

METZ 1/2

JEFFERSON. *(Crossing to couch for hat and starting for arch L.)* I understand... Well, thank you very much, Mr. Whiteside—you've been very kind. By the way, I'm a cribbage player, if you need one while you're here.

(John enters up L. C. crosses to hall L.)

WHITESIDE. Fine. How much can you afford to lose?

JEFFERSON. I usually win.

WHITESIDE. We won't discuss that. Come back at eight-thirty.

START We'll play three-handed with Elsie Dinsmore...

METZ

METZ. Sherry!

WHITESIDE. Metz!

(John, who has answered doorbell, has ushered in a strange-looking little man in his fifties. His hair runs all over his head and his clothes are too big for him. John carries in a package, which he places on table D. L.)

Metz, you incredible beetle-hound! What are you doing here?

METZ. *(Crossing to c. With a mild Teutonic accent.)* I explain, Sherry. First I kiss my little Maggie.

MAGGIE. *(Crosses to c. Embracing him.)* Metz darling, what a wonderful surprise!

WHITESIDE. The enchanted Metz! Jefferson, you are standing in the presence of Professor Adolph Metz, the world's greatest authority on insect life.

JEFFERSON. How do you do.

METZ. How do you do. Well, Sherry?

WHITESIDE. Metz, stop looking at me adoringly and tell me why you are here.

METZ. *(Crosses R. to Whiteside. Maggie crosses down to the R. of couch.)* You are sick, Sherry, so I come to cheer you.

WHITESIDE. Jefferson, he lived for two years in a cave with nothing but plant lice. He rates three pages in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Don't you, my little hookworm?

METZ. Please, Sherry, you embarrass me. Look—I have brought you a present to while away the hours. Please—*(Bringing stool at*

staircase to wheelchair. He motions to John, who carries the package to stool L. of wheelchair. Package is in brown canvas cover.)

I said to my students: "Boys and girls, I want to give a present to my sick friend, Sheridan Whiteside." So you know what we did? We made for you a community of *Periplaneta americana*, commonly known as the American cockroach. Behold, Sherry! Roach City! *(He strips off cover.)* Inside here are ten thousand cockroaches.

JOHN. ~~Ten thousand~~ *(Headed for kitchen U. R. in great excitement.)*
Sarah! Sarah! ~~What do you think!~~ *(Exits up R.)*

METZ. And in one week, Sherry, if all goes well, there will be *fifty* thousand.

MAGGIE. If all goes well—? What can go wrong? They're in there, aren't they?

WHITESIDE. *(Glaring at her.)* Quiet, please.

METZ. You can watch them, Sherry, while they live out their whole lives. Look!

(Jefferson crosses C.)

Here is their maternity hospital. It is fascinating. They do everything that human beings do.

MAGGIE. Well!

WHITESIDE. Please, Maggie, these are *my* cockroaches.

MAGGIE. Sorry. *(Crosses to back of Whiteside's chair.)*

WHITESIDE. Go ahead, Metz.

METZ. With these earphones, Sherry, you listen to the mating calls. There are microphones down inside.

(Jefferson crosses to back of Whiteside's chair.)

Listen! *(Metz has put earphones over Whiteside's ears; he listens, rapt.)*

WHITESIDE. Hmm. How long has this been going on?

(Mrs. Stanley is seen descending stairs. Sniffing, Metz crosses to R. and then C. Suddenly his face lights up.)

END

METZ. Aha! *Periplaneta Americana!* There are cockroaches in this house! *(The last addressed to Mrs. Stanley.)*

MRS. STANLEY. *(Shocked into speech.)* I beg your pardon!