

SIDE #8

(Script pages: Bottom of p. 27 – 1/3 down p. 29)

Whiteside and Maggie

Whiteside has just learned from Richard and June that Maggie has been on an ice-skating date with Bert Jefferson, the local newspaperman. Whiteside correctly surmises that romance has taken hold of Maggie, and that he is at risk of losing his loyal secretary. This does not make him happy, and, when she arrives, Whiteside's first order of business is to nip this in the bud and to encourage Maggie to go back to focusing on what's most important: Sheridan Whiteside and his needs.

MAGGIE enters L. fresh from her date with BERT JEFFERSON. Her cheeks are rosy and there is a glow about her that WHITESIDE has never seen before — a glow that cannot be explained by the hours spent doing figure eights on the frozen pond alone. She puts her bag and gloves on the table back of couch.

MAGGIE: Good evening, Sherry. Really, Sherry, you've got this room looking like an old parrot-cage . . . Did you nap while I was out? *(Crossing R. to C. WHITESIDE merely glowers at her.)* What's the matter, dear? Cat run away with your tongue?

WHITESIDE: *(Furious.)* Don't look at me with those great cow-eyes, you sex-ridden hag. Where have you been all afternoon? Alley-cattin' around with Bert Jefferson?

MAGGIE: *(Her face aglow, crossing to him.)* Sherry, Bert read his play to me this afternoon. It's superb. It isn't just that play written by a newspaperman. It's superb. *(To him.)* I want you to read it *tonight*. *(She puts it in his lap.)* It just cries out for Cornell. Will you send it to her, Sherry? And will you read it tonight?

WHITESIDE: No, I will not read it tonight or any other time. And while we're on the subject of Mr. Jefferson, you might ask him if he wouldn't like to pay your salary, since he takes up all your time.

MAGGIE: *(She is on her knees, gathering up debris L. of wheelchair.)* Oh, come now, Sherry. It isn't as bad as that.

WHITESIDE: I have not been able to reach you, not knowing what haylofts you frequent.

MAGGIE: *(Crossing to back of sofa with box of debris.)* Oh, stop behaving like a spoiled child, Sherry.

WHITESIDE: Don't take that patronizing tone with me, you flea-bitten Cleopatra. I am sick and tired of your sneaking out like some love-sick high-school girl every time my back is turned.

MAGGIE: Well, Sherry — I'm afraid you've hit the nail on the head. *(Taking of hat and putting it on table back of couch.)*

WHITESIDE: Stop acting like Zazu Pitts and explain yourself.

MAGGIE: *(To C.)* I'll make it quick, Sherry. I'm in love.

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WHITESIDE: Nonsense. This is merely delayed puberty.

MAGGIE: No, Sherry, I'm afraid this is it. You're going to lose a very excellent secretary.

WHITESIDE: You are out of your mind.

MAGGIE: Yes, I think I am a little. But I'm a girl who's waited a long time for this to happen, and now it has. Mr. Jefferson doesn't know it yet, but I'm going to try my darndest to marry him.
(Eases L.)

WHITESIDE: (As she pauses.) Is that all?

MAGGIE: Yes, except that — well — I suppose this is what might be called my resignation, as soon as you've got someone else.

WHITESIDE: (A slight pause.) Now listen to me, Maggie. We have been together for a long time. You are indispensable to me, but I think I am unselfish enough not to let that stand in the way where your happiness is concerned. Because, whether you know it or not, I have a deep affection for you.

MAGGIE: (Eases R.) I know that, Sherry.

WHITESIDE: That being the case, I will not stand by and allow you to make a fool of yourself.

MAGGIE: I'm not, Sherry.

WHITESIDE: You are, my dear. You are behaving like a Booth Tarkington heroine. It's — it's incredible. I cannot believe that a girl who for the past ten years has had the great of the world served up on a platter before her, I cannot believe that it is anything but a kind of temporary insanity when you are swept off your feet in seven days by a second-rate, small-town newspaper man.

MAGGIE: (To him.) Sherry, I can't explain what's happened. I can only tell you that it's so. It's hard for me to believe, too, Sherry. Here I am, a hard-bitten old cynic, behaving like True Story Magazine, and liking it. Discovering the moon, and ice-skating — I keep laughing to myself all the time, but there it is. What can I do about it, Sherry? I'm in love.