

Street cries commence, and are heard through change.
Street cries: 1 (Man)—Young fryers! 2 (Man)—Black-berries, 10 cents a quart. 3 (Woman)—Nice fresh roas'n ears. 4 (Man)—Watermelons! 5 (Man)—Irish potatoes! 6 (Woman)—Tender young snap beans! 7 (Man)—Fresh country eggs!

SCENE 4

Early the following morning.

Street-criers are still heard as the lights dim up. Stella is lounging in armchair in bedroom. Curtains closed between two rooms, which are still in disarray from poker game of night before. Stella's eyes and lips have that almost narcotized tranquility that is in the faces of eastern idols. Blanche comes down from spiral stair, opens door, and hurries into apartment. Street cries fade away.

BLANCHE. (*Entering.*) Stella?

STELLA. (*Stirring lazily.*) Hmmh?

Blanche utters a moaning cry, runs into bedroom, stands beside Stella in a rush of hysterical tenderness.

BLANCHE. Baby, my baby sister!

STELLA. (*Drawing away.*) Blanche, what is the matter with you?

BLANCHE. (*Looking about.*) He's left?

STELLA. Stan? Yes.

BLANCHE. Will he be back?

STELLA. He's gone to get the car greased. Why?

BLANCHE. Why!—I've been half-crazy, Stella! When I found out you'd been insane enough to come back in here after what happened!—I started to rush in after you.

STELLA. I'm glad you didn't.

BLANCHE. What on earth were you thinking of?

Stella makes an indefinite gesture.

Answer me! What? What?

STELLA. Please, Blanche! Sit down and stop yelling.

BLANCHE. (*Sitting on stool in front of Stella, takes her hand.*) All right, Stella. I will repeat the question quietly now. How could you come back in this place last night? Why, you must have slept with him!

STELLA. (*Gets up in a calm, leisurely way; stretches.*) Blanche, I'd forgotten how excitable you are. You're making much too much fuss about this.

She goes to dressing-table chair.

BLANCHE. Am I?

STELLA. (*Kneeling in chair, looking in mirror.*) Yes, you are, Blanche. I know how it must have seemed to you, and I'm awful sorry it had to happen, but it wasn't anything as serious as you seem to take it.

Blanche rises and moves upstage above L. end of armchair.

In the first place when men are drinking and playing poker anything can happen. It's always a powder-keg. (*Rubs her head comfortably.*) He didn't know what he was doing... He was as good as a lamb when I came back and he's really very, very ashamed of himself.

BLANCHE. And that—that makes it all right?

STELLA. No, it isn't all right for anybody to make such a terrible row, but—people do sometimes. Stanley's always smashed things. Why, on our wedding night—soon as we came in here—he snatched off one of my slippers and rushed about the place smashing the light bulbs with it.

BLANCHE. He did—*what?*

STELLA. (*Arranging dressing-table chair to face mirror as she sits in it.*) He smashed all the light bulbs with the heel of my slipper! (*Laughs.*)

BLANCHE. (*Crossing to above dressing table.*) And you—you let him—you didn't *run*, you didn't *scream*?

STELLA. I was sort of—thrilled by it. (*Rises.*) Eunice and you had breakfast?

BLANCHE. Do you suppose I wanted any breakfast?

STELLA. There's some coffee left on the stove. (*Crosses U.*)

BLANCHE. You're so—matter of fact about it, Stella.

STELLA. (*Below radio table, holding up some loose wires.*) What other can I be? He's taken the radio to get it fixed. (*Gurgle pleasantly.*) It didn't land on the pavement, so only one tube was smashed.

BLANCHE. And you are standing there smiling!

STELLA. (*Puts wires back.*) What do you want me to do? (*Moves screen to head of bed—folds and stacks it there.*)

BLANCHE. (*Sits on bed.*) Pull yourself together and face the facts.

STELLA. (*Sits beside Blanche on bed.*) What are they, in your opinion?

BLANCHE. In my opinion? You're married to a madman.

STELLA. No!

BLANCHE. Yes, you are, your fix is worse than mine is! Only you're not being sensible about it. I'm going to *do* something. Get hold of myself and make a new life!

STELLA. Yes?

BLANCHE. But you've given in. And that isn't right, you're not old! You can get out.

STELLA. (*Slowly and emphatically.*) I'm not in anything I want to get out of.

BLANCHE. (*Incredulously.*) What—Stella?

Stella rises. Crosses below to door between rooms.

STELLA. I said I am not in anything I have a desire to get out of. (*Surveys mess in living room.*) Look at the mess in this room!—And those empty bottles!

She moves above and around table, picking up cards and putting them down. Blanche follows to C. door.

They went through two cases last night! He promised this morning he was going to quit having these poker parties, but you know how long such a promise is going to keep. (*Crossing to L. of Blanche at C.*) Oh, well, it's his pleasure, like mine is movies and bridge. People have got to tolerate each other's habits, I guess.