

Contact Dramatists Play
Service, Inc., NYC, NY

Arthur Miller's

ALL MY SONS

All My Sons was first presented by Elia Kazan, Harold Clurman, and Walter Fried (in association with Herbert Harris), at the Coronet Theatre on the evening of January 29, 1947, with the following cast:

JOE KELLER Ed Begley
KATE KELLER Beth Merrill
CHRIS KELLER Arthur Kennedy
ANN DEEVER Lois Wheeler
GEORGE DEEVER Karl Malden
DR. JIM BAYLISS John McGovern
SUE BAYLISS Peggy Meredith
FRANK LUBEY Dudley Sadler
LYDIA LUBEY Hope Cameron
BERT Eugene Steiner

The production was directed by Elia Kazan
The setting was designed by Mordecai Gorelik

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT I

The back yard of the Keller home in the outskirts of an American town. August of our era.

ACT II

Scene, as before. The same evening, as twilight falls.

ACT III

Scene, as before. Two o'clock the following morning.

ACT ONE

The back yard of the KELLER home in the outskirts of an American town. August of our era.

The stage is hedged on R. and L. by tall, closely planted poplars which lend the yard a secluded atmosphere. Upstage is filled with the back of the house and its open, unroofed porch which extends into the yard some six feet. The house is two stories high and has seven rooms. It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. Now it is nicely painted, looks tight and comfortable, and the yard is green with sod, here and there plants whose season is gone. At the R., beside the house, the entrance of the driveway can be seen, but the poplars cut off view of its continuation downstage. In the L. corner, downstage, stands the four-foot high stump of a slender apple tree whose upper trunk and branches lie toppled beside it, fruit still clinging to its branches.

Downstage R. is a small, trellised arbor, shaped like a sea-shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from its forward-curving roof. Garden chairs and a table are scattered about. A garbage pail on the ground next to the porch steps, a wire leaf-burner near it.

ON THE RISE: It is early Sunday morning. JOE KELLER is sitting in the sun reading the want ads of the Sunday paper, the other sections of which lie neatly on the ground beside him. Behind his back, inside the arbor, DOCTOR JIM BAYLISS is reading part of the paper at the table.

KELLER is nearing sixty. A heavy man of stolid mind and build, a business man these many years, but with the imprint of the machine-shop worker and boss still upon him. When he reads, when he speaks, when he listens, it is with the terrible concentration of the uneducated man for whom there is still wonder in many commonly known things, a man whose judg-

ments must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense. A man among men.

DOCTOR BAYLISS is nearing forty. A wry self-controlled man, an easy talker, but with a wisp of sadness that clings even to his self-effacing humor.

AT CURTAIN, JIM is standing at L., staring at the broken tree. He taps a pipe on it, blows through the pipe, feels in his pockets for tobacco, then speaks.

JIM. Where's your tobacco?

KELLER. I think I left it on the table. (JIM goes slowly to table on the arbor at R., finds a pouch, and sits there on the bench, filling his pipe.) Gonna rain tonight.

JIM. Paper says so?

KELLER. Yeah, right here.

JIM. Then it can't rain.

(FRANK LUBEY enters, from R., through a small space between the poplars. FRANK is thirty-two but balding. A pleasant, opinionated man, uncertain of himself, with a tendency toward peevishness when crossed, but always wanting it pleasant and neighborly. He rather saunters in, leisurely, nothing to do. He does not notice JIM in the arbor. On his greeting, JIM does not bother looking up.)

FRANK. Hya.

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

FRANK. Nothin'. Walkin' off my breakfast. (Looks up at the sky.) That beautiful? Not a cloud.

KELLER. (Looks up.) Yeah, nice.

FRANK. Every Sunday ought to be like this.

KELLER. (Indicating the sections beside him.) Want the paper?

FRANK. What's the difference, it's all bad news. What's today's calamity?

KELLER. I don't know, I don't read the news part any more. It's more interesting in the want ads.

FRANK. Why, you trying to buy something?

KELLER. No, I'm just interested. To see what people want, y'know? For instance, here's a guy is lookin' for two Newfoundland dogs. Now what's he want with two Newfoundland dogs?

FRANK. That is funny.

KELLER. Here's another one. Wanted—Old Dictionaries. High prices paid. Now what's a man going to do with an old dictionary?

6

FRANK. Why not? Probably a book collector.

KELLER. You mean he'll make a living out of that?

FRANK. Sure, there's a lot of them.

KELLER. (Shakes his head.) All the kind of business goin' on. In my day, either you were a lawyer, or a doctor, or you worked in a shop. Now . . .

FRANK. Well, I was going to be a forester once.

KELLER. Well, that shows you; in my day, there was no such thing.

(Scanning the page, sweeping it with his hand.) You look at a page like this you realize how ignorant you are. (Softly, with wonder, as he scans page.) Psss!

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

KELLER. Ain't that awful? The wind must've got it last night. You heard the wind, didn't you?

FRANK. Yeah, I got a mess in my yard, too. (Goes to tree.) What a pity. (Turns to KELLER.) What'd Kate say?

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

FRANK. (Shrugs.) 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.

KELLER. (Touched.) I'm surprised you remember his birthday, Frank. That's nice.

FRANK. Well, I'm working on his horoscope.

KELLER. How can you make him a horoscope? That's for the future, ain't it?

FRANK. Well, what I'm doing is this, see. Larry was reported missing on November 25th, right?

KELLER. Yeah?

FRANK. Well, then, we assume that if he was killed it was on November 25th. Now, what Kate wants . . .

KELLER. Oh, Kate asked you to make a horoscope?

FRANK. Yeah, what she wants to find out is whether November 25th was a favorable day for Larry.

KELLER. What is that, favorable day?

FRANK. Well, a favorable day for a person is a fortunate day, according to his stars. In other words it would be practically impossible for him to have died on his favorable day.

KELLER. Well, was that his favorable day?—November 25th?

FRANK. That's what I'm working on to find out. It takes time! See.

7

the point is, if November 25th was his favorable day, then it's completely possible he's alive somewhere, because . . . I mean it's possible. (*He notices JIM now. JIM is looking at him as though at an idiot. To JIM—with an uncertain laugh.*) I didn't even see you.

KELLER. (*To JIM.*) Is he talkin' sense?

JIM. Him? He's all right. He's just completely out of his mind, that's all.

FRANK. (*Peeved.*) The trouble with you is, you don't believe in anything.

JIM. And your trouble is that you believe in *anything*. You didn't see my kid this morning, did you?

FRANK. No.

KELLER. Imagine? He walked off with his thermometer. Right out of his bag.

JIM. (*Gets up.*) What a problem. One look at a girl and he takes her temperature. (*Goes to driveway, looks upstage toward street.*)

FRANK. That boy's going to be a real doctor; he's smart.

JIM. Over my dead body he'll be a doctor. A good beginning, too.

FRANK. Why? It's an honorable profession.

JIM. (*Looks at him tiredly.*) Frank, will you stop talking like a civics book? (*KELLER laughs.*)

FRANK. Why, I saw a movie a couple of weeks ago, reminded me of you. There was a doctor in that picture . . .

KELLER. Don Ameche!

FRANK. I think it was, yeah. And he worked in his basement discovering things. That's what you ought to do; you could help humanity, instead of . . .

JIM. I would love to help humanity on a Warner Brothers salary.

KELLER. (*Points at him, laughing.*) That's very good, Jim.

JIM. (*Looks toward house.*) 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. Hardly recognized her, and she was running in and out of this yard all her life. That was a very happy family used to live in your house, Jim. Like to meet her. The block can use a pretty girl. In the whole neighborhood there's not a damned thing to look at. (*Enter SUE, JIM's wife, from L. She is rounding forty, an overweight woman*

who fears it. On seeing her JIM wryly adds:) . . . Except my wife, of course.

SUE. (*In same spirit.*) Mrs. Adams is on the phone, you dog.

JIM. (*To KELLER.*) Such is the condition which prevails, (*Going to his wife.*) my love, my light. . . .

SUE. Don't sniff around me. (*Points to their house, L.*) And give her a nasty answer. I can smell her perfume over the phone.

JIM. What's the matter with her now?

SUE. I don't know, dear. She sounds like she's in terrible pain—unless her mouth is full of candy.

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

SUE. She enjoys it more when you tell her to lay down. And when are you going to see Mr. Hubbard?

JIM. My dear; Mr. Hubbard is not sick, and I have better things to do than to sit there and hold his hand.

SUE. It seems to me that for ten dollars you could hold his hand.

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

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 L. to parsley box and pulls some parsley.*) You were a nurse too long, Susie. You're too . . . too . . . realistic.

SUE. (*Laughing, points at him.*) Now you said it! (*Enter LYDIA LUBBY from R. She is a robust, laughing girl of twenty-seven.*)

LYDIA. Frank, the toaster . . . (*Sees the others.*) Hya.

KELLER. Hello!

LYDIA. (*To FRANK.*) The toaster is off again.

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

LYDIA. (*Kindly, but insistently.*) 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 R.*)

SUE. (*Laughs.*) Thomas Edison.

LYDIA. (*Apologetically.*) He's really very handy. (*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, she's a knockout.

SUE. I should've been a man. People are always introducing me to beautiful women. (To JOE.) Tell her to come over later; I imagine she'd like to see what we did with her house. And thanks. (SUE exits L.)

LYDIA. Is she still unhappy, Joe?
 KELLER. Annie? I don't suppose she goes around dancing on her toes, but she seems to be over it.

LYDIA. She going to get married? Is there anybody . . . ?
 KELLER. I suppose . . . say, it's a couple years already. She can't mourn a boy forever.

LYDIA. It's so strange . . . Annie's here and not even married. And I've got three babies. I always thought it'd be the other way around.

KELLER. Well, that's what a war does. I had two sons, now I got one. It changed all the tallies. In my day when you had sons it was an honor. Today a doctor could make a million dollars if he could figure out a way to bring a boy into the world without a trigger finger.

LYDIA. You know, I was just reading . . . (Enter CHRIS KELLER from house, stands in doorway.)

LYDIA. Hya, Chris . . . (FRANK shouts from off R.)

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

LYDIA. (Embarrassed, laughs.) Did I . . . ?

FRANK. And the next time I fix something, don't tell me I'm crazy! Now come in here!

LYDIA. (To KELLER.) I'll never hear the end of this one.

KELLER. (Calling to FRANK.) So what's the difference? Instead of toast have a malted!

LYDIA. Sh! sh! (She exits R. laughing.)

(CHRIS watches her off. He is thirty-two; like his father, solidly built, a listener. A man capable of immense affection and loyalty. He has a cup of coffee in one hand, part of a doughnut in other.)

KELLER. You want the paper?
 CHRIS. That's all right, just the book section. (He bends down and pulls out part of paper on porch floor.)

KELLER. You're always reading the book section and you never

10

buy a book.

CHRIS. (Coming down to settee.) I like to keep abreast of my ignorance. (He sits on settee.)

KELLER. What is that, every week a new book comes out?
 CHRIS. Lot of new books.

KELLER. All different.
 CHRIS. All different.

KELLER. (Shakes his head, puts knife down on bench, takes oil-stone up to the cabinet.) Pss! Annie up yet?
 CHRIS. Mother's giving her breakfast in the dining-room.

KELLER. (Crosses, d.s. of stool, looking at broken tree.) See what happened to the tree?
 CHRIS. (Without looking up.) Yeah.

KELLER. What's Mother going to say? (BERT runs on from driveway. He is about eight. He jumps on stool, then on KELLER'S back.)

BERT. You're finally up.

KELLER. (Swinging him around and putting him down.) Ha! Bert's here! Where's Tommy? He's got his father's thermometer again.

BERT. He's taking a reading.

CHRIS. What!
 KELLER. But it's only oral.

KELLER. Oh, well, there's no harm in oral. So what's new this morning, Bert?

BERT. Nothin'. (He goes to broken tree, walks around it.)

KELLER. Then you couldn't've made a complete inspection of the block. In the beginning, when I first made you a policeman you used to come in every morning with something new. Now, nothin's ever new.

BERT. Except some kids from Thirtieth Street. They started kicking a can down the block, and I made them go away because you were sleeping.

KELLER. Now you're talkin', Bert. Now you're on the ball. First thing you know I'm liable to make you a detective.

BERT. (Pulls him down by the lapel and whispers in his ear.) Can I see the jail now?
 KELLER. Seein' the jail ain't allowed, Bert. You know that.

BERT. Aw, I betcha there isn't even a jail. I don't see any bars on the cellar windows.

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

11

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 off r. back of arbor.*)
 KELLER. (*Calling after him.*) And mum's the word, Bert.
 BERT. (*Stops and sticks his head thru the arbor.*) About what?
 KELLER. Just in general. Be v-e-r-y careful.
 BERT. (*Nods in bewilderment.*) Okay. (*BERT exits D.R.*)
 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 stand-

ing 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.
 KELLER. What?
 CHRIS. Being dishonest with her. That kind of thing always pays off, and now it's 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?
 CHRIS. 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 Goddam 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.

KELLER. How do you know she'll marry you? Maybe she feels the same way Mother does?

CHRIS. Well, if she does, then that's the end of it. From her letters I think she's forgotten him. I'll find out. And then we'll thrash it out with Mother? Right? Dad, don't avoid me.

KELLER. The trouble is, you don't see enough women. You never did.

CHRIS. So what? I'm not fast with women.

14

KELLER. I don't see why it has to be Annie. . . .

CHRIS. Because it is.

KELLER. That's a good answer, but it don't answer anything. You haven't seen her since you went to war. It's five years.

CHRIS. I can't help it. I know her best. I was brought up next door to her. These years when I think of someone for my wife, I think of Annie. What do you want, a diagram?

KELLER. I don't want a diagram . . . I . . . I'm . . . She thinks he's coming back, Chris. You marry that girl and you're pronouncing him dead. Now what's going to happen to Mother? Do you know? I don't! (*Pause.*)

CHRIS. All right, then, Dad.

KELLER. (*Thinking Chris has retreated.*) Give it some more thought.

CHRIS. I've given it three years of thought. I'd hoped that if I waited, Mother would forget Larry and then we'd have a regular wedding and everything happy. But if that can't happen here, then I'll have to get out.

KELLER. What the hell is *this*?

CHRIS. I'll get out. I'll get married and live some place else. Maybe in New York.

KELLER. Are you crazy?

CHRIS. I've been a good son too long, a good sucker. I'm through with it.

KELLER. You've got a business here, what the hell is this?

CHRIS. The business! The business doesn't inspire me.

KELLER. Must you be inspired?

CHRIS. Yes. I like it an hour a day. If I have to grub for money all day long at least at evening I want it beautiful. I want a family, I want some kids, I want to build something I can give myself to. Annie is in the middle of that. Now . . . where do I find it?

KELLER. You mean . . . (*Goes to him.*) Tell me something, you mean you'd leave the business?

CHRIS. Yes. On this I would.

KELLER. (*Pause.*) Well . . . you don't want to think like that.

CHRIS. Then help me stay here.

KELLER. All right, but . . . but don't think like that. Because what the hell did I work for? That's only for you, Chris, the whole shootin'-match is for you!

CHRIS. I know that, Dad. Just you help me stay here.

15

KELLER. (*Puts a fist up to CHRIS' jaw.*) But don't think that way, you hear me?

CHRIS. I am thinking that way.

KELLER. (*Lowering his hand.*) I don't understand you, do I?

CHRIS. No, you don't. I'm a pretty tough guy.

KELLER. Yeah, I can see that. (*MOTHER appears on porch. She is in her early fifties, a woman of uncontrolled inspirations, and an overwelming capacity for love.*)

MOTHER. Joe?

CHRIS. (*Going toward porch.*) Hello, Mom.

MOTHER. (*Indicating house behind her. To KELLER.*) Did you take a bag from under the sink?

KELLER. Yeah, I put it in the pail.

MOTHER. Well, get it out of the pail. That's my potatoes. (*CHRIS bursts out laughing—goes up into alley.*)

KELLER. (*Laughing.*) I thought it was garbage.

MOTHER. Will you do me a favor, Joe? Don't be helpful.

KELLER. I can afford another bag of potatoes.

MOTHER. Minnie scoured that pail in boiling water last night. It's cleaner than your teeth.

KELLER. And I don't understand why, after I worked forty years and I got a maid, why I have to take out the garbage.

MOTHER. If you would make up your mind that every bag in the kitchen isn't full of garbage you wouldn't be throwing out my vegetables. Last time it was the onions. (*CHRIS comes on, hands her bag.*)

KELLER. I don't like garbage in the house.

MOTHER. Then don't eat. (*She goes into the kitchen with bag.*)

CHRIS. That settles you for today.

KELLER. Yeah, I'm in last place again. I don't know, once upon a time I used to think that when I got money again I would have a maid and my wife would take it easy. Now I got money, and I got a maid, and my wife is workin' for the maid. (*He sits in one of the chairs. MOTHER comes out on last line. She carries a pot of string-beans.*)

MOTHER. It's her day off, what are you crabbing about?

CHRIS. (*To Mother.*) Isn't Annie finished eating?

MOTHER. (*Looking around preoccupiedly at yard.*) She'll be right out. (*Mover.*) That wind did some job on this place. (*Of the tree.*) So much for that, thank God.

KELLER. (*Indicating chair beside him.*) Sit down, take it easy.

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

CHRIS. Can I get you an aspirin?

MOTHER. (*Picks a few petals off ground, stand there smelling them in her hand, then sprinkles them over 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. I was just down the cellar, and what do I stumble over? His baseball glove. I haven't seen it in a century.

CHRIS. Don't you think Annie looks well?

MOTHER. Fine. There's no question about it. She's a beauty . . . I still don't know what brought her here. Not that I'm not glad to see her, but . . .

CHRIS. I just thought we'd all like to see each other again. (*MOTHER just looks at him, nodding ever so slightly—almost as though admitting something.*) And I wanted to see her myself.

MOTHER. (*Her nods halt. To KELLER.*) The only thing is I think her nose got longer. But 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. (*As though that were impossible for Annie.*) Oh, what're you . . . ?

MOTHER. Never mind. Most of them didn't wait till the telegrams were opened. I'm just glad she came, so you can see I'm not completely out of my mind. (*Sits, and rapidly breaks stringbeans in the pot.*)

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

MOTHER. (*With an undercurrent of observation.*) Why then isn't she?

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

MOTHER. (*Directly at him.*) Like what, for instance?

CHRIS. (*Embarrassed, but standing his ground.*) I don't know. Whatever it is. Can I get you an aspirin? (*MOTHER puts her hand to her head.*)

MOTHER. (*She gets up and goes aimlessly toward the trees on rising.*) It's not like a headache.

KELLER. You don't sleep, that's why. She's wearing out more bedroom slippers than shoes.

MOTHER. I had a terrible night. (*She stops moving.*) I never had a night like that.

CHRIS. (*Looks at KELLER.*) What was it, Mom? Did you dream?

MOTHER. More, more than a dream.

CHRIS. (*Hesitantly.*) About Larry?

MOTHER. I was fast asleep, and . . . (*Raising her arm over the audience.*) Remember the way he used to fly low past the house when he was in training? When we used to see his face in the cockpit going by? That's the way I saw him. Only high up. 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, crying to me . . . Mom, Mom! I could hear him like he was in the room. Mom! . . . it was his voice! If I could touch him I knew I could stop him, if I could only . . . (*Breaks off, allowing her outstretched hand to fall.*) I woke up and it was so funny . . . The wind . . . it was like the roaring of his engine. I came out here . . . I must've still been half asleep. I could hear that roaring like he was going by. The tree snapped right in front of me . . . and I like . . . came awake. (*She is looking at tree. She suddenly realizes something, turns with a reprimanding finger shaking slightly at KELLER.*) See? We should never have planted that tree. I said so in the first place; it was too soon to plant a tree for him.

CHRIS. (*Alarmed.*) Too soon!

MOTHER. (*Angering.*) We rushed into it. Everybody was in such a hurry to bury him. I said not to plant it yet. (*To KELLER.*) I told you to . . .!

CHRIS. Mother, Mother! (*She looks into his face.*) The wind blew it down. What significance has that got? What are you talking about? Mother, please . . . Don't go through it all again, will you? It's no good, it doesn't accomplish anything. I've been thinking, y'know? — maybe we ought to put our minds to forgetting him?

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

CHRIS. Because it's not right; we never took up our lives again. We're like at a railroad station waiting for a train that never comes in.

MOTHER. (*Presses top of her head.*) Get me an aspirin, huh?

CHRIS. Sure, and let's break out of this, huh, Mom? I thought the four of us might go out to dinner a couple of nights, maybe go dancing out at the shore.

MOTHER. Fine. (*To KELLER.*) We can do it tonight.

18

KELLER. Swell with me!

CHRIS. Sure, let's have some fun. (*To MOTHER.*) You'll start with this aspirin. (*He goes up and into house with new spirit. Her smile vanishes.*)

MOTHER. (*With an accusing undertone.*) Why did he invite her here?

KELLER. Why does that bother you?

MOTHER. She's been in New York three and a half years, why all of a sudden . . .?

KELLER. Well, maybe . . . maybe he just wanted to see her . . .

MOTHER. Nobody comes seven hundred miles "just to see."

KELLER. What do you mean? He lived next door to the girl all his life, why shouldn't he want to see her again? (*MOTHER looks at him critically.*) Don't look at me like that, he didn't tell me any more than he told you.

MOTHER. (*A warning and a question.*) He's not going to marry her.

KELLER. How do you know he's even thinking of it?

MOTHER. It's got that about it.

KELLER. (*Sharply watching her reaction.*) Well? So what?

MOTHER. (*Alarmed.*) What's going on here, Joe?

KELLER. Now listen, kid . . .

MOTHER. (*Avoiding contact with him.*) She's not his girl, Joe; she knows she's not.

KELLER. You can't read her mind.

MOTHER. Then why is she still single? New York is full of men, why isn't she married? (*Pause.*) Probably a hundred people told her she's foolish, but she's waited.

KELLER. How do you know why she waited?

MOTHER. She knows what I know, that's why. She's faithful as a rock. In my worst moments, I think of her waiting, and I know again that I'm right.

KELLER. Look, it's a nice day. What are we arguing for?

MOTHER. (*Warningly.*) Nobody in this house dares take her faith away, Joe. Strangers might. But not his father, nor his brother.

KELLER. (*Exasperated.*) What do you want me to do? What do you want?

MOTHER. I want you to act like he's coming back. Both of you. Don't think I haven't noticed you since Chris invited her. I won't stand for any nonsense.

KELLER. But, Kate . . .

MOTHER. Because if he's not coming back, then I'll kill myself!

19

Laugh. Laugh at me. (*She points to tree.*) But why did that happen the very night she came back? Laugh, but there are meanings in such things. She goes to sleep in his room and his memorial breaks in pieces. Look at it; look. (*She sits on bench at his L.*) Joe . . .

KELLER. Calm yourself.
MOTHER. Believe with me, Joe. I can't stand all alone.
KELLER. Calm yourself.
MOTHER. Only last week a man turned up in Detroit, missing longer than Larry. You read it yourself.
KELLER. All right, all right, calm yourself.
MOTHER. You above all have got to believe, you . . .
KELLER. (*Rises.*) Why me above all?
MOTHER. . . . Just don't stop believing . . .
KELLER. What does that mean, me above all? (*BERT comes rushing on from L.*)
BERT. Mr. Keller! Say, Mr. Keller . . . (*Pointing up driveway.*) Tommy just said it again!
KELLER. (*Not remembering any of it.*) Said what? . . . Who? . . .
BERT. The dirty word.
KELLER. Oh. Well . . .
BERT. Gee, aren't you going to arrest him? I warned him.
MOTHER. (*With suddenness.*) Stop that, Bert. Go home. (*BERT backs up, as she advances.*) There's no jail here.
KELLER. (*As though to say, "Ob-what-the-hell-let-him-believe-there-is."*) Kate . . .
MOTHER. (*Turning on KELLER, furiously.*) There's no jail here! I want you to stop that jail business! (*He turns, shamed, but peeved.*)
BERT. (*Past her to KELLER.*) He's right across the street . . .
MOTHER. Go home, Bert. (*BERT turns around and goes up driveway. She is shaken. Her speech is bitten off, extremely urgent.*) I want you to stop that, Joe. That whole jail business!
KELLER. (*Alarmed, therefore angered.*) Look at you, look at you shaking.
MOTHER. (*Trying to control herself, moving about clasping her hands.*) I can't help it.
KELLER. What have I got to hide? What the hell is the matter with you, Kate?
MOTHER. I didn't say you had anything to hide, I'm just telling you to stop it! Now stop it! (*As ANN and CHRIS appear on porch.*) ANN

is twenty-six, gentle but despite herself capable of holding fast to what she knows. CHRIS opens door for her.)
ANN. Hya, Joe! (*She leads off a general laugh that is not self-conscious because they know one another too well.*)
CHRIS. (*Bringing ANN down, with an outstretched, chivalric arm.*) Take a breath of that air, kid. You never get air like that in New York.
MOTHER. (*Genuinely overcome with it.*) Annie, where did you get that dress!
ANN. I couldn't resist. I'm taking it right off before I ruin it. (*Swings around.*) How's that for three weeks' salary?
MOTHER. (*To KELLER.*) Isn't she the most . . . ? (*To ANN.*) It's gorgeous, simply got . . .
CHRIS. (*To MOTHER.*) No kidding, now, isn't she the prettiest gal you ever saw?
MOTHER. (*Caught short by his obvious admiration, she finds herself reaching out for a glass of water and aspirin in his hand, and . . .*) You gained a little weight, didn't you, darling? (*She gulps pill and drinks.*)
ANN. It comes and goes.
KELLER. Look how nice her legs turned out!
ANN. (*She runs to fence, L.*) Boy, the poplars got thick, didn't they?
KELLER. (*Moves U. to settee and sits.*) Well, it's three years, Annie. We're gettin' old, kid.
MOTHER. How does Mom like New York? (*ANN keeps looking through trees.*)
ANN. (*A little hurt.*) Why'd they take our hammock away?
KELLER. Oh, no, it broke. Couple of years ago.
MOTHER. What broke? He had one of his light lunches and flopped into it.
ANN. (*She laughs and turns back toward JIM's yard. . . .*) Oh, excuse me! (*JIM has come to fence and is looking over it. He is smoking a cigar. As she cries out, he comes on around on stage.*)
JIM. How do you do. (*To CHRIS.*) She looks very intelligent!
CHRIS. Ann, this is Jim . . . Doctor Bayliss.
ANN. (*Shaking JIM's hand.*) Oh sure, he writes a lot about you.
JIM. Don't believe it. He likes everybody. In the Battalion he was known as Mother McKeller.

ANN. I can believe it . . . You know—? (To MOTHER.) It's so strange seeing him come out of that yard. (To CHRIS.) I guess I never grew up. It almost seems that Mom and Pop are in there now. And you and my brother doing Algebra, and Larry trying to copy my home-work. Gosh, those dear dead days beyond recall.

JIM. Well, I hope that doesn't mean you want me to move out?

SUE. (Calling from off L.) Jim, come in here! Mr. Hubbard is on the phone!

JIM. I told you I don't want . . .

SUE. (Commandingly sweet.) Please, dear! Please!!

JIM. (Reigned.) All right, Susie, (Trailing off.) all right, all right. . . . (To ANN.) I've only met you, Ann, but if I may offer you a piece of advice—When you marry, never—even in your mind

—never count your husband's money.

SUE. (From off.) Jim?!

JIM. At once! (Turns and goes L.) At once. (He exits L.)

MOTHER. (ANN is looking at her. She speaks meaningfully.) I told her to take up the guitar. It'd be a common interest for them. (They laugh.) Well, he loves the guitar!

ANN. (As though to overcome MOTHER, she becomes suddenly lively, crosses to KELLER on settle, sits on his lap.) Let's eat at the shore tonight! Raise some hell around here, like we used to before Larry went!

MOTHER. (Emotionally.) You think of him! You see? (Triumphantly.) She thinks of him!

ANN. (With an uncomprehending smile.) What do you mean, Kate?

MOTHER. Nothing. Just that you . . . remember him, he's in your thoughts.

ANN. That's a funny thing to say; how could I help remembering him?

MOTHER. (It is drawing to a head the wrong way for her; she starts anew. She rises and comes to ANN.) Did you hang up your things?

ANN. Yeah . . . (To CHRIS.) Say, you've sure gone in for clothes. I could hardly find room in the closet.

MOTHER. No, don't you remember? That's Larry's room.

ANN. You mean . . . they're Larry's?

MOTHER. Didn't you recognize them?

ANN. (Slowly rising, a little embarrassed.) Well, it never occurred to me that you'd . . . I mean the shoes are all shined.

MOTHER. Yes, dear. (Slight pause. ANN can't stop staring at her.)

MOTHER breaks it by speaking with the relish of gossip, putting her arm around ANN and walking s.l. with her.) For so long I've been aching for a nice conversation with you, Annie. Tell me something. ANN. What?

MOTHER. I don't know. Something nice.

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

MOTHER. Oh, shut up.

KELLER. And are any of them serious?

MOTHER. (Laughing, sits in her chair.) Why don't you both choke?

KELLER. Annie, you can't go into a restaurant with that woman any more. In five minutes thirty-nine strange people are sitting at the table telling her their life story.

MOTHER. If I can't ask Annie a personal question . . .

KELLER. Askin' is all right, but don't beat her over the head. You're beatin' her, you're beatin' her. (They are laughing.)

ANN. (To MOTHER. Takes pan of beans off stool, puts them on floor under chair and sits.) Don't let them bulldoze you. Ask me anything you like. What do you want to know, Kate? Come on, let's gossip.

MOTHER. (To CHRIS and KELLER.) She's the only one is got any sense. (To ANN.) Your mother . . . she's not getting a divorce, heh?

ANN. No, she's calmed down about it now. I think when he gets out they'll probably live together. In New York, of course.

MOTHER. That's fine. Because your father is still . . . I mean he's a decent man after all is said and done.

ANN. I don't care. She can take him back if she likes.

MOTHER. And you? You . . . (Shakes her head negatively.) . . . go out much? (Slight pause.)

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

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

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

MOTHER. . . . Well . . . yes.

ANN. Well, I'm not, Kate.

MOTHER. (Faintly.) You're not?

ANN. Isn't it ridiculous? You don't really imagine he's . . . ?

MOTHER. I know, dear, but don't say it's ridiculous, because the papers were full of it; I don't know about New York, but there was half a page about a man missing even longer than Larry, and he turned up from Burma.

CHRIS. (Coming to ANN.) He couldn't have wanted to come home very badly, Mom.

MOTHER. Don't be so smart.

CHRIS. You can have a helluva time in Burma.

ANN. (Rises and swings around in back of CHRIS.) So I've heard.

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

MOTHER. You're sure?

CHRIS. Yes, I am.

MOTHER. Well, if you're sure then you're sure. (She turns her head away an instant.) They don't say it on the radio but I'm sure that in the dark at night they're still waiting for their sons.

CHRIS. Mother, you're absolutely—

MOTHER. (Waving him off.) Don't be so damned smart! Now stop it! (Slight pause.) There are just a few things you don't know. All of you. And I'll tell you one of them, Annie. Deep, deep in your heart you've always been waiting for him.

ANN. (Resolutely.) No, Kate.

MOTHER. (With increasing demand.) But deep in your heart, Annie!

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

MOTHER. Don't let them tell you what to think. Listen to your heart. Only your heart.

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

MOTHER. Because he has to be.

ANN. But why, Kate?

MOTHER. (Going to her.) Because certain things have to be, and certain things can never be. Like the sun has to rise, it has to be. That's why there's God. Otherwise anything could happen. But there's God, so certain things can never happen. I would know, Annie—just like I knew the day he (Indicates CHRIS.) went into that terrible battle. Did he write me? Was it in the papers? No, but that morning I couldn't raise my head off the pillow. Ask Joe. Suddenly, I knew. I knew! And he was nearly killed that day. Ann, you know I'm right!

ANN. (She stands there in silence, then turns trembling, going up-stage.) No, Kate.

MOTHER. I have to have some tea. (FRANK appears from L. carrying ladder.)

FRANK. Annie! (Coming down.) How are you, gee whizz!

ANN. (Taking his hand.) Why, Frank, you're losing your hair.

24

KELLER. He's got responsibility.

FRANK. Gee whizz!

KELLER. Without Frank the stars wouldn't know when to come out. FRANK. (Laughs. To ANN.) You look more womanly. You've matured. You . . .

KELLER. Take it easy, Frank, you're a married man.

ANN. (As they laugh.) You still haberdashering?

FRANK. Why not? Maybe I too can get to be president. How's your brother? Got his degree, I hear.

ANN. Oh, George has his own office now!

FRANK. Don't say! (Funerally.) And your dad? Is he . . . ?

ANN. (Abruptly.) Fine. I'll be in to see Lydia.

FRANK. (Sympathetically.) How about it, does Dad expect a parole soon?

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

FRANK. (Staunchly defending her father for her sake.) 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 cue.) That's all right, I'll . . . (Picks up ladder.) I'll finish the horseshoe tonight, Kate. (Embarrassed.) See you later, Ann, you look wonderful. (He exits R. They look at ANN.)

ANN. (To CHRIS, sits slowly on stool.) Haven't they stopped talking about Dad?

CHRIS. (Comes down and sits on arm of chair.) Nobody talks about him any more.

KELLER. (Rises and comes to her.) Gone and forgotten, kid.

ANN. Tell me. Because I don't want to meet anybody on the block if they're going to . . .

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

ANN. (To KELLER.) Do they still remember the case, Joe? Do they talk about you?

KELLER. The only one still talks about it is my wife.

MOTHER. That's because you keep on playing policeman with the kids. All their parents hear out of you is jail, jail, jail.

KELLER. Actually what happened was that when I got home from the penitentiary the kids got very interested in me. You know kids. I was (Laughs.) like the expert on the jail situation. And as time passed they got it confused and . . . I ended up a detective. (Laughs.)

25

MOTHER. Except that *they* didn't get it confused. (To ANN.) He hands out police badges from the Post Toasties boxes. (They laugh.)

ANN. (Wondrously at them, happily. She rises and comes to KELLER, putting her arm around his shoulder.) Gosh, it's wonderful to hear you laughing about it.

CHRIS. Why, what'd you expect?

ANN. The last thing I remember on this block was one word—"Murderers!" Remember that, Kate? . . . Mrs. Hammond standing in front of our house and yelling that word . . . She's still around, I suppose?

MOTHER. They're all still around.

KELLER. Don't listen to her. Every Saturday night the whole gang is playin' poker in this arbor. All the ones who yelled murderer takin' my money now.

MOTHER. Don't, Joe, she's a sensitive girl, don't fool her. (To ANN.) They still remember about Dad. It's different with him—(Indicates JOE.)—he was exonerated, your father's still there. That's why I wasn't so enthusiastic about your coming. Honestly, I know how sensitive you are, and I told Chris, I said . . .

KELLER. Listen, you do like I did and you'll be all right. The day I come home, I got out of my car;—but not in front of the house . . . on the corner. You should've been here, Annie, and you too, Chris; you'd-a seen something. Everybody knew I was getting out that day; the porches were loaded. Picture it now; none of them believed I was innocent. The story was, I pulled a fast one getting myself exonerated. So I get out of my car, and I walk down the street. But very slow. And with a smile. The beast! I was the beast; the guy who sold cracked cylinder heads to the Army Air Force; the guy who made twenty-one P-40's crash in Australia. Kid, walkin' down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I wasn't, and there was a court paper in my pocket to prove I wasn't, and I walked . . . past . . . the porches. Result? Fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state again, a respected man again; bigger than ever.

CHRIS. (With admiration.) Joe McGuts.

KELLER. (Now 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 back right on this block.

MOTHER. (Pained.) How could they move back?

26

KELLER. It ain't gonna end *till* they move back! (To ANN.) Till people play cards with him again, and talk with him, and smile with him— you play cards with a man you know he can't be a murderer. And the next time you write him I like you to tell him just what I said. (ANN simply stares at him.) You hear me?

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, don't you?

ANN. You, either, Kare? Don't you feel any . . .?

KELLER. (To ANN.) The next time you write Dad . . .

ANN. I don't write him.

KELLER. (Struck.) Well every now and then you . . .

ANN. (A little abashed, but determined.) No, I've never written to him. Neither has my brother. (To CHRIS.) Say, do you feel this way, too?

CHRIS. He murdered twenty-one pilots.

KELLER. What the hell kinda talk is that?

MOTHER. That's not a thing to say about a man.

ANN. What else can you say? When they took him away I followed him, went to him every visiting day. I was crying all the time. Until the news came about Larry. Then I realized. It's wrong to pity a man like that. Father or no father, there's only one way to look at him. He knowingly shipped out parts that would crash an airplane. And how do you know Larry wasn't one of them?

MOTHER. I was waiting for that. (Going to her.) As long as you're here, Annie, I want to ask you never to say that again.

ANN. You surprise me. I thought you'd be mad at him.

MOTHER. What your father did had nothing to do with Larry. Nothing.

ANN. But we can't know that.

MOTHER. (Striving for control.) As long as you're here!

ANN. (Perplexed.) But, Kate . . .

MOTHER. Put that out of your head!

KELLER. Because . . .

MOTHER. (Quickly to KELLER.) That's all, that's enough. (Places her hand on her head.) Come inside now, and have some tea with me. (She turns and goes up steps.)

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

27

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 dasn'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, Steve, 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 musn't feel that way about him. 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. (*Clasps 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, Casanova. (*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?

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 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. (*Finally.*) 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!

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 towards 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 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.

ANN. How many?

CHRIS. Just about all.

ANN. Oh, gee!

CHRIS. It takes a little time to toss that off. Because they weren't

just men. For instance, one time it'd been raining several days and this kid came to me, and gave me his last pair of dry socks. Put them in my pocket. That's only a little thing . . . but . . . that's the kind of guys I had. They didn't die; they killed themselves for each other. I mean that exactly; a little more selfish and they'd've been here today. And I got an idea—watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of . . . responsibility. Man for man. You understand me?—To show that, to bring that on to the earth again like some kind of a monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him. (*Pause.*) And then I came home and it was incredible. I . . . there was no meaning in it here; the whole thing to them was a kind of a—bus accident. I went to work with Dad, and that rat-race again. I felt . . . what you said . . . ashamed somehow. Because nobody was changed at all. It seemed to make suckers out of a lot of guys. I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator. I mean you can take those things out of a war, but when you drive that car you've got to know that it came out of the love a man can have for a man, you've got to be a little better because of that. Otherwise what you have is really loot, and there's blood on it. I didn't want to take any of it. And I guess that included you.

ANN. And you still feel that way?

CHRIS. I want you now, Annie.

ANN. Because you mustn't feel that way any more. Because you have a right to whatever you have. Everything, Chris, understand that? To me, too . . . And the money, there's nothing wrong in your money. Your father put hundreds of planes in the air, you should be proud. A man should be paid for that . . .

CHRIS. Oh Annie, Annie . . . I'm going to make a fortune for you!

KELLER. (*Offstage.*) Hello . . . Yes, Sure.

ANN. (*Laughing softly.*) What'll I do with a fortune . . . ? (*They kiss. KELLER enters from house.*)

KELLER. (*Thumping toward house.*) Hey, Ann, your brother . . .

(*They step apart shyly. KELLER comes down, and wryly . . .*) What is this, Labor Day?

CHRIS. (*Waving him away, knowing the kidding will be endless.*) All right, all right . . .

ANN. You shouldn't burst out like that.

KELLER. Well, nobody told me it was Labor Day. (*Looks around.*) Where's the hot dogs?

CHRIS. (*Loving it.*) All right. You said it once.
 KELLER. Well, as long as I know it's Labor Day from now on, I'll wear a bell around my neck.
 ANN. (*Affectionately*) He's so subtle!
 KELLER. George Bernard Shaw as an elephant.
 KELLER. George!—hey, you kissed it out of my head—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, Kate's talking to him. Hurry up, she'll cost him five dollars.
 ANN. (*She takes a step upstage, then comes down toward CHRIS.*) I wonder if we ought to tell your mother yet? I mean I'm not very good in an argument.
 CHRIS. We'll wait till tonight. After dinner. Now don't get tense, just leave it to me.
 KELLER. What're you telling her?
 CHRIS. Go ahead, Ann. (*With misgivings, ANN goes up and into house.*) We're getting married, Dad. (*KELLER nods indistinctly.*) Well, don't you say anything?
 KELLER. (*Distracted.*) I'm glad, Chris, I'm just . . . 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. (*Asking uncomfortably.*) Chris! You . . . you think you know her pretty good?
 CHRIS. (*Hurt and apprehensive.*) What kind of a question . . . ?
 KELLER. I'm just wondering. All these years George don't go to see his father. Suddenly he goes . . . and she comes here.
 CHRIS. Well, what about it?
 KELLER. It's crazy, but it comes to my mind. She don't hold nothin' against me, does she?
 CHRIS. (*Angry.*) I don't know what you're talking about.
 KELLER. (*A little more combatively.*) I'm just talkin'. To his last last day in court the man blamed it all on me; and this is his daughter. I mean if she was sent here to find out something?
 CHRIS. (*Angered.*) Why? What is there to find out?
 ANN. (*On phone, offstage.*) Why are you so excited, George? What happened there?

KELLER. I mean if they want to open up the case again, for the nuisance value, to hurt us?
 CHRIS. Dad . . . how could you think that of her? } (*Together.*)
 ANN. (*Still on phone.*) But what did he say to }
 you, for God's sake?
 KELLER. It couldn't be, heh. You know.
 CHRIS. Dad, you amaze me . . .
 KELLER. (*Breaking in.*) All right, forget it, forget it. (*With great force, moving about.*) I want a clean start for you, Chris. I want a new sign over the plant—Christopher Keller, Incorporated.
 CHRIS. (*A little uneasily.*) J. O. Keller is good enough.
 KELLER. We'll talk about it. I'm going to build you a house, stone, with a driveway from the road. I want you to spread out, Chris, I want you to use what I made for you . . . (*He is close to him now.*) . . . I mean, with joy, Chris, without shame . . . with joy.
 CHRIS. (*Touched.*) I will, Dad.
 KELLER. (*With deep emotion.*) . . . Say it to me.
 CHRIS. Why?
 KELLER. Because sometimes I think you're . . . ashamed of the money.
 CHRIS. No, don't feel that.
 KELLER. Because it's good money, there's nothing wrong with that money.
 CHRIS. (*A little frightened.*) Dad, you don't have to tell me this.
 KELLER. (*With overriding affection and self-confidence now. He grips CHRIS by the back of the neck, and with laughter between his determined jaws.*) Look, Chris, I'll go to work on Mother for you. We'll get her so drunk tonight we'll all get married! (*Steps away, with a wide gesture of his arm.*) There's gonna be a wedding, kid, like there never was seen! Champagne, tuxedos . . . !
 (*He breaks off as ANN'S voice comes out loud from the house where she is still talking on phone.*)
 ANN. Simply because when you get excited you don't control yourself. . . . (*MOTHER comes out of house.*) Well, what did he tell you for God's sake? (*Pause.*) All right, come then. (*Pause.*) Yes, they'll all be here. Nobody's running away from you. And try to get hold of yourself, will you? (*Pause.*) All right, all right. Good-bye. (*There is a brief pause as ANN hangs up receiver, then comes out of kitchen.*)
 CHRIS. Something happen?
 KELLER. He's coming here?

ANN. On the seven o'clock. He's in Columbus. (To MOTHER.) 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.

MOTHER. Drive through the park. It's beautiful now.

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

ANN. (As she and CHRIS exit up driveway.) See you. (MOTHER comes down toward Keller, her eyes fixed on him.)

KELLER. Take your time. (To MOTHER.) What does George want?

MOTHER. He's been in Columbus since this morning with Steve. He's gotta see Annie right away, he says.

KELLER. What for?

MOTHER. I don't know. (She speaks with warning.) He's a lawyer now, Joe. George is a lawyer. All these years he never even sent a postcard to Steve. Since he got back from the war, not a post-card.

KELLER. So what?

MOTHER. (Her tension breaking out.) Suddenly he takes an airplane from New York to see him. An airplane!

KELLER. Well? So?

MOTHER. (Trembling.) Why?

KELLER. I don't read minds. Do you?

MOTHER. Why, Joe? What has Steve suddenly got to tell him that he takes an airplane to see him?

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

MOTHER. You're sure, Joe?

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

MOTHER. (She sits stiffly in a chair.) Be smart now, Joe. The boy is coming. Be smart.

KELLER. (Desperately.) Once and for all, did you hear what I said? I said I'm sure!

MOTHER. (She nods weakly.) All right, Joe. (He straightens up.) Just . . . be smart. (KELLER, in hopeless fury, looks at her, turns around, goes up to porch and into house, slamming screen door violently behind him. MOTHER sits in chair drowsily, stiffly, staring, seeing.)

CURTAIN

ACT TWO

As twilight falls, that evening.
On the rise, CHRIS is discovered at R., sawing the broken-off tree, leaving stump standing alone. He is dressed in good pants, white shoes, but without a shirt. He disappears with tree up the alley when MOTHER appears on porch. She comes down and stands watching him. She has on a dressing-gown, carries a tray of grape-juice drink in a pitcher, and glasses with sprigs of mint in them.

MOTHER. (Calling up alley.) Did you have to put on good pants to do that? (She comes downstage and puts tray on table in the arbor. Then looks around uneasily, then feels pitcher for coolness. CHRIS enters from alley brushing off his hands.) You notice there's more light with that thing gone?

CHRIS. Why aren't you dressing?

MOTHER. It's suffocating upstairs. I made a grape drink for George. 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 eye.) 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. (Non-committally.) Don't worry about Annie.