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Beverly Carlton with Whiteside and Maggie

Beverly Carlton is based on Noel Coward, who, in real life, was a close friend of Alexander Woollcott (on whom Sheridan Whiteside is based). Coward was a true man of the theater; an accomplished actor, singer, playwright, songwriter, film director and all-around-wit, he was uniquely treasured in the United States as well as in his native England. In Beverly Carlton's incarnation of Noel Coward, he is a loyal friend to both Maggie and Sherry and something of an incorrigible prankster who enjoys pretending to be a conceited, egotistical snob. And, although he is genuinely elegant and always sophisticated, this mega-star, celebrated for his genius on two continents, nevertheless retains a down-to-earth quality.

In this scene, Beverly drops in to visit Sherry in the midst of his constant world travels in Sherry's "time of need" to offer support.

BEVERLY: (Offstage, at door.) Magpie!

MAGGIE: (Offstage, answering the door.) Beverly!

BEVERLY: (Offstage) A large, most, incestuous kiss for *my* Magpie!

WHITESIDE: (Roaring.) Come in here, you Piccadilly pen-pusher, and gaze upon a soul in agony!

BEVERLY CARLTON enters L., crosses to C. arm in arm with MAGGIE. Very confident, very British, very Beverly Carlton. He throws his coat over newel-post. MAGGIE puts his hat on table back of couch.)

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 rollicked through Zambesia, seducing the Major-General's daughter and finishing a three-act play at the same time? (Crosses to MAGGIE L.) Magpie, dear, you are the moonflower 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: 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?

WHITESIDE: You did indeed. She's paying us a Christmas visit.

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- BEVERLY:** Dear girl! They do say she set fire to her mother, but I don't believe it . . . Sherry (*Sits on stool R.C.*), my evil one, not only have I written the finest comedy since Molière, 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 Aldus Huxley, among others. Dear, sweet, incomparable Banjo. (*Crossing to couch, he puts his arm around 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:** Oh, I knew I had a bit of dirt for us all to nibble on. (*He draws a letter out of his pocket.*)
- WHITESIDE:** Is it something juicy?
- BEVERLY:** (*To stool L. of wheelchair — sits.*) Juicy as a pomegranate. It is the latest report from London on the winter maneuvers of Miss Lorraine Sheldon against the left flank — in fact, all flanks — of Lord Cedric Bottomley. Listen: "Lorraine has just

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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 weekends, 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? *(Rises to C.)*

MAGGIE:

No, I haven't.

(He goes immediately into an impersonation of His Lordship. Very British, very full of teeth, stuttering.)

BEVERLY:

"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.)*