

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)

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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)

[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)

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)