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Sommario/riassunto	"There is nothing like a dame," proclaims the song from South Pacific. Certainly there is nothing like the fast-talking dame of screen comedies in the 1930's and '40's. In this engaging book, film scholar and movie buff Maria DiBattista celebrates the fast-talking dame as an American original. Coming of age during the Depression, the dame--a woman of lively wit and brash speech--epitomized a new style of self-reliant, articulate womanhood. Dames were quick on the uptake and hardly ever downbeat. They seemed to know what to say and when to say it. In their fast and breezy talk seemed to lie the secret of happiness, but also the key to reality. DiBattista offers vivid portraits of the grandest dames of the era, including Katharine Hepburn, Irene Dunne, Rosalind Russell, Barbara Stanwyck, and others, and discusses the great films that showcased their compelling way with words--and with men. With their snappy repartee and vivid colloquialisms, these fast-talkers were verbal muses at a time when Americans were reinventing both language

and the political institutions of democratic culture. As they taught their laconic male counterparts (most notably those appealing but tongue-tied American icons, Gary Cooper, Henry Fonda, and James Stewart) the power and pleasures of speech, they also reimagined the relationship between the sexes. In such films as *Bringing Up Baby*, *The Awful Truth*, and *The Lady Eve*, the fast-talking dame captivated moviegoers of her time. For audiences today, DiBattista observes, the sassy heroine still has much to say.
