

*They dance off to the music of "Mood Indigo" which continues through the following scene. Harriet enters, dancing with a boy named Bill.*

Harriet

God!

*She sinks down on the steps.*

Bill

I say, Harriet, why doesn't this barrage of elderly white elephants go home? They ought to be in bed. They've been blocking the traffic too long. I've had my elbow in three women's hair.

Harriet

I've had my hand in four men's mouths.

Bill

Cigarette?

Harriet

I think a drink would set me up more.

*He goes out for a drink. Harriet closes her eyes and proceeds to take a short nap. Bill comes back with a silver pitcher of champagne. She comes to and takes it.*

Harriet

A pitcher, b' God!

*She drinks.*

I feel better. I feel that I am rapidly becoming drunk, and that I shall rapidly become drunker.

*Bill has sunk, exhausted, onto the steps and is gloomily regarding his legs stuck out straight in front of him.*



Bill

At this time of the night you have to be drunk or you go to sleep. I usually go to sleep anyway. Being drunk makes it easier.

Harriet

*Sentimentally*

We could have gone to a movie tonight, Bill.

Bill

And if we wanted to stay up all night we could have done it privately in a speak-easy or romantically on a hill-side.

Harriet

And if anyone thinks I get any pleasure out of screaming into the leering faces of my mother's girlhood friends, they're crazy. I could have bitten the lorgnettes off the hatchet-face of that old Mrs. Harkness and chewed them up and swallowed them and never even felt it.

Bill

That's because your stomach's lined with good, hard liquor, dear.

Harriet

Every Bageheot is either a gourmand or a drunkard, and I have to keep thin so I can wear this kind of dress. I wouldn't be surprised if I just dropped this dress somewhere. I have to keep checking up on myself to make sure it's still with me.

Bill

*Still regarding his legs gloomily*

I don't think I'd notice if it fell off, myself.

Harriet

*Her tone changing as she listens to the waves of shrill laughter from the ballroom*

Sometimes I get so fed up on this stuff I could scream.

*Flippant and hard again*

William, I'm afraid I'm going to have one of those scenes where the poor little rich girl bares her heart to the thoughtless young man who does not understand. I'm going to tell you I wish I were a fish-wife—that you should marry me and we could go to Abyssinia and raise cockle-shells and start all over again—

Bill

Well, it's an interesting version of the old tale. I might ask the orchestra to put on "The Little Things in Life."

*He starts to rise.*

Harriet

Don't bother. Or I might be a revolutionary—I look well in red—I might be pretty fascinating with a red flag around my brows and my arms thrust through an Internationale—what is an Internationale, Bill?

Bill

I don't know. Going Bolshevik, huh?

Harriet

*Bitterly*

Yeah. Parlor Bolshevik.

*As the music and drunken laughter reach a climax*

Well, if we want the country to go Communist, carrying on stampedes like this one—



*She waves her cigarette towards the ballroom.*

—is the quickest and surest way to do it. If I were a dirt farmer, or a dirt farmer's woman, I know which side I'd be on.

*The orchestra starts to play "Hello Beautiful." The Congressman enters.*

Well, let's get back to the carnage. ~~Aha, here's the pillar of the State himself. Your health, Pillar!~~

Congressman

Harriet, must you drink like a road-laborer? Really, my dear, at your own party. People are talking—

Harriet

My, that must be a change.

Congressman

It's one thing to take a quiet, ladylike cocktail, but champagne in pitchers—it's perverted!

Harriet

Come, Father, when did you ever take a quiet, ladylike cocktail? The only reason you never drank champagne in pitchers is because you never thought of it. No, sir, you forget that this is something I've looked forward to all my girlhood, and am going to remember for the rest of my life! And boy, so is everyone else!

*Another dance is over. People begin to come back. Couples One, Two and Three come in, also the Painted Woman and the Young Attaché. A boy calls off-stage, "Paging Congressman Bageheot." "Telephone—Long Distance—Congressman Bageheot." The Congressman goes out. There is a burst of laughter in the group around Harriet who is on the steps. Somebody cries:*