

MILDRED PIERCE YOUNG VEDA SC 1

(SCENE 1 - SPRING, 1931)

LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

We FOLLOW Mildred as she approaches the well-dressed "young lady" standing by the mirror removing her coat and hat.

START

MILDRED

Hello, dear. How was practice?

VEDA, Mildred's eldest, turns to her mother: a dazzling, highly precocious 11-year-old, with bright blue eyes, copper-red hair--and a searing intelligence.

VEDA

Hello, mother. Mmm, pas extraordinaire.

MILDRED

Where's your sister?

VEDA

Outside.

She picks up her books and flexes one hand as she walks past Mildred into the kitchen. Mildred follows.

VEDA

That is, if Chopin's French pronunciation): Grand Valse Brilliante doesn't give me palsy.

KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

VEDA

Though it is the creme-de-la-creme of waltzes, says Aaron Copland.

Veda plops down at the kitchen table, eyes on Mildred. She quizzes her mother.

VEDA

Now what did I say...?

MILDRED

(realizing)
Oh--The Grand...

VEDA

...The Grand Valse Brilliante.
really, Mother.
(MORE)

(1/9)

VEDA (cont'd)
 (glancing at the cake): And who,
 pray tell, is 'Bob'?

Mildred brings Veda an iced cupcake on a plate, decorated
 with an iced "V".

MILDRED
 Here. I had extra batter.

VEDA
 Oh, Mother, it's darling!

MILDRED
 Bob Whitley. (opens kitchen door,
 calls): Ray! Time to come in now!

VEDA
 Of course. The paper boy.

From outside we hear the voice of Mildred's youngest
 daughter, RAY, age 7.

RAY (O.S.)
 Mommy--guess what?

Mildred goes to pour Veda a glass of milk.

MILDRED
 He'll be a paper boy without a
 birthday cake if I don't find some
 way to get it over there. Maybe
 your Grandfather wouldn't mind
 taking me. Eat your cake now and
 we'll--

VEDA
 Why can't we use our car?

MILDRED
 Your father's out with it, and he--
 may be late.

Veda is suddenly out of her chair.

VEDA
 What time is it? Richard Crooks is
 back on the Voice of Firestone.
 He's doing a medley of the The
 Student Prince.

She runs out of the room.

MILDRED
 You still have time.

(2/9)

[]

LIVING ROOM

We FOLLOW Veda as she walks back into the kitchen.

RAY (O.S.)

Mommy, guess what? Miss Pinkins
said my caterpillar was the most
beautiful.

Veda arrives at the door and stops.

VEDA



Mother, where's Father?

MILDRED

(still wrangling Ray)
He--had to go somewhere. Now
please, dear, sit down and eat your-

VEDA

Then where are his clothes?

Mildred stops and turns to look at Veda, who remains standing
at the door, coolly. Even Ray, cupcake in hand, settles to
listen. The colorful cake seems to listen as well.

MILDRED

He's gone away.

VEDA

Where to?

MILDRED

I... I don't know.

VEDA

Is he coming back-?

Silence.

MILDRED

No.

Ray stops eating, her little face suddenly sinking.

RAY

But why? Why is he gone away?

(3/9)

MILDRED
 I can't explain it all this instant. Someday you girls will understand. What's important to know is there's nothing to worry about. Nothing at all.

RAY
 (growing distraught)
 But... Daddy's gone.

→ MILDRED
 It's all right, dear. Everything is going to be just fine.

Ray bursts into a child's sob. Mildred squats down with open arms and Ray folds into them. Veda remains standing, feeling further removed.

VEDA
 (almost pleading)
 I just wanted to know why his clothes were gone.

MILDRED
 (comforting Ray)
 Oh... darling, don't worry. You know your father thinks the world of you girls. But he didn't want to say goodbye because he didn't want to upset you or worry you. But it's not his fault. It's no one's fault. It's simply due to things that happen... All right?

Veda, who's been listening gravely, suddenly looks up.

VEDA
 If you mean Mrs. Biederhof, Mother, I quite agree. I think she's distinctly middle-class.

Mildred winces, though can't help laughing at the same time at her daughter's precocity, and takes Veda into her arms as well, kissing and hugging both of her girls.

MILDRED
 Oh, Veda, my darling! What would I do without you girls?... ~~What would I do without you girls?...~~
~~What would I do without you girls?...~~
~~What would I do without you girls?...~~
~~What would I do without you girls?...~~

END

(4/9)

(SCENE 2 - XMAS, 1933)

INT. GLENDALE HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

A box is opened and tissue parted, revealing a new pair of riding boots, which Veda begins to take out of the box.

START

VEDA

Ohhh, they're lovely! That's so so dear of Father!

MILDRED

Here, let me help you.

Mildred helps her try them on, kneeling beside her daughter amidst a pile of wrapping and the glow of the lighted tree. She stands up to look.

MILDRED

Oh, they look very smart.

She hands Veda a small gift from the table.

MILDRED

And this is for you, dear, from Mother.

VEDA

Best for last!
(sweetly coy)
What could it be? It's so small...

Veda starts unwrapping it.

MILDRED

It's not what I was hoping to give you, but...

Veda reveals a ladies wristwatch and stops, staring flatly. All her sparkle has gone.

MILDRED

I think it'll go nicely with school clothes as well as with-

VEDA

Thanks.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

(MORE)

(5/9)

~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~
~~XX~~
~~XX~~

But Veda gets up and walks toward the dining room.

MILDRED

You like the boots your father got you? (no response); Veda? (to the air) I told him not to get your hopes up. I told him, how many times?

VEDA

Christ, I hate this dump.

Mildred looks at her a moment, then starts collecting wrapping.

MILDRED

Is it... anything in particular that you object to?

VEDA

No, Mother--and please don't start changing things around, just to please me. No, nothing in particular--just every lousy, stinking part of it-(she heads to the bar): And if it were to burn down tomorrow I wouldn't shed a tear from the Elixir of Love, by Gaetano Donizetti, seventeen ninety-eight--eighteen forty-eight..

MILDRED

I see.

Veda picks up a pack of cigarettes Mildred keeps on hand for Monty, lights one, and throws the match on the floor. Mildred stops what she's doing and stands, furiously.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

You'll put that cigarette out and pick up that match.

VEDA

Like hell I will.

Mildred marches over, takes careful aim, and slaps Veda hard on the cheek. Veda slaps her back so fast it takes Mildred a moment to realize--and start to boil. Veda dances back a few steps in defence, taking her taunt around the room.

(6/9)

[REDACTED]

Mildred, quite familiar with Veda's repertoire, is not familiar with this last display.

[REDACTED]

Veda plops down on the couch, facing away from Mildred.

VEDA

You're such a sap, Mother--you actually believe he would marry YOU?

MILDRED

Yes... if I were willing.

VEDA

Oh! Yee gods and little fishes hear my cynical laughter... If I were willing! Stupid, don't you know what he sees in you?

MILDRED

About what you see, I think.

VEDA

No--it's your legs.

MILDRED

What?... He said that? (marching over to face her): To YOU?

VEDA

Why shouldn't he? We're very good friends, and I hope I have a mature point of view on such matters. Really, he speaks very nicely about your legs. He has a theory about them. He says a gingham apron is the greatest provocation ever invented by woman for the torture of man, and that the very best legs are found in kitchens, not in drawing rooms. 'Never take the mistress if you can get the maid,' is how he puts it.

(7/a)

Veda snaps at her cigarette as she continues. But Mildred is too overwhelmed to respond, stunned by what she's hearing.

VEDA

Not that he would consider them his equals, per se. Try as he will at his slumming, his shoes are still custom made.

MILDRED

(quick--and bitter)
They ought to be. They cost me enough.

Veda is left reflecting on this, cigarette in air.

MILDRED

You didn't know that, did you?

VEDA

You buy his shoes? Yee gods and little-

MILDRED

His shoes and his shorts and his drinks and everything else he's needed over the last four months, ~~_____~~ So you needn't call on your gods and little fishes, or your dates from the operas. No, Miss Pierce, it's not my legs that he likes me for, it's my money. ~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~

Veda gets up from the couch and steps away, but Mildred follows. The haughtiness in her manner is just like Veda's.

MILDRED

~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~
~~_____~~: And I say there'll be no more money for you, not one cent, until you take back everything you've said, and apologize for it!

(8/9)

Utterly disarmed and cornered, Veda reverts into a screaming fourteen-year-old, kicking the upright piano with her brand new boots.

VEDA

I don't have to apologize for
ANYTHING! YOU'RE the one who ruins
EVERYTHING ALWAYS!!

MILDRED

And that's the piano that you're
going to practice on, until I get
ready, in my own good time, to buy
you another!

END

To this, Veda screams at the top of her lungs, then lunges savagely for the keys and begins pounding out the CAN-CAN FROM ORPHEUS. Stormy MUSIC rises up as Mildred walks to the door, grabs her coat, and as calmly as possible walks out of the house.

(9/9)