

a father! [*As though the outburst had revealed him, he looks about, wanting to retract it. His hand goes to his cheek.*] I better . . . I better shave. [*He turns and a smile is on his face. To ANN*] I didn't mean to yell at you, Annie.

ANN: Let's forget the whole thing, Joe.

KELLER: Right. [*To CHRIS*] She's likable.

CHRIS [*a little peeved at the man's stupidity*]: Shave, will you?

KELLER: Right again.

[*As he turns to porch LYDIA comes hurrying from her house, R.*]

LYDIA: I forgot all about it . . . [*Seeing CHRIS and ANN*] Hya. [*To JOE*] I promised to fix Kate's hair for tonight. Did she comb it yet?

KELLER: Always a smile, hey, Lydia?

LYDIA: Sure, why not?

KELLER [*going up on porch*]: Come on up and comb my Katie's hair. [*LYDIA goes up on porch.*] She's got a big night, make her beautiful.

LYDIA: I will.

KELLER [*he holds door open for her and she goes into kitchen. To CHRIS and ANN*]: Hey, that could be a song. [*He sings softly.*]

"Come on up and comb my Katie's hair . . .

Oh, come on up, 'cause she's my lady fair—"

[*To ANN*] How's that for one year of night school? [*He continues singing as he goes into kitchen.*]

"Oh, come on up, come on up, and comb my lady's hair—"

[*JIM BAYLISS rounds corner of driveway, walking rapidly. JIM crosses to CHRIS, motions him up and pulls him down to stage L., excitedly. KELLER stands just inside kitchen door, watching them.*]

CHRIS: What's the matter? Where is he?

JIM: Where's your mother?

CHRIS: Upstairs, dressing.

ANN [*crossing to them rapidly*]: What happened to George?

JIM: I asked him to wait in the car. Listen to me now. Can you take some advice? [*They wait.*] Don't bring him in here.

ANN: Why?

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

ANN: Explode what?

JIM: You know why he's here, don't try to kid it away. There's blood in his eye; drive him somewhere and talk to him alone.

[*ANN turns to go up drive, takes a couple of steps, sees KELLER and stops. He goes quietly on into house.*]

CHRIS [*shaken, and therefore angered*]: Don't be an old lady.

JIM: He's come to take her home. What does that mean? [*To ANN*] You know what that means. Fight it out with him someplace else.

ANN [*she comes back down toward CHRIS*]: I'll drive . . . him somewhere.

CHRIS [*goes to her*]: No.

JIM: Will you stop being an idiot?

CHRIS: Nobody's afraid of him here. Cut that out! [*He starts for driveway, but is brought up short by GEORGE, who enters there. GEORGE is Chris's age, but a paler man, now on the edge of his self-restraint. He speaks quietly, as though afraid to find himself screaming. An instant's hesitation and CHRIS steps up to him, hand extended, smiling.*] Helluva way to do; what're you sitting out there for?

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

CHRIS: So what? She'd want to see you, wouldn't she? We've been waiting for you all afternoon. [*He puts his hand on GEORGE's arm, but GEORGE pulls away, coming across toward ANN.*]

ANN [*touching his collar*]: This is filthy, didn't you bring another shirt? [*GEORGE breaks away from her, and moves down and L., examining the yard. Door opens, and he turns rapidly, thinking it is Kate, but it's Sue. She looks at him, he turns away and moves on L., to fence. He looks over it at his former home. SUE comes downstage.*]

SUE [*annoyed*]: How about the beach, Jim?

JIM: Oh, it's too hot to drive.

SUE: How'd you get to the station—Zeppelin?

CHRIS: This is Mrs. Bayliss, George. [*Calling, as GEORGE pays no attention, staring at house off L.*] George! [*GEORGE turns.*] Mrs. Bayliss.

SUE: How do you do.

ANN: Shhh!

CHRIS [*ready to hit him*]: Are you going to talk like a grown man or aren't you?

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

GEORGE [*breathlessly*]: My life turned upside down since then. I couldn't go back to work when you left. I wanted to go to Dad and tell him you were going to be married. It seemed impossible not to tell him. He loved you so much . . . [*He pauses.*] Annie . . . we did a terrible thing. We can never be forgiven. Not even to send him a card at Christmas. I didn't see him once since I got home from the war! Annie, you don't know what was done to that man. You don't know what happened.

ANN [*afraid*]: Of course I know.

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

CHRIS: Are you through now?

GEORGE [*surging up at him*]: I'm not through now! [*Back to ANN*] Dad was afraid. He wanted Joe there if he was going to do it. But Joe can't come down . . . he's sick. Sick! He suddenly gets the flu! Suddenly! But he promised to take responsibility. Do you understand what I'm saying? On the telephone you can't have responsibility! In a court you can always deny a phone call and that's exactly what he did. They knew he was a liar the first time, but in the appeal they believed that rotten lie and now Joe is a big shot

and your father is the patsy. [*He gets up.*] Now what're you going to do? Eat his food, sleep in his bed? Answer me; what're you going to do?

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

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

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

ANN: George, the court . . .

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

CHRIS [*whirling him around*]: Lower your voice or I'll throw you out of here!

GEORGE: She knows. She knows.

CHRIS [*to ANN*]: Get him out of here, Ann. Get him out of here.

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

GEORGE [*almost a scream*]: The court did not know him, Annie!

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

GEORGE [*turning to CHRIS, with deliberation*]: I'll ask you something, and look me in the eye when you answer me.

CHRIS: I'll look you in the eye.

GEORGE: You know your father . . .

CHRIS: I know him well.

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

CHRIS: He's that kind of boss.

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

CHRIS [*with growing anger*]: The same Joe Keller.

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

CHRIS: The same man.