

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 oilstone up to the cabinet*]: Psss! 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!

BERT: 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?

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!

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