

Female 40s

THE LITTLE FOXES by Lillian Hellman

BIRDIE That was the first day I ever saw Oscar. The Ballongs were selling their horses and he was going there to buy. He passed and lifted his hat—we could see him from the window—and my brother, to tease Mama, said maybe we should have invited the Hubbards to the party. He said Mama didn't like them because they kept a store and he said that was old-fashioned of her. (Her face lights up) And then, and then I saw Mama angry for the first time in my life. She said that wasn't the reason. She said she was old-fashioned, but not that way. She said she was old-fashioned enough not to like people who killed animals they couldn't use, and who made their money charging awful interest to poor, ignorant blacks and cheating them on what they bought. She was very angry, Mama was. I had never seen her face like that. And then suddenly she laughed and said, "Look, I frightened Birdie out of the hiccoughs. And so she had.... Who would have thought—(quickly) You all want to know something? Well, I don't like Leo. My very own son, and I don't like him. (Laughs gaily) My, I guess I even like Oscar more. Why did I marry Uncle Oscar? I don't know. I thought I liked him. He was kind to me and I thought it was because he liked me too. But that wasn't the reason—Ask why he married me. I can tell you that: he's told it to me often enough. (Speaking very rapidly, tensely) My family was good and the cotton on Lionnet's fields was better. Ben Hubbard wanted the cotton and Oscar Hubbard married for him. He was kind to me, then. He used to smile at me. He hasn't smiled at me since. Everybody knew that's what he married me for. Everybody buy me. Stupid Stupid me. I don't have a headache!! I've never had a headache in my life. You know it as well as I do. I never had a headache, Zan. That's a lie they tell for me. I drink. All by myself, in my own room, by myself, I drink. Then, when they want to hide it, they say, "Birdie's got a headache again" You know what? In twenty-two years I haven't had a whole day of happiness. Oh, a little, like today with you all. But never a single, whole day. I say to myself, if only I had one more whole day...