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Harriet Stanley with Sheridan Whiteside

NOTE: Harriet Stanley's appearances onstage occur throughout the play; each appearance is brief, as she is a fleeting, other-worldly character. As such, this audition text comprises all four of her appearances, which can be performed by auditioners as separate vignettes, but within a single audition reading.

The first vignette is Harriet's first appearance: her initial encounter with Whiteside in Act 1, Scene 1. Maggie Cutler, Sheridan Whiteside's secretary, has just been scolding him for his persistent lack of manners and demanding nature.

WHITESIDE: And now, if we may dismiss the subject of my charm, for which, incidentally, I receive fifteen hundred dollars per appearance (*Harriet enters L.*), possibly we can go to work . . . Oh, no, we can't. Yes?

(MAGGIE crosses R. to D.R. This last is addressed to a wraith-like lady of uncertain years, who has more or less floated into the room. She is carrying a large spray of holly, and her whole manner suggests something not quite of this world.)

HARRIET: (*Crosses to him. Her voice seems to float, too.*) My name is Harriet Stanley. I know you are Sheridan Whiteside. I saw this holly, framed green against the pine trees. I remembered what you had written about "Tess" and "Jude the Obscure." It was the nicest present I could bring you. (*She places holly in his lap, and exits upstairs C.*)

The second vignette is Harriet's second appearance, which takes place toward the beginning of Act 1, Scene 2. It is a week later, and Whiteside has completely taken over the house and household. As Harriet enters, Whiteside is bullying his nurse, Miss Preen, into a hasty retreat out of the room.

(with one line from **MR. STANLEY** toward end)

WHITESIDE: (*To MISS PREEN, impatiently.*) All right, all right. Go back to your sex life.

(MISS PREEN goes out. WHITESIDE tries to settle down to his book, but his mind is plainly troubled. He shifts a little; looks anxiously toward outer door. HARRIET STANLEY comes softly down the steps. She seems delighted to find WHITESIDE alone.)

HARRIET: (*Opening cardboard portfolio she has brought with her — crossing down C.*) Dear Mr. Whiteside, may I show you a few mementoes of the past? I somehow feel that you would love them as I do.

WHITESIDE: I'd be delighted. (*Observing her.*) Miss Stanley, haven't we met somewhere before?

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HARRIET: Oh, no. I would have remembered. It would have been one of my cherished memories — like these. *(She spreads portfolio before him.)* Look! Here I am with my first sweetheart, under our lovely beechwood trees. I was eight and he was ten. I have never forgotten him. What happy times we had! What — *(She stops short as she hears footsteps on stairway.)*

MR. STANLEY: *(From upstairs.)* But I tell you I'm going to.

HARRIET: There's someone coming! I'll come back! . . . *(She gathers up portfolio and vanishes into dining room U.R. WHITESIDE looks after her, puzzled.)*

The third vignette takes place another week later. It is Christmas Eve. Whiteside's plan to undermine Maggie's romance is now underway. He is awaiting the arrival of Lorraine Sheldon, glamorous star of stage and screen, who will help him execute his plot to sink Maggie's romance by seducing Maggie's new love interest, Bert Jefferson, thereby allowing Whiteside to retain her services. Whiteside has just summarily dismissed Mr. and Mrs. Stanley to their rooms, and they are about to leave: Daisy perplexed, and Ernest approaching apoplectic.

(with one line from MR. STANLEY at beginning)

WHITESIDE: Why, Mr. Stanley, what happened to your forehead? Did you have an accident?

MR. STANLEY: *(Vexed to the point of distraction.)* No, Mr. Whiteside. I'm taking boxing lessons. . . . Go ahead, Daisy. *(They go L.)*

HARRIET, *who has been hovering at head of stairs, hurries down as the STANLEYS depart. She is carrying a little Christmas package.*

HARRIET: *(Crosses R.)* Dear Mr. Whiteside, I've been trying all day to see you. To give you — *this*.

WHITESIDE: Why, Miss Stanley. A Christmas gift for me?

HARRIET: It's only a trifle, but I wanted you to have it. It's a picture of me as I used to be. It was taken on another Christmas Eve, many years ago. Don't open it till the stroke of midnight, *will you?* *(The doorbell rings. HARRIET looks apprehensively over her shoulder.)* Merry Christmas, dear Mr. Whiteside. Merry Christmas.

WHITESIDE: Merry Christmas to you, Miss Stanley, and thank you.
(She glides out of the room, up R.)

Harriet's fourth and final vignette takes place on Christmas morning. Whiteside's plot to insert Lorraine as a wedge between Maggie and her new boyfriend, Bert Jefferson, has succeeded beautifully; Lorraine has just left for a weekend with Bert to her hideaway in Lake Placid — ostensibly to "help him with his play" but really of

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course, to seduce him. However, Whiteside vastly underestimated Maggie's reaction to his meddling; she has just stormed out of the room in a state of utter despair, leaving Whiteside – for once – feeling remorseful. It is at this moment that Harriet makes her final entrance, descending the staircase.

HARRIET: (Crosses 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 you — 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.)
