

All About Eve

INT. LADIES' ROOM - STORK CLUB - NIGHT

Never having been, I can't say what it looks like. It is to be hoped that there is an outer and inner room. We are concerned with the outer. There is an attendant in charge, and a constantly changing flow of ladies who pause to make various repairs. All cafe society - including one young drunk stretched out under a mink coat and a wet towel. There are two chairs - or a banquette - in a corner. Eve waits there. She rises as Karen approaches.

EVE I was wondering whether you'd come at all..

KAREN Don't get up. (*she smiles grimly*) And don't act as if I were the queen mother.

EVE I don't expect you to be pleasant.

KAREN I don't intend to be.

EVE Can't we sit down? Just for a minute...

She sits down. Karen remains standing.

EVE I've got a lot to say. And none of it is easy.

KAREN There can't be very much-

EVE Oh, but there is-

KAREN - and easy or not, I won't believe a word.

EVE Why shouldn't you? (*a pause*) Please sit down.

Karen sits, reluctantly and rigidly.

EVE You know, I've always considered myself a very clever girl. Smart. Good head on my shoulders, that sort of thing, never the wrong word at the wrong time... but then, I'd never met Addison deWitt. (*another pause*) I remember once I had a tooth pulled. They gave me some an aesthetic - I don't remember the name - and it affected me in a strange way. I heard myself saying things I wasn't even thinking... as if my mind were someplace outside of my body, and couldn't control what I did or said-

KAREN (*leading her on*) - and you felt just like that talking to Addison.

EVE (*nods*) In a way. You find yourself trying to say what you mean, but somehow the words change - and they become his words - and suddenly you're not saying what you mean, but what he means-

KAREN (*sharply*) Do you expect me to believe that you didn't say any of those things - that they were all Addison?

EVE No! I don't expect you to believe anything. Except that the responsibility is mine. And the disgrace.

KAREN Let's not get over-dramatic.

EVE (*smiles grimly*) You've really got a low opinion of me, haven't you? We'll I'll give you some pleasant news. I've been told off in no uncertain terms all over town. Miss Channing should be happy to hear that. To know how loyal her friends are - how much more loyal they are than she had a right to expect me to be...

She turns away from Karen. Karen's embarrassed.

KAREN Eve... don't cry.

EVE (*turned away*) I'm not crying.

KAREN Tell me. How did your lunch turn out - with the man from Hollywood?

EVE Some vague promises of a test, that's all - if a particular part should come along, one of those things-

KAREN But the raves about your performance-

EVE - an understudy's performance.

KAREN Well, I think you're painting the picture a little darker than it is, really. If nothing else - and don't underestimate him - you have a powerful friend in Addison.

EVE He's not my friend. You were my friends...

KAREN He can help you.

EVE I wish I'd never met him, I'd like him to be dead... I want my friends back.

This time she does cry. Softly, miserably. Karen looks about. A pause. She puts an arm around Eve.

KAREN Eve. I - I don't think you meant to cause unhappiness. But you did. More to yourself, perhaps - as it turned out - than to anyone else...

EVE I'll never get over it.

KAREN (*smiles*) Yes, you will. You Theater people always do. Nothing is forever in the Theater. Love or hate, success or failure - whatever it is, it's here, it flares up and burns hot - and then it's gone.

EVE I wish I could believe that.

KAREN Give yourself time. Don't worry too much about what people think, you're very young and very talented... (she gets up, her hand still on Eve's shoulder) ... and, believe it or not, if there's anything I can do-
Eve has reached up to take Karen's hand. She holds it now, as she turns slowly to face her.

EVE There is something.

Karen stares down at her. Eve's eyes burn into tears. Karen is caught,

fascinated by them.

KAREN I think I know...

EVE Something most important you can do.

KAREN You want to play "Cora." You want me to tell Lloyd I think you should play it.

EVE If you told him so, he'd give me the part. He said he would.

KAREN After all you've said... don't you know the part was written for Margo?

EVE It could have been - fifteen years ago. It's my part now.

KAREN You talk just as Addison said you did.

EVE "Cora" is my part. You've got to tell Lloyd it's for me.

KAREN I don't think anything in the world could make me say that.

She turns away again, but Eve's grip is like a vise.

EVE Addison wants me to play it.

KAREN Over my dead body...

EVE (*cold, relentless*) That won't be necessary. Addison knows how Margo happen to miss that performance - how I happened to know she'd miss it in time to call him and notify every paper in town... (Karen stops struggling) ... it's quite a story. Addison could make quite a thing of it - imagine how snide and vicious he could get and still write nothing but the truth. I had a time persuading him... (she smiles, now) ... you'd better sit down. You look a bit wobbly. (Karen sits) If I play "Cora," Addison will never tell what happened - in or out of print. A simple exchange of favors. And I'm so happy I can do something for you - at long last... (Karen covers her face with her hands) Your friendship with Margo - your deep, close friendship - what would happen to it, do you think, if she knew the chap trick you'd played on her - for my benefit? And you and Lloyd - how long, even in the Theater, before people forgot what happened - and trusted you again? (now Eve gets up) No... it would be so much easier on everyone concerned, if I were to play "Cora." And so much better theater, too...

Karen looks up slowly.

KAREN A part in a play. You'd do all that - just for a part in a play.

EVE (*smiles*) I'd do much more - for a part that good.

She leaves. Karen is alone.