

CHRIS/ANNE

and have some tea with me. [She turns and goes up steps.]

KELLER [to ANN]. The one thing you . . . MOTHER [sharply]. He's not dead, so there's no argument! Now come!

KELLER [angrily]. In a minute! [MOTHER turns and goes into house.] Now look, Annie . . .

CHRIS. All right, Dad, forget it.

KELLER. No, she hasn't feel that way. Annie . . . CHRIS. I'm sick of the whole subject, now cut it out. KELLER. You want her to go on like this? [To ANN.] Those cylinder heads went into P-40's only. What's the matter with you? You know Larry never flew a P-40.

CHRIS. So who flew those P-40's, pigs?

KELLER. The man was a fool, but don't make a murderer out of him. You got no sense? Look what it does to her! [To ANN.] Listen, you gotta appreciate what was doin' in that shop in the war. The both of you! It was a madhouse. Every half hour the Major callin' for cylinder heads, they were whippin' us with the telephone. The trucks were hauling them away hot, damn near. I mean just try to see it human, see it human. All of a sudden a batch comes out with a crack. That happens, that's the business. A fine, hairline crack. All right, so . . . so he's a little man, your father, always scared of loud voices. What'll the Major say?—Half a day's production shot . . . What'll I say? You know what I mean? Human. [He pauses.] 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, Herb, we can afford it. But alone he was afraid. But I know he meant no harm. He believed they'd

hold up a hundred percent. That's a mistake, but it ain't murder. You understand me? It ain't right.

ANN [she regards him a moment]. Joe, let's forget it.

KELLER. Annie, the day the news came about Larry he was in the next cell to mine . . . Dad. And he cried, Annie . . . he cried half the night.

ANN [touched]. He shoulda cried all night. [Slight pause.]

KELLER [almost angered]. Annie, I do not understand why you . . . !

CHRIS [breaking in—with nervous urgency]. Are you going to stop it?

ANN. Don't yell at him. He just wants everybody happy.

KELLER [claps her around waist, smiling]. That's my sentiments. Can you stand steak?

CHRIS. And champagne!

KELLER. Now you're operatin'! I'll call Swanson's for a table! Big time tonight, Annie!

ANN. Can't scare me.

KELLER [to CHRIS, pointing at ANN]. I like that girl. Wrap her up. [They laugh. Goes up porch.] You got nice legs, Annie . . . I want to see everybody drunk tonight. [Pointing to CHRIS.] Look at him, he's blushin'! [He exits, laughing, into house.]

CHRIS [calling after him]. Drink your tea, Gasanova! [He turns to ANN.] 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 [with a sudden touch of sadness]. It's all right. It's a good thing. [She looks about.] You know? It's lovely here. The air is sweet.

CHRIS [hopefully]. You're not sorry you came?

ANN. Not sorry, no. But I'm . . . not going to stay. . . . CHRIS. Why?

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ANN. In the first place, your mother as much as told me to go.

CHRIS. Well . . .

ANN. You saw that . . . and then you . . . you've been kind of . . .

CHRIS. What?

ANN. Well . . . kind of embarrassed ever since I got here.

CHRIS. The trouble is I planned on kind of sneaking up on you over a period of a week or so. But they take it for granted that we're all set.

ANN. I knew they would. Your mother anyway.

CHRIS. How did you know?

ANN. From her point of view, why else would I come?

CHRIS. Well . . . would you want to? [ANN still studies him.] I guess you know this is why I asked you to come.

ANN. I guess this is why I came.

CHRIS. Ann, I love you. I love you a great deal. [Finnally.] I love you. [Pause. She waits.] I have no imagination . . . that's all I know to tell you. [ANN, waiting, ready.] I'm embarrassing you. I didn't want to tell it to you here. I wanted some place we'd never been; a place where we'd be brand new to each other. . . . You feel it's wrong here, don't you? This yard, this chair? I want you to be ready for me. I don't want to win you away from anything.

ANN [putting her arms around him]. Oh, Chris, I've been ready a long, long time!

CHRIS. Then he's gone forever. You're sure.

ANN. I almost got married two years ago.

CHRIS. . . . why didn't you?

ANN. You started to write to me. . . . [Slight pause.]

CHRIS. You felt something that far back? ANN. Every day since!

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CHRIS. Ann, why didn't you let me know?

ANN. I was waiting for you, Chris. Till then you never wrote. And when you did, what did you say? You sure can be ambiguous, you know.

CHRIS [he looks toward house, then at her, trembling]. Give me a kiss, Ann. Give me a . . . [They kiss.] God, I kissed you, Annie, I kissed Annie. How long, how long I've been waiting to kiss you!

ANN. I'll never forgive you. Why did you wait all these years? All I've done is sit and wonder if I was crazy for thinking of you.

CHRIS. Annie, we're going to live now! I'm going to make you so happy. [He kisses her, but without their bodies touching.]

ANN [a little embarrassed]. Not like that you're not.

CHRIS. I kissed you. . . .

ANN. Like Larry's brother. Do it like you, Chris. [He breaks away from her abruptly.] What is it, Chris?

CHRIS. Let's drive some place . . . I want to be alone with you.

ANN. No . . . what is it, Chris, your mother?

CHRIS. No . . . nothing like that . . .

ANN. Then what's wrong? . . . Even in your letters, there was something ashamed.

CHRIS. Yes. I suppose I have been. But it's going from me.

ANN. You've got to tell me—

CHRIS. I don't know how to start. [He takes her hand. He speaks quietly, factually at first.]

ANN. It wouldn't work this way.

[Slight pause.]

CHRIS. It's all mixed up with so many other things. . . . You remember, overseas, I was in command of a company?

ANN. Yeah, sure.

CHRIS. Well, I lost them.

KELLER. Bert, on my word of honor there's a jail in the basement. I showed you my gun, didn't I?

BERT. But that's a hunting gun.

KELLER. That's an arresting gun!

BERT. Then why don't you ever arrest anybody? Tommy said another dirty word to Doris yesterday, and you didn't even demote him.

KELLER [*he chuckles and winks at CHRIS, who is enjoying all this*]. Yeah, that's a dangerous character, that Tommy. [*Beckons him closer*.] What word does he say?

BERT [*backing away quickly in great embarrassment*]. Oh, I can't say that.

KELLER [*grabs him by the shirt and pulls him back*]. Well, gimme an idea.

BERT. I can't. It's not a nice word.

KELLER. Just whisper it in my ear. I'll close my eyes. Maybe I won't even hear it.

BERT [*on tiptoe, puts his lips to KELLER'S ear, then in unbearable embarrassment steps back*]. I can't, Mr. Keller.

CHRIS [*laughing*]. Don't make him do that.

KELLER. Okay, Bert. I take your word. Now go out, and keep both eyes peeled.

BERT [*interested*]. For what?

KELLER. For what! Bert, the whole neighborhood is depending on you. A policeman don't ask questions. Now peel them eyes!

BERT [*mystified, but willing*]. Okay. [*He runs offstage back of arbor*.]

KELLER [*calling after him*]. And mum's the word, Bert. Bert [*stops and sticks his head through the arbor*].

About what?

KELLER. Just in general. Be v-e-r-y careful.

BERT [*nods in bewilderment*]. Okay. [*BERT exits*.]

Keller Chris

KELLER [*laughs*]. I got all the kids crazy!
CHRIS. One of these days, they'll all come in here and beat your brains out.

KELLER. What's she going to say? Maybe we ought to tell her before she sees it.

CHRIS. She saw it.

KELLER. How could she see it? I was the first one up. She was still in bed.

CHRIS. She was out here when it broke.

KELLER. When?

CHRIS. About four this morning. [*Indicating window above them*.] I heard it cracking and I woke up and looked out. She was standing right here when it cracked.

KELLER. What was she doing out here four in the morning?

CHRIS. I don't know. When it cracked she ran back into the house and cried in the kitchen.

KELLER. Did you talk to her?

CHRIS. No, I . . . I figured the best thing was to leave her alone.

[*Pause*.]

KELLER [*deeply touched*]. She cried hard?

CHRIS. I could hear her right through the floor of my room.

KELLER [*slight pause*]. What was she doing out here at that hour? [*CHRIS silent. An undertone of anger showing*.] She's dreaming about him again. She's walking around at night.

CHRIS. I guess she is.

KELLER. She's getting just like after he died. [*Slight pause*.] What's the meaning of that?

CHRIS. I don't know the meaning of it. [*Slight pause*.] But I know one thing, Dad. We've made a terrible mistake with Mother.

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KELLER. What?

CHRIS. Being dishonest with her. That kind of thing always pays off, and now its paying off.

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? I don't want to argue with her, but it's time she realized that nobody believes Larry is alive any more. [KELLER simply moves away, thinking, looking at the ground.] Why shouldn't she dream of him, walk the nights waiting for him? Do we contradict her? Do we say straight out that we have no hope any more? That we haven't had any hope for years now?

KELLER [frightened at the thought]. You can't say that to her.

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

KELLER. How're you going to prove it? Can you prove it?

CHRIS. For God's sake, three years! Nobody comes back after three years. It's insane.

KELLER. To you it is, and to me. But not to her. You can talk yourself blue in the face, but there's no body and there's no grave, so where are you?

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

KELLER [looks at him searchingly a moment, and sitting . . .]. The trouble is the ~~ground~~ 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. KELLER sits on settee.] You know why I asked Annie here, don't you?

KELLER [he knows, but . . .]. Why?

CHRIS. You know.

KELLER. Well, I got an idea, but . . . What's the story? CHRIS. I'm going to ask her to marry me. [Slight pause.]

KELLER [nods]. Well, that's only your business, Chris. CHRIS. You know it's not only my business.

KELLER. What do you want me to do? You're old enough to know your own mind.

CHRIS [asking, annoyed]. Then it's all right, I'll go ahead with it?

KELLER. Well, you want to be sure Mother isn't going to . . .

CHRIS. Then it isn't just my business.

KELLER. I'm just sayin' . . .

CHRIS. Sometimes you infuriate me, you know that? Isn't it your business, too, if I tell this to Mother and she throws a fit about it? You have such a talent for ignoring things.

KELLER. I ignore what I gotta ignore. 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. [Slight pause.] Now you can go on from there if you know where to go, but I'm tellin' you I don't know where to go. See? I don't know. Now what can I do for you?

CHRIS. I don't know why it is, but every time I reach out for something I want, I have to pull back because other people will suffer. My whole bloody life, time after time after time.

KELLER. You're a considerate fella, there's nothing wrong in that.

CHRIS. To hell with that.

KELLER. Did you ask Annie yet?

CHRIS. I wanted to get this settled first.

END

he argue? [She goes to him, and with desperation and compassion, stroking his hair.] Georgie and us have no argument. How could we have an argument, Georgie? We all got hit by the same lightning, how can you . . . ? Did you see what happened to Larry's tree, Georgie? [She has taken his arm, and unwillingly he moves across stage with her.] Imagine? While I was dreaming of him in the middle of the night, the wind came along and . . .

[LYDIA enters on porch. As soon as she sees him.]

LYDIA. Hey, Georgie! Georgie! Georgie! Georgie! Georgie! [She comes down to him eagerly. She has a flowered hat in her hand, which KATE takes from her as she goes to GEORGE.]

GEORGE [they shake hands eagerly, warmly]. Hello, Laughey. What'd you do, grow?

LYDIA. I'm a big girl now.

MOTHER [taking hat from her]. Look what she can do to a hat!

ANN [to LYDIA, admiring the hat]. Did you make that?

MOTHER. In ten minutes! [She puts it on.]

LYDIA [fixing it on her head]. I only rearranged it.

GEORGE. You still make your own clothes?

CHRIS [of MOTHER]. Ain't she classy! All she needs now is a Russian wolfhound.

MOTHER [moving her head]. It feels like somebody is sitting on my head.

ANN. No, it's beautiful, Kate.

MOTHER [kisses LYDIA—to GEORGE]. She's a genius! You should've married her. [They laugh.] This one can feed you!

LYDIA [strangely embarrassed]. Oh, stop that, Kate.

GEORGE [to LYDIA]. Didn't I hear you had a baby?

MOTHER. You don't hear so good. She's got three babies.

GEORGE [a little hurt by it—to LYDIA]. No kidding, three?

LYDIA. Yeah, it was one, two, three— You've been away a long time, Georgie.

GEORGE. I'm beginning to realize.

MOTHER [to CHRIS and GEORGE]. The trouble with you kids is you think too much.

LYDIA. Well, we think, too.

MOTHER. Yes, but not all the time.

GEORGE [with almost obvious envy]. They never took Frank, heh?

LYDIA [a little apologetically]. No, he was always one year ahead of the draft.

MOTHER. It's amazing. When they were calling boys twenty-seven Frank was just twenty-eight, when they made it twenty-eight he was just twenty-nine. That's why he took up astrology. It's all in when you were born, it just goes to show.

GEORGE. What does it go to show?

MOTHER [to CHRIS]. Don't be so intelligent. Some superstitions are very nice! [To LYDIA.] Did he finish Larry's hgtroscope?

LYDIA. I'll ask him now, I'm going in. [To GEORGE, a little sadly, almost embarrassed.] Would you like to see my babies? Come on.

GEORGE. I don't think so, Lydia.

LYDIA [understanding]. All right. Good luck to you, George.

GEORGE. Thanks. And to you . . . And Frank.

[She smiles at him, turns and goes off to her house.

GEORGE stands staring after her.]

LYDIA [as she runs off]. Oh, Frank!

MOTHER [reading his thoughts]. She got pretty, heh?

GEORGE [sadly]. Very pretty.

MOTHER [as a reprimand]. She's beautiful, you damned fool!

KATE / GEORGE

GEORGE [*looks around longingly; and softly, with a catch in his throat*]. She makes it seem so nice around here.

MOTHER [*shaking her finger at him*]. Look what happened to you because you wouldn't listen to me! I told you to marry that girl and stay out of the war! GEORGE [*laughs at himself*]. She used to laugh too much.

MOTHER. And you didn't laugh enough. While you were getting mad about Fascism Frank was getting into her bed.

GEORGE [*to CHRIS*]. He won the war, Frank.

CHRIS. All the battles.

MOTHER [*in pursuit of this mood*]. The day they started the draft, Georgie, I told you you loved that girl.

CHRIS [*laughs*]. And truer love hath no man—

MOTHER. I'm smarter than any of you.

GEORGE [*laughing*]. She's wonderful!

MOTHER. And now you're going to listen to me, George. You had big principles, Eagle Scouts the three of you; so now I got a tree, and this one [*indicating CHRIS*] when the weather gets bad he can't stand on his feet; and that big dope [*pointing to LYDIA'S house*] next door who never reads anything but Andy Gump has three children and his house paid off. Stop being a philosopher, and look after yourself. Like Joe was just saying—you move back here, he'll help you get set, and I'll find you a girl and put a smile on your face.

GEORGE. Joe? Joe wants me here?

ANN [*laughing*]. He asked me to tell you, and I think it's a good idea.

MOTHER. Certainly. Why must you make believe you hate us? Is that another principle?—that you have to

hate us? You don't hate us, George, I know you, you can't fool me, I diapered you. [*Suddenly, to ANN*]. You remember Mr. Marcy's daughter?

ANN [*laughing, to GEORGE*]. She's got you beaked at ready!

[*GEORGE laughs, is excited.*]

MOTHER. You look her over, George; you'll see she's the most beautiful . . .

CHRIS. She's got warts, George.

MOTHER [*to CHRIS*]. She hasn't got warts! [*To GEORGE*].

So the girl has a little beauty mark on her chin . . .

CHRIS. And two on her nose.

MOTHER. You remember. Her father's the retired police inspector.

CHRIS. Sergeant, George.

MOTHER. He's a very kind man!

CHRIS. He looks like a gotilla.

MOTHER [*to GEORGE*]. He never shot anybody.

[*They all burst out laughing, as KELLER appears in doorway. GEORGE rises abruptly, stares at KELLER, who comes rapidly down to him.*]

KELLER [*the laughter stops. With strained joviality*]. Well! Look who's here! [*Extending his hand*]. George, good to see ya.

GEORGE [*shakes hands—somerly*]. 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 up into the house*].

KELLER. Too bad you can't stay, George. Sit down.

[*To MOTHER*]. He looks fine.

MOTHER. He looks terrible.

KELLER. That's what I said, you look terrible, George.

KGR

END

KATE | KELLER

JIM [tiredly]. Somebody had a headache and thought he was dying. [Slight pause.] Half of my patients are quite mad. Nobody realizes how many people are walking around loose, and they're cracked as coco-nuts. Money. Money-money-money. You say it long enough it doesn't mean anything. [She smiles, makes a silent laugh.] Oh, how I'd love to be around when that happens!

MOTHER [shakes her head]. You're so childish, Jim! Sometimes you are.

JIM [looks at her a moment]. Kate. [Pause.] What happened?

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

JIM. What kind of an argument?

MOTHER. An argument, Joe . . . he was crying like a child, before.

JIM. They argued about Ann?

MOTHER [slight hesitation]. No, not Ann. Imagine? [Indicates lighted window above.] She hasn't come out of that room since he left. All night in that room.

JIM [looks at window, then at her]. What'd Joe do, tell him?

MOTHER [she stops rocking]. I tell him what?

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

MOTHER. How?

JIM. It occurred to me a long time ago.

MOTHER. 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 [gets up]. Chris would never know how to live with a thing like that. It takes a certain talent . . . for lying. You have it, and I do. But not him.

MOTHER. What do you mean . . . he's not coming back?

JIM. Oh, no, he'll come back. We all come back, Kate. These private little revolutions always die. The com-

promise is always made. In a peculiar way. Frank is right—every man does have a star. The star of one's honesty. And you spend your life groping for it, but once it's out it never lights again. I don't think he went very far. He probably just wanted to be alone to watch his star go out.

MOTHER. Just as long as he comes back.

JIM. I wish he wouldn't, Kate. One year I simply took off, went to New Orleans, for two months I lived on bananas and milk, and studied a certain disease. It was beautiful. And then she came, and she cried. And I went back home with her. And now I live in the usual darkness; I can't find myself; it's even hard sometimes to remember the kind of man I wanted to be. I'm a good husband; Chris is a good son—he'll come back.

[KELLER comes out on porch in dressing-gown and slips. He goes upstage—to alley. JIM goes to him.]

JIM. I have a feeling he's in the park. I'll look around for him. Put her to bed, Joe; this is no good for what she's got. [JIM exits up driveway.]

KELLER [coming down]. What does he want here? ~~START~~

MOTHER. His friend is not home.

KELLER [his voice is husky. Comes down to her]. I don't like him mixing in so much.

MOTHER. It's too late, Joe. He knows.

KELLER [apprehensively]. How does he know?

MOTHER. He guessed a long time ago.

KELLER. I don't like that.

MOTHER [laughs dangerously, quietly into the line]. What you don't like . . .

KELLER. Yeah, what I don't like.

MOTHER. You can't bull yourself through this one, Joe, you better be smart now. This thing—this thing is not over yet.

KELLER [indicating lighted window above]. And what

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is she doing up there? She don't come out of the room.

MOTHER. I don't know, what is she doing? Sit down, stop being mad. You want to live? You better figure out your life.

KELLER. She don't know, does she?

MOTHER. 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?

MOTHER. Don't ask me, Joe.

KELLER [*almost an outburst*]. Then who do I ask? But I don't think she'll do anything about it.

MOTHER. You're asking me again.

KELLER. I'm askin' you. What am I, a stranger? I thought I had a family here. What happened to my family?

MOTHER. You've got a family. I'm simply telling you that I have no strength to think any more.

KELLER. You have no strength. The minute there's trouble you have no strength.

MOTHER. Joe, you're doing the same thing again; all your life whenever there's trouble you yell at me and you think that settles it.

KELLER. Then what do I do? Tell me, talk to me, what do I do?

MOTHER. Joe . . . I've been thinking this way. If he comes back . . .

KELLER. What do you mean "if"? . . . he's comin' back! MOTHER. I think if you sit him down and you . . . explain yourself. I mean you ought to make it clear to him that you know you did a terrible thing. [*Not looking into his eyes*.] I mean if he saw that you realize what you did. You see?

KELLER. What ice does that cut?

MOTHER [*a little fearfully*]. I mean if you told him that you want to pay for what you did.

KELLER [*sensing . . . quietly*]. How can I pay? MOTHER. Tell him . . . you're willing to go to prison. [*Pause*.]

KELLER [*struck, amazed*]. I'm willing to . . . ?

MOTHER [*quickly*]. You wouldn't go, he wouldn't ask you to go. But if you told him you wanted to, if he could feel that you wanted to pay, maybe he would forgive you.

KELLER. He would forgive me! For what?

MOTHER. Joe, you know what I mean.

KELLER. I don't know what you mean! You wanted money, so I made money. What must I be forgiven? You wanted money, didn't you?

MOTHER. I didn't want it that way.

KELLER. I didn't want it that way, either! What difference is it what you want? I spoiled the both of you. I should've put him out when he was ten like I was put out, and make him earn his keep. Then he'd know how a buck is made in this world. Forgiven! I could live on a quarter a day myself, but I got a family so I . . .

MOTHER. Joe, Joe . . . it don't excuse it that you did it for the family.

KELLER. It's got to excuse it!

MOTHER. There's something bigger than the family to him.

KELLER. Nothin' is bigger!

MOTHER. There is to him.

KELLER. There's nothin' he could do that I wouldn't forgive. Because he's my son. Because I'm his father and he's my son.

MOTHER. Joe, I tell you . . .

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 something bigger than that I'll put a bullet in my head!

— EMP

SUE / ANNIE

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CHRIS. Why aren't you dressing?

MOTHER. It's suffocating upstairs. I made a grape drink for Georgie. He always liked grape. Come and have some.

CHRIS [*impatiently*]. Well, come on, get dressed. And what's Dad sleeping so much for? [*He goes to table and pours a glass of juice.*]

MOTHER. He's worried. When he's worried he sleeps. [*Pauses. Looks into his eyes.*] We're dumb, Chris. Dad and I are stupid people. We don't know anything. You've got to protect us.

CHRIS. You're silly; what's there to be afraid of?

MOTHER. 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 just a damn fool, Mother. How can you take him seriously?

MOTHER. That family hates us. Maybe even Annie . . .

CHRIS. Oh, now, Mother . . .

MOTHER. You think just because you like everybody, they like you!

CHRIS. All right, stop working yourself up. Just leave everything to me.

MOTHER. When George goes home tell her to go with him.

CHRIS [*noncommittally*]. Don't worry about Annie. MOTHER. Steve is her father, too.

CHRIS. Are you going to cut it out? Now, come. MOTHER [*going onstage with him*]. You don't realize how people can hate, Chris, they can hate so much they'll tear the world to pieces. . . .

[ANN, dressed up, appears on porch.]

CHRIS. Look! She's dressed already. [*As he and MOTHER mount porch.*] I've just got to put on a shirt. ANN [*in a preoccupied way*]. Are you feeling well, Kate?

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MOTHER. What's the difference, dear. There are certain people, y'know, the sicker they get the longer they live. [*She goes into house.*]

CHRIS. You look nice.

ANN. We're going to tell her tonight.

CHRIS. Absolutely, don't worry about it.

ANN. I wish we could tell her now. I can't stand scheming. My stomach gets hard.

CHRIS. It's not scheming, we'll just get her in a better mood.

MOTHER [*offstage, in the house*]. Joe, are you going to sleep all day!

ANN [*laughing*]. The only one who's relaxed is your father. He's fast asleep.

CHRIS. I'm relaxed.

ANN. Are you?

CHRIS. Look. [*He holds out his hand and makes it shake.*] Let me know when George gets here. [*He goes into the house.*]

[*She moves aimlessly, and then is drawn toward tree stump. She goes to it, hesitantly touches broken top in the hush of her thoughts. Offstage*

LYDIA calls, "Johnny! Come get your supper!" SUE enters, and halts, seeing ANN.]

SUE. Is my husband . . . ?

ANN [*turns, startled*]. Oh!

SUE. I'm terribly sorry.

ANN. It's all right, I . . . I'm a little silly about the dark.

SUE [*looks about*]. It is getting dark.

ANN. Are you looking for your husband?

SUE. As usual. [*Laughs tiredly.*] He spends so much time here, they'll be charging him rent.

ANN. Nobody was dressed so he drove over to the depot to pick up my brother.

START
SNI

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SUE. Oh, your brother's in?
ANN. Yeah, they ought to be here any minute now. Will you have a cold drink?

SUE. I will, thanks. [ANN goes to table and pours.] My husband. Too hot to drive me to beach.—Men are like little boys; for the neighbors they'll always cut the grass.

ANN. People like to do things for the Kellers. Been that way since I can remember.

SUE. It's amazing. I guess your brother's coming to give you away, heh?

ANN. [giving her drink]. I don't know. I suppose.

SUE. You must be all nerved up.

ANN. It's always a problem getting yourself married, isn't it?

SUE. That depends on your shape, of course. I don't see why you should have had a problem.

ANN. I've had chances—

SUE. I'll bet. It's romantic . . . it's very unusual to me, marrying the brother of your sweetheart.

ANN. I don't know. I think it's mostly that whenever I need somebody to tell me the truth I've always thought of Chris. When he tells you something you know it's so. He relaxes me.

SUE. And he's got money. That's important, you know. ANN. It wouldn't matter to me.

SUE. You'd be surprised. It makes all the difference. I married an interne. On my salary. And that was bad, because as soon as a woman supports a man he owes her something. You can never owe somebody without resenting them. [ANN laughs.] That's true, you know.

ANN. Underneath, I think the doctor is very devoted. SUE. Oh, certainly. But it's bad when a man always sees the bars in front of him. Jim thinks he's in jail all the time.

ANN. Oh . . .
SUE. That's why I've been intending to ask you a small favor, Ann . . . it's something very important to me. ANN. Certainly, if I can do it.

SUE. You can. When you take up housekeeping, try to find a place away from here.

ANN. Are you fooling?
SUE. I'm very serious. My husband is unhappy with Chris around.

ANN. How is that?
SUE. Jim's a successful doctor. But he's got an idea he'd like to do medical research. Discover things. You see?

ANN. Well, isn't that good?
SUE. Research pays twenty-five dollars a week minus laundering the hair shirt. You've got to give up your life to go into it.

ANN. How does Chris?
SUE. [with growing feeling]. Chris makes people want to be better than it's possible to be. He does that to people. — END SAI

ANN. Is that bad?
SUE. My husband has a family, dear. Every time he has a session with Chris he feels as though he's compromising by not giving up everything for research.

ANN. As though Chris or anybody else isn't compromising. It happens with Jim every couple of years. He meets a man and makes a statue out of him.

ANN. Maybe he's right. I don't mean that Chris is a statue, but . . .

SUE. Now darling, you know he's not right.

ANN. I don't agree with you. Chris . . .

SUE. Let's face it, dear. Chris is working with his father, isn't he? He's taking money out of that business every week in the year.

ANN. What of it?

SAPs

SUE. You ask me what of it?

ANN. I certainly do. [She seems about to burst out.] You oughtn't cast aspersions like that, I'm surprised at you.

SUE. You're surprised at me!

ANN. He'd never take five cents out of that plant if there was anything wrong with it. SUE. You know that.

ANN. I know it. I resent everything you've said.

SUE [moving toward her]. You know what I resent, dear?

ANN. Please, I don't want to argue.

SUE. I resent living next door to the Holy Family. It makes me look like a bum, you understand?

ANN. I can't do anything about that.

SUE. Who is he to ruin a man's life? Everybody knows Joe pulled a fast one to get out of jail.

ANN. That's not true!

SUE. Then why don't you go out and talk to people? Go on, talk to them. There's not a person on the block who doesn't know the truth.

ANN. That's a lie. People come here all the time for cards and . . .

SUE. So what? They give him credit for being smart. I do, too, I've got nothing against Joe. But if Chris wants people to put on the hair shirt let him take off his broadcloth. He's driving my husband crazy with that phony idealism of his, and I'm at the end of my rope on it! [Chris enters on porch, wearing shirt and tie now. She turns quickly, hearing. With a smile.] Hello, darling. How's Mother?

CHRIS. I thought George came.

SUE. No, it was just us.

CHRIS [coming down to them]. Susie, do me a favor, huh? Go up to Mother and see if you can calm her. She's all worked up.

SUE. She still doesn't know about you two? CHRIS [laughs a little]. Well, she senses it, I guess. You know my mother.

SUE [going up to porch]. Oh, yeah, she's psychic. CHRIS. Maybe there's something in the medicine chest. SUE. I'll give her one of everything. [On porch.] Don't worry about Kate; couple of drinks, dance her around a little . . . she'll love Ann. [To ANN.] Because you're the female version of him. [CHRIS laughs.] Don't be alarmed, I said version. [She goes into house.]

CHRIS. Interesting woman, isn't she?

ANN. Yeah, she's very interesting.

CHRIS. She's a great nurse, you know, she . . .

ANN [in tension, but trying to control it]. Are you still doing that?

CHRIS [sensing something wrong, but still smiling]. Doing what?

ANN. As soon as you get to know somebody you find a distinction for them. How do you know she's a great nurse?

CHRIS. What's the matter, Ann?

ANN. The woman hates you. She despises you!

CHRIS. Hey . . . what's hit you?

ANN. Gee, Chris . . .

CHRIS. What happened here?

ANN. You never . . . Why didn't you tell me?

CHRIS. Tell you what?

ANN. She says they think Joe is guilty.

CHRIS. What difference does it make what they think?

ANN. I don't care what they think, I just don't understand why you took the trouble to deny it. You said it was all forgotten.

CHRIS. I didn't want you to feel there was anything wrong in you coming here, that's all. I know a lot