

PEGGY - EDITH - NURSE

A month later. A room in a lying in hospital. L., a door to corridor. R., a window Banked to sill with expensive flowers, C, . hospital bed, in which Edith, propped up in a sea of lace pillows, lies with a small bundle at her breast. A white uniformed nurse sits by window. The droop of her shoulders is eloquent: Edith is a trying patient. As curtain rises, Edith reaches across bundle to bedside table for a cigarette. She can't make it.

EDITH. (Whining.) Nurse!

NURSE. (Rising wearily.) Yes, Mrs. Potter.

EDITH. Throw me a cigarette.

NURSE. Can't you wait, at least until you're through nursing?

EDITH. How many children have you nursed? I've nursed four, (Nurse lights her cigarette, Edith shifts bundle slightly) Ouch! Damn it! It's got jaws like a dinosaur. (Enter Peggy with box of flowers.)

PEGGY. Hello, Edith

EDITH. (In a faint voice.) Hello, Peggy.

PEGGY. (Putting flowers on bed) Here----

EDITH. How thoughtful! Nurse, will you ask this damn hospital if they're equipped with a decent vase? (Nurse takes box, opens flowers and arranges them, with others, in window)

PEGGY. (Leans over baby.) Oh, let me see. Oh, Edith, isn't he divine!

EDITH. I hate that milky smell

PEGGY. (Alarmed.) What's that on his nose?

EDITH. What nose? Oh, that's an ash (Blows away ash. Hands Peggy a letter from bedside table.)

PEGGY, It's from Mary?

EDITH. (Nodding.) All about how healthy Reno is. Not a word about how she feels. I thought she cared more about Stephen than that. She sends her love to you and John (Peggy reads. The wail of a newborn is heard outside) Nurse, close that door. (Nurse closes door.) I can't tell you what that new-born yodel does to my nerves. (To Peggy.) What're you so down in the mouth about? I feel as badly about it as you do, but it was the thing Mary wanted to do, or she wouldn't have done it. Judging by that, she's reconciled to the whole idea.

PEGGY. She's just being brave!

EDITH. Brave? Why should she bother to be brave with her Friends? Here, Nurse, he's through (Nurse takes bundle from ber) I told Phelps to be sure to tell Stephen that Mary's perfectly happy. It will cheer Stephen up. He's been going around like a whipped

dog

PEGGY Oh, Edith, please let me hold him! (Nurse gives Peggy the baby)

NURSE (Smiling) Careful of his back, Mrs. Day.

PEGGY (Goes to window, hugging bundle.) Oh, I like the feeling so!

EDITH. You wouldn't like it so much if you'd just had it (Whimpering) I had a terrible time, didn't I Nurse?

NURSE. Oh, no, Mrs. Potter. You had a very easy time. (She is suddenly angry) Why, women like you don't know what a terrible time is. Try bearing a baby and scrubbing floors. Try having one in a cold filthy kitchen, without either, without a change of linen, without decent food, without a cent to bring it up and try getting up the next day with your insides falling out to cook your husband's! (Controls herself. No, Mrs. Potter, you didn't have a terrible time at all. I'll take the baby, please. (Sees reluctant expression on Peggy's face.) I hope some day you'll have one of your own, Mrs. Day. (Nurse exits with baby, Penny breaks into tears.)

EDITH. Well, for God's sake, Peggy, that old battle axe didn't hurt my feelings a bit! They're all the same. If you don't get peritonitis or have quintuplets, they think you've had a picnic (Peggy sits beside bed, crying.) What's the matter?

PEGGY. Oh, Edith-John and I are getting a divorce!

EDITH. (Patting her hand) Well, darling, that's what I heard.

PEGGY. (Surprised.) But but we didn't decide to til fast night.

EDITH. (Cheerfully.) Oh, darling, everybody could see it was in the cards. Money, I suppose?

PEGGY. (Nodding.) Oh, dear! I wish Mary were here

EDITH. Well, she'll be there. (Laughs.) Oh, forgive me, dear. I do feel sorry for you. But it is funny. PEGGY. What's funny? EDITH. It's gonna be quite a gathering of the clan. (Sitting up in bed, full of energy to break the neces) Howard Fowler's bounced Sylvia out right on her car! He's threatened to divorce her right here in New York if she doesn't go to Reno. And name her young customer's man

PEGGY. But-Howard's always known

EDITH. Certainly. Howard hired him, so he'd have plenty of time for his own affairs. Howard's got some girl he wants to marry. But nobody, not even Winchell, knows who she is! Howard's a coony cuss (laughing) I do think it's screaming. When you remember how Sylvia always thought she was putting something over on us girls! (She laughs so hard, she gives herself a stitch. She falls back among her pillows, limp and martyred.) P

EGGY. (Bitterly.) Life's awfully unattractive, isn't it?

EDITH. Manning) Oh, I wouldn't complain if that damned stork would take the Indian sign off me.