SCENE SEVEN

STANLEY:
Temperature too on the nose, and she soaks herself in a hot tub.

STELLA:
She says it cools her off for the evening.

STANLEY:
And you run out an' get her cokes, I suppose? And serve 'em to Her Majesty in the tub? [Stella shrugs] Set down here a minute.

STELLA:
Stanley, I've got things to do.

STANLEY:
Set down! I've got th' dope on your big sister, Stella.

STELLA:
Stanley, stop picking on Blanche.

STANLEY:
That girl calls me common!

STELLA:
Lately you been doing all you can think of to rub her the wrong way, Stanley, and Blanche is sensitive and you've got to realize that Blanche and I grew up under very different circumstances than you did.

STANLEY:
So I been told. And told and told and told! You know she's been feeding us a pack of lies here?

STELLA:
No, I don't, and—

STANLEY:
Well, she has, however. But now the cat's out of the bag! I found out some things!

STELLA:
What—things?

STANLEY:
Things I already suspected. But now I got proof from the most reliable sources—which I have checked on!

[Blanche is singing in the bathroom a saccharine popular ballad which is used contrapuntally with Stanley's speech.]

STELLA [to Stanley]:
Lower your voice!

STANLEY:
Some canary-bird, huh!

STELLA:
Now please tell me quietly what you think you've found out about my sister.

STANLEY:
Lie Number One: All this squeamishness she puts on! You should just know the line she's been feeding to Mitch. He thought she had never been more than kissed by a fellow! But Sister Blanche is no lily! Ha-ha! Some lily she is!

STELLA:
What have you heard and who from?

STANLEY:
Our supply-man down at the plant has been going through Laurel for years and he knows all about her and everybody else in the town of Laurel knows all about her. She is as famous in Laurel as if she was the President of the United States, only she is not respected by any party! This supply-man stops at a hotel called the Flamingo.
SCENE SEVEN

BLANCHE [singing blithely]:
"Say, it's only a paper moon, Sailing over a cardboard sea—But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"

STELLA:
What about the—Flamingo?

STANLEY:
She stayed there, too.

STELLA:
My sister lived at Belle Reve.

STANLEY:
This is after the home-place had slipped through her lily-white fingers! She moved to the Flamingo! A second-class hotel which has the advantage of not interfering in the private social life of the personalities there! The Flamingo is used to all kinds of goings-on. But even the management of the Flamingo was impressed by Dame Blanche! In fact they was so impressed by Dame Blanche that they requested her to turn in her room-key—for permanently! This happened a couple of weeks before she showed here.

BLANCHE [singing]:
"It's a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be—
But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"

STELLA:
What—contemptible—lies!

STANLEY:
Sure, I can see how you would be upset by this. She pulled the wool over your eyes as much as Mitch's!

SCENE SEVEN

STELLA:
It’s pure invention! There’s not a word of truth in it and if I were a man and this creature had dared to invent such things in my presence—

BLANCHE [singing]:
"Without your love,
It’s a honky-tonk parade!
Without your love,
It’s a melody played In a penny arcade…"

STANLEY:
Honey, I told you I thoroughly checked on these stories! Now wait till I finished. The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel! They got wised up after two or three dates with her and then they quit, and she goes on to another, the same old line, same old act, same old hokey! But the town was too small for this to go on forever! And as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco—nuts.

[Stella draws back.]
And for the last year or two she has been washed up like poison. That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act—because she's practically told by the mayor to get out of town! Yes, did you know there was an army camp near Laurel and your sister's was one of the places called "Out-of-Bounds"?

BLANCHE:
"It's only a paper moon, Just as phony as it can be—
But it wouldn't be make-believe If you believed in me!"
SCENE SEVEN

STANLEY:
Well, so much for her being such a refined and particular type of girl. Which brings us to Lie Number Two.

STELLA:
I don’t want to hear any more!

STANLEY:
She’s not going back to teach school! In fact I am willing to bet you that she never had no idea of returning to Laurel! She didn’t resign temporarily from the high school because of her nerves! No, siree, Bob! She didn’t. They kicked her out of that high school before the spring term ended—and I hate to tell you the reason that step was taken! A seventeen-year-old boy—she’d gotten mixed up with!

BLANCHE:
“It’s a Barnum and Bailey world, Just as phony as it can be—"

[In the bathroom the water goes on loud; little breathless cries and peals of laughter are heard as if a child were frolicking in the tub.]

STELLA:
This is making me—sick!

STANLEY:
The boy’s dad learned about it and got in touch with the high school superintendent. Boy, oh, boy, I’d like to have been in that office when Dame Blanche was called on the carpet! I’d like to have seen her trying to squirm out of that one! But they had her on the hook good and proper

that time and she knew that the jig was all up! They told her she better move on to some fresh territory. Yep, it was practically a town ordinance passed against her!

[The bathroom door is opened and Blanche shrugs her head out, holding a towel about her hair.]

BLANCHE:
Stella!

STELLA [faintly]:
Yes, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
Give me another bath-towel to dry my hair with. I’ve just washed it.

STELLA:
Yes, Blanche. [She crosses in a dazed way from the kitchen to the bathroom door with a towel.]

BLANCHE:
What’s the matter, honey?

STELLA:
Matter? Why?

BLANCHE:
You have such a strange expression on your face!

STELLA:
Oh—[She tries to laugh] I guess I’m a little tired!

BLANCHE:
Why don’t you bathe, too, soon as I get out?

STANLEY [calling from the kitchen]:
How soon is that going to be?

BLANCHE:
Not so terribly long! Possess your soul in patience!
SCENE SEVEN

STANLEY:
It's not my soul, it's my kidneys I'm worried about!

[Blanche slams the door. Stanley laughs harshly. Stella comes slowly back into the kitchen.]

STANLEY:
Well, what do you think of it?

STELLA:
I don't believe all of those stories and I think your supply-man was mean and rotten to tell them. It's possible that some of the things he said are partly true. There are things about my sister I don't approve of—things that caused sorrow at home. She was always—flighty!

STANLEY:
Flighty!

STELLA:
But when she was young, very young, she married a boy who wrote poetry... He was extremely good-looking. I think Blanche didn't just love him but worshipped the ground he walked on! Adored him and thought him almost too fine to be human! But then she found out—

STANLEY:
What?

STELLA:
This beautiful and talented young man was a degenerate. Didn't your supply-man give you that information?

STANLEY:
All we discussed was recent history. That must have been a pretty long time ago.

STELLA:
Yes, it was—a pretty long time ago...

[Stanley comes up and takes her by the shoulders rather gently. She gently withdraws from him. Automatically she starts sticking little pink candles in the birthday cake.]

STANLEY:
How many candles you putting in that cake?

STELLA:
I'll stop at twenty-five.

STANLEY:
Is company expected?

STELLA:
We asked Mitch to come over for cake and ice-cream.

[Stanley looks a little uncomfortable. He lights a cigarette from the one he has just finished.]

STANLEY:
I wouldn't be expecting Mitch over tonight.

[Stella pauses in her occupation with candles and looks slowly around at Stanley.]

STELLA:
Why?

STANLEY:
Mitch is a buddy of mine. We were in the same outfit together—Two-forty-first Engineers. We work in the same plant and now on the same bowling team. You think I could face him if—

STELLA:
Stanley Kowalski, did you—did you repeat what that—?
SCENE SEVEN

STANLEY:
You're goddam right I told him! I'd have that on my conscience the rest of my life if I knew all that stuff and let my best friend get caught!

STELLA:
Is Mitch through with her?

STANLEY:
Wouldn't you be if—?

STELLA:
I said, Is Mitch through with her?

[Blanche's voice is lifted again, serenely as a bell. She sings: "But it wouldn't be make believe if you believed in me."

STANLEY:
No, I don't think he's necessarily through with her—just wised up!

STELLA:
Stanley, she thought Mitch was—going to—going to marry her. I was hoping so, too.

STANLEY:
Well, he's not going to marry her. Maybe he was, but he's not going to jump in a tank with a school of sharks—now! [He rises] Blanche! Oh, Blanche! Can I please get in my bathroom? [There is a pause.]

BLANCHE:
Yes, indeed, sir! Can you wait one second while I dry?

STANLEY:
Having waited one hour I guess one second ought to pass in a hurry.

STELLA:
And she hasn't got her job? Well, what will she do?

STANLEY:
She's not stayin' here after Tuesday. You know that, don't you? Just to make sure I bought her ticket myself. A bus-ticket!

STELLA:
In the first place, Blanche wouldn't go on a bus.

STANLEY:
She'll go on a bus and like it.

STELLA:
No, she won't, no, she won't, Stanley!

STANLEY:
She'll go! Period. P.S. She'll go Tuesday!

STELLA [slowly]:
What'll—she—do? What on earth will she—do?

STANLEY:
Her future is mapped out for her.

STELLA:
What do you mean?

[Blanche sings.]

STANLEY:
Hey, canary bird! Toots! Get OUT of the BATH-ROOM!

[The bathroom door flies open and Blanche emerges with a gay peal of laughter, but as Stanley crosses past her, a frightened look appears in her face, almost a look of panic. He doesn't look at her but slams the bathroom door shut as he goes in.]
SCENE SEVEN

BLANCHE [snatching up a hair-brush]: Oh, I feel so good after my long, hot bath, I feel so good and cool and—rested!

STELLA [sadly and doubtfully from the kitchen]: Do you, Blanche?

BLANCHE [brushing her hair vigorously]: Yes, I do, so refreshed! [She sinks her highball glass.] A hot bath and a long, cold drink always give me a brand new outlook on life! [She looks through the portieres at Stella, standing between them, and slowly stops brushing.] Something has happened!—What is it?

STELLA [turning away quickly]: Why, nothing has happened, Blanche.

BLANCHE: You’re lying! Something has!

[She stares fearfully at Stella, who pretends to be busy at the table. The distant piano goes into a hectic breakdown.]

SCENE EIGHT

Three-quarters of an hour later.

The view through the big windows is fading gradually into a still-golden dusk. A torch of sunlight blazes on the side of a big water-tank or oil-drum across the empty lot toward the business district which is now pierced by pinpoints of lighted windows or windows reflecting the sunset.

The three people are completing a dismal birthday supper. Stanley looks sullen. Stella is embarrassed and sad. Blanche has a tight, artificial smile on her drawn face. There is a fourth place at the table which is left vacant.

BLANCHE [suddenly]: Stanley, tell us a joke, tell us a funny story to make us all laugh. I don’t know what’s the matter, we’re all so solemn. Is it because I’ve been stood up by my beau?

[Stella laughs feebly.] It’s the first time in my entire experience with men, and I’ve had a good deal of all sorts, that I’ve actually been stood up by anybody! Ha-ha! I don’t know how to take it. . . . Tell us a funny little story, Stanley! Something to help us out.

STANLEY: I didn’t think you liked my stories, Blanche.

BLANCHE: I like them when they’re amusing but not indecent.

STANLEY: I don’t know any refined enough for your taste.
BLANCHE:
Then let me tell one.

STELLA:
Yes, you tell one, Blanche. You used to know lots of good stories.

[The music fades.]

BLANCHE:
Let me see, now.... I must run through my repertoire! Oh, yes—I love parrot stories! Do you all like parrot stories? Well, this one's about the old maid and the parrot. This old maid, she had a parrot that cursed a blue streak and knew more vulgar expressions than Mr. Kowalski.

STANLEY:
Huh.

BLANCHE:
And the only way to hush the parrot up was to put the cover back on its cage so it would think it was night and go back to sleep. Well, one morning the old maid had just uncovered the parrot for the day—when who should she see coming up the front walk but the preacher! Well, she rushed back to the parrot and slipped the cover back on the cage and then she let in the preacher. And the parrot was perfectly still, just as quiet as a mouse, but just as she was asking the preacher how much sugar he wanted in his coffee—the parrot broke the silence with a loud—[She whistles]—and said—"God damn, but that was a short day!"

[She throws back her head and laughs. Stella also makes an ineffectual effort to seem amused. Stanley

pays no attention to the story but reaches way over the table to spear his fork into the remaining chop which he eats with his fingers.]

BLANCHE:
Apparently Mr. Kowalski was not amused.

STELLA:
Mr. Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself to think of anything else!

STANLEY:
That's right, baby.

STELLA:
Your face and your fingers are disgustingly greasy. Go and wash up and then help me clear the table.

[He hurms a plate to the floor.]

STANLEY:
That's how I'll clear the table! [He seizes her arm] Don't ever talk that way to me! "Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!"—them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister's too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember what Huey Long said—"Every Man is a King!" And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! [He hurms a cup and saucer to the floor] My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places?

[Stella begins to cry weakly. Stanley stalks out on the porch and lights a cigarette.

[The Negro entertainers around the corner are heard.]
SCENE EIGHT

BLANCHE:
What happened while I was bathing? What did he tell you, Stella?

STELLA:
Nothing, nothing, nothing!

BLANCHE:
I think he told you something about Mitch and me! You know why Mitch didn't come but you won't tell me! [Stella shakes her head helplessly] I'm going to call him!

STELLA:
I wouldn't call him, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
I am, I'm going to call him on the phone.

STELLA [miserably]:
I wish you wouldn't.

BLANCHE:
I intend to be given some explanation from someone!

[She rushes to the phone in the bedroom. Stella goes out on the porch and stares reproachfully at her husband. He grunts and turns away from her.]

STELLA:
I hope you're pleased with your doings. I never had so much trouble swallowing food in my life, looking at that girl's face and the empty chair! [She cries quietly.]

BLANCHE [at the phone]:
Hello. Mr. Mitchell, please... Oh... I would like to leave a number if I may. Magnolia 9047. And say it's important to call... Yes, very important... Thank you. [She remains by the phone with a lost, frightened look.]

[Stanley turns slowly back toward his wife and takes her clumsily in his arms.]

STANLEY:
Stell, it's gonna be all right after she goes and after you've had the baby. It's gonna be all right again between you and me the way that it was. You remember that way that it was? Them nights we had together? God, honey, it's gonna be sweet when we can make noise in the night the way that we used to and get the colored lights going with nobody's sister behind the curtains to hear us!

[Their upstairs neighbors are heard in bellowing laughter at something. Stanley chuckles.]

Steve an' Eunice...

STELLA:
Come on back in. [She returns to the kitchen and starts lighting the candles on the white cake.] Blanche?

BLANCHE:
Yes. [She returns from the bedroom to the table in the kitchen.] Oh, those pretty, pretty little candles! Oh, don't burn them, Stella.

STELLA:
I certainly will.

[Stanley comes back in.]

BLANCHE:
You ought to save them for baby's birthdays. Oh, I hope candles are going to glow in his life and I hope that his
eyes are going to be like candles, like two blue candles
lighted in a white cake!

STANLEY [sitting down]:
What poetry!

BLANCHE [she pauses reflectively for a moment]:
I shouldn’t have called him.

STELLA:
There’s lots of things could have happened.

BLANCHE:
There’s no excuse for it, Stella. I don’t have to put up with
insults. I won’t be taken for granted.

STANLEY:
Goddamn, it’s hot in here with the steam from the bath-
room.

BLANCHE:
I’ve said I was sorry three times. [The piano fades out.] I
take hot baths for my nerves. Hydro-therapy, they call it. You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of
course you don’t know what anxiety feels like!

STANLEY:
I am not a Polack. People from Poland are Poles, not
Polacks. But what I am is a one hundred percent Ameri-
can, born and raised in the greatest country on earth and
proud as hell of it, so don’t ever call me a Polack.

[The phone rings. Blanche rises expectantly.]

BLANCHE:
Oh, that’s for me, I’m sure.

STANLEY:
I’m not sure. Keep your seat. [He crosses leisurely to
phone.] H’lo. Aw, yeh, hello, Mac.

[He leans against wall, staring insolently in at Blanche.
She sinks back in her chair with a frightened look.
Stella leans over and touches her shoulder.]

BLANCHE:
Oh, keep your hands off me, Stella. What is the matter
with you? Why do you look at me with that pitying
look?

STANLEY [bawling]:
QUIET IN THERE!—We’ve got a noisy woman on the
place.—Go on, Mac. At Riley’s? No, I don’t wanna bowl
at Riley’s. I had a little trouble with Riley last week. I’m
the team-captain, ain’t I? All right, then, we’re not gonna
bowl at Riley’s, we’re gonna bowl at the West Side or
the Gala. All right, Mac. See you!

[He hangs up and returns to the table. Blanche fiercely
controverting herself, drinking quickly from her tumbler
of water. He doesn’t look at her but reaches in a
pocket. Then he speaks slowly and with false amiabil-
ity.]

Sister Blanche, I’ve got a little birthday remembrance
for you.

BLANCHE:
Oh, have you, Stanley? I wasn’t expecting any, I—I don’t
know why Stella wants to observe my birthday! I’d much
rather forget it—when you—reach twenty-seven! Well—
age is a subject that you’d prefer to—ignore!

STANLEY:
Twenty-seven?
SCENE EIGHT

BLANCHE [quickly]:
What is it? Is it for me?

[He is holding a little envelope toward her.]

STANLEY:
Yes, I hope you like it!

BLANCHE:
Why, why—Why, it's a—

STANLEY:
Ticket! Back to Laurell! On the Greyhound! Tuesday!

[The Varsowiana music steals in softly and continues playing. Stella rises abruptly and turns her back. Blanches tries to smile. Then she tries to laugh. Then she gives both up and springs from the table and runs into the next room. She clutches her throat and then runs into the bathroom. Coughing, gagging sounds are heard.]

Well!

STELLA:
You didn't need to do that.

STANLEY:
Don't forget all that I took off her.

STELLA:
You needn't have been so cruel to someone alone as she is.

STANLEY:
Delicate piece she is.

STELLA:
She is. She was. You didn't know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change.

Do you think you're going bowling now?

STANLEY:
Sure.

STELLA:
You're not going bowling. [She catches hold of his shirt]
Why did you do this to her?

STANLEY:
I done nothing to no one. Let go of my shirt. You've torn it.

STELLA:
I want to know why. Tell me why.

STANLEY:
When we first met, me and you, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me the snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it, having them colored lights going! And wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay till she showed here?

[Stella makes a slight movement. Her look goes suddenly inward as if some interior voice had called her name. She begins a slow, shuffling progress from the bedroom to the kitchen, leaning and resting on the back of the chair and then on the edge of a table with a blind look and listening expression. Stanley, finishing with his shirt, is unaware of her reaction.]

And wasn't we happy together? Wasn't it all okay? Till
SCENE EIGHT

she showed here. Hoity-toity, describing me as an ape. [He suddenly notices the change in Stella] Hey, what is it, Stell? [He crosses to her.]

STELLA [quietly]:
Take me to the hospital.

[He is with her now, supporting her with his arm, murmuring indistinguishably as they go outside.]

SCENE NINE

A while later that evening, Blanche is seated in a tense hunched position in a bedroom chair that she has recovered with diagonal green and white stripes. She has on her scarlet satin robe. On the table beside chair is a bottle of liquor and a glass. The rapid, feverish polka tune, the "Varsouviana," is heard. The music is in her mind; she is drinking to escape it and the sense of disaster closing in on her, and she seems to whisper the words of the song. An electric fan is turning back and forth across her.

Mitch comes around the corner in work clothes: blue denim shirt and pants. He is unshaven. He climbs the steps to the door and rings. Blanche is startled.

BLANCHE:
Who is it, please?

MITCH [hoarsely]:
Me. Mitch.

[The polka tune stops.]

BLANCHE:

Mitch!—Just a minute.

[She rushes about frantically, hiding the bottle in a closet, crouching at the mirror and dabbing her face with cologne and powder. She is so excited that her breath is audible as she dashes about. At last she rushes to the door in the kitchen and lets him in.]

Mitch!—Y'know, I really shouldn't let you in after the treatment I have received from you this evening! So utterly uncavalier! But hello, beautiful!
SCENE NINE

[She offers him her lips. He ignores it and pushes past her into the flat. She looks fearfully after him as he stalks into the bedroom.]

My, my, what a cold shoulder! And such uncouth apparel! Why, you haven’t even shaved! The unforgiveable insult to a lady! But I forgive you. I forgive you because it’s such a relief to see you. You’ve stopped that polka tune that I had caught in my head. Have you ever had anything caught in your head? No, of course you haven’t, you dumb angel-puss, you’d never get anything awful caught in your head!

[He stares at her while she follows him while she talks. It is obvious that he has had a few drinks on the way over.]

MITCH:
Do we have to have that fan on?

BLANCHE:
No!

MITCH:
I don’t like fans.

BLANCHE:
Then let’s turn it off, honey. I’m not partial to them!

[She presses the switch and the fan nods slowly off. She clears her throat uneasily as Mitch plumps himself down on the bed in the bedroom and lights a cigarette.]

I don’t know what there is to drink. I—haven’t investigated.

MITCH:
I don’t want Stan’s liquor.

BLANCHE:
It isn’t Stan’s. Everything here isn’t Stan’s. Some things on the premises are actually mine! How is your mother? Isn’t your mother well?

MITCH:
Why?

BLANCHE:
Something’s the matter tonight, but never mind. I won’t cross-examine the witness. I’ll just—[She touches her forehead vaguely. The polka tune starts up again.]—pretend I don’t notice anything different about you! That—music again ...

MITCH:
What music?

BLANCHE:
The “Varsouviana”! The polka tune they were playing when Allan—Wait!

[A distant revolver shot is heard. Blanche seems relieved.]

There now, the shot! It always stops after that.

[The polka music dies out again.]

Yes, now it’s stopped.

MITCH:
Are you boxed out of your mind?

BLANCHE:
I’ll go and see what I can find in the way of—[She crosses into the closet, pretending to search for the bottle.]
SCENE NINE

Oh, by the way, excuse me for not being dressed. But I'd practically given you up! Had you forgotten your invitation to supper?

MITCH:

I wasn't going to see you any more.

BLANCHE:

Wait a minute. I can't hear what you're saying and you talk so little that when you do say something, I don't want to miss a single syllable of it.... What am I looking around here for? Oh, yes—liqueur! We've had so much excitement around here this evening that I am boxed out of my mind! [She pretends suddenly to find the bottle. He draws his foot up on the bed and stares at her contemptuously.] Here's something. Southern Comfort! What is that, I wonder?

MITCH:

If you don't know, it must belong to Stan.

BLANCHE:

Take your foot off the bed. It has a light cover on it. Of course you boys don't notice things like that. I've done so much with this place since I've been here.

MITCH:

I bet you have.

BLANCHE:

You saw it before I came. Well, look at it now! This room is almost—dainty! I want to keep it that way. I wonder if this stuff ought to be mixed with something? Ummm, it's sweet, so sweet! It's terribly, terribly sweet!

SCENE NINE

Why, it's a liqueur, I believe! Yes, that's what it is, a liqueur! [Mitch grunts.] I'm afraid you won't like it, but try it, and maybe you will.

MITCH:

I told you already I don't want none of his liquor and I mean it. You ought to lay off his liquor. He says you been lapping it up all summer like a wild-cat!

BLANCHE:

What a fantastic statement! Fantastic of him to say it, fantastic of you to repeat it! I won't descend to the level of such cheap accusations to answer them, even!

MITCH:

Huh.

BLANCHE:

What's in your mind? I see something in your eyes!

MITCH [getting up]:

It's dark in here.

BLANCHE:

I like it dark. The dark is comforting to me.

MITCH:

I don't think I ever seen you in the light. [Blanche breathlessly] That's a fact!

BLANCHE:

Is it?

MITCH:

I've never seen you in the afternoon.

BLANCHE:

Whose fault is that?
SCENE NINE

M itch:
You never want to go out in the afternoon.

B lanche:
Why, Mitch, you're at the plant in the afternoon!

M itch:
Not Sunday afternoon. I've asked you to go out with me sometimes on Sundays but you always make an excuse. You never want to go out till after six and then it's always some place that's not lighted much.

B lanche:
There is some obscure meaning in this but I fail to catch it.

M itch:
What it means is I've never had a real good look at you, Blanche. Let's turn the light on here.

B lanche [fearfully]:
Light? Which light? What for?

M itch:
This one with the paper thing on it. [He tears the paper lantern off the light bulb. She utter's a frightened gasp.]

B lanche:
What did you do that for?

M itch:
So I can take a look at you good and plain!

B lanche:
Of course you don't really mean to be insulting!

M itch:
No, just realistic.

B lanche:
I don't want realism. I want magic! [Mitch laughs] Yes, yes, magic! I try to give that to people. I misrepresent things to them. I don't tell truth, I tell what ought to be truth. And if that is sinful, then let me be damned for it!—Don't turn the light on!

[Mitch crosses to the switch. He turns the light on and stares at her. She cries out and covers her face. He turns the light off again.]

M itch [slowly and bitterly]:
I don't mind you being older than what I thought. But all the rest of it—Christ! That pitch about your ideals being so old-fashioned and all the malarkey that you've dished out all summer. Oh, I knew you weren't sixteen any more. But I was a fool enough to believe you was straight.

B lanche:
Who told you I wasn't—'straight'? My loving brother-in-law. And you believed him.

M itch:
I called him a liar at first. And then I checked on the story. First I asked our supply-man who travels through Laurel. And then I talked directly over long-distance to this merchant.

B lanche:
Who is this merchant?

M itch:
Kiefaber.
SCENE NINE

BLANCHE:
The merchant Kiefaber of Laurel! I know the man. He whistled at me. I put him in his place. So now for revenge he makes up stories about me.

MICH:
Three people, Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw, swore to them!

BLANCHE:
Rub-a-dub-dub, three men in a tub! And such a filthy tub!

MICH:
Didn't you stay at a hotel called The Flamingo?

BLANCHE:
Flamingo? No! Tarantula was the name of it! I stayed at a hotel called The Tarantula Arms!

MICH [stupidly]:
Tarantula?

BLANCHE:
Yes, a big spider! That's where I brought my victims. [She pours herself another drink] Yes, I had many intimacies with strangers. After the death of Allan— intimacies with strangers was all I seemed able to fill my empty heart with. . . . I think it was panic, just panic, that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection—here and there, in the most—unlikely places—even, at last, in a seventeen-year-old boy but— somebody wrote the superintendent about it—"This woman is morally unfit for her position!"

[She throws back her head with convulsive, sobbing laughter. Then she repeats the statement, gasps, and drinks.]

True? Yes, I suppose—unfit somehow—anyway.... So I came here. There was nowhere else I could go. I was played out. You know what played out is? My youth was suddenly gone up the water-spout, and—I met you. You said you needed somebody. Well, I needed somebody, too. I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle—a cleft in the rock of the world that I could hide in! But I guess I was asking, hoping—too much! Kiefaber, Stanley and Shaw have tied an old tin can to the tail of the kite.

[There is a pause. Mitch stares at her dumbly.]

MICH:
You lied to me, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
Don't say I lied to you.

MICH:
Lies, lies, inside and out, all lies.

BLANCHE:
Never inside, I didn't lie in my heart...

[A Vendor comes around the corner. She is a blind Mexican woman in a dark shawl, carrying bunches of shore gaudy tin flowers that lower class Mexicans display at funerals and other festive occasions. She is calling barely audibly. Her figure is only faintly visible outside the building.]

MEXICAN WOMAN:
Flores. Flores. Flores para los muertos. Flores. Flores.
SCENE NINE

BLANCHE:
What? Oh! Somebody outside... [She goes to the door, opens it and stares at the Mexican Woman.]

MEXICAN WOMAN [she is at the door and offers Blanche some of her flowers]:
Flores? Flores para los muertos?

BLANCHE [frightened]:
No, no! Not now! Not now!

[She darts back into the apartment, slamming the door.]

MEXICAN WOMAN [she turns away and starts to move down the street]:
Flores para los muertos.

[The polka tune fades in.]

BLANCHE [as if to herself]:
Crumble and fade and—regrets—retributions... 'If you'd done this, it wouldn't've cost me that!'

MEXICAN WOMAN:
Corones para los muertos. Corones...

BLANCHE:
Legacies! Huh... And other things such as bloodstained pillow-slips—'Her linen needs changing'—'Yes Mother. But couldn't we get a colored girl to do it?' No, we couldn't of course. Everything gone but the—

MEXICAN WOMAN:
Flores.

BLANCHE:
Death—I used to sit here and she used to sit over there and death was as close as you are... We didn't dare even admit we had ever heard of it!

MEXICAN WOMAN:
Flores para los muertos, flores—flores...

BLANCHE:
The opposite is desire. So do you wonder? How could you possibly wonder? Not far from Belle Reve, before we had lost Belle Reve, was a camp where they trained young soldiers. On Saturday nights they would go in town to get drunk—

MEXICAN WOMAN [softly]:
Corones...

BLANCHE:
—and on the way back they would stagger onto my lawn and call—'Blanche! Blanche!'—The deaf old lady remaining suspected nothing. But sometimes I slipped outside to answer their calls... Later the paddy-wagon would gather them up like daisies... the long way home...

[The Mexican Woman turns slowly and drifts back off with her soft mournful cries. Blanche goes to the dresser and leans forward on it. After a moment, Mitch rises and follows her purposefully. The polka music fades away. He places his hands on her waist and tries to turn her about.]

BLANCHE:
What do you want?

MITCH [fumbling to embrace her]:
What I been missing all summer.
**SCENE NINE**

BLANCHE:
Then marry me, Mitch!

MITCH:
I don't think I want to marry you any more.

BLANCHE:
No?

MITCH [dropping his hands from her waist]:
You're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.

BLANCHE:
Go away, then. [He stares at her] Get out of here quick before I start screaming fire! [Her throat is tightening with hysteria] Get out of here quick before I start screaming fire.

[He still remains staring. She suddenly rushes to the big window with its pale blue square of the soft summer light and cries wildly.]

Fire! Fire! Fire!

[With a startled gasp, Mitch turns and goes out the outer door, clatters awkwardly down the steps and around the corner of the building. Blanche staggers back from the window and falls to her knees. The distant piano is slow and blue.]

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**SCENE TEN**

It is a few hours later that night.

Blanche has been drinking fairly steadily since Mitch left. She has dragged her wardrobe trunk into the center of the bedroom. It hangs open with flowery dresses thrown across it. As she drinking and packing went on, a mood of hysterical exhilaration came into her and she has decked herself out in a somewhat soiled and crumpled white satin evening gown and a pair of scuffed silver slippers with brilliants set in their heels.

Now she is placing the rhinestone tiara on her head before the mirror of the dressing-table and murmuring excitedly as if to a group of spectral admirers.

BLANCHE:
How about taking a swim, a moonlight swim at the old rock-quarry? If anyone's sober enough to drive a car! Ha-ha! Best way in the world to stop your head buzzing! Only you've got to be careful to dive where the deep pool is—if you hit a rock you don't come up till tomorrow...

[Tremblingly she lifts the hand mirror for a closer inspection. She catches her breath and slams the mirror face down with such violence that the glass cracks. She moans a little and attempts to rise.]

[Stanley appears around the corner of the building. He still has on the vivid green silk bowling shirt. As he rounds the corner the honky-tonk music is heard. It continues softly throughout the scene.]

[He enters the kitchen, slamming the door. As he peers in at Blanche, he gives a low whistle. He has had a few drinks on the way and has brought some quart beer bottles home with him.]
SCENE TEN

BLANCHE:
How is my sister?

STANLEY:
She is doing okay.

BLANCHE:
And how is the baby?

STANLEY [grinning amiably]:
The baby won't come before morning so they told me to go home and get a little shut-eye.

BLANCHE:
Does that mean we are to be alone in here?

STANLEY:
Yep. Just me and you, Blanche. Unless you got somebody hid under the bed. What've you got on those fine feathers for?

BLANCHE:
Oh, that's right. You left before my wire came.

STANLEY:
You got a wire?

BLANCHE:
I received a telegram from an old admirer of mine.

STANLEY:
Anything good?

BLANCHE:
I think so. An invitation.

STANLEY:
What to? A fireman's ball?

BLANCHE [throwing back her head]:
A cruise of the Caribbean on a yacht!

STANLEY:
Well, well. What do you know?

BLANCHE:
I have never been so surprised in my life.

STANLEY:
I guess not.

BLANCHE:
It came like a bolt from the blue!

STANLEY:
Who did you say it was from?

BLANCHE:
An old beau of mine.

STANLEY:
The one that give you the white fox-pieces?

BLANCHE:
Mr. Shep Huntleigh. I wore his ATO pin my last year at college. I hadn't seen him again until last Christmas. I ran in to him on Biscayne Boulevard. Then—just now—this wire—inviting me on a cruise of the Caribbean! The problem is clothes. I tore into my trunk to see what I have that's suitable for the tropics!

STANLEY:
And come up with that—gorgeous—diamond—tiara?

BLANCHE:
This old relic? Ha-ha! It's only rhinestones.
I used to have a cousin who could open a beer-bottle with his teeth. [Pounding the bottle cap on the corner of the table] That was his only accomplishment, all he could do—he was just a human bottle-opener. And then one time, at a wedding party, he broke his front teeth off! After that he was so ashamed of himself he used t' sneak out of the house when company came . . .

[The bottle cap pops off and a geyser of foam shoots up. Stanley laughs happily, holding up the bottle over his head.]

Ha-ha! Rain from heaven! [He extends the bottle toward her] Shall we bury the hatchet and make it a loving-cup? Huh?

BLANCHE:
No, thank you.

STANLEY:
Well, it's a red letter night for us both. You having an oil-millionaire and me having a baby.

[He goes to the bureau in the bedroom and crouches to remove something from the bottom drawer.]

BLANCHE [drawing back]:
What are you doing in here?

STANLEY:
Here's something I always break out on special occasions like this. The silk pyjamas I wore on my wedding night!

BLANCHE:
Oh.

STANLEY:
When the telephone rings and they say, "You've got a son!" I'll tear this off and wave it like a flag! [He shakes
SCENE TEN

out a brilliant pyjama coat) I guess we are both entitled to put on the dog. [He goes back to the kitchen with the coat over his arm.]

BLANCHE:
When I think of how divine it is going to be to have such a thing as privacy once more—I could weep with joy!

STANLEY:
This millionaire from Dallas is not going to interfere with your privacy any?

BLANCHE:
It won't be the sort of thing you have in mind. This man is a gentleman and he respects me. [Improvising feverishly] What he wants is my companionship. Having great wealth sometimes makes people lonely! A cultivated woman, a woman of intelligence and breeding, can enrich a man's life—indeed! I have those things to offer, and this doesn't take them away. Physical beauty is passing. A transitory possession. But beauty of the mind and richness of the spirit and tenderness of the heart—and I have all of those things—aren't taken away, but grow! Increase with the years! How strange that I should be called a destitute woman! When I have all of these treasures locked in my heart. [A choked sob comes from her] I think of myself as a very, very rich woman! But I have been foolish—casting my pearls before swine!

STANLEY:
Swine, huh?

BLANCHE:
Yes, swine! Swine! And I'm thinking not only of you but of your friend, Mr. Mitchell. He came to see me to—

night. He dared to come here in his work-clothes! And to repeat slander to me, vicious stories that he had gotten from you! I gave him his walking papers . . .

STANLEY:
You did, huh?

BLANCHE:
But then he came back. He returned with a box of roses to beg my forgiveness! He implored my forgiveness. But some things are not forgivable. Deliberate cruelty is not forgivable. It is the one unforgivable thing in my opinion and it is the one thing of which I have never, never been guilty. And so I told him, I said to him, "Thank you," but it was foolish of me to think that we could ever adapt ourselves to each other. Our ways of life are too different. Our attitudes and our backgrounds are incompatible. We have to be realistic about such things. So farewell, my friend! And let there be no hard feelings . . .

STANLEY:
Was this before or after the telegram came from the Texas oil millionaire?

BLANCHE:
What telegram? No! No, after! As a matter of fact, the wire came just as—

STANLEY:
As a matter of fact there wasn't no wire at all!

BLANCHE:
Oh, oh!

STANLEY:
There isn't no millionaire! And Mitch didn't come back with roses 'cause I know where he is—
SCENE TEN

BLANCHE:
Oh!

STANLEY:
There isn’t a goddam thing but imagination!
BLANCHE:
Oh!

STANLEY:
And lies and conceit and tricks!
BLANCHE:
Oh!

STANLEY:
And look at yourself! Take a look at yourself in that worn-out Mardi Gras outfit, rented for fifty cents from some rag-picker! And with the crazy crown on! What queen do you think you are?
BLANCHE:
Oh—God...

STANLEY:
I’ve been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy’s eyes! You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light-bulb with a paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor! I say—Ha!—Ha! Do you hear me? Ha—ha—ha! [He walks into the bedroom.]

BLANCHE:
Don’t come in here!

[Scenes appear on the walls around Blanche.]

The shadows are of a grotesque and menacing form. She catches her breath, crosses to the phone and jiggles the hook. Stanley goes into the bathroom and closes the door.]

Operator, operator! Give me long-distance, please. . . . I want to get in touch with Mr. Shep Huntleigh of Dallas. He’s so well-known he doesn’t require any address. Just ask anybody who—Wait!!—No, I couldn’t find it right now. . . . Please understand, I—No! No, wait! . . . One moment! Someone is—Nothing! Hold on, please!

[She sets the phone down and crosses warily into the kitchen. The night is filled with inhuman voices like cries in a jungle.

[The shadows and lurid reflections move sinuously as flames along the wall spaces.

[Through the back wall of the rooms, which have become transparent, can be seen the sidewalk. A prostitute has rolled a drunkard. He pursues her along the walk, overtakes her and there is a struggle. A policeman’s whistle breaks it up. The figures disappear.

[Some moments later the Negro Woman appears around the corner with a sequined bag which the prostitute had dropped on the walk. She is rooting excitedly through it.

[Blanche presses her knuckles to her lips and returns slowly to the phone. She speaks in a hoarse whisper.]

BLANCHE:
Operator! Operator! Never mind long-distance. Get Western Union. There isn’t time to be—Western—Western Union!
[She waits anxiously.]

Western Union? Yes! I—want to—Take down this message! "In desperate, desperate circumstances! Help me! Caught in a trap. Caught in—" Oh!

[The bathroom door is thrown open and Stanley comes out in the brilliant silk pyjamas. He grins at her as he knots the tasseled sash about his waist. She gasps and backs away from the phone. He stares at her for a count of ten. Then a clicking becomes audible from the telephone, steady and rasping.]

STANLEY:
You left th' phone off th' hook.

[He crosses to it deliberately and sets it back on the hook. After he has replaced it, he stares at her again, his mouth slowly curving into a grin, as he weaves between Blanche and the outer door.

[The barely audible "blue piano" begins to drum up louder. The sound of it turns into the roar of an approaching locomotive. Blanche crouches, pressing her fists to her ears until it has gone by.]

BLANCHE [finally straightening]:
Let me—let me get by you!

STANLEY:
Get by me? Sure. Go ahead. [He moves back a pace in the doorway.]

BLANCHE:
You—you stand over there! [She indicates a further position.]

STANLEY [grinning]:
You got plenty of room to walk by me now.

BLANCHE:
Not with you there! But I've got to get out somehow!

STANLEY:
You think I'll interfere with you? Ha-ha!

[The "blue piano" goes softly. She turns confusedly and makes a faint gesture. The inhuman jungle voices rise up. He takes a step toward her, biting his tongue which protrudes between his lips.]

STANLEY [softly]:
Come to think of it—maybe you wouldn't be bad to—interfere with...

[Blanche moves backward through the door into the bedroom.]

BLANCHE:
Stay back! Don't you come toward me another step or I'll—

STANLEY:
What?

BLANCHE:
Some awful thing will happen! It will!

STANLEY:
What are you putting on now?

[They are now both inside the bedroom.]

BLANCHE:
I warn you, don't, I'm in danger!
SCENE TEN

[He takes another step. She smashes a bottle on the table and faces him, clutching the broken top.]

STANLEY:
What did you do that for?

BLANCHE:
So I could twist the broken end in your face!

STANLEY:
I bet you would do that!

BLANCHE:
I would! I will if you—

STANLEY:
Oh! So you want some rough-house! All right, let's have some rough-house!

[He springs toward her, overturning the table. She cries out and strikes at him with the bottle top but he catches her wrist.]

Tiger—tiger! Drop the bottle-top! Drop it! We've had this date with each other from the beginning!

[She moans. The bottle-top falls. She sinks to her knees. He picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. The trumpet and drums from the Four Deuces sound loudly.]

SCENE ELEVEN

It is some weeks later. Stella is packing Blanche's things. Sound of water can be heard running in the bathroom.

The portieres are partly open on the poker players—Stanley, Steve, Mitch and Pablo—who sit around the table in the kitchen. The atmosphere of the kitchen is now the same raw, lurid one of the disastrous poker night.

The building is framed by the sky of turquoise. Stella has been crying as she arranges the flouery dresses in the open trunk.

Eunice comes down the steps from her flat above and enters the kitchen. There is an outburst from the poker table.

STANLEY:
Drew to an inside straight and made it, by God.

PABLO:
Maldita sea tu suertol!

STANLEY:
Put it in English, greaseball.

PABLO:
I am cursing your rutting luck.

STANLEY [prodigiously elated]:
You know what luck is? Luck is believing you're lucky. Take at Salerno. I believed I was lucky. I figured that 4 out of 5 would not come through but I would... and I did. I put that down as a rule. To hold front position in this rat-race you've got to believe you are lucky.
SCENE ELEVEN

MITCH:
You...you...you...brag...brag...bull...bull.
[Stella goes into the bedroom and starts folding a dress.]

STANLEY:
What's the matter with him?

EUNICE [walking past the table]:
I always did say that men are callous things with no feelings, but this does beat anything. Making pigs of yourselves. [She comes through the portieres into the bedroom.]

STANLEY:
What's the matter with her?

STELLA:
How is my baby?

EUNICE:
Sleeping like a little angel. Brought you some grapes. [She puts them on a stool and lowers her voice.] Blanche?

STELLA:
Bathing.

EUNICE:
How is she?

STELLA:
She wouldn't eat anything but asked for a drink.

EUNICE:
What did you tell her?

STELLA:
I—just told her that—we'd made arrangements for her to rest in the country. She's got it mixed in her mind with Shep Huntleigh.

[Blanche opens the bathroom door slightly.]

BLANCHE:
Stella.

STELLA:
Yes, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
If anyone calls while I'm bathing take the number and tell them I'll call right back.

STELLA:
Yes.

BLANCHE:
That cool yellow silk—the bouclé. See if it's crushed. If it's not too crushed I'll wear it and on the lapel that silver and turquoise pin in the shape of a seahorse. You will find them in the heart-shaped box I keep my accessories in. And Stella... Try and locate a bunch of artificial violets in that box, too, to pin with the seahorse on the lapel of the jacket.

[She closes the door. Stella turns to Eunice.]

STELLA:
I don't know if I did the right thing.

EUNICE:
What else could you do?

STELLA:
I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley.
SCENE ELEVEN

EUNICE:
Don't ever believe it. Life has got to go on. No matter what happens, you've got to keep on going.

[The bathroom door opens a little.]

BLANCHE [looking out]:
Is the coast clear?

STELLA:
Yes, Blanche. [To Eunice] Tell her how well she's looking.

BLANCHE:
Please close the curtains before I come out.

STELLA:
They're closed.

STANLEY:
—How many for you?

PABLO:
—Two.

STEVE:
—Three.

[Blanche appears in the amber light of the door. She has a tragic radiance in her red satin robe following the sculptural lines of her body. The “Varsouviana” rises audibly as Blanche enters the bedroom.]

BLANCHE [with faintly hysterical vivacity]:
I have just washed my hair.

STELLA:
Did you?

BLANCHE:
I'm not sure I got the soap out.

EUNICE:
Such fine hair!

BLANCHE: [accepting the compliment]:
It's a problem. Didn't I get a call?

STELLA:
Who from, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
Shep Huntleigh . . .

STELLA:
Why, not yet, honey!

BLANCHE:
How strange! I—

[At the sound of Blanche's voice Mitch's arm supporting his cards has sagged and his gaze is dissolved into space. Stanley slaps him on the shoulder.]

STANLEY:
Hey, Mitch, come to!

[The sound of this new voice shocks Blanche. She makes a shocked gesture, forming his name with her lips. Stella nods and looks quickly away. Blanche stands quite still for some moments—the silverbacked mirror in her hand and a look of sorrowful perplexity as though all human experience shows on her face. Blanche finally speaks but with sudden hysteria.]

BLANCHE:
What's going on here?
[She turns from Stella to Eunice and back to Stella. Her rising voice penetrates the concentration of the game. Mitch ducks his head lower but Stanley shoves back his chair as if about to rise. Steve places a restraining hand on his arm.]

BLANCHE [continuing]:
What’s happened here? I want an explanation of what’s happened here.

STELLA [agonizingly]:
Hush! Hush!

EUNICE:
Hush! Hush! Honey.

STELLA:
Please, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
Why are you looking at me like that? Is something wrong with me?

EUNICE:
You look wonderful, Blanche. Don’t she look wonderful?

STELLA:
Yes.

EUNICE:
I understand you are going on a trip.

STELLA:
Yes, Blanche is. She’s going on a vacation.

EUNICE:
I’m green with envy.

BLANCHE:
Help me, help me get dressed!

STELLA [handing her dress]:
Is this what you—

BLANCHE:
Yes, it will do! I’m anxious to get out of here—this place is a trap!

EUNICE:
What a pretty blue jacket.

STELLA:
It’s lilac colored.

BLANCHE:
You’re both mistaken. It’s Della Robbia blue. The blue of the robe in the old Madonna pictures. Are these grapes washed?

[She fingers the bunch of grapes which Eunice had brought in.]

EUNICE:
Huh?

BLANCHE:
Washed, I said. Are they washed?

EUNICE:
They’re from the French Market.

BLANCHE:
That doesn’t mean they’ve been washed. [The cathedral
SCENE ELEVEN

bells chime] Those cathedral bells—they're the only clean thing in the Quarter. Well, I'm going now. I'm ready to go.

EUNICE [whispering]:
She's going to walk out before they get here.

STELLA:
Wait, Blanche.

BLANCHE:
I don't want to pass in front of those men.

EUNICE:
Then wait till the game breaks up.

STELLA:
Sit down and . . .

[Blanche turns weakly, hesitantly about. She lets them push her into a chair.]

BLANCHE:
I can smell the sea air. The rest of my time I'm going to spend on the sea. And when I die, I'm going to die on the sea. You know what I shall die of? [She plucks a grape]
I shall die of eating an unwashed grape one day out on the ocean. I will die—with my hand in the hand of some nice-looking ship's doctor, a very young one with a small blond mustache and a big silver watch. "Poor lady," they'll say, "the quinine did her no good. That unwashed grape has transported her soul to heaven." [The cathedral chimes are heard] And I'll be buried at sea sewn up in a clean white sack and dropped overboard—at noon—in the blaze of summer—and into an ocean as blue as [Chimes again] my first lover's eyes!

[A Doctor and a Matron have appeared around the corner of the building and climbed the steps to the porch. The gravity of their profession is exaggerated—the unmistakable aura of the state institution with its cynical detachment. The Doctor rings the doorbell. The murmur of the game is interrupted.]

EUNICE [whispering to Stella]:
That must be them.

[Stella presses her fists to her lips.]

BLANCHE [rising slowly]:
What is it?

EUNICE [affectedly casual]:
Excuse me while I see who's at the door.

STELLA:
Yes.

[Eunice goes into the kitchen.]

BLANCHE [tensely]:
I wonder if it's for me.

[A whispered colloquy takes place at the door.]

EUNICE [returning, brightly]:
Someone is calling for Blanche.

BLANCHE:
It is for me, then! [She looks fearfully from one to the other and then to the portieres. The"Varsouviana" faintly plays] Is it the gentleman I was expecting from Dallas?

EUNICE:
I think it is, Blanche.
SCENE ELEVEN

BLANCHE:
I'm not quite ready.

STELLA:
Ask him to wait outside.

BLANCHE:
I...

[Eunice goes back to the portieres. Drums sound very softly.]

STELLA:
Everything packed?

BLANCHE:
My silver toilet articles are still out.

STELLA:
Ah!

EUNICE [returning]:
They're waiting in front of the house.

BLANCHE:
They! Who's "they"?

EUNICE:
There's a lady with him.

BLANCHE:
I cannot imagine who this "lady" could be! How is she dressed?

EUNICE:
Just—just a sort of a—plain-tailored outfit.

BLANCHE:
Possibly she's—[Her voice dies out nervously.]
SCENE ELEVEN

Stella, who stands just outside the door, and speaks in a frightening whisper] That man isn't Shep Huntleigh.

[The “Varsouviana” is playing distantly.

[Stella stares back at Blanche. Eunice is holding Stella's arm. There is a moment of silence—no sound but that of Stanley steadily shuffling the cards.

[Blanche catches her breath again and slips back into the flat. She enters the flat with a peculiar smile, her eyes wide and brilliant. As soon as her sister goes past her, Stella closes her eyes and clenches her hands. Eunice throws her arms comfortingly about her. Then she starts up to her flat. Blanche stops just inside the door. Mitch keeps staring down at his hands on the table, but the other men look at her curiously. At last she starts around the table toward the bedroom. As she does, Stanley suddenly pushes back his chair and rises as if to block her way. The Matron follows her into the flat.]

STANLEY:
Did you forget something?

BLANCHE [shrilly]:
Yes! Yes, I forgot something!

[She rushes past him into the bedroom. Lurid reflections appear on the walls in odd, sinuous shapes. The “Varsouviana” is filtered into a weird distortion, accompanied by the cries and noises of the jungle. Blanche seizes the back of a chair as if to defend herself.]

STANLEY [sotto voce]:
Doc, you better go in.

DOCTOR [sotto voce, motioning to the Matron]:
Nurse, bring her out.

[The Matron advances on one side, Stanley on the other. Divested of all the softer properties of womanhood, the Matron is a peculiarly sinister figure in her severe dress. Her voice is bold and toneless as a firebell.]

MATRON:
Hello, Blanche.

[The greeting is echoed and re-echoed by other mysterious voices behind the walls, as if reverberated through a canyon of rock.]

STANLEY:
She says that she forgot something.

[The echo sounds in threatening whispers.]

MATRON:
That's all right.

STANLEY:
What did you forget, Blanche?

BLANCHE:
I— I—

MATRON:
It doesn't matter. We can pick it up later.

STANLEY:
Sure. We can send it along with the trunk.

BLANCHE [retreating in panic]:
I don't know you—I don't know you. I want to be—left alone—please!
SCENE ELEVEN

MATRON:
Now, Blanché!

ECHOES [rising and falling]:
Now, Blanché—now, Blanché—now, Blanché!

STANLEY:
You left nothing here but spilled talcum and old empty perfume bottles—unless it's the paper lantern you want to take with you. You want the lantern?

[He crosses to dressing table and seizes the paper lantern, tearing it off the light bulb, and extends it toward her. She cries out as if the lantern was herself. The Matron steps boldly toward her. She screams and tries to break past the Matron. All the men spring to their feet. Stella runs out to the porch, with Eunice following to comfort her, simultaneously with the confused voices of the men in the kitchen. Stella rushes into Eunice's embrace on the porch.]

STELLA:
Oh, my God, Eunice help me! Don't let them do that to her, don't let them hurt her! Oh, God, oh, please God, don't hurt her! What are they doing to her? What are they doing? [She tries to break from Eunice's arms.]

EUNICE:
No, honey, no, no, honey. Stay here. Don't go back in there. Stay with me and don't look.

STELLA:
What have I done to my sister? Oh, God, what have I done to my sister?

EUNICE:
You done the right thing, the only thing you could do.

She couldn't stay here; there wasn't no other place for her to go.

[While Stella and Eunice are speaking on the porch the voices of the men in the kitchen overlap them. Mitch has started toward the bedroom. Stanley crosses to block him. Stanley pushes him aside. Mitch lunges and strikes at Stanley. Stanley pushes Mitch back. Mitch collapses at the table, sobbing.]

[During the preceding scene, the Matron catches hold of Blanché's arm and prevents her flight. Blanche turns wildly and scratches at the Matron. The heavy woman pinions her arms. Blanche cries out hoarsely and slips to her knees.]

MATRON:
These fingernails have to be trimmed. [The Doctor comes into the room and she looks at him.] Jacket, Doctor?

DOCTOR:
Not unless necessary.

[He takes off his hat and now he becomes personalized. The unhuman quality goes. His voice is gentle and reassuring as he crosses to Blanché and crouches in front of her. As he speaks her name, her terror subsides a little. The lurid reflections fade from the walls, the inhuman cries and noises die out and her own hoarse crying is calmed.]

DOCTOR:
Miss DuBois.

[She turns her face to him and stares at him with de-
SCENE ELEVEN

perate pleading. He smiles; then he speaks to the Matron.

It won't be necessary.

BLANCHE [faintly]:
Ask her to let go of me.

DOCTOR [to the Matron]:
Let go.

[The Matron releases her. Blanche extends her hands toward the Doctor. He draws her up gently and supports her with his arm and leads her through the porter.

BLANCHE [holding tight to his arm]:
Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers.

[The poker players stand back as Blanche and the Doctor cross the kitchen to the front door. She allows him to lead her as if she were blind. As they go out on the porch, Stella cries out her sister's name from where she is crouched a few steps up on the stairs.]

STELLA:
Blanche! Blanche, Blanche!

[Blanche walks on without turning, followed by the Doctor and the Matron. They go around the corner of the building.

[Eunice descends to Stella and places the child in her arms. It is wrapped in a pale blue blanket. Stella accepts the child, sobbingly. Eunice continues downstairs and enters the kitchen where the men, except for

STANLEY [a bit uncertainly]:

Stella?

[She sobs with inhuman abandon. There is something luxurious in her complete surrender to crying now that her sister is gone.]

STANLEY [voluptuously, soothingly]:

Now, honey. Now, love. Now, now, love. [He kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse]

Now, now, love. Now, love.

[The luxurious sobbing, the sensual murmur fade away under the swaying music of the "blue piano" and the muted trumpet.]

STEVE:

This game is seven-card stud.

CURTAIN