

KELLER: Gonna rain tonight.

JIM: Paper say so?

KELLER: Yeah, right here.

JIM: Then it can't rain.

*(FRANK enters.)*

FRANK: Hiya.

KELLER: Hello, Frank. What's doin'?

FRANK: *(Noticing tree)* Hey, what happened to your tree?

KELLER: Ain't that awful? The wind must've got it last night.

FRANK: What'd Kate say?

KELLER: They're all asleep yet. I'm just waiting for her to see it.

FRANK: You know? - It's funny.

KELLER: What?

FRANK: Larry was born in August. He'd been twenty-seven this month and his tree blows down.

JIM: *(Changing the subject)* Well, where's the beautiful girl was supposed to be here?

FRANK: *(Excited)* Annie came?

KELLER: Sure, sleepin' upstairs. We picked her up on the one o'clock train last night. Wonderful thing. Girl leaves here, a scrawny kid. Couple of years go by, she's a regular woman. That was a very happy family used to live in your house, Jim.

JIM: Like to meet her. The block can use a pretty girl. In the whole neighborhood there's not a thing to look at.  
*(Enter SUE. On seeing her JIM adds:)* Except my wife, of course.

SUE: Mrs. Adams is on the phone, you dog.

JIM: What's the matter with her now?

SUE: I don't know, dear. She sounds like she's in terrible pain.

JIM: Why don't you just tell her to lay down?

SUE: She enjoys it more when you tell her to lay down.

JIM: *(To KELLER)* If your son wants to play golf tell him I'm ready. Or if he'd like to take a trip around the world for about thirty years. *(He exits.)*

KELLER: Why do you needle him? He's a doctor, women are supposed to call him up.

SUE: All I said was Mrs. Adams is on the phone. Can I have some of your parsley?

KELLER: Yeah, sure. *(She goes to pull some parsley. Enter LYDIA)*

LYDIA: Frank, the toaster... *(She sees the others)* Hya.

KELLER: Hello!

LYDIA: The toaster is off again.

FRANK: Well, plug it in, I just fixed it.

LYDIA: Please, dear, fix it back like it was before.

FRANK: I don't know why you can't learn to turn on a simple thing like a toaster! *(FRANK exits.)*

SUE: *(Laughs)* Thomas Edison.

LYDIA: *(She sees broken tree)* Oh, did the wind get your tree?

KELLER: Yeah, last night.

LYDIA: Oh, what a pity. Annie get in?

KELLER: She'll be down soon. Wait'll you meet her, Sue.

SUE: Tell her to come over later; I imagine she'd like to see what we did with her house. And thanks. *(SUE exits.)*

LYDIA: Is she still unhappy, Joe?

KELLER: Annie? It's a couple years already. She can't mourn a boy forever.

*(Enter CHRIS from the house)*

LYDIA: Hiya, Chris... *(FRANK shouts from off)*

FRANK: Lydia, come in here! If you want the toaster to work don't plug in the mixer.

LYDIA: *(Embarrassed, laughs)* Did I...? I'll never hear the end of this one. *(She exits, laughing)*

KELLER: *(To CHRIS)* See what happened to the tree?

CHRIS: Yeah.

KELLER: What's Mother going to say? *(BERT runs on from the driveway, playing with his toy airplane)* Ha! Bert's here! *(He picks up BERT and swings him around)* So what's new this morning, Bert?

BERT: Nothin' *(He goes to the tree and inspects it as they talk)*

KELLER: Maybe we ought to tell her before she sees it.

CHRIS: She saw it.

KELLER: How could she see it?

CHRIS: She was out here when it broke.

KELLER: When?

CHRIS: About four this morning. *(BERT loses interest and runs off with his airplane. KELLER and CHRIS watch him leave)*

KELLER: What was she doing out here at that hour? *(CHRIS silent. An undertone of anger showing.)* She's dreaming about him again.

CHRIS: I guess she is.

KELLER: She's getting just like after he died.

CHRIS: We've made a terrible mistake with Mother.

KELLER: What?

CHRIS: Being dishonest with her.

KELLER: What do you mean, dishonest?

CHRIS: You know Larry's not coming back and I know it. Why do we allow her to go on thinking that we believe with her?

KELLER: What do you want to do, argue with her?

CHRIS: I don't want to argue with her. But it's time she realized that nobody believes Larry is alive anymore. Why shouldn't she dream of him? Do we contradict her? Do we say straight out that we have no hope anymore?

KELLER: (*Frightened*) You can't say that to her.

CHRIS: We've got to say it to her.

KELLER: How're you gonna prove it?

CHRIS: Three years! Nobody comes back after three years! It's insane.

KELLER: To you it is, and to me. But not to her. There's no body and there's no grave, so where are you?

CHRIS: Sit down, Dad. I want to talk to you.

KELLER: The trouble is the newspapers. Every month some boy turns up from nowhere, so the next one is going to be Larry, so...

CHRIS: All right, all right, listen to me. (*Slight pause*) you know why I asked Annie here, don't you?

KELLER: (*he knows, but...*) Why?

CHRIS: I'm going to ask her to marry me.

KELLER: Well, that's your business, Chris.

CHRIS: You know it's not only my business.

KELLER: The girl is Larry's girl.

CHRIS: She's not Larry's girl.

KELLER: From Mother's point of view he is not dead and you have no right to take his girl.

*(KATE appears on the porch)*

KATE: Joe?

CHRIS: Hello, Mom. Is Annie finished eating?

KATE: *(Looking around at the yard)* She'll be right out. The wind did some job on this place.

KELLER: Sit down, take it easy.

KATE: *(She presses her hand to the top of her head)* I've got such a funny pain on the top of my head.

CHRIS: Can I get you an aspirin?

KATE: *(Picks a few petals off the ground, stands there smelling them then sprinkles them over the plants)* No more roses. It's so funny... everything decides to happen at the same time. This month is his birthday; his tree blows down, Annie comes. Everything that happened seems to be coming back.

CHRIS: Don't you think Annie looks well?

KATE: She's a beauty... I still don't know what brought her here.

CHRIS: I just thought we'd all like to see her again. *(KATE just looks at him, nodding ever so slightly)* And I wanted to see her myself.

KATE: I'll always love that girl. She's one that didn't jump into bed with somebody else as soon as it happened with her fella.

KELLER: Oh, what're you...

KATE: I'm just glad she came, so you can see I'm not *completely* out of my mind.

CHRIS: Just because she isn't married doesn't mean she's been mourning Larry.

KATE: *(With an undercurrent of observation)* Why then isn't she?

CHRIS: *(A little flustered)* Well... it could've been any number of things.

KATE: Like what, for instance?

CHRIS: *(Embarrassed, but standing his ground)* I don't know. Whatever it is. Can I get you an aspirin?

KATE: *(Puts her hand to her head)* It's not like a headache.

KELLER: You don't sleep, that's why.

KATE: I had a terrible night.

CHRIS: What was it, Mom? Did you dream? About Larry?

KATE: I saw him. Way, way up where the clouds are. He was so real I could reach out and touch him. And suddenly he started to fall. And crying to me... Mom, Mom! And I woke and it was so funny... the wind... it was like the roaring of his engine. See? We should never have planted that tree. It was too soon!

CHRIS: *(Alarmed)* Too soon!

KATE: *(Angering)* We rushed into it. Everybody was in such a hurry to bury him.

CHRIS: Mother. *(She looks into his face)* I've been thinking, y'know? - maybe we ought to put our minds to forgetting him?

KATE: That's the third time you've said that this week.

CHRIS: Because it's not right.

KATE: *(Presses her head)* Get me an aspirin, heh?

CHRIS: Sure, and let's break out of this, heh, Mom? I thought the four of us might go out to dinner.

KATE: Fine. We can do it tonight.

KELLER: Swell with me!

CHRIS: Sure, let's have some fun. You'll start with this aspirin. *(He exits into the house)*

KATE: Why did he invite her here? Why all of a sudden?

KELLER: Maybe he just wanted to see her..

KATE: Nobody comes seven hundred miles "just to see."

KELLER: Don't look at me like that.

KATE: He's not going to marry her. She's not his girl, Joe.

KELLER: What do you want me to do?

KATE: I want you to act like he's coming back. Both of you.

KELLER: But, Kate...

KATE: Because if he's not coming back, then I'll kill myself. Laugh. Laugh at me. *(Points at tree)* But why did that happen the very night she came back? Look at it-

KELLER: Calm yourself.

KATE: Believe with me, Joe.

KELLER: All right, all right.

KATE: You above all have got to believe-

KELLER: Why me above all?

*(BERT comes rushing in with his airplane, making sounds as if it were crashing)*

BERT: Mr. Keller, Mr. Keller!

KATE: Stop that, Bert. Go home.

*(Bert "crashes" his plane on Larry's tree)*

I want you to stop that! Go home, Bert!

KELLER: What is the matter with you, Kate?

*(ANN appears on the porch with CHRIS)*

ANN: Hiya.

CHRIS: Take a breath of that air, kid. You never get air like that in New York.

KATE: For so long I've been aching for a nice conversation with you, Annie. Tell me something.

ANN: What?

KATE: I don't know. Something nice.

CHRIS: (*Wryly*) She means do you go out much?

KATE: Oh, shut up. (*Slight pause*) Do you... go out much?

ANN: (*Delicately*) You mean am I still waiting for him?

KATE: Well, no, I don't expect you to wait for him but...

ANN: (*Kindly*) But that's what you mean, isn't it?

KATE: ... Well... yes.

ANN: Well, I'm not, Kate.

KATE: (*Faintly*) You're not?

ANN: You don't really imagine he's... ?

CHRIS: Mother, I'll bet you money you're the only woman in the country who after three years is still...

KATE: Don't be so smart! There are just a few things you *don't* know. All of you. And I'll tell you one of them, Annie, deep in your heart you've always been waiting for him.

ANN: (*Resolutely*) No, Kate.

KATE: (*With increasing demand*) But deep in your heart, Annie!

CHRIS: She ought to know, shouldn't she?

KATE: Don't let them tell you what to think. Listen to your heart.

ANN: Why does your heart tell you he's alive?

KATE: Because he has to be.

ANN: But why, Kate?

KATE: Because certain things have to be, and certain things can never be. That's why there's God. Otherwise anything could happen. But there's God so certain things can never happen. Ann, you know I'm right.

ANN: *(She stands there in silence, then turns trembling)* No, Kate.

*(FRANK appears carrying a ladder)*

FRANK: Annie! How are you, gee whiz!

ANN: *(Taking his hand)* Why, Frank.

FRANK: How's your brother? Got his degree, I hear.

ANN: Oh, George has his own office now!

FRANK: Don't say! *(Funereally)* And... does Dad expect a parole soon?

ANN: *(With growing ill-ease)* I really don't know, I...

FRANK: I mean, because I feel, y'know, that if an intelligent man like your father is put in prison, there ought to be a law that says either you execute him, or let him go after a year.

CHRIS: *(Interrupting)* Want a hand with that ladder, Frank?

FRANK: *(Taking the cue)* That's all right, I'll... *(Embarrassed)* See you later, Ann, you look wonderful. *(He exits.)*

ANN: Haven't they stopped talking about Dad?

CHRIS: Nobody talks about him any more.

KELLER: Gone and forgotten.

CHRIS: I don't want you to worry about it.

ANN: *(To KELLER)* Do they talk about you? The last thing I remember on this block was one word - "Murderers!" Remember,

Kate?... Mrs. Hammond standing in front of our house and yelling that word...

KELLER: Listen, you do like I did and you'll be all right. The day I come home... Everybody knew I was getting out that day; the porches were loaded. None of them believed I was innocent. So I get out of my car, and I walk down the street with a smile. I was the beast; the guy who sold cracked cylinder heads to the Army Air force; the guy who made twenty-one P-40s crash in Australia. Kid, walking down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I wasn't, and I walked... past... the porches. Result? Fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state, a respected man again; bigger than ever.

CHRIS: *(With admiration)* Joe McGuts.

KELLER: *(With great force)* That's the only way you lick 'em is guts! *(to ANN)* The worst thing you did was to move away from here. You made it tough for your father when he gets out. That's why I tell you, I like to see him move right back on this block.

ANN: *(Surprised)* Don't you hold anything against him?

KELLER: Annie, I never believed in crucifying people.

ANN: *(Mystified)* But he was your partner, he dragged you through the mud...

KELLER: Well, he ain't my sweetheart, but you gotta forgive-

CHRIS: He murdered twenty-one pilots.

KATE: That is not a thing to say about a man.

ANN: What else can you say? He knowingly shipped out parts that would crash an airplane. And how do you know Larry wasn't one of them?

KATE: As long as you're here, Annie, I want to ask you never to say that again.

ANN: I thought you'd be mad at him.

KATE: What your father did had nothing to do with Larry.

ANN: But we can't know that.

KATE: As long as you're here!

ANN: But, Kate...

KATE: Enough! Come inside now and have some tea with me. *(She turns to go inside)*

KELLER: *(To ANN)* The one thing you...

KATE: *(Sharply)* He's not dead, so there's no argument! Now come!

KELLER: *(Angrily)* In a minute! *(KATE turns and goes into the house)* Now Look, Annie... The man was a fool, but don't make a murderer out of him. Listen, you gotta appreciate what was doin' in that shop in the war. It was a madhouse! Every half hour the Major callin' for cylinder heads. All of a sudden a batch comes out with a crack. That happens, that's the business. So he's a little man, your father, always scared of loud voices. What'll the Major say? What'll I say? You know what I mean? So he takes out his tools and he... covers over the cracks. All right... that's bad, it's wrong, but that's what a little man does. If I could have gone in that day I'd a told him- junk 'em, Steve, we can afford it. But alone he was afraid. That's a mistake, but it ain't murder.

ANN: Joe, let's forget it.

KELLER: *(Smiling)* That's my sentiments. Can you stand steak?

CHRIS: And champagne!

KELLER: Now you're operatin'. Big time tonight, Annie!

ANN: Can't scare me.

KELLER: *(To CHRIS)* I like that girl. Wrap her up. *(They laugh)* I want to see everybody drunk tonight. *(He exits, laughing, into the house)*

CHRIS: Isn't he a great guy?

ANN: You're the only one I know who loves his parents!

CHRIS: I know. It went out of style, didn't it?

ANN: You know? It's lovely here.

CHRIS: *(Hopefully)* You're not sorry you came?

ANN: Not sorry, no.

CHRIS: Ann, I love you. I love you a great deal.

ANN: *(Putting her arms around him)* Oh, Chris.

CHRIS: Then he's gone forever. You're sure. *(They embrace and kiss)* Annie, I'm going to make you so happy.

*(KELLER enters from the house)*

KELLER: Hey, Ann, your brother's on the phone.

ANN: *(Surprised)* My brother?

KELLER: Yeah, George. Long distance.

ANN: What's the matter, is anything wrong?

KELLER: I don't know. *(ANN goes into the house)* George is calling from Columbus.

CHRIS: Columbus!

KELLER: Did Annie tell you he was going to see his father today?

CHRIS: No, I don't think she knew anything about it.

KELLER: All these years George don't go see his father. Suddenly he goes-

ANN: *(On the phone, inside the house)* Why are you so excited, George? What happened? *(KATE comes outside)* Well, what did he tell you? *(Pause)* All right, come then. *(Pause)* Yes, they'll all be here. And try to get hold of yourself, will you? *(Pause)* All right, all right. Goodbye. *(Brief pause as ANN hangs up the receiver, then comes out of the kitchen.)*

CHRIS: Something happen?

KELLER: He's coming here?

ANN: On the seven o'clock. *(To KATE)* I told him it would be all right.

KELLER: Sure, fine! Your father took sick?

ANN: *(Mystified)* No, George, didn't say he was sick. I...  
*(Shaking it off)* I don't know, I suppose it's something stupid,  
you know my brother... *(She comes to CHRIS)* Let's go for a  
drive, or something...

CHRIS: Sure. Give me the keys, Dad.

KATE: Drive through the park. It's beautiful now.

CHRIS: Come on, Ann. *(To them)* Be back right away.

ANN: *(As she and CHRIS exit)* See you. *(KATE comes down to  
KELLER, her eyes fixed on him)*

KELLER: Take your time. *(To KATE)* What does George want?

KATE: I don't know. *(With warning)* He's a lawyer now, Joe.  
George is a lawyer. All these years he never even sent a  
postcard to Steve.

KELLER: So what?

KATE: *(Her tension breaking out)* Suddenly he takes an airplane  
from New York to see him.

KELLER: So?

KATE: Why, Joe? What has Steve suddenly got to tell him?

KELLER: What do I care what Steve's got to tell him?

KATE: You're sure, Joe?

KELLER: *(Frightened, but angry)* Yes, I'm sure.

KATE: Be smart now, Joe. The boy is coming. Be smart.

KELLER: I said I'm sure!

KATE: All right, Joe. Just... be smart. *(KELLER, in hopeless  
fury, looks at her, turns around and goes into the house,  
slamming the screen door violently. KATE sits stiffly, staring,  
seeing.)*

## SCENE 2

*(Twilight, that evening. CHRIS is discovered sawing the broken-off tree. KATE comes out and watches him)*

KATE: You notice there's more light with that thing gone?

CHRIS: Why aren't you dressing?

KATE: It's suffocating upstairs.

CHRIS: Well, come on, get dressed. And what's Dad sleeping so much for?

KATE: He's worried. When he's worried he sleeps. *(Pause. She looks into his eyes)* Chris. You've got to protect us.

CHRIS: What's there to be afraid of?

KATE: To his last day in court Steve never gave up the idea that Dad made him do it. If they're going to open the case again I won't live through it.

CHRIS: George is a fool, Mother.

KATE: That family hates us. Maybe even Annie...

CHRIS: Oh, now, Mother...

KATE: When George goes home, tell her to go with him.

CHRIS: Don't worry about Annie.

KATE: Steve is her father too.

CHRIS: Are you going to cut it out?

KATE: You don't realize how much people can hate, Chris, they can hate so much they'll tear the world to pieces... *(ANN appears, dressed up)*

CHRIS: Look! She's dressed already. *(He and KATE mount the porch)*

ANN: Are you feeling well, Kate?

KATE: What's the difference, dear. *(She goes into the house)*

CHRIS: You look nice.

ANN: We're going to tell her tonight.

CHRIS: Absolutely. Don't worry about it. *(They embrace as JIM enters walking rapidly. KELLER enters during the following and stands just inside the kitchen door, watching)*

JIM: Where's your mother?

CHRIS: Upstairs, dressing.

ANN: What happened to George?

JIM: I asked him to wait in the car. Listen to me now. Don't bring him in here.

ANN: Why?

JIM: Kate is in bad shape, you can't explode this in front of her.

ANN: Explode what?

JIM: You know why he's here.

CHRIS: *(Shaken, and therefore angered)* Don't be an old lady.

JIM: He's come to take her home. *(To ANN)* Fight it out with him some place else.

ANN: I'll drive... him somewhere.

CHRIS. No.

JIM: Will you stop being an idiot?

CHRIS: Nobody's afraid of him here. Cut that out! *(He starts for the driveway but is brought up short by GEORGE who enters. An instant's hesitation and CHRIS steps up to him, hand extended, smiling.)* Helluva way to do; what're you sitting out there for?

GEORGE: Doctor said your mother isn't well, I...

CHRIS: So what? She'd want to see you, wouldn't she? We've been waiting for you all afternoon. *(He puts his hand on GEORGE'S arm, but GEORGE pulls away.)*

ANN: (*Touching his collar*) This is filthy, didn't you bring another shirt? (*GEORGE breaks away from her and moves down, examining the yard, looking over at his former home.*)

CHRIS: How've you been, George?- Sit down.

GEORGE: (*He keeps moving*) It takes me a minute. (*Looking around*) It seems impossible.

CHRIS: What?

GEORGE: That I'm back here.

CHRIS: Say, you've gotten a little nervous, haven't you?

GEORGE: Yeah, toward the the end of the day. What're you, big executive now?

CHRIS: Just kind of medium. How's the law?

GEORGE: I don't know. There doesn't seem to be much of a law. (*Points to the tree stump*) What's that?

CHRIS: Blew down last night. We had it there for Larry. You know.

GEORGE: Why, afraid you'll forget him?

CHRIS: (*Starts for GEORGE*) Kind of a remark is that?

ANN: (*Breaking in, putting a restraining hand on CHRIS*) When did you start wearing a hat?

GEORGE: Today. From now on I decided to look like a lawyer, anyway. (*He holds it up to her*) Don't you recognize it?

ANN: Why? Where... ?

GEORGE: Your father's... He asked me to wear it.

ANN:...How is he?

GEORGE: He got smaller.

GEORGE: Yeah, little. He's a little man. That's what happens to suckers, you know. It's good I went to him in time- another year there'd be nothing left but his smell.

CHRIS: What's the matter, George, what's the trouble?

GEORGE: The trouble? The trouble is when you make suckers out of people once, you shouldn't try to do it twice.

CHRIS: What does that mean?

GEORGE: *(to ANN)* You're not married yet, are you?

ANN: George, will you sit down and stop-?

GEORGE: Are you married yet?

ANN: No, I'm not married.

GEORGE: You're not going to marry him.

ANN: Why am I not going to marry him?

GEORGE: Because his father destroyed your family.

CHRIS: Now look, George...

GEORGE: Cut it short, Chris. Tell her to come home with me. Let's not argue, you know what I've got to say.

CHRIS: George, don't come bulling in here. If you've got something to say, be civilized about it.

GEORGE: Don't civilize me!

ANN: Shhh!

CHRIS: *(Ready to hit him)* Are you going to talk like a grown man or aren't you?

ANN: *(Quickly, to forestall an outburst)* Sit down, dear. Don't be angry, what's the matter? *(He allows her to seat him)* Now what happened? You kissed me when I left, now you...

GEORGE: My life turned upside down since then. I couldn't go back to work when you left. I wanted to go to Dad and tell him you were going to be married. It seemed impossible not to tell

him. He loved you so much... *(He pauses)* Annie... we did a terrible thing. We can never be forgiven. Annie, you don't know what was done to that man.

ANN: *(Afraid)* Of course I know.

GEORGE: You can't know, you wouldn't be here. Dad came to work that day. The night foreman came to him and showed him the cylinder heads... they were coming out of the process with defects. There was something wrong. So Dad went directly to the phone and called here and told Joe to come down right away. But the morning passed. No sign of Joe. So Dad called again, By this time he had over a hundred defectives. The Army was screaming for stuff and Dad didn't have anything to ship. So Joe told him... on the phone he told him to weld, to cover up the cracks in any way he could, and ship them out.

CHRIS: Are you through, now?

GEORGE: *(Surging up at him)* I'm not through now! *(back to ANN)* Dad was afraid. He wanted Joe there if he was going to do it. But Joe can't come down... He's sick. He suddenly gets the flu! Suddenly! But he promised to take responsibility. Do you understand what I'm saying? On the telephone you can't have responsibility! In a court you can always deny a phone call and that's exactly what he did. They knew he was a liar the first time, but in the appeal they believed that rotten lie and now Joe is a big shot and your father is the patsy. Now what're you going to do? Eat his food, sleep in his bed? Answer me; what're you going to do?

CHRIS: What're you going to do, George?

GEORGE: He's too smart for me, I can't prove a phone call.

CHRIS: Then how dare you come in here with that rot?

ANN: George, the court...

GEORGE: The court didn't know your father! But you know him. You know in your heart Joe did it.

CHIRS: Lower your voice or I'll throw you out of here!

GEORGE: She knows. She knows.

CHRIS: *(To ANN)* Get him out of here, Ann. Get him out of here.

ANN: George, I know everything you've said. Dad told that whole thing in court, and they...

GEORGE: *(Almost a scream)* The court did not know him, Annie!

ANN: Shhh!- But he'll say anything, George. You know how quick he can lie.

GEORGE: *(Turning to CHRIS, with deliberation)* I'll ask you something, and look me in the eye when you answer me.

CHRIS: I'll look you in the eye.

GEORGE: You know your father.

CHRIS: I know him well.

GEORGE: And he's the kind of boss to let a hundred and twenty-one cylinder heads be repaired and shipped out of his shop without even knowing about it?

CHRIS: He's that kind of boss.

GEORGE: And that's the same Joe Keller who never left his shop without first going around to see that all the lights were out.

CHRIS: *(With growing anger)* The same Joe Keller.

GEORGE: The same man who knows how many minutes a day his workers spend on the toilet.

CHRIS: The same man.

GEORGE: And my father, that frightened mouse who'd never buy a shirt without somebody along- that man would dare do such a thing on his own?

CHRIS: On his own. And because he's a frightened mouse this is another thing he'd do;- throw the blame on somebody else because he's not man enough to take it himself. He tried it in court, but it didn't work, but with a fool like you it works!

GEORGE: Oh Chris, you're a liar to yourself!

ANN: *(Deeply shaken)* Don't talk like that!

CHRIS: Tell me, George. What happened? The court record was good enough for you all these years, why isn't it good now? Why did you believe it all these years?

GEORGE: *(Slight pause)* Because you believed it... That's the truth, Chris. I believed everything because I thought you did. But today I heard it from his mouth. From his mouth it's altogether different than the record. Anyone who knows him, and knows your father, will believe it from his mouth. Your Dad took everything we have. I can't beat that. But she's one item he's not going to grab. *(He turns to ANN)* Get your things. Everything they have is covered with blood. You're not the kind of girl who can live with that. Get your things.

CHRIS: Ann... you're not going to believe that, are you?

ANN: *(She goes to him)* You know it's not true, don't you?

GEORGE: How can he tell you? It's his father. *(To CHRIS)* None of these things ever even crossed your mind?

CHRIS: Yes, they crossed my mind. Anything can cross your mind!

GEORGE: *He knows, Annie.* He knows! Let me go up and talk to your father. In ten minutes you'll have the answer. Or are you afraid of the answer?

CHRIS: I'm not afraid of the answer. I know the answer. But my mother isn't well and I don't want a fight here now.

GEORGE: Let me go to him.

CHRIS: You're not going to start a fight here now.

GEORGE: *(To ANN)* What more do you want!!! *(The sound of footsteps inside)*

ANN: Someone's coming.

CHRIS: *(To GEORGE, quietly)* You won't say anything now.

ANN: You'll go soon. I'll call a cab.

GEORGE: You're coming with me.

ANN: And don't mention marriage, because we haven't told her yet.

GEORGE: You're coming with me.

ANN: You understand? Don't... George, you're not going to say anything now! *(She hears footsteps)* Shsh! *(KATE enters. She is dressed now, her hair fixed. On seeing GEORGE she raises both hands and comes down toward him)*

KATE: Georgie, Georgie.

GEORGE: Hello, Kate.

KATE: *(She cups his face in her hands)* They made an old man out of you.

GEORGE: I know, I...

KATE: Look at him, why did you say he's fine? He looks like a ghost.

GEORGE: I feel all right.

KATE: I'm sick to look at you. What's the matter with your mother, why don't she feed you?

ANN: He just hasn't any appetite.

KATE: If he ate in my house he'd have an appetite. *(To ANN)* I pity your husband! *(To GEORGE)* Sit down. I'll make you a sandwich.

GEORGE: I'm really not hungry.

KATE: It breaks my heart to see what happened to all the children. How we worked and planned for you, and you end up no better than us.

GEORGE: You... you haven't changed at all, you know that, Kate?

KATE: None of us changed, Georgie. We all love you. And now you're going to sit here and drink some juice and look like something!

GEORGE: Kate, I feel hungry already.

KATE: Listen, I got a ham in the icebox, and frozen strawberries...

ANN: Swell, I'll help you!

GEORGE: The train leaves at eight-thirty, Ann.

KATE: *(To ANN)* You're leaving?

CHRIS: No, Mother, she's not...

ANN: You hardly got here; give yourself a chance to get acquainted again.

CHRIS: Sure, you don't even know us anymore.

KATE: Well, Chris, if they can't stay, don't...

CHRIS: No, it's just a question of George, Mother, he planned on...

GEORGE: Now wait a minute, Chris...

CHRIS: *(Smiling and full of command, cutting him off)* If you want to go, I'll drive you to the station now, but if you're staying no arguments while you're here.

KATE: Why should he argue? Georgie and us have no argument. How could we, Georgie? We all go hit by the same lightning.

*(KELLER enters)*

KELLER: *(With strained joviality)* Well! Look who's here! Georgie, good to see ya.

GEORGE: *(Shakes hands-somberly)* How're you, Joe?

KELLER: So-so. Gettin' old. You comin' out to dinner with us?

GEORGE: No, got to be back in New York.

ANN: I'll call a cab for you. *(She goes into the house)*

KELLER: Too bad you can't stay, George. Sit down. *(To KATE)* He looks fine.

KATE: He looks terrible.

KELLER: That's what I said, you look terrible, George. *(They laugh)* I wear the pants and she beats me with the belt. So, you finally went to see your father, I hear.

GEORGE: Yes, this morning.

KELLER: How'd you find Dad? Feel all right?

GEORGE: No, he's not well, Joe.

KELLER: Not his heart again, is it?

GEORGE: It's everything, Joe. It's his soul.

KELLER: Uh-huh.

CHRIS: How about seeing what they did with your house?

KELLER: Leave him be.

GEORGE: *(To CHRIS)* I'd like to talk to him.

KELLER: Sure, he just got here. I wish you'd a told me you were going to see Dad.

GEORGE: I didn't know you were interested.

KELLER: In a way, I am. I would like him to know, George, that as far as I'm concerned, any time he wants, he's got a place with me.

GEORGE: He hates your guts, Joe. Don't you know that?

KELLER: I imagined it. But that can change, too.

KATE: Steve was never like that.

GEORGE: He's like that now.

KELLER: That's a sad thing to hear.

GEORGE: Why? What'd you expect him to think of you?

KELLER: I'm sad to see he hasn't changed. As long as I know him, twenty-five years, the man never learned how to take the blame. You know that, George.

GEORGE: *(He does)* Well...

KELLER: But you do know it. Because the way you come in here you look like you don't remember it. I mean like in 1937 when we had the shop on Flood Street. And he near blew us all up with that heater he left burning for two days without water. He wouldn't admit that was his fault, either.

GEORGE: Yes, but...

KELLER: I'm just mentioning it, George. Like when he gave Frank that money to invest in oil stock.

GEORGE: *(Distressed)* I know that, I...

KELLER: *(Driving in)* But it's good to remember those things, kid. The way he cursed Frank because the stock went down. Was that Frank's fault?

GEORGE: I know those things...

KELLER: Then remember them. There are certain men in the world who rather see everybody hung before they'll take blame. You understand me, George?

ANN: *(Coming out of the house)* The cab's on its way.

KATE: *(With a thrust of hope)* Why must he go? Make the midnight, George.

KELLER: Sure, you'll have dinner with us!

ANN: How about it?

GEORGE: *(Long pause as he looks at them)* All right.

KATE: Now you're talking.

CHRIS: I've got a shirt that'll go right with that suit. *(He exits into the house)*

GEORGE: *(He looks around the place)* I never felt at home anywhere but here. I feel so... *(He nearly laughs)* Kate, you look so young, you know? You didn't change at all. You too, Joe, you're amazingly the same.

KELLER: Say, I ain't got time to get sick.

KATE: He hasn't been laid up in fifteen years...

KELLER: (*Quickly, trying to cover*) Except my flu during the war.

KATE: Huhh?

KELLER: My flu, when I was sick during... the war.

KATE: Well, sure... I meant except for that flu. (*GEORGE stands perfectly still.*) Well, it slipped my mind, don't look at me that way. He wanted to go to the shop but he couldn't lift himself off of the bed. I thought he had pneumonia.

GEORGE: Why did you say he's never... ?

KELLER: I know how you feel, kid, I'll never forgive myself. If I could've gone in that day I'd never allow Dad to touch those heads.

GEORGE: She said you've never been sick.

KATE: I said he was sick, George.

GEORGE: Ann, didn't you hear her say... ?

KATE: Do you remember every time you were sick?

GEORGE: I'd remember pneumonia. Especially if I got it just the day my partner was going to patch up cylinder heads... What happened that day, Joe?

(*A car horn is heard. CHRIS enters from the house*)

KATE: They'll be right out, driver!

CHRIS: She's not leaving, Mother.

GEORGE: (*To ANN*) You heard her say it, he's never been sick!

KATE: He misunderstood me, Chris. (*CHRIS looks at her, struck.*)

GEORGE: He simply told your father to kill pilots, and covered himself in bed!

CHRIS: You'd better answer him, Annie. Answer him.

KATE: I packed your bag, darling...

CHRIS: What?

KATE: I packed your bag. All you've got to do is close it.

ANN: I'm not closing anything. He asked me here and I'm staying till he tells me to go. *(To GEORGE)* Till Chris tells me!

CHRIS: Now get out of here, George!

KATE: *(To CHRIS)* But if that's how he feels...

CHRIS: That's all, nothing more about the case or Larry as long as I'm here! Now get out of here, George!

GEORGE: *(To ANN)* You tell me. I want to hear you tell me.

ANN: Go, George! *(They disappear up the drive, ANN saying "Don't take it that way, Georgie! Please don't take it that way!")*

CHRIS: What do you mean, you packed her bag?

KATE: Chris...

CHRIS: How dare you?

KATE: She doesn't belong here.

CHRIS: Then I don't belong here.

KATE: She's Larry's girl.

CHRIS: And I'm his brother, and he's dead, and I'm marrying his girl!

KATE: Never, never in this world!

KELLER: You lost your mind?

KATE: You have nothing to say!

KELLER: *(Cruelly)* I got plenty to say. Three and a half years you been talking like a maniac-

KATE: *(She smashes him across the face)* Nothing. You have nothing to say. Now I say. He's coming back, and everybody has got to wait.

CHRIS: Mother-

KATE: Wait, wait...

CHRIS: How long? How long?

KATE: *(Rolling out of her)* Till he comes; forever and ever till he comes!

CHRIS: Mother, I'm going ahead with it.

KATE: Chris, I've never said no to you in my life, now I say no.

CHRIS: You'll never let him go till I do it.

KATE: I'll never let him go and you'll never let him go... !

CHRIS: I've let him go!

KATE: Then let your father go. *(Pause. CHRIS stands transfixed.)*

KELLER: She's out of her mind.

KATE: Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now? God does not let a son be killed by his father. Now you see, don't you? *(Beyond control, she hurries up into the house.)*

KELLER: She's out of her mind.

CHRIS: *(A broken whisper)* Then... you did it?

KELLER: He never flew a P-40-

CHRIS: *(Struck. Deadly.)* But the others.

KELLER: *(Insistently)* She's out of her mind.

CHRIS: *(Unyielding)* Dad... you did it?

KELLER: He never flew a P-40, what's the matter with you?

CHRIS: *(Still asking.)* Then you did it. To the others.

KELLER: What's the matter with you?

CHRIS: Dad, you killed twenty-one men!

KELLER: What, killed?

CHRIS: You killed them, you murdered them.

KELLER: I didn't kill anybody!

CHRIS: Then explain it to me or I'll tear you to pieces!

KELLER: (*Horrificed*) Don't Chris, don't...

CHRIS: You had a hundred and twenty cracked engine heads, now what did you do?

KELLER: What could I do! I'm in business! (*His voice cracks*) I never thought they'd install them. I swear.

CHRIS: Then why did you ship them out?

KELLER: I was going to tell them.

CHRIS: Then why didn't you?

KELLER: Chris, I did it for you.

CHRIS: You knew they wouldn't hold up in the air.

KELLER: I didn't say that...

CHRIS: But you were going to warn them not to use them...

KELLER: But that don't mean...

CHRIS: It means you knew they'd crash.

KELLER: It don't mean that.

CHRIS: Then you *thought* they'd crash.

KELLER: I was afraid maybe...

CHRIS: You were afraid maybe! What kind of a man are you? Kids were hanging in the air by those heads. You knew that!

KELLER: For you, a business for you!

CHRIS: *(With burning fury)* For me! Where do you live, where have you come from? I was dying every day and you were killing my boys and you did it for me? What the hell do you think I was thinking of, the business? Don't you have a country? Don't you live in the world? What the hell are you? You're not even an animal, no animal kills his own. I ought to tear the tongue out of your mouth! *(With his fists he pounds down upon his father's shoulder. He stumbles away, covering his face as he weeps.)* What must I do, what must I do?

KELLER: Chris... My Chris...

### SCENE 3

*(Two o'clock the following morning. KATE is rocking in a chair, staring. JIM enters.)*

JIM: Any news?

KATE: No news.

JIM: You can't sit up all night, dear, why don't you go to bed?

KATE: I'm waiting for Chris.

JIM: But it's almost two o'clock.

KATE: I can't sleep.

JIM: Kate. What happened?

KATE: He had an argument with Joe. Then he got in the car and drove away.

JIM: What'd Joe do, tell him?

KATE: Tell him what?

JIM: Don't be afraid, Kate. I know. I've always known.

KATE: How?

JIM: It occurred to me a long time ago.

KATE: I always had the feeling that in the back of his head, Chris... almost knew. I didn't think it would be such a shock.

JIM: Chris is a good son, he'll come back. (*KELLER comes out on the porch. JIM goes up to him.*) I'll go look for him. Put her to bed, Joe. This is no good for what she's got. (*JIM exits*)

KELLER: What does he want here?

KATE: He knows.

KELLER: How does he know?

KATE: He guessed it a long time ago.

KELLER: I don't like that.

KATE: (*Laughs dangerously*) What you don't like... Joe, this thing is not over yet.

KELLER: (*Referring to ANN*) She don't know, does she?

KATE: She saw Chris storming out of here. It's one and one - she knows how to add.

KELLER: Maybe I ought to talk to her?

KATE: Don't ask me, Joe.

KELLER: (*Almost an outburst*) Then who do I ask? I thought I had a family here. What happened to my family?

KATE: I have no strength to think anymore.

KELLER: What do I do? Tell me, talk to me, what do I do?

KATE: Joe... if he comes back-

KELLER: What do you mean "if"?

KATE: I think if you sit him down and you make it clear that you know you did a terrible thing.

KELLER: What ice does that cut?

KATE: I mean if you told him that you want to pay for what you did.

KELLER: (*Sensing*) How can I pay?

KATE: Tell him you're willing to go to prison.

KELLER: (*Struck. Amazed.*) I'm willing to... ?

KATE: (*Quickly*) You wouldn't go. But if you told him you wanted to, maybe he would forgive you.

KELLER: He would forgive me! For what?

KATE: Joe, you know what I mean.

KELLER: I don't know what you mean! You wanted money, so I made money!

KATE: I didn't want it that way.

KELLER: I didn't want it that way either! But I got a family-

KATE: It don't excuse it that you did it for the family.

KELLER: It's got to excuse it!

KATE: There's something bigger than the family to him.

KELLER: Nothing is bigger!

KATE: There is to him.

KELLER: There's nothing he could do that I wouldn't forgive. Because he's my son.

KATE: Joe-

KELLER: Nothin's bigger than that. And you're goin' to tell him, you understand? I'm his father and he's my son, and if there's somethin' bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head!

KATE: You stop that!

KELLER: You heard me. (*Pause*) But, he wouldn't put me away-would he?

KATE: Joe, you broke his heart.

KELLER: But to put me away.

KATE: I don't know.

KELLER: What am I gonna do, Kate...

KATE: Joe, please, you'll be all right, nothing is going to happen...

KELLER: *(Desperately)* For you, Kate, for both of you, that's all I ever lived for...

KATE: I know, darling, I know... *(ANN enters from the house.)*

ANN: There's something I want to tell you. I'm not going to do anything about it.

KATE: You see? She's a...

ANN: I'll do nothing about Joe, but you're going to do something for me. *(Directly to KATE)* You made Chris feels guilty with me. I'd like you tell him that Larry is dead and that you know it. I want you to set him free. And then I promise you, everything will end, and we'll go away.

KELLER: You'll do that. You'll tell him.

ANN: I know what I'm asking, Kate. You had two sons. But now you've only got one now.

KELLER: You'll tell him...

ANN: And you've got to say it to him so he knows you mean it.

KATE: My dear, if the boy was dead, it wouldn't depend on my words to make Chris know it... The night he gets into your bed, his heart will dry up. Because he knows and you know. To his dying day he'll wait for his brother! You're going in the morning, and you're going alone. That's your life, that your lonely life. *(She start to go inside)*

ANN: Larry is dead, Kate.

KATE: Don't speak to me.

ANN: I said he's dead. I know! He crashed off the coast of China, November twenty-fifth. His engine didn't fail him. But he died.

KATE: You're lying to me. If you know, how did he die?

ANN: I loved him. Would I have looked at anyone else if I wasn't sure? That's enough for you.

KATE: What's enough for me? What're you talking about? *(She grasps ANN'S wrists.)*

ANN: You're hurting my wrists.

KATE: What are you talking about!

ANN: Joe, go in the house.

KELLER: Why should I...

ANN: Please go.

KELLER: Lemme know when he comes. *(KELLER goes into the house)*

KATE: *(She sees ANN take a letter from her pocket)* What's that?

ANN: I didn't bring this to hurt you. I thought I'd show it to you only if there was no other way to settle Larry in your mind.

KATE: Larry? *(She snatches the letter from ANN'S hand.)*

ANN: He wrote it to me just before he- *(KATE begins reading the letter)* I'm not trying to hurt you, Kate. You're making me do this. I've been so lonely, Kate... I can't leave here alone again. *(A long, low moan comes from KATE'S throat)* You made me show it to you.

KATE: Oh, my-

ANN: *(With pity and fear)* Kate, please, please... I'm so sorry. *(CHRIS enters from the drive.)*

CHRIS: What's the matter?

ANN: Where were you?

CHRIS: Just drove around a little. I thought you'd be gone.

ANN: Where do I go?

CHRIS: *(To KATE)* Where's Dad?

ANN: Inside.

CHRIS: Sit down, both of you. Mother, I'm going away. I mean, I'm going away for good.

ANN: I'm coming with you.

CHRIS: No, Ann.

ANN: Chris, I don't ask you to do anything about Joe.

CHRIS: In your heart you always will.

ANN: Then do what you have to do!

CHRIS: Do what? What is there to do? I've looked all night for a reason to make him suffer.

ANN: There's reason.

CHRIS: What? Do I raise the dead when I put him behind bars?

ANN: *(To KATE)* You know what he's got to do! Tell him!

KATE: Let him go.

ANN: I won't let him go. You'll tell him-

KATE: Annie!

ANN: Then I will! *(KELLER enters. CHRIS sees him)*

KELLER: I want to talk to you.

CHRIS: I've got nothing to say to you.

KELLER: *(Taking his arm)* I want to talk to you!

CHRIS: *(Pulling violently away)* Don't do that, Dad. I'm going to hurt you if you do that.

KELLER: Exactly what's the matter? You got too much money? Is that what bothers you?

CHIRS: It bothers me.

KELLER: Then throw it away. Give it to charity. If it's dirty then burn it. Do what you want to do!

CHRIS: It's not what I want to do, it's what you want to do.

KELLER: Jail? You want me to go to jail? If you want me to go, say so! *(Slight pause)* What's the matter, you can't tell me? *(Furiously)* I'll tell you why you can't say it. Because you know I don't belong there. Who worked for nothin' in that war? Did they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroit before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace. Half the country gotta go if I go! That's why you can't tell me.

CHRIS: That's exactly why.

KELLER: Then why am I bad?

CHRIS: *I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father. (Almost breaking) I can't look at you this way, I can't look at myself! (He turns away. ANN goes quickly to KATE and takes the letter from her.)*

KATE: Give me that!

ANN: He's going to read it! *(She thrusts the letter into CHRIS' hand.)* Larry. He wrote it to me the day he died.

KELLER: Larry!?

KATE: Chris, it's not for you. *(He starts to read)* Joe... Go away.

KELLER: *(Mystified, frightened)* Why'd she say, Larry, what-?

KATE: Go to the street, Joe, go to the street! Don't Chris... Don't tell him...

CHRIS: This is how he died, now tell me where you belong.

KELLER: Chris, a man can't be a Jesus in this world!

CHRIS: Now listen to this, and tell me what a man's got to be!  
(Reads) "My dear Ann:..." You listening? He wrote this the day he died. Listen, don't cry... Listen! "My dear Ann: Yesterday I read about Dad and your father being convicted. I can't tell you how I feel- I can't bear to live anymore. How could he have done that? Every day three or four men never come back and he sits back there doing business... I can't face anybody. I'm going out on a mission in a few minutes. They'll probably report me missing. If they do, I want you to know that you mustn't wait for me. I tell you Ann, if I had him here now I could kill him- (KELLER grabs the letter and reads) Now blame the world. Do you understand that letter?

KELLER: I think I do. Get the car, I'll put on my jacket.

KATE: Why are you going?

KELLER: I'll feel better if I go.

KATE: You're so foolish. Larry was your son, too, wasn't he? You know he'd never tell you to do this.

KELLER: (Looking at the letter) Then what is this if it isn't telling me? Sure, he was my son. But I think to him, they were all my sons. And I guess they were. I guess they were. I'll be right down. (He exits)

KATE: (To CHRIS) You're not going to take him.

CHRIS: I'm taking him.

KATE: It's up to you, if you tell him to stay he'll stay. Go and tell him! How long will he live in prison?- Are you trying to kill him?

CHRIS: I thought you read this!

KATE: The war is over! Didn't you hear?- It's over!

CHRIS: Then what was Larry to you? It's not enough for him to be sorry.

KATE: What more can we be!?

CHRIS: You can be better! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it, and

unless you know that you threw away your son because that's why he died.

*(A gunshot is heard inside the house. They stand frozen for a brief second. CHRIS runs into the house.)*

KATE: Joe... Joe... Joe...

*(CHRIS come out of the house into KATE'S arms)*

CHRIS: Mother, I didn't mean to...

KATE: Don't dear. Don't take it on yourself. Forget now. Live.  
*(CHRIS stirs to answer) Shhh... Shhh... (As she reaches the porch steps she begins sobbing as the lights fade.)*

END