Yes, it is, but —

WHITESIDE: Therefore, you *came in*. (Before MISS PREEN can reply, however, JOHN enters from dining room up R. and crosses L. to exit L.) Hereafter, please knock.

JOHN: (En route to front door up L.) There's some expressmen here with a crate, Mr. Whiteside. I told them to come around the front.

WHITESIDE: Thank you, John . . . Don't stand there, Miss Preen. You look like a frozen custard. Go away.

MISS PREEN: (Controlling herself as best she can.) Yes, sir. (She exits up R. At the same time, an EXPRESSMAN carrying a crate enters from front door.)

JOHN: (Up L.) Bring it right in here. Careful there — don't scrape the wall. Why, it's some kind of animals.

EXPRESSMAN: (Crossing R. to up C.) I'll say it's animals. We had to feed 'em at seven o'clock this morning.

WHITESIDE: Who's it from, John?

JOHN: (Crossing R.) (Reading from top of crate as they set it down.) Admiral Richard E. Byrd. Say!

WHITESIDE: Bring it over here. (EXPRESSMAN carries it to chair. JOHN crosses to chair; WHITESIDE peers through slats.) Why, they're penguins. Two — three — four penguins. Hello, my pretties.

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EXPRESSMAN: (*Crossing L.*) Directions for feeding are right on top. Two of those slats are loose.

JOHN: (*Reading.*) “To be fed only whale blubber, eels and cracked lobster.”

EXPRESSMAN: They got Coca-Cola this morning. And liked it. (*He goes L.*)