

KATE & BLANCHE

BLANCHE. No, darling. Didn't you go with Eugene?

LAURIE. No. I was across the street in the creepy house. It's just as creepy inside.

BLANCHE. In Mr. Murphy's house? You were just in there? Why?

LAURIE. She called me from the window. The old lady. I think it's his mother. She told me she had a letter for you. I had to go inside to get it. *(She hands letter to BLANCHE.)*

KATE. What did she say to you?

LAURIE. She offered me a cookie but it was all green. I said I wasn't hungry.

(EUGENE appears outside the house. He carries a brown paper bag with four small cartons of ice cream. BLANCHE opens the letter.)

EUGENE. *(to audience)* "Dear Mrs. Morton, I send regrets for my son Frank. I tried to reach you earlier, then realized you had no phone. Frank will be unable to keep his dinner engagement with you this evening. Frank is in hospital as a result of an automobile accident last night and although his injuries are not serious, the consequences are. As a devoted mother I would end this letter here and forward my apologies. Despite all my son's faults, honesty and sincerity have never been his failings. He wanted me to tell you the truth. That while driving a friend's motor car, he was intoxicated and was the cause of the aforementioned accident. The truth would come out soon enough, but Frank has too much respect and fondness for you to have you hear it from some other source. I hope you will not think I am just a dotting mother when I tell you my boy has a great many attributes. A great many. As soon as Frank can get out of his difficulties here we have decided to move to

upstate New York where there is a clinic that can help Frank and where we have relatives with whom we can stay. Frank sends along with his regrets, his regard for a warm, intelligent, friendly and most delightful neighbor across the way . . . Yours most respectfully, Mrs. Matthew Murphy."

KATE. What is it? *(BLANCHE hands the letter to KATE.)*

BLANCHE. He's not coming. He's . . . in the hospital. *(KATE reads the letter.)*

KATE. *(as she reads)* I knew it. I said it right from the beginning, didn't I?

BLANCHE. He was in a car accident . . . Oh, God. That poor woman.

KATE. *(nodding her head as she finishes)* It could have been you in that car with him. I warned you the first day about those people.

BLANCHE. Stop calling them "those people." They're not "those people." She's a mother, like you and me.

KATE. And what is he? Tell me what he is.

BLANCHE. He's somebody in trouble. He's somebody that needs help. For God's sakes, Kate, you don't even know the man.

KATE. I know the man. I know what they're all like.

BLANCHE. Who are you to talk? Are we any better? Are we something so special? We're all poor around here, the least we can be is charitable.

KATE. Why? What have I got I can afford to give

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away? Am I the one who got you all dressed up for nothing? Am I the one who got your hopes up? Am I the one they're going to lock up in a jail somewhere?

LAURIE. They're going to put him in jail?

KATE. Don't talk to me about charity. Anyone else, but not me.

BLANCHE. I never said you weren't charitable.

KATE. All I did was try to help you. All I ever did was try to help you.

BLANCHE. I know that. Nobody cares for their family more than you do. But at least you can be sympathetic to somebody else in trouble.

KATE. Who should I care about? Who's out there watching over *me*? I did enough in my life for people. You know what I'm talking about.

BLANCHE. No, I don't. Say what's on your mind, Kate. What people?

KATE. You! Celia! Poppa, when he was sick. Everybody! . . . Don't you ask *me* what people! How many beatings from Momma did I get for things that you did? How many dresses did I go without so you could look like someone when you went out? I was the workhorse and you were the pretty one. You have no right to talk to me like that. No right.

BLANCHE. This is all about Jack, isn't it? You're blaming me for what happened.

KATE. Why do you think that man is sick today? Why did a policeman have to carry him home at two o'clock in the morning? So your Nora could have dancing lessons? So that Laurie could see a doctor every three weeks? Go on! Worry about your friend across the street, not the ones who have to be dragged home to keep a roof over your head. (*She turns away. JACK walks in from the kitchen.*)

JACK. What is this? What's going on here?

BLANCHE. (*to KATE*) Why didn't you ever tell me you felt that way?

KATE. (*turns her back to her*) I never had the time. I was too busy taking care of everyone.

JACK. What is it, Blanche? What happened? (*She hands JACK the letter. He starts to read it.*)

BLANCHE. It took all those years? It took something like that letter for you to finally get your feelings out?

KATE. I didn't need a letter . . . I just needed you to ask me. (*BLANCHE is terribly hurt and extremely vulnerable standing there.*)

BLANCHE. Laurie! Please go upstairs. This conversation isn't for you.

EUGENE. The ice cream is ready.

BLANCHE. Eugene, put the ice cream in the ice box. I have to talk to your mother. (*EUGENE goes into the kitchen.*)

JACK. (*finishes the letter*) I never spoke to the woman. They've lived in that house for three years, and I never exchanged a word with her.

KATE. (*to JACK*) What are you walking around for? If you're out of bed, at least sit in a chair.

BLANCHE. If I could take Nora and Laurie, and pack them out of this house tonight, I would do it. But I can't. I have no place to take them.

JACK. Blanche! What are you talking about? Don't say such things.

BLANCHE. (*looking straight at KATE*) If I can leave the girls with you for another few weeks, I would appreciate it. Until I can find a place of my own and then I'll send for them.

JACK. You're not sending for anybody and you're not leaving anywhere. I don't want to hear this kind of talk.

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