

EDIFY III

GENERAL ENGLISH TEXTBOOK

THIRD SEMESTER

Bachelor of Business Administration [BBA] and all courses under the
Faculty of Management

As Per State Education Policy 2025



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Edify III, the General English Textbook for the III Semester B.B.A. and all Courses under the Faculty of Management, has been prepared by the Members of the BBA Textbook Committee, Bengaluru City University (BCU).

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First Edition: 2025

FOREWORD

Edify III, the General English Textbook for the III Semester B.B.A. and all Courses under the Faculty of Management, has been carefully designed to provide undergraduate students with a balanced mix of literary studies and language skills. The course aims to foster an appreciation for literature from diverse cultural and thematic perspectives while enhancing essential communication skills through practical and professional writing exercises. By combining literary engagement with functional communication training, the syllabus seeks to develop both creative insight and linguistic proficiency.

The texts range from plays and poems to speeches and short stories, reflecting on both contemporary and timeless human experiences. Simultaneously, focusing on LSRW skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing) equips students for academic excellence and career readiness. We hope this course will cultivate a deep understanding of the world in learners and give them the confidence to express themselves effectively and ethically.

I appreciate the efforts of the textbook committee in bringing out this textbook, which features excellent literary selections and relevant content on communication skills.

Prof. K. R. Jalaja
Vice-Chancellor (Acting)
Bengaluru City University

PREFACE

It is with great pleasure that we introduce Edify III, the English Language and Literature textbook for III Semester BBA students. The book has been carefully curated to meet the evolving academic and professional needs of today's learners. The course seamlessly combines the richness of literary study with the relevance of communicative skill-building, ensuring that students read the world critically and engage with it constructively.

With a clear focus on both analytical thinking and practical skills, the syllabus prepares students to take on various roles, become responsible citizens, effective communicators, and reflective individuals. The inclusion of creative writing, business correspondence, and commercial content creation further enhances their expressive abilities.

This syllabus will be a valuable resource for students and educators committed to holistic learning and language empowerment. I commend the textbook committee for curating this textbook, which features excellent literary selections and relevant language-learning content.

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Note to the Facilitator

Course Title – L3 - GENERAL ENGLISH	
Teaching Hours: 4 hours per week	Course Credits: 3
Formative Assessment Marks: 20	Internal Assessment
Summative Assessment Marks: 80	Duration of Exam: 3 Hours

Course Objectives

- To familiarize students with various literary genres and explore significant themes through curated texts.
- To foster critical thinking and ethical sensitivity by engaging with literature as a mirror of society.
- To strengthen students' proficiency in Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing (LSRW) for both academic and practical contexts.
- To develop essential writing skills for professional, formal, and creative communication.
- To inspire creative expression by designing and developing advertisements, posters, and brochures.

Learning Outcomes

- Students will be able to critically evaluate literary texts and recognise their social, political, and human relevance.
- Students will gain confidence in delivering various types of presentations and engaging in effective verbal communication.
- Students will enhance their comprehension and writing skills, demonstrating clarity, coherence, and creativity.

- Students will be capable of composing well-structured professional and business correspondence.
- Students will effectively create commercial content, including advertisements and visual materials, with clarity and impact.

This textbook has been carefully developed in accordance with the new SEP syllabus. It seamlessly integrates literary engagement with communicative skills. The selection of texts and language elements reflects a deliberate effort to provide a comprehensive educational experience, encompassing both the aesthetic and practical aspects of language learning.

The literature section features distinguished voices from varied cultural and historical backgrounds—Arthur Miller’s thought-provoking drama, Kamala Das’s candid introspection, Bob Marley’s evocative call for liberation, and Banu Mushtaq’s socially rooted narrative. These texts have been selected for their literary merit, thematic depth, and ability to encourage critical thinking, meaningful discussion, and empathetic understanding among students.

The second unit emphasizes the development of essential communication skills for academic and professional settings. Through units on presentation techniques, formal and business correspondence, resume writing, and commercial writing, this section aims to prepare learners to express their ideas clearly, confidently, and purposefully in various real-world situations.

This textbook has been designed with a student-centric approach, incorporating a glossary, explanatory notes, guided activities and exercises. I extend my sincere gratitude to the members of the textbook committee for their contribution and to the reviewers, whose valuable insights and support have contributed to the successful realisation of this textbook.

We hope this textbook will enrich classroom instruction, interaction and nurture curiosity, creativity, and communicative competence in the students.

The Committee expresses its heartfelt gratitude to Dr. Thandava Gowda T. N., Chairperson (UG/PG), Bengaluru City University, for his steadfast support and invaluable contributions to the development of this book. We also extend our sincere thanks to Prof. K R Jalaja, the Vice-Chancellor (Acting) of BCU, for her guidance.

Dr. Manjula Veerappa

Chairperson Textbook Committee

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BLACK COBRAS

Banu Mushtaq

(Translated by Deepa Bhashti)



Pre-Reading Activities:

- Do you believe challenging injustice is important, even if it risks making you unpopular or unsafe? Why or why not?
- What does courage mean to you? Can you think of someone you admire for their bravery?
- What does justice mean to you in the context of family or religion?
- Can women's voices create change in a society where men hold power?
- Imagine a woman in your community being denied help by those in authority. How might she react—alone or with others? What emotions could she experience?
- “Sometimes silence helps evil grow stronger.” Do you agree or disagree? Write a few lines to explain your view.

About the Author

Banu Mushtaq was born on April 3, 1948, in Hassan, Karnataka. A versatile personality, she has made her mark as a writer, activist, journalist, lawyer, and

politician. She holds degrees in Science (B.Sc) and Law (LLB), showcasing her broad academic interests.

She is married to Mohiyuddin Mushtaq, a businessman. Banu began her literary journey in the 1970s, with her first short story published in the periodical *Prajamatha* in 1974. From 1981 to 1990, she worked as a reporter for *Lankesh Patrike*, a well-known tabloid edited by the poet and writer P. Lankesh.

Mushtaq was actively involved in the ‘Bandaya (Rebellion) movement’ in Kannada literature during the 1980s. This movement championed social and economic justice and provided a platform for the voices of the marginalized, including Muslims and Dalits. In 1983, she was elected to the Hassan City Municipal Council, where she served two consecutive terms.

In 1990, Banu Mushtaq transitioned from journalism to practising law to support her family. A prolific and passionate writer, she has authored over 60 short stories over a literary career spanning six decades. Her narratives, published in six collections, explore themes such as faith, gender, resistance, and identity. Her writing traverses multiple linguistic and cultural terrains, often shifting between Kannada, Urdu, Arabic, and Dakhni.

Her notable works include “Hejje Moodida Haadi” (1990), “Benki Male” (1999), “Edeya Hanate” (2004), “Safeera” (2006), “Haseena Mattu Itara Kathegalu”(2015), and “Hennu Haddina Swayamvara” (2022). One of her acclaimed stories, “Black Cobra”, featured in *Heart Lamp*, was adapted into the award-winning film “Hasina” by renowned filmmaker Girish Kasaravalli.

Her stories have been translated into several Indian languages, including Malayalam, Tamil, Punjabi, Urdu, and English. In recognition of her literary contributions, she received the “Karnataka State Sahitya Academy Award” in 1999. Recently, the English translation of her short story collection “Haseena and Other Stories,” translated by Deepa Bhashi, was honored with the English PEN Translation Award in 2024. She is the first Kannada writer to win the coveted £50,000 “International Booker Prize.” She received the award in London on May 20, 2025.

Despite facing criticism from conservative parts of her community and surviving a life-threatening attack, Banu Mushtaq has remained steadfast in her dedication to storytelling. Her works often focus on the lived experiences of Muslim

families, especially highlighting strong women protagonists who assert their rights and challenge societal norms.

About the Translator

Deepa Bhasthi is a writer and literary translator based in Kodagu. Her columns, essays, and cultural criticism have been published in India and internationally. Her translations from Kannada include a novel by Kota Shivarama Karanth and a collection of short stories by Kodagina Gouramma. Her translation of Banu Mushtaq's stories won the "English PEN's PEN Translates award" and the 2025 "International Booker Prize".

About Heart Lamp Selected Stories

In this remarkable collection of 12 short stories, Banu Mushtaq masterfully portrays the everyday lives of women and girls in Muslim communities across southern India. With a narrative style that is witty, vivid, colloquial, poignant, and unflinching, Mushtaq demonstrates her extraordinary talent for observing and rendering human nature. Her characters—spirited children, defiant grandmothers, overbearing maulvis, violent brothers, hapless husbands, and above all, mothers who endure emotional struggles with quiet resilience—are brought to life through a rich, spoken idiom that creates powerful emotional depth.

These stories, selected from Mushtaq's expansive body of work written between 1990 and 2023, explore themes of religion, patriarchy, gender inequality, violence, and social injustice. Set mainly in Karnataka and other parts of South India, they vividly depict the lived realities of Muslim women navigating oppressive societal norms. Yet their emotional resonance and thematic scope are universal—the experiences and characters could easily belong to communities anywhere in India or across the world.

Mushtaq's writing has drawn both severe criticism from conservative circles and recognition through some of India's most esteemed literary awards. Her fearless critique of patriarchal and religious structures, including her exposure of the hypocrisy of male figures like the Muttawalli Saheb (the local religious head), lends her work a rare courage and authenticity.

While her work has drawn criticism from conservative circles, it has also earned her some of India's highest literary honours.

About the Story

"Black Cobras" is a poignant short story by Indian writer Banu Mushtaq, featured in her acclaimed collection, *Heart Lamp: Selected Stories*. Originally written in Kannada and translated into English by Deepa Bhasthi, the collection has received international recognition, including winning the International Booker Prize.

Set in a conservative village, the story follows Aashraf, a poor mother of three daughters, whose husband, Yakub, abandons her because she has not borne a son. Her youngest daughter, Munni, becomes seriously ill, and Aashraf's efforts to seek medical help are blocked by the local mutawalli, who dismisses her pleas, citing religious reasons for her husband's actions. Unfazed, Aashraf sits outside the mosque with her children, demanding justice and attention. She is seen literally and metaphorically "banging on the grand door of Allah's house" for justice.

The story concludes with a collective act of defiance as the village women, previously passive spectators, unite in their outrage over the mutawalli's indifference. Their subtle yet powerful actions, such as throwing stones and invoking curses, represent a communal stand against patriarchal oppression and religious hypocrisy.

The title "Black Cobra" acts as a powerful and meaningful symbol in the story. It symbolizes the destructive and harmful forces of patriarchy and religious hypocrisy that deeply affect helpless women like Aashraf. The "black cobra" is not a literal snake; it serves as a metaphor for figures such as Yakub, the harsh husband, and the mutawalli saheb, the religious leader who twists religion to control women instead of helping them.

Yakub behaves like a cobra—dangerous and heartless. He marries again without any sense of duty, leaves his children to suffer, and even violently attacks Aashraf inside a mosque. The mutawalli is no better. He hides behind religious rules to deny his wife Amina a simple operation, to protect his image in a male-dominated society. He also does nothing to stop Yakub's abuse, showing more concern for his comfort and pride than for doing what is right.

The cobra also symbolizes the fear and silence many women face. But, as shown in the story, when women like Aashraf suffer too much, they start to resist. In the end, the other women spit, curse, and insult the mutawalli—these small acts show that the fear of the "black cobra" is gradually turning into courage and protest.

This makes the title very powerful, reflecting both the danger these women face and the start of their fight back. "Black Cobra" was adapted into the award-winning Kannada film "Hasina".

Just in time for the Isha namaz, Tarannum came running, the Arabic book in her bag, her dupatta on top to shield it from the rain, and yelled, 'Ammi! Ammiiiiiii!' while shaking out the water dripping from her hair. Rafiya, slowly roasting dried mackerel on coals, did not answer.

Tarannum rushed in and said, 'Ammi, Hasina and her mother are sitting in the mosque.'

'Oh. Why?'

'Apparently, there is some judgement today.'

'Oh, is it?'

When he was sent to the Arabic madrasa to study, Rafi was in the habit of dozing off in his seat, or he would forget his books, or lose his cap somewhere. When he reached home, he pushed his mother Waseema's hand away as she tried to hold him still to feed him a mouthful and said, 'Ammi, along with Hasina, her mother has also been sitting in the mosque from that time itself.'

'At this hour? Why?'

'There is some judgement today it seems.'

'... Oh. That.'

After distributing matchbox labels, and pictures of actors and actresses to all the madrasa students in exchange for a stick of chalk each, his pockets were full, but when Hamid reached home, he was crying because of a rotten tooth and told his mother,

'Ammi... Hasina is...'

As they were all conveying the news at home one by one, Majida lifted her shalwar carefully with her left hand to ensure it didn't get dirty, hugged the Qur'an to her chest with her right, and stepped into the house.

She saw her father sitting leisurely in the drawing room and came to a sudden halt. She held the Qur'an in both her hands, pressed the holy book to her eyes before placing it on the table and asked, 'Abba, why haven't you gone to the mosque?'

'Hmm. Isn't it time for the Isha namaz now? There is still some time for the jama'at to congregate. I'll go,' said Abdul Khader Saheb, the mutawalli of the mosque. He picked up his cap from the teapoy and slowly placed it on his head. Majida snapped, 'I am not talking about the namaz. There, in the mosque, Hasina and her mother are sitting and waiting for you. It seems her judgement is happening today.'

'Oh... hmm... that is... wait, what did you say? That woman is sitting in the mosque? Where in the mosque is she?'

Having forgotten about the meeting of the council he had called for, the mutawalli saheb was scratching his thick, black beard with the tips of his fingers, lost in thought.

'Oh, Abbajaan, you – ! Where they keep the janaza, there, they are sitting near there, Hasina, her mother, Hasina's two younger sisters, they are all sitting there. You must go quickly, Abbajaan, poor things! They are all shivering in the cold.'

The rain, the cold. The eagerness to feel warm! What will now make it fun is some Ceylon parotta, phaal made with lots of chillies, chicken kababs, and to wash it all down, to get a barely noticeable high, some...

Along with that, the jewel-like Amina, who had borne him seven children in ten years of marriage, her body, her saree smelling of garlic, fresh ginger and garam masala, her breasts round and full since she was still breastfeeding the youngest baby...

The mutawalli saheb's imagination was reaching a peak when Amina herself appeared at the door. She wiped her masala-filled hands on her seragu, and as if she was a rooster about to start a fight, she tilted her neck and coughed softly. The mutawalli looked up at her.

'I am completely fed up. No matter how many times I tell you, you don't let it fall inside your ears. Others are not even married at my age. But I am already an old woman,' Amina grumbled.

'What's happened now?'

‘What is there to happen? My back is broken. These children, the home, samsara – do I have even a minute of free time? If I bear one child per year, what will I become? Don’t you want me to live long enough to be a mother to these children at least?’

‘Hush. Why talk about all that now? Have I ever left you wanting for anything? No matter what, the thing you ask for will not happen, understand that very clearly. I am the mutawalli; if people get to know that I got the operation done for a woman in my own house, I will have to be answerable to them, hamm.’

The conversation would have continued, but there was a sound near the front door, and Amina quickly went in.

‘Assalamu alaikum, Mutawalli Saab.’

‘Wa ’alaikum assalam. Arey, Yakub, you have only come now? But she came and has been waiting for a long time. Should I take a decision or not?’

‘You are here. Does she know the law better than you? Let everything happen according to what you decide. If you can have your food now...’

Yakub trailed off.

‘Food. Well, something of that sort will be done, leave that,’ the mutawalli saheb said.

‘How can that be? First you must have your food. I have brought the auto. Once you finish your meal, then we can talk.’

‘Ohhhh, what food? What does it all matter. Once one becomes the mutawalli, that’s it. We have to forget about house and family.

Even if someone comes and calls me at midnight, I have to come to your service, what do you say?’ he grumbled.

‘Che, che! You must not misunderstand me. God’s law says get married not just to one woman, but four. Should women give up their honour and dignity and come to the mosque? I waited for not one, but ten years. Did she give birth to even one boy? And the way she runs her mouth! Abbabbaa! Is that a sign of a woman from a respectable family? So, I married another woman. So what? Should I not have? Didn’t I go visit her every time I felt like it?’

The other day, I was driving on the road when I saw Hasina. I dropped her off near the house in my auto itself, and placed ten rupees in her hands. Are we not humans? As a woman, if she can't even adjust this much, then...' Yakub said.

Amina was listening to their conversation from behind the door, and cursed him wholeheartedly. 'Ah! Look at him buttering up. For his own satisfaction, he will even bring down God. He will bring up the Qur'an, quote from the Hadith. But if he is told to give something to feed that poor woman, then he begins to shirk his responsibilities. God, when will you give some sense to this fellow?' She quietly slid behind the door and went inside.

'OK, leave it now. Once you start, you go on non-stop,' the mutawalli saheb said, putting on his coat. When he had stepped into his sandals and got down to the road, Yakub said, 'Let's go to the Princess Hotel. No one from our community will peep into the Family Room there.'

'Let's go to a nicer place, in case someone sees us. What if there is unnecessary trouble? Who will give them answers? As it is, you know how people behave.'

This rain, abbaa this cold! Eyy, Amina, I am going out, I'll be late coming back. Close the door,' the mutawalli said.

In reply came the sound of vessels being slammed down, and Amina's grumbling. 'Mutawalli, it seems, mutawalli. But what kind of man is he? After becoming the mutawalli, does he do the namaz properly five times a day? Has he stopped going to the cinema? Fine, let all that be. Has he at least stopped drinking the devil's piss? May his mutawalli position burn in hell.'

They did not hear her grumble, but the loud sound of Yakub's autorickshaw, running down the end of the street with the mutawalli in it, reached Amina. Aashraf was the unfortunate woman sitting like a ghost in the still quietness of the mosque in this cold weather. 'Poor thing! What is her fault in all this? Is it her fault that she gave birth to three daughters in a row? Is that like making rottis, to roll them out as we want? Thoo!' Amina's heart turned bitter.

She went to the backyard and turned south to reach the high wall surrounding the mosque. She had pushed a few large stones against the compound wall to make it convenient for her to listen to sermons at the mosque when she could spare the time, and to have someone pass over a few pots of water from the hauz inside the mosque. She pulled her seragu over her head, climbed on the stones, and peeped into the mosque's inner compound, covering her face slightly. After finishing the

Isha namaz people were walking out of the main door of the extensive compound. She bent forward. Oh, there, in front of the hall that had been built to the north of the mosque, there sat Aashraf, shrivelled up. Her seragu covered her head, while the folds of her tattered saree were wrapped around the baby on her lap. Hasina was sitting next to her mother, her legs stretched out on the cold floor. Three-year old Habiba was half on the floor and half in her mother's lap, struggling to warm herself.

All those who had come to do namaz cast a questioning look in her direction and left one by one. The fragrance of biriyani wafted from one man's house. The smell of fish curry came from another's. Somebody's new wife was waiting for him. Yet another's son had just learned to walk and was tottering forward. This way, they hurriedly exited the mosque, each looking forward to the happiness that awaited them in their homes, or hoping to free themselves from their endless troubles and woes.

Aashraf remained seated. The powdery rain falling relentlessly for the last two days had not cooled the fire in her gut. The cold that had seeped into her bones had not reduced her energy. The hunger that was gnawing at her stomach with sharp nails had not weakened her. She was banging on the grand door of Allah's house. Not for herself – hers was a dog's belly that could be filled somehow or the other – but to beg for justice for her children. She was ready to fight for their right to live their lives. She stood alone to ask why she was being punished for no fault of her own. But the doors of Allah's house had not yet opened for her. The pale faces of her children who sat around her kept her determined. When her voice continued to go unheard, she had resorted to creating a scene.

The baby sleeping in her lap moved a little. Aashraf tried to stretch her stiffened legs a bit, parted her seragu and looked at the baby's face. Illness had made the baby's face dull, and she looked even sicker in the faint light. The child's nose was blocked. When the baby's chest rose and expanded following the rhythm of breathing, two depressions could be seen below her ribcage. Her eyes were closed; rheum had dried on her eyelashes. The baby's body was burning. Aashraf stared at her. Her child Munni. It was after she was born that Aashraf's troubles reached their peak. When the first two daughters came, Yakub had been disappointed, but he still lived at home. She had saved some money from the earnings Yakub brought home and had some gold ornaments made; not just that, she had bought silver anklets that were two fingers thick, and she enjoyed walking around, her feet making chamm-chumm sounds. When the third was also a girl

child, Yakub disappeared. He had not even looked in the direction of the hospital. He did not step inside their house. Instead, he went to live with his mother.

Aashraf boiled and ate pumpkin leaves to survive. She reused tea powder for two, three days and held on to her life by drinking the weak brew. She also tried every means possible to placate her husband and bring him back. She held the infant to her shoulder and went to the market, and fell at Yakub's feet at the autorickshaw stand. She cried, she begged him to show mercy. 'Allah will destroy you,' she cursed. But it was all in vain. When she could not see any other way out, she began to go to Zulekha Begum's house to work. The housework did not seem like a burden to her. But whether there was something to do or not, she had to be there from morning till night. Zulekha Begum's husband worked in some office. They had two children, both of whom studied in college. Zulekha Begum read one or the other book all day long.

Once, she raised her head from her book and asked Aashraf,

'What job does your husband do?'

'He drives an autorickshaw, Apa.'

'So then his earnings must be enough to run the household, isn't it?'

'It used to be enough,' she replied, dismissively. All her thoughts were on the infant Munni whom she had left at home under Hasina's care. Her breasts were leaking, and the front of her blouse was soaking wet. 'The baby must be hungry,' she thought and teared up.

'Then why do you come here to work?'

Zulekha was surprised to hear Aashraf's story. In this day, in this age, are there still people like this, she wondered.

'Do you know, Aashraf, if a daughter is born, it is as if the Prophet himself has saluted the house.'

'Oh, leave it, Apa, how many times should the Prophet's salaam fall on a poor woman's house like mine?'

'You are mad! The Prophet himself had only daughters. A son was born, but died when he was still a child. Have you read about how much he loved his daughters? Have you learned about it? Bibi Fathima was his life. They were living proof of the bond that can exist between father and daughter,' Zulekha Begum said.

Aashraf did not understand a word. Her mind still revolved around thoughts of Munni. Finally, Zulekha Begum said, 'This is utter injustice. Why don't you give a petition to the mosque?'

'Arey!' Aashraf leaped up. 'Why didn't I think of it, Apa?' she cried. 'Please write a petition for me.'

She went to the mutawalli saheb's house four-five times with the petition in hand, but she could not meet him. Then one day she ran and placed the petition in the mutawalli's hands just as he was stepping out. He absent-mindedly shoved the piece of paper into his coat pocket and walked away.

The water supply had been turned on in the public taps along the street that morning. Hanifa Chikkamma, who was sweeping half the width of the street with a stick broom in hand, quickly disappeared behind the fat wall. Rafiya, who had come to place her pot below the public tap, noticed Hanifa Chikkamma making 'shh shh' signs and ran inside her home, unmindful of her pot slipping from her hands. All the women in the mohalla who were occupied with their various chores vanished from sight. Satisfied with the respect he commanded, the mutawalli saheb checked from the corner of his eyes to see if any women were continuing their chores without fear, and walked on, donning a serious face.

When the mutawalli saheb did not call for her even after fifteen days, Aashraf went to his house again. As usual he was not at home. While she sat there waiting, Amina asked her, 'They say that those who get an operation done to stop getting pregnant will not reach jannat. Is that true, Aashraf?'

'Whatever that is, Amma, I don't know. I have to ask Zulekha Apa, she is always reading a lot of fat-fat books.'

Amina came very close to her and whispered, as if it was a secret, 'If that is the case, will you ask her and tell me the next time you are here?'

'OK, ma. She keeps talking about a lot of other things as well. But me? I am stupid, will I understand all that?'

Before Aashraf finished speaking the mutawalli saheb came inside, his face fuming.

'Oh. Your petition is lost somewhere. If you want, write another one and bring it,' he said and went into his room.

If I want – oh no – I don't want, not for me, I don't want my husband even – but my children need food...

Munni had been a well-fed child even in the middle of Aashraf's mountain of problems, but she had started losing weight and become weak. Her hands and legs were sticklike, and her stomach bloated. Her nose always running, filled with a hunger that could eat the entire world, Munni cried relentlessly day and night, but still Aashraf did not think of her as a burden.

She gave Munni more love and more food than she gave her two elder daughters. Yet what Munni needed urgently was medicine. Where could she find the money for that? Injections, pills, tonic, the doctor's fees every day, and on top of everything she had to wait her turn to see the doctor too. The tablets that she managed to give Munni once in a while were of no use and only made her illness worse.

By the time she got Zulekha Begum to write another application and had gone to see the mutawalli saheb at his home four, five times, she heard a rumour that doused the fire burning in her. It was this: 'Yakub is not in town, he has moved away from here.' Isn't he a man? Whether he is there, not there, whether he carries responsibilities, whether he neglects them, who's going to ask? Who does he have to answer to? He is langoti yaar, after all, a man, everybody's best friend. His past does not rise up to dance in public. The present doesn't touch him. The future doesn't move him, nor is it a mystery. He does not have to remain shyly in the shadows. He does not have to say who he belongs to. He does not need to seek forgiveness, not ever at all, because nothing he does is a mistake.

Aashraf was very hurt. Munni, who was melting away in her lap, became closer to her heart. But a mother's love was not enough for her. Treatment. Care. Within six months, Munni was skin and bones.

Just then, like a thin reed clutched by a drowning man, she heard that Yakub had returned. She ran to the auto stand, but Yakub disappeared the moment he saw her. The next time she was smarter. She came from behind his auto and sat inside with her children. Without a word, he began to drive. He came to a stop in front of her hut and said, 'You pop out an army of girls and roam around like a dog. Learn to have a little bit of decency at least.' He spat and plonked the children on the ground. Just as she was getting out, confused, he drove off, his auto making a 'barrrr' sound. She hugged her teary-eyed children tightly to her chest.

Seeing no other way, she gave dozens of appeal letters to the mosque committee and to the mutawalli. She begged them to make Yakub provide at least a little money for the child's medical expenses. The only answer she got was, come back later, come another day, go away. In the middle of all this, another rumour came flying by, complete with wings and feathers. 'Yakub is going to marry again. He wants a son who can drive the autorickshaw after him, it seems.' Whatever was left of Aashraf's world came crumbling down before her eyes. She cried all night, and went to sit by the door of the mutawalli's house again. The mutawalli saheb came out yawning at around nine in the morning, saw her and asked, 'What?', his face showing his irritation.

Aashraf described her usual complaints in detail. The mutawalli coughed, spat forth loudly. 'What forbidden thing has he done now? He has done another nikah, that's all, isn't it? He didn't elope with anyone, did he? Let him do it. Do you know that there is a Sharia law that says he can get married to four women? Why are you getting jealous of that? These women are like this only, they know only to be jealous,' he said, looking at Amina from the corner of his eyes. Although Amina, breastfeeding her youngest baby, thought, 'Damn these men,' she felt a prick in her heart. She realised that the day when she would have to line up her children and beg, just like Aashraf, was not far off.

In a weak voice, Aashraf said, 'He – not one – let him get married a thousand times. I am not jealous. As long as he is happy, that is enough for me. I am not going to trouble him. But, Mutawalli Saheb, this child is dying. At least medicine for—'

The mutawalli stopped her mid-sentence and scolded. 'Look, don't talk like a fool. Maut and hayat, our death and life, is in Allah's hands. Even if a rock is smashed over the heads of some people, they don't die. That is because it is Allah's wish that they should live. Just like that, if it is Allah's wish that this one should live, then it will live. If not, it will die. Why should you trouble Yakub for that?'

Aashraf was speechless before such questions. It was true! She tried to console herself thinking that whatever happens is God's will. But the child had non-stop diarrhoea, and, looking at her, she could not put all the burden on Allah and sit quietly. Who else could she ask? Yakub had married again and gone to his new wife's village.

The next time Aashraf saw him, there was mehendi on his nails. The watch he wore on his left wrist was shining. He was standing next to his auto wearing new shoes, stylishly combing his hair, looking almost like a stranger. Completely occupied with himself, he stuffed a ten-rupee note into Aashraf's hands as if she was some beggar, and disappeared.

Aashraf became a stone. But the question of Munni's life and death kept her determined. Zulekha Begum lifted her head from her book and said, 'Look, for any man to marry four wives, there has to be right reason for it. If it is wartime, if many men are dying in the war, then a man can marry more than once. If the wife is suffering from a long-term incurable disease, or if she cannot have children, then he can marry again. Else, if he cannot get satisfaction from one...' She couldn't finish the sentence.

Aashraf suddenly exploded in anger. 'I don't fall into any of these categories. Don't I have children? Isn't it wrong that he left me? Isn't it wrong that he made me and our children destitute?'

'Look, according to Sharia, even if he marries again, he has to ensure that he does not make even a little distinction between the two wives and treats them both equally.'

'That means... how, Apa?'

'That means if he builds you a house, he has to build a similar house for her. If he buys you a saree, one for her too. If he spends one night with you, he has to spend one night with her.'

Aashraf's eyes welled up. 'I don't want all that, Apa. If he spends a little money for my child and saves her life, I won't even look in his direction again. But still, what he is doing is wrong, isn't it, Apa?'

'Of course. Hundred per cent, it is his fault.'

'Then why doesn't the mutawalli saheb say that?'

'See, that is where the biggest problem is. In a lot of our jama'at, the mutawallis don't know the law themselves. Secondly, they don't have the authority to implement the law. Thirdly, no one listens to them. And then they accept only the parts of the law that suit them. Where this Sharia law remains is in the laps of poor women like you, like this Munni.'

'Is there no medicine for this, Apa?'

‘There is. Why won’t there be? Why don’t scholars tell women about the rights available to them? Because they only want to restrict women. The whole world is at a stage where everyone is saying something must be done for women and girl children. But these people, they have taken over the Qur’an and the Hadiths. Let them behave as per these texts at least! Let them educate girls, not just a madrasa education, but also in schools and colleges. The choice of a husband should be hers. Let them give that. These eunuchs, let them give meher and get married instead of licking leftovers by taking dowry. Let a girl’s maternal family give her a share in the property. Let them respect her right to get divorced if there is no compatibility between the man and woman. If she is divorced, let someone come forward to marry her again; if she is a widow, let her get a companion to share her life with.’

‘Apa, Apa, what are you saying?’ Aashraf felt like she had lost her senses.

‘What I am saying is correct, Aashraf. All these rights are available for women in Islam. A girl can go to school, she can go to the shops, go to work. She can have a life outside. But there is a clause too that she should not exhibit her body and her beauty...’

Zulekha Begum began giving a passionate lecture. Aashraf nodded her head, disappointed. She did not want any of this. ‘What can I ask about my Munni?’

‘What will you ask? Your expenses for food and clothing and for your children, a house for yourself, then a night with him every alternate day. You have a right to all this. He has to give you all this. If he does not, hold his collar in front of people and demand them. This mutawalli, take the slipper from your foot in your hands, slap him with it and insist. Do not beg. Demand justice.

Do you know who gets justice? Only those who demand it. People like you will not get justice if you don’t demand it. Give a petition to the masjid, gather a panchayat around and call me. I will tell your man, and that mutawalli, what the Sharia is, what justice is. Twisting the Qur’an and Hadiths the way they want in front of a helpless woman is not justice.’

Aashraf was very scared, and felt her hands and legs go cold. If it was only the question of her own stomach, there was no need for all this trouble. ‘If God has given life, he will at least provide grass to eat, I could stay quiet thinking this way, but – this

Munni...’

Aashraf was determined and ready to make justice hers, instead of having to beg for it. Munni stirred in her lap. Her breath sounded strained. There were beads of sweat on her forehead. Munni's neck was soaking wet. Aashraf wiped her child's neck and armpits with her saree. She touched her body, and, even in that state of distress, felt relieved that the fever was coming down. Earlier Hasina had cried that she was hungry, hungry. When she looked around for her in that dim light,

Aashraf's heart almost stopped. Unable to bear the cold from sleeping on the floor, Hasina had crawled under a mat inside the wooden bier and wrapped half of it around herself. Habiba was curled up on the floor nearby. There was a quietness to the green light emanating from the mosque veranda. A cool breeze from the heavy rain and a peopleless environment. She felt a strange fear even in the holy atmosphere of the mosque. She did not know what the time was.

Thinking that the business of the outside world must have concluded, she felt afraid. From morning till evening, every Muslim chanted 'Bismillah ir-Rahman ir-Raheem' continuously. Here was a situation that would move even the heart of Allah, the most merciful, most compassionate; but at least Munni had some warmth. The other two children did not even have clothes to fully cover their bodies. At once, a thousand scissors flew across her insides, and a deep sigh escaped her. From her heart: 'Ya Allah!' Allah did not reply. Her stomach, once warm and quiet, now felt chilled, as if a ball of snow was turning inside her. Her blood turned cold, her veins, unable even to shiver, turned to ice. She couldn't understand that someone was calling. Finally, she heard Amina's voice from a distance.

Amina was standing on the other side of the compound wall with a plate in her hands. She was calling, 'Aashraf, take this, there is rotti, come, fast... hold this...' Aashraf returned to reality very slowly. Rain continued to fall, as if that was the law of this cruel world. On the other side, far away, rotti... An extraordinary strength flowed through her. She held Munni to her chest and got up. Just then—

The masjid gate creaked. The mutawalli saheb, seemingly at the height of happiness, was coming in with Yakub. The mutawalli patted his stomach and burped softly. He spat with a 'pichak' sound from his paan-reddened lips, and slowly walked up to the top of the masjid steps. Yakub walked just as leisurely and stood a little distance away. An expression of 'Look at that, she still has not left' passed across his face. Amina's hands that held the rottis slowly slid back.

In the houses surrounding the mosque, most people had finished their dinners. The men were either watching TV or had gone to sleep. The women, on the pretext of finishing their chores, kept going to the end of their own house compounds, keeping a foot on some high platform, or pressing their palms on the wet walls of the masjid to see what was happening.

Aashraf held Munni, the inspiration for her fight, to her chest, and slowly walked up to the men. The mutawalli was sitting on the top step. Yakub was standing to his left, one step below. Aashraf stood to their right, three-four steps below them. Since there was a roof over this part, she was protected from the rain. But the moisture-laden breeze had taken away her ability to even stand. Yakub was ready to charge and gore her like a bull. Water from the roof was dripping down Aashraf's back and dripping from her seragu. Oh! Even this rain does not soak men, and is behaving so softly, with great respect. She was surprised even in that moment.

The mutawalli saheb had reason to hesitate before speaking. A lot of paan juice had accumulated in his mouth. He couldn't pollute those holy steps. He had to walk up to the compound wall at a distance to spit it, like out of a squirt gun. Just when he was about to get up, Yakub spat out, like he was spitting fire:

‘Mutawalli Saheb, what does she want, this whore?’

Mutawalli Saheb became alert all of a sudden. Since he had ended up gulping the paan juice down, his head felt dizzy for a second, though his common sense became alert nonetheless. He realised that in the darkness surrounding the compound wall, there were women-shaped lizards standing on their big toes and watching. He was very certain that a lizard called Amina was no doubt stuck to the wall and staring at him as if she would swallow him up. That was why, for their sake, for the sake of a show of power, the rice, paan and other things that Yakub had bought him moved to one side of his throat.

‘Eyy, Yakub. You should not speak like that,’ he said.

But Yakub was not in a state to listen. This woman, she had made his life hell. Like faeces stuck to the feet! She was the devil who destroyed him by putting the responsibility of those three girls on him. When all he wanted was to find happiness in the lap of his new wife, and, if a baby boy was born, to have an heir to his autorickshaw. She was the demon troubling him. That Gafoor, Idris, Nasir, all of them have two wives and are having fun, but none of their wives are causing trouble like this. They have quietly gone to their maternal homes, or else they are

working as coolies or something. This bitch has not only troubled me for two years, but has now climbed the steps of the mosque even. ‘She – her –’ Yakub burned with uncontrollable anger even in that cold. ‘Lei! If you who squats to pee has this much arrogance, how much arrogance should I, who stands to piss, have?’ he screamed, in his very dignified manner.

Not a word came out of Aashraf’s mouth. She had become still. Zulekha Begum had not told her what to reply to such questions. She had not even expected such a question. In her confusion she held Munni even more tightly to her chest. By then, Yakub, boiling with rage, came swiftly towards her and, gathering all his strength, kicked her. Aashraf fell to one side. Her attempt to protect Munni even as she fell was in vain. When her forehead smashed to the ground, Munni flew out of her hands. A terribly painful sound never before heard in any masjid escaped Aashraf.

Both her children woke up, even Hasina, who was sleeping inside the janaza. Perhaps even the innumerable corpses, carried on that bier before melting into layers of soil, had woken up too.

Aashraf fainted.

The mutawalli was in shock. His intoxication vanished. Piercing through the veil of darkness, facing the onslaught of cold and rain, shaking off the dirt that stuck to their feet, with their heads covered, those innumerable women, where were they, who are they, where did they come from, here, is Amina among them?

Some lifted Aashraf up, others moved towards Munni. Munni’s fever had come down. Her breath was no longer ragged. There was no suffering. She had become free from all the pains of this world. Her life of agony had ended. Her body had fought, determined to live, but had now slipped under death’s black chador.

The mutawalli saheb remained sitting, unable to move. Hanifa Chikkamma took Aashraf and her children to her home. Munni’s corpse remained in the mosque. All the lights were turned on. Water in the pot behind the masjid started boiling. All the sleeping men slowly woke up and came out. Without saying a word, the cloth-shop owner Mateen Saheb opened up and brought red cloth for the shroud. They bathed Munni, draped the red cloth on her, cried, dabbed attar and abeer on the body, and shifted her to the khabaristan.

At the cemetery, Aashraf hugged Munni and cried ferociously, but in some corner of her heart there was a thread of quiet peace. There was no happiness for Munni

here, no reason for her to have stayed back. Munni is free from pain, and has freed me from pain too; now I don't have to go behind Yakub begging; I don't have to chase this mutawalli, begging; I don't have to answer inhumane questions; there is me, and my two children; but still, poor Munni, she didn't wear new clothes even once, she didn't hold a doll in her hands to play. From the time she was born, she only got injections and bitter medicines to swallow. Her maternal instinct rose up, and she shed innumerable tears again.

After laying the egg of light at dawn, the black hen of ignorance exited, rushing into the darkness to peck at grains and sticks.

Mutawalli Saheb began to walk slowly. Hanifa Chikkamma, sweeping half the width of the road with a stick broom in her hand, brushed the slush here and there furiously. Unbothered that a few drops had splashed on the mutawalli, she held up the broom in her right hand, like a fan, pounded it on her left palm and, staring at the broom, addressed the wind: 'May Allah's curse fall on you. It feels like I saw Shaitan in person.' Rafiya, who had come to place a pot under the water tap, put her pot down, picked up a stone, and, addressing a non-existent dog, threw the stone into a slush-filled drain nearby. 'A dog, just a dog!' she said, sniggering.

Naseema chased her hen, the one with wide grey and white feathers on its back and fat thighs, which sauntered even on its short legs. She caught it by its comb and beak, glared with hatred at the cock perched on its back and said, 'Hey Allah! May your benevolence destroy this damned cock's lineage. It has no shame or dignity. No fear of Allah. Have you been getting fat to feed the worms in the grave? Donkey-face, get lost.' She cracked her knuckles and cursed the cock she herself had reared.

At the corner house, Qazi Saheb's daughter-in-law, who had not so much as come to the main door even though it had been two years since her wedding, walked up to the compound gate and stood watching her husband get on his scooter. Seeing the mutawalli saheb, she addressed the child in her arms and asked, 'Do you want to see a gorilla, my love? Look, there, a gorilla!'

When the mutawalli turned back to look, she giggled and slammed the door. From a distance, Jameela Athe scolded loudly, as if she was addressing someone: 'Nothing good will come your way. You will be born with a pig face on Judgement Day. May black cobras coil themselves around you. May you not remember the Kalima on your tongue when you die.' She tossed a string of curses around like dynamite.

Asifa came out with an overflowing garbage basket, not caring about the seragu that had slipped off her head. She dumped the trash and spat ‘thoo, thoo,’ loudly, hard enough to fully dry her throat, as if she had seen something utterly disgusting. Her spit might have fallen on him too.

The mutawalli saheb could not forget Munni’s face wrapped in that red cloth. Her eyes were shut, but he felt as if she was staring at him. Voices surrounded him from all sides. His heart was heavy, his legs refused to move; every morsel of the biriyani he had eaten felt like it had turned to iron and was punching him from inside. Everything he had drunk... like Amina said, it felt like Shaitan’s piss, he felt assaulted by its stink, as if he was going to drown in the smell; he was afraid, there was a bad feeling in his stomach.

Just as he was struggling up the steps to his house, he saw the blurry sight of Amina with her mother, getting ready to go somewhere. He wiped his sweat, and, dry-throated and unable to speak, gestured to ask where to.

‘Where else to?’ she exploded. ‘I have given you seven already. At least now I am going to get an operation done.’

Without the strength to stop her, without any words to say to her, just as the mutawalli was about to sit down, Amina spoke exactly like him.

‘Look, close the door and look after the children. It will be more than a week before I return.’

Glossary

Isha Namaz: The fifth and final prayer (namaz) of the day in Islam, performed at night.

Dried mackerel: A type of fish (mackerel) preserved by drying.

Jama’at: Congregational prayer performed together by Muslims, especially in a mosque.

Mutawalli: Caretaker or manager of a mosque or waqf (religious endowment) property.

Janaza: The Islamic funeral prayer and rites performed after a Muslim passes away.

Hadiths: A report of the sayings, actions, approvals, or disapprovals of the Prophet.

Shirk: Refers to the sin of associating partners with Allah.

Hauz: A small water tank or reservoir, often found in traditional homes or mosques for washing or ablutions.

Shrivelled: Something shrunken, wrinkled, or dried out.

Tottering: Unsteady or shaky, as if about to fall.

Gut: The stomach or intestines, or a person's instinct or inner feeling.

Gnawing: Chewing or biting repeatedly, or a persistent feeling.

Rheum: A watery or mucous discharge from the eyes or nose.

Placate: To calm someone down or make them less angry, especially by giving into their demands or soothing them.

Jannat: An Arabic word meaning "Paradise" or "Heaven" in Islamic belief.

Janaza: The Islamic funeral prayer and rites performed after a Muslim passes away.

Hauz: A small water tank or reservoir, often found in traditional homes or mosques for washing or ablutions.

Plonked: A colloquial verb meaning to drop or place something heavily or carelessly.

Sharia law: Islamic law derived from the Quran and the Hadith.

Hadiths: Records of the sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad.

Abeer: A fragrant powder or perfume often used in South Asian and Middle Eastern cultures.

Kalima (or Kalimah): Refers to the Islamic declaration of faith: "**La ilaha illallah, Muhammadur Rasulullah.**"

Shroud: A cloth used to wrap a dead body for burial.

Comprehension:

I. Answer the following questions in about a page.

1. How did the news of Aashraf and her daughters sitting in the mosque spread and what is the mutawalli Saheb's initial reaction to it?
2. How does Amina convey her physical and emotional struggles, and how does the mutawalli respond to her request?
3. Yakub justifies his actions through religion and personal issues. Do you think he is justified?
4. Write a note on Yakub.
4. Explain how Zulekha Begum comforts and instructs Aashraf regarding her rights in Islam.
5. What was Munni's role in Aashraf's life?
6. How do the women of the community oppose the Mutawalli after Munni's death?
7. In the story, how do men use Sharia law to justify their actions and deny justice to women like Aashraf?
8. What does the title 'Black Cobra' symbolize in the story, and how does it effectively convey the themes of power, fear, and gender-based injustice?

II. Answer the following questions in about two pages.

1. How are women mistreated in the name of religion and tradition in the story?
2. What challenges does Aashraf face as a mother, and how does she stay resilient?
3. How does poverty increase the suffering of marginalised women like Aashraf in the story?
4. What kind of person is the mutawalli, and in what ways does he misuse religion?
5. How do the community members behave when Aashraf is suffering, and how do they demonstrate their solidarity afterward?

6. How does Munni's death serve as a turning point in the story, both emotionally and symbolically?
7. Discuss how the story critiques the unequal enforcement of Sharia law and questions its interpretation by men.
8. How do women help and support each other in the story?

Suggested Reading/Viewing:

- "Lihaaf" (The Quilt): Ismat Chughtai
- *The God of Small Things*: Arundhati Roy
- "Parched" – Dir. Leena Yadav
- "Hasina" directed by Girish Kasaravalli

SIR DON BRADMAN ORATION (SPEECH)

By Rahul Dravid



Pre-Reading Activities

- What qualities come to mind when you think of sportsmanship and cricketing legends?
- Describe a public figure you admire and what qualities make her/him admirable.
- Cricketers, as influential public figures and role models, are often invited to deliver formal speeches because their experiences reflect discipline, leadership, and national pride.
- “Sports and sportspeople have the power to inspire nations.”

About the Speaker

Rahul Dravid, widely regarded as one of the most outstanding cricketers in Indian cricket history, has distinguished himself through his technical skill, disciplined approach, and exemplary sportsmanship. Born on January 11, 1973, in Indore, Madhya Pradesh, Dravid received his early education in Bangalore, where he also played a key role in developing cricket at the regional level. He represented Karnataka in domestic cricket, showcasing his immense talent and making significant contributions to the state's success in various tournaments. Renowned for his solid and patient batting style, he earned the nickname "The Wall" for his ability to withstand pressure and anchor innings. Beyond his individual accomplishments, Dravid made substantial contributions to the Indian team's successes, including leading India to its first Test series victory in Australia in

2004. Following his retirement, he has served as the head coach of the Indian national cricket team, focusing on nurturing young talent and fostering a culture of discipline and resilience. Additionally, Dravid maintains a strong connection with Bangalore, both through his early education and his ongoing involvement in cricket development initiatives. Consequently, Rahul Dravid's legacy extends beyond his statistical achievements, exemplifying dedication, integrity, and resilience in the world of professional sports.

About the Speech

The Don Bradman Oration is an annual speech held to honor the legacy of Sir Donald Bradman, one of the greatest cricketers in history. Organized by Cricket Australia, the event invites distinguished individuals such as players, commentators, and statesmen to speak about the spirit and values of cricket.

Rahul Dravid was the first Indian to deliver the speech at the annual Sir Donald Bradman Oration in Canberra at the Australian War Memorial. In the speech delivered in Australia on December 14, 2011, Rahul Dravid pays tribute to the legendary Sir Donald Bradman and reflects on the cricket history shared between India and Australia. Speaking with grace and humility, Dravid acknowledges Bradman's unparalleled legacy while celebrating the game's evolution and the values it upholds. He talks about leadership, respect, and the importance of sportsmanship, emphasising how the spirit of cricket transcends generations and cultures. Dravid also humbly shares his personal experiences of playing in Australia, highlighting the mutual respect between the two great cricketing nations.

Thank you for inviting me to deliver the Bradman Oration; the respect and the regard that came with the invitation to speak tonight, is deeply appreciated.

I realise a very distinguished list of gentlemen have preceded me in the ten years that the Bradman Oration has been held. I know that this Oration is held every year to appreciate the life and career of Sir Don Bradman, a great Australian and a great cricketer. I understand that I am supposed to speak about cricket and issues in the game, and I will.

Yet, but first before all else, I must say that I find myself humbled by the venue we find ourselves in. Even though there is neither a pitch in sight, nor stumps or bat and balls, as a cricketer, I feel I stand on very sacred ground tonight. When I was told that I would be speaking at the National War Memorial, I thought of

how often and how meaninglessly, the words ‘war’, ‘battle’, ‘fight’ are used to describe cricket matches.

Yes, we cricketers devote the better part of our adult lives to being prepared to perform for our countries, to persist and compete as intensely as we can – and more. This building, however, recognises the men and women who lived out the words – war, battle, fight – for real and then gave it all up for their country, their lives left incomplete, futures extinguished.

The people of both our countries are often told that cricket is the one thing that brings Indians and Australians together. That cricket is our single common denominator.

India’s first Test series as a free country was played against Australia in November 1947, three months after our independence. Yet the histories of our countries are linked together far more deeply than we think and further back in time than 1947.

We share something else other than cricket. Before they played the first Test match against each other, Indians and Australians fought wars together, on the same side. In Gallipoli, where, along with the thousands of Australians, over 1300 Indians also lost their lives. In World War II, there were Indian and Australian soldiers in El Alamein, North Africa, in the Syria-Lebanon campaign, in Burma, in the battle for Singapore.

Before we were competitors, Indians and Australians were comrades. So, it is only appropriate that we are here this evening at the Australian War Memorial, where along with celebrating cricket and cricketers, we remember the unknown soldiers of both nations.

It is however, incongruous, that I, an Indian, happen to be the first cricketer from outside Australia, invited to deliver the the Bradman Oration. I don’t say that only because Sir Don once scored a hundred before lunch at Lord’s and my 100 at Lord’s this year took almost an entire day.

But more seriously, Sir Don played just five Tests against India; that was in the first India-Australia series in 1947-48, which was to be his last season at home. He didn’t even play in India, and remains the most venerated cricketer in India not to have played there.

We know that he set foot in India though, in May 1953, when on his way to England to report on the Ashes for an English newspaper, his plane stopped in Calcutta airport. There were said to be close to a 1000 people waiting to greet him; as you know, he was a very private person and so got into an army jeep and rushed into a barricaded building, annoyed with the airline for having ‘breached

confidentiality.’ That was all Indians of the time saw of Bradman who remains a mythical figure.

For one generation of fans in my country, those who grew up in the 1930s, when India was still under British rule, Bradman represented a cricketing excellence that belonged to somewhere outside England. To a country taking its first steps in Test cricket, that meant something. His success against England at that time was thought of as our personal success. He was striking one for all of us ruled by the common enemy. Or as your country has so poetically called them, the Poms.

There are two stories that I thought I should bring to your notice. On June 28, 1930, the day Bradman scored 254 at Lord’s against England, was also the day Jawaharlal Nehru was arrested by the police. Nehru was, at the time, one of the most prominent leaders of the Indian independence movement and later, independent India’s first Prime Minister. The coincidence of the two events, was noted by a young boy KN Prabhu, who was both nationalist, cricket fan and later became independent India’s foremost cricket writer. In the 30s, as Nehru went in and out of jail, Bradman went after the England bowling and, for KN Prabhu, became a kind of avenging angel.

There’s another story I’ve heard about the day in 1933, when the news reached India that Bradman’s record for the highest Test score of 334 had been broken by Wally Hammond. As much as we love our records, they say some Indian fans at the time were not exactly happy. Now, there’s a tale that a few even wanted to wear black bands to mourn the fact that this precious record that belonged to Australia – and by extension, us – had gone back. To an Englishman. We will never know if this is true, if black bands were ever worn, but as journalists sometimes tell me, why let facts get in the way of a good story.

My own link with Bradman was much like that of most other Indians – through history books, some old video footage and his wise words. About leaving the game better than you found it. About playing it positively, as Bradman, then a selector, told Richie Benaud before the 1960-61 West Indies tour of Australia. Of sending a right message out from cricket to its public. Of players being temporary trustees of a great game.

While there may be very little similarity in our records or our strike-rates or our fielding – and I can say this only today in front of all of you – I am actually pleased that I share something very important with Sir Don.

He was, primarily, like me, a No.3 batsman. It is a tough, tough job.

We're the ones who make life easier for the kings of batting, the middle order that follows us. Bradman did that with a bit more success and style than I did. He dominated bowling attacks and put bums on seats, if I bat for any length of time I am more likely to bore people to sleep. Still, it is nice to have batted for a long time in a position, whose benchmark is, in fact, the benchmark for batsmanship itself.

Before he retired from public life in his 80s, I do know that Bradman watched Sunil Gavaskar's generation play a series in Australia. I remember the excitement that went through Indian cricket when we heard the news that Bradman had seen Sachin Tendulkar bat on TV and thought he batted like him. It was more than mere approval, it was as if the great Don had finally, passed on his torch. Not to an Aussie or an Englishman or a West Indian. But to one of our own.

One of the things, Bradman said has stayed in my mind. That the finest of athletes had, along with skill, a few more essential qualities: to conduct their life with dignity, with integrity, with courage and modesty. All this he believed, were totally compatible with pride, ambition, determination and competitiveness. Maybe those words should be put up in cricket dressing rooms all over the world. As all of you know, Don Bradman passed away on February 25, 2001, two days before the India v Australia series was to begin in Mumbai.

Whenever an important figure in cricket leaves us, cricket's global community pauses in the midst of contests and debates, to remember what he represented of us, what he stood for, and Bradman was the pinnacle. The standard against which all Test batsmen must take guard.

The series that followed two days after Bradman's death later went on to become what many believe was one of the greatest in cricket. It is a series, I'd like to believe, he would have enjoyed following.

A fierce contest between bat and ball went down to the final session of the final day of the final Test. Between an Australian team who had risen to their most imposing powers and a young Indian team determined to rewrite some chapters of its own history.

The 2001 series contained high-quality cricket from both sides and had a deep impact on the careers of those who played a part in it. The Australians were near

unbeatable in the first half of the new decade, both home and away. As others floundered against them, India became the only team that competed with them on even terms.

India kept answering questions put to them by the Australians and asking a few themselves. The quality demanded of those contests, sometimes acrimonious, sometimes uplifting, made us, the Indian team, grow and rise. As individuals, we were asked to play to the absolute outer limits of our capabilities and we often extended them.

Now, whenever India and Australia meet, there is expectation and anticipation – and as we get into the next two months of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, players on both sides will want to deliver their best.

When we toured in 2007-08, I thought it was going to be my last tour of Australia. The Australians thought it was going to be the last time they would be seeing Sachin Tendulkar on their shores. He received warm standing ovations from wonderful crowds all around the country.

Well, like a few, creaking Terminators, we're back. Older, wiser and I hope improved.

The Australian public will want to stand up to send Sachin off all over again this time. But I must warn you, given how he's been playing these days, there are no guarantees about final goodbyes.

In all seriousness, though, the cricket world is going to stop and watch Australia and India. It is Australia's first chance to defend their supremacy at home following defeat in the 2010 Ashes and a drawn series against New Zealand. It is India's opportunity to prove that the defeat to England in the summer was an aberration that we will bounce back from.

If both teams look back to their last 2007-08 series in Australia, they will know that they should have done things a little differently in the Sydney Test. But I think both sides have moved on from there; we've played each other twice in India already and relations between the two teams are much better than they have been as far as I can remember.

Thanks to the IPL, Indians and Australians have even shared dressing rooms. Shane Watson's involvement in Rajasthan, Mike Hussey's role with Chennai to mention a few, are greatly appreciated back home. And even Shane Warne likes

India now. I really enjoyed playing alongside him at Rajasthan last season and can confidently report to you that he is not eating imported baked beans any more.

In fact, looking at him, it seems, he is not eating anything.

It is often said that cricketers are ambassadors for their country; when there's a match to be won, sometimes we think that is an unreasonable demand. After all, what would career diplomats do if the result of a Test series depended on them, say, walking? But, as ties between India and Australia have strengthened and our contests have become more frequent, we realise that as Indian players, we stand for a vast, varied, often unfathomable and endlessly fascinating country.

At the moment, to much of the outside world, Indian cricket represents only two things – money and power. Yes, that aspect of Indian cricket is a part of the whole, but it is not the complete picture. As a player, as a proud and privileged member of the Indian cricket team, I want to say that, this one-dimensional, often cliched image relentlessly repeated is not what Indian cricket is really all about.

I cannot take all of you into the towns and villages our players come from, and introduce you to their families, teachers, coaches, mentors and team-mates who made them international cricketers. I cannot take all of you here to India to show you the belief, struggle, effort and sacrifice from hundreds of people that runs through our game.

As I stand here today, it is important for me to bring Indian cricket and its own remarkable story to you. I believe it is very necessary that cricketing nations try to find out about each other, try to understand each other and the different role cricket plays in different countries, because ours is, eventually, a very small world.

In India, cricket is a buzzing, humming, living entity going through a most remarkable time, like no other in our cricketing history. In this last decade, the Indian team represents more than ever before, the country we come from – of people from vastly different cultures, who speak different languages, follow different religions, belong to all classes of society. I went around our dressing room to work out how many languages could be spoken in there and the number I have arrived at is: 15, including Shona and Afrikaans.

Most foreign captains, I think, would baulk at the idea. But, when I led India, I enjoyed it, I marvelled at the range of difference and the ability of people from

so many different backgrounds to share a dressing room, to accept, accommodate and respect that difference. In a world growing more insular, that is a precious quality to acquire, because it stays for life and helps you understand people better, understand the significance of the other.

Let me tell you one of my favourite stories from my Under-19 days, when the India Under-19 team played a match against the New Zealand junior team. We had two bowlers in the team, one from the north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh – he spoke only Hindi, which is usually a link language for players from all over India, ahead even of English. It should have been all right, except the other bowler came from Kerala, in the deep south, and he spoke only the state's regional language, Malayalam. Now even that should have been okay as they were both bowlers and could bowl simultaneous spells.

Yet in one game, they happened to come together at the crease. In the dressing room, we were in splits, wondering how they were going to manage the business of a partnership, calling for runs or sharing the strike. Neither man could understand a word of what the other was saying and they were batting together. This could only happen in Indian cricket. Except that these two guys came up with a 100-run partnership. Their common language was cricket and that worked out just fine.

The everyday richness of Indian cricket lies right there, not in the news you hear about million-dollar deals and television rights. When I look back over the 25 years I've spent in cricket, I realise two things. First, rather alarmingly, that I am the oldest man in the game, older to even Sachin by three months. More importantly, I realise that Indian cricket actually reflects our country's own growth story during this time. Cricket is so much a part of our national fabric that as India – its economy, society and popular culture – transformed itself, so did our most-loved sport.

As players we are appreciative beneficiaries of the financial strength of Indian cricket, but we are more than just mascots of that economic power. The caricature often made of Indian cricket and its cricketers in the rest of the world is that we are pampered superstars. Overpaid, underworked, treated like a cross between royalty and rock stars.

Yes, the Indian team has an enormous, emotional following and we do need security when we get around the country as a group. It is also why we make it a point to always try and conduct ourselves with composure and dignity. On tour,

I must point out, we don't attack fans or do drugs or get into drunken theatrics. And at home, despite what some of you may have heard, we don't live in mansions with swimming pools.

The news about the money may well overpower all else, but along with it, our cricket is full of stories the outside world does not see. Television rights generated around Indian cricket, are much talked about. Let me tell you what the television – around those much sought-after rights – has done to our game.

A sport that was largely played and patronised by princes and businessmen in traditional urban centres, cities like Bombay, Bangalore, Chennai, Baroda, Hyderabad, Delhi – has begun to pull in cricketers from everywhere.

As the earnings from Indian cricket have grown in the past 2 decades, mainly through television, the BCCI has spread revenues to various pockets in the country and improved where we play. The field is now spread wider than it ever has been, the ground covered by Indian cricket, has shifted.

Twenty seven teams compete in our national championship, the Ranji Trophy. Last season Rajasthan, a state best known for its palaces, fortresses and tourism won the Ranji Trophy title for the first time in its history. The national one-day championship also had a first-time winner in the newly formed state of Jharkand, where our captain MS Dhoni comes from.

The growth and scale of cricket on our television was the engine of this population shift. Like Bradman was the boy from Bowral, a stream of Indian cricketers now come from what you could call India's outback.

Zaheer Khan belongs to the Maharashtra heartland, from a town that didn't have even one proper turf wicket. He could have been an instrumentation engineer but was drawn to cricket through TV and modelled his bowling by practising in front of the mirror on his cupboard at home, and first bowled with a proper cricket ball at the age of 17.

One day out of nowhere, a boy from a village in Gujarat turned up as India's fastest bowler. After Munaf Patel made his debut for India, the road from the nearest railway station to his village had to be improved because journalists and TV crews from the cities kept landing up there.

We are delighted that Umesh Yadav didn't become a policeman like he was planning and turned to cricket instead. He is the first cricketer from the central Indian first-class team of Vidarbha to play Test cricket.

Virender Sehwag, it shouldn't surprise you, belongs to the wild west just outside Delhi. He had to be enrolled in a college which had a good cricket programme and travelled 84kms every day by bus to get to practice and matches.

Every player in this room wearing an India blazer has a story like this. Here, ladies and gentlemen, is the heart and soul of Indian cricket.

Playing for India completely changes our lives. The game has given us a chance to pay back our debt to all those who gave their time, energy and resources for us to be better cricketers: we can build new homes for our parents, get our siblings married off in style, give our families very comfortable lives.

The Indian cricket team is in fact, India itself, in microcosm. A sport that was played first by princes, then their subordinates, then the urban elite, is now a sport played by all of India. Cricket, as my two under-19 team-mates proved, is India's most widely-spoken language. Even Indian cinema has its regional favourites; a movie star in the south may not be popular in the north. But a cricketer? Loved everywhere.

It is also a very tough environment to grow up in – criticism can be severe, responses to victory and defeat extreme. There are invasions of privacy and stones have been thrown at our homes after some defeats.

It takes time getting used to, extreme reactions can fill us with anger. But every cricketer realises at some stage of his career, that the Indian cricket fan is best understood by remembering the sentiment of the majority, not the actions of a minority.

One of the things that has always lifted me as a player is looking out of the team bus when we travelled somewhere in India. When people see the Indian bus going by, see some of us sitting with our curtains drawn back, it always amazes me how much they light up. There is an instantaneous smile, directed not just at the player they see – but at the game we play that, for whatever reason, means something to people's lives. Win or lose, the man on the street will smile and give you a wave.

After India won the World Cup this year, our players were not congratulated as much as they were thanked by people they ran into. "You have given us

everything,” they were told, “all of us have won.” Cricket in India now stands not just for sport, but possibility, hope, opportunities.

On our way to the Indian team, we know of so many of our team-mates, some of whom may have been equally or more talented than those sitting here, who missed out. When I started out, for a young Indian, cricket was the ultimate gamble – all or nothing, no safety nets. No second chances for those without an education or a college degree or second careers. Indian cricket’s wealth now means a wider pool of well paid cricketers even at first-class level.

For those of us who make it to the Indian team, cricket is not merely our livelihood, it is a gift we have been given. Without the game, we would just be average people leading average lives. As Indian cricketers, our sport has given us the chance do something worthwhile with our lives. How many people could say that?

This is the time Indian cricket should be flowering; we are the world champions in the short game, and over the space of the next 12 months should be involved in a tight contest with Australia, South Africa and England to determine which one of us is the world’s strongest Test team.

Yet I believe this is also a time for introspection within our game, not only in India, but all over the world. We have been given some alerts and responding to them quickly is the smart thing to do.

I was surprised a few months ago to see the lack of crowds in an ODI series featuring India. By that I don’t mean the lack of full houses, I think it was the sight of empty stands I found somewhat alarming.

India played its first one-day international at home in November 1981, when I was nine. Between then and now India have played 227 ODIs at home; the October five-match series against England was the first time that the grounds have not been full for an ODI featuring the Indian team.

In the summer of 1998, I played in a one-dayer against Kenya in Kolkata and the Eden Gardens was full. Our next game was held in the 48-degree heat of Gwalior and the stands were heaving.

The October series against England was the first one at home after India’s World Cup win. It was called the ‘revenge’ series meant to wipe away the memory of a forgettable tour of England. India kept winning every game, and yet the stands

did not fill up. Five days after a 5-0 victory 95,000 turned up to watch the India's first Formula One race.

A few weeks later I played in a Test match against West Indies in Calcutta, in front of what was the lowest turn out in Eden Gardens' history. Yes we still wanted to win and our intensity did not dip. But at the end of the day, we are performers, entertainers and we love an audience. The audience amplifies everything you are doing, the bigger the crowd the bigger the occasion, its magnitude, its emotion. When I think about the Eden Gardens crowds this year, I wonder what the famous Calcutta Test of 2001 would have felt like with 50,000 people less watching us.

Australia and South Africa played an exciting and thrilling Test series recently and two great Test matches produced some fantastic performances from players of both teams, but were sadly played in front of sparse crowds.

It is not the numbers that Test players need, it is the atmosphere of a Test that every player wants to revel in and draw energy from. My first reaction to the lack of crowds for cricket was that there had been a lot of cricket and so perhaps, a certain amount of spectator-fatigue. That is too simplistic a view; it's the easy thing to say but might not be the only thing.

The India v England ODI series had no context, because the two countries had played each other in four Tests and five ODIs just a few weeks before. When India and West Indies played ODIs a month after that the grounds were full, but this time the matches were played in smaller venues that didn't host too much international cricket. Maybe our clues are all there and we must remain vigilant.

Unlike Australia or England, Indian cricket has never had to compete with other sports for a share of revenues, mind space or crowd attendance at international matches. The lack of crowds may not directly impact on revenues or how important the sport is to Indians, but we do need to accept that there has definitely been a change in temperature over, I think, the last two years.

Whatever the reasons are – maybe it is too much cricket or too little by way of comfort for spectators – the fan has sent us a message and we must listen. This is not mere sentimentality. Empty stands do not make for good television. Bad television can lead to a fall in ratings, the fall in ratings will be felt by media planners and advertisers looking elsewhere.

If that happens, it is hard to see television rights around cricket being as sought after as they have always been in the last 15 years. And where does that leave everyone? I'm not trying to be an economist or doomsday prophet – this is just how I see it.

Let us not be so satisfied with the present, with deals and finances in hand that we get blindsided. Everything that has given cricket its power and influence in the world of sports has started from that fan in the stadium. They deserve our respect and let us not take them for granted. Disrespecting fans is disrespecting the game. The fans have stood by our game through everything. When we play, we need to think of them. As players, the balance between competitiveness and fairness can be tough but it must be found.

If we stand up for the game's basic decencies, it will be far easier to tackle its bigger dangers – whether it is finding short cuts to easy money or being lured by the scourge of spot-fixing and contemplating any involvement with the betting industry.

Cricket's financial success means it will face threats from outside the game and keep facing them. The last two decades have proved this over and over again. The internet and modern technology may just end up being a step ahead of every anti-corruption regulation in place in the game. As players, the one way we can stay ahead for the game, is if we are willing to be monitored and regulated closely. Even if it means giving up a little bit of freedom of movement and privacy. If it means undergoing dope tests, let us never say no. If it means undergoing lie-detector tests, let us understand the technology, what purpose it serves and accept it. Now lie-detectors are by no means perfect but they could actually help the innocent clear their names. Similarly, we should not object to having our finances scrutinised if that is what is required.

When the first anti-corruption measures were put into place, we did moan a little bit about being accredited and depositing our cell phones with the manager. But now we must treat it like we do airport security because we know it is for our own good and our own security.

Players should be ready to give up a little personal space and personal comfort for this game, which has given us so much. If you have nothing to hide, you have nothing to fear.

Other sports have borrowed from cricket's anti-corruption measures to set up their own ethical governance programmes and we must take pride in belonging to a sport that is professional and progressive.

One of the biggest challenges that the game must respond to today, I believe, is charting out a clear road map for the three formats. We now realise that the sport's three formats cannot be played in equal numbers – that will only throw scheduling and the true development of players completely off gear.

There is a place for all three formats, though, we are the only sport I can think of which has three versions. Cricket must treasure this originality. These three versions require different skills, skills that have evolved, grown, changed over the last four decades, one impacting on the other.

Test cricket is the gold standard; it is the form the players want to play. The 50-over game is the one that has kept cricket's revenues alive for more than three decades now. Twenty20 has come upon us and it is the format people, the fans want to see.

Cricket must find a middle path, it must scale down this mad merry-go-round that teams and players find themselves in: heading off for two-Test tours and seven-match ODI series with a few Twenty20s thrown in.

Test cricket deserves to be protected, it is what the world's best know they will be judged by. Where I come from, nation versus nation is what got people interested in cricket in the first place. When I hear the news that a country is playing without some of its best players, I always wonder, what do their fans think?

People may not be able to turn up to watch Test cricket but everyone follows the scores. We may not fill 65,000 capacity stadiums for Test matches, but we must actively fight to get as many as we can in, to create a Test match environment that the players and the fans feed off. Anything but the sight of Tests played on empty grounds. For that, we have got to play Test cricket that people can watch. I don't think day-night Tests or a Test championship should be dismissed.

In March of last year I played a day-night first-class game in Abu Dhabi for the MCC and my experience from that was that day-night Tests is an idea seriously worth exploring. There may be some challenges in places where there is dew but the visibility and durability of the pink cricket ball was not an issue.

Similarly, a Test championship, with every team and player driving themselves to be winners of a sought after title, seems like it would have a context to every game.

Keeping Tests alive may mean different innovations in different countries – maybe taking it to smaller cities, playing it in grounds with smaller capacities like New Zealand has thought of doing, maybe reviving some old venues in the West Indies, like the old Recreation Ground in Antigua.

When I was around seven years old, I remember my father taking a Friday off so that we could watch three days of Test cricket together. On occasions he couldn't, I would accompany one of his friends, just to soak in a day of Test cricket and watch the drama slowly unfold.

What we have to do is find a way to ensure that Test matches fit into 21st century life, through timing, environments and the venues they are held in. I am still convinced it can be done, even in our fast-moving world with a short attention span. We will often get told that Test matches don't make financial sense, but no one ever fell in love with Test cricket because they wanted to be a businessman. Not everything of value comes at a price.

There is a proposal doing the rounds about scrapping the 50-over game completely. I am not sure I agree with that – I certainly know that the 50-over game helped us innovate strokes in our batting which we were then able to take into Test matches. We all know that the 50-over game has been responsible for improving fielding standards all over the world.

The future may well lie in playing one-day internationals centered around ICC events, like the Champions Trophy and the World Cups. This would ensure that all 50-over matches would build up for those tournaments.

That will cut back the number of one-day internationals played every year but at least those matches will have context. Since about I think 1985, people have been saying that there is too much meaningless one-day cricket. Maybe it's finally time to do something about it.

The Twenty20 game as we know has as many critics as it has supporters in the public. Given that an acceptable strike rate in T20 these days is about 120, I should probably complain about it the most. The crowd and revenue numbers, though, tell us that if we don't handle Twenty20 correctly, we may well have

more and more private players stepping in to offer not just slices of pie, but maybe even bigger pies themselves.

So I'll re-iterate what I've just said very quickly because balancing three formats is important:

We have Test cricket like we have always had, nation versus nation, but carefully scheduled to attract crowds and planned fairly so that every Test playing country gets its fair share of Tests. And playing for a championship or a cup, not just a ranking.

The 50-overs format focused around fewer, significant multi-nation ICC events like the Champions Trophy and the World Cup. In the four-year cycle between World Cups, plan the ODI calendar and devise rankings around these few important events. Anything makes more sense than seven-match ODI series.

The best role for Twenty20 is as a domestic competition through official leagues, which will make it financially attractive for cricketers. That could also keep cricket viable in countries where it fights for space and attention.

Because the game is bigger than us all, we must think way ahead of how it stands today. Where do we want it to be in the year 2020? Or say in 2027, when it will be 150 years since the first Test match was played. If you think about it, cricket has been with us longer than the modern motor car, it existed before modern air travel took off.

As much as cricket's revenues are important to its growth, its traditions and its vibrancy are a necessary part of its progress in the future. We shouldn't let either go because we played too much of one format and too little of the other.

Professionalism has given cricketers of my generation privileged lives and we know it, even though you may often hear us whining about burn-out, travel and the lack of recovery time.

Whenever we begin to get into that mindset, it's good to remember a piece of Sachin's conversation with Bradman. Sachin told us that he had asked Sir Don how he had mentally prepared for big games, what his routines were. Sir Don said, that well, before a game he would go to work and after the game go back to work. Whenever a cricketer feels a whinge coming on, that would be good to remember.

Before I conclude, I also want to talk briefly about an experience I have often had over the course of my career. It is not to do with individuals or incidents, but one I believe is important to share. I have sometimes found myself in the middle of a big game, standing at slip or even at the non-strikers end and suddenly realised that everything else has vanished. At that moment, all that exists is the contest and the very real sense of the joy that comes from playing the game.

It is an almost meditative experience, where you reconnect with the game just like you did years ago, when you first began, when you hit your first boundary, took the first catch, scored your first century, or were involved in a big victory. It lasts for a very fleeting passage of time, but it is a very precious instant and every cricketer should hang on to it.

I know it is utterly fanciful to expect professional cricketers to play the game like amateurs; but the trick, I believe, is taking the spirit of the amateur – of discovery, of learning, of pure joy, of playing by the rules – into our profession. Taking it to practice or play, even when there's an epidemic of white-line fever breaking out all over the field.

In every cricketer there lies a competitor who hates losing, and yes, winning matters. But it is not the only thing that matters when you play cricket. How it is played is as important for every member of every team because every game we play leaves a footprint in cricket's history. We must never forget that.

What we do as professionals is easily carried over into the amateur game, in every way – batting, bowling, fielding, appealing, celebration, dissent, argument. In the players of 2027, we will see a reflection of this time and of ourselves and it had better not annoy or anguish us 50-year-olds.

As the game's custodians, it is important we are not tempted by the short-term gains of the backward step. We can be remembered for being the generation that could take the giant stride.

Thank you for the invitation to address all of you tonight, and your attention.

Link to the speech

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aF2r-ui47ow>

Glossary

Oration: A formal and respectful public speech, usually given on a momentous occasion.

Pantheon (Cricketing Pantheon): A group of the most legendary or highly admired individuals in a field; here, the most iconic cricketers.

Resonates: Has a powerful emotional or meaningful effect; something that feels personally or culturally important.

Stately: Majestic, dignified, and impressive in a composed and formal manner.

Conscience of the Game: A person who reminds others of the ethical and moral standards of the sport.

Cultural Ambassador: Someone who represents their country's culture and values abroad.

Gentleman's Game: A traditional term for cricket emphasizing fairness, respect, and good behavior.

Colonial Cousins: Countries like India and Australia that were once British colonies and share some cultural practices, such as cricket.

Nation-Building: Creating a strong and united country; sports like cricket can help bring people together and build national pride.

Bradmanesque: Exceptionally brilliant, like Sir Donald Bradman, regarded as one of the greatest cricketers of all time.

Umpire's Call: A decision made by the cricket umpire when technology is inconclusive, often used to describe decisions based on judgment.

Spirit of Cricket: The unwritten code of fair play, respect, and honesty that all players are expected to follow.

Ball-tampering: Illegally altering the condition of the cricket ball to gain an unfair advantage.

Camaraderie: A feeling of friendship and trust among teammates or fellow players.

Comprehension:

I Answer the following questions in about a page each.

1. How does Rahul Dravid use personal experiences to enhance the impact of his tribute to Sir Don Bradman?
2. What leadership values does Dravid highlight in his speech, and how are they reflected in the world of cricket?
3. In what ways does Dravid portray the cricketing relationship between India and Australia in the speech?
4. How does Dravid emphasize the idea that the spirit of cricket goes beyond just winning or losing?
5. What arguments does Rahul Dravid present in support of preserving Test cricket?
6. Discuss how the financial landscape of cricket has changed over the years.

II Answer the following in about two pages each:

1. Critically analyse how Rahul Dravid's speech reflects the values of sportsmanship, humility, and cultural respect through the lens of cricket.
2. Discuss how Dravid's tribute to Sir Don Bradman reflects the evolution of cricket and its role in shaping international relationships.
3. What concerns did Rahul Dravid raise about corruption in cricket, and what measures did he propose to protect the game's integrity?
4. Why does Rahul Dravid emphasize the need to maintain a balance between the three formats of cricket, and what challenges does he foresee in doing so?

Suggested Reading/ Viewing:

- *The Servant Leader*: Robert K. Greenleaf
- "What Makes a Leader?" by Daniel Goleman (Harvard Business Review)
- "Leadership Lessons from the Sports Field" – Forbes
- *Playing It My Way*: Sachin Tendulkar
- *The Leader Who Had No Title*: Robin Sharma
- "The Test: A New Era for Australia's Team" (2020) – Docuseries
- "Fire in Babylon" (2010)
- "The Don" (2000) – Documentary on Sir Donald Bradman
- "Lagaan" (2001)

REDEMPTION SONG

Bob Marley



Pre-Reading Activities:

- What are the different genres of music?
- Are you familiar with reggae and Jamaican music? List some of the famous reggae artists.
- Do you think true freedom is freeing one's mind from the shackles of mental slavery? Discuss
- Give examples of revolutionary songs/ poems of protest that speak of freedom and emancipation.

About the Poet

Bob Marley (1945–1981) was a Jamaican singer-songwriter and guitarist who played a key role in popularizing reggae music worldwide. Born on February 6, 1945, in Nine Miles, St. Ann, Jamaica, Marley began his musical career in 1963 by forming a band called The Teenagers with Peter Tosh and Bunny Wailer. This group later became known as 'The Wailers'.

Marley's music was a rich blend of ska, rocksteady, and reggae—musical styles that originated in Jamaica. By the 1970s, he created a unique sound by adding rock influences, which helped make him famous worldwide. Reggae, which

emerged in Jamaica in the late 1960s, gained immense popularity both locally and internationally. It was seen as the voice of the oppressed and gained popularity in countries like Britain, the United States, and parts of Africa.

A committed Rastafarian (a religious and political movement that began in the 1930s in Jamaica, combining Protestant Christianity, mysticism, and pan-African political consciousness, and later spreading globally). Marley infused his music with spirituality and social consciousness. He was a symbol of Jamaican culture and identity and a strong advocate for peace, unity, and democratic social reforms—views that sometimes made him a controversial figure.

Bob Marley's legacy continues to profoundly influence music and culture worldwide. His greatest hits compilation, “Legend”, released posthumously in 1984, is the best-selling reggae album of all time. With over 75 million records sold globally, Marley ranks among the world’s best-selling music artists. He was awarded Jamaica’s Order of Merit shortly after he died in Miami, Florida, on May 11, 1981, and was inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1994.

Old pirates, yes, they rob I
Sold I to the merchant ships
Minutes after they took I
From the bottomless pit
But my hand was made strong
By the hand of the Almighty
We forward in this generation
Triumphantly

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have

Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them can stop the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look? Ooh!
Some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
Redemption songs
Redemption songs

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery
None but ourselves can free our minds
Whoa! Have no fear for atomic energy
'Cause none of them-ah can-ah stop-ah the time
How long shall they kill our prophets
While we stand aside and look?
Yes, some say it's just a part of it
We've got to fulfill the book

Won't you help to sing
These songs of freedom?
'Cause all I ever have
Redemption songs
All I ever have
Redemption songs
These songs of freedom
Songs of freedom

Glossary

Old pirates: Refer to historical slave traders or colonial powers that captured and exploited people.

Rob I / Sold I: Jamaican Creole for “robbed me” and “sold me”; a poetic way of saying the speaker was enslaved.

Songs of freedom: Songs that express hope, resistance, and the desire for liberation.

Redemption: The act of being saved or freed from sin, slavery, or injustice.

Emancipate: To set free from legal, social, or political restrictions, especially from slavery.

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in a page each.

1. How does the song utilize imagery and metaphors to convey its message?
2. What historical and cultural references are included in the lyrics, and how do they enhance the song's meaning?
3. What is the meaning of the concept of "mental slavery" in the context of the song?
4. How does the song address the issue of oppression and injustice?
5. What is the role of "prophets" in the song's message?
6. How does the song inspire listeners to take action and fight for their freedom?

II. Answer the following questions in two pages each.

1. Does the song's message still resonate with the issues of injustice and oppression in today's world?
2. How can individuals apply the song's message to their own lives and communities?

3. What is the potential impact of the song's message on social and political change?
4. How does the song's legacy continue to inspire artists and activists?

Suggested Reading/Viewing:

- “Akku”: Vaidehi
- “Thakur’s Well”: Premchand
- “Caged Bird”: Maya Angelou
- “Hasina” (2004), directed by Girish Kasaravalli
- “Sardari Begum” (1996) directed by Shyam Benegal

AN INTRODUCTION

Kamala Das



Pre-Reading Activities:

- Do you think there is often a gap between how society perceives us and how we truly see ourselves? How does this gap affect a person's sense of identity, especially for women?
- Have you ever felt the urge to express yourself in a way that others did not accept? Discuss.
- Do you believe society treats men and women differently when they openly share their feelings? Discuss.
- What does freedom mean to you, especially regarding personal identity and self-expression?

About the Poet

Kamala Das (1934–2009), also known by her pen name Madhavi Kutty, was one of India's most influential English-language poets and a prominent figure in Indian literature. Renowned for her daring, confessional style, she often wrote about love, desire, womanhood, and identity—topics that were considered taboo,

especially in conservative Indian society. Kamala Das's poetry stands out from that of other Indian women poets, not only because of the themes she explores but also due to her bold and unconventional presentation. She used English in her poetry with a refreshing disregard for strict grammatical correctness, focusing instead on expression and emotion. Her work demonstrates a remarkable command of sound, rhythm, imagery, symbolism, wordplay, and dramatic effect.

Kamala Das is also one of the few women writers to successfully master multiple literary genres in two different languages—English and Malayalam. Her autobiographical work, such as "My Story" (1976), sparked controversy for its frankness and established her as a feminist icon.

Das received several prestigious awards, including the "Kerala Sahitya Akademi Award" and nominations for the "Nobel Prize in Literature". Her work is celebrated for its emotional intensity, lyrical style, and unapologetic honesty.

About the Poem

"An Introduction," from Kamala Das's debut collection *Summer in Calcutta* (1965), is a bold and powerful confessional poem that reflects her unique poetic voice and personal experiences. Written in free verse and a conversational style, the poem expresses the poet's thoughts and emotions, making it a compelling depiction of her inner world.

This autobiographical poem explores Kamala Das's identity as a woman, her political awareness, linguistic independence, emotional struggles, and the pain of an unfulfilling marriage. With striking honesty and candour, she shares deeply personal experiences, offering insight into her challenges as a woman in a patriarchal society. The poem questions traditional norms imposed on women—

how they should speak, dress, or live—and affirms the poet's right to choose her language, pursue her desires, and define her own identity.

"An Introduction" stands out not only for its daring themes but also for its innovative form and style. It breaks away from conventional poetic structures and expectations, embodying both a personal revolt and a political statement. 'An Introduction' is a self-portrait and an exploration of Kamala Das's mind. The poem recounts the major incidents of her life that have shaped her experience.

I don't know politics but I know the names
Of those in power, and can repeat them like
Days of week, or names of months, beginning with Nehru.
I am Indian, very brown, born in Malabar,
I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one.
Don't write in English, they said, English is
Not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses
All mine, mine alone.
It is half English, half Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to the lions, it

Is human speech, the speech of the mind that is
Here and not there, a mind that sees and hears and
Is aware. Not the deaf, blind speech
Of trees in storm or of monsoon clouds or of rain or the
Incoherent mutterings of the blazing
Funeral pyre. I was child, and later they
Told me I grew, for I became tall, my limbs
Swelled and one or two places sprouted hair.
When I asked for love, not knowing what else to ask
For, he drew a youth of sixteen into the
Bedroom and closed the door, He did not beat me
But my sad woman-body felt so beaten.
The weight of my breasts and womb crushed me.
I shrank Pitifully.
Then ... I wore a shirt and my
Brother's trousers, cut my hair short and ignored
My womanliness. Dress in sarees, be girl
Be wife, they said. Be embroiderer, be cook,
Be a quarreller with servants. Fit in. Oh,
Belong, cried the categorizers. Don't sit
On walls or peep in through our lace-draped windows.
Be Amy, or be Kamala. Or, better
Still, be Madhavikutty. It is time to
Choose a name, a role. Don't play pretending games.
Don't play at schizophrenia or be a
Nympho. Don't cry embarrassingly loud when
Jilted in love ... I met a man, loved him. Call
Him not by any name, he is every man
Who wants. a woman, just as I am every

Woman who seeks love. In him . . . the hungry haste
Of rivers, in me . . . the oceans' tireless
Waiting. Who are you, I ask each and everyone,
The answer is, it is I. Anywhere and,
Everywhere, I see the one who calls himself I
In this world, he is tightly packed like the
Sword in its sheath. It is I who drink lonely
Drinks at twelve, midnight, in hotels of strange towns,
It is I who laugh, it is I who make love
And then, feel shame, it is I who lie dying
With a rattle in my throat. I am sinner,
I am saint. I am the beloved and the
Betrayed. I have no joys that are not yours, no
Aches which are not yours. I too call myself I.

Glossary

Confessional: A style of poetry that deals with personal and often taboo subjects.

Categorizers: Those who attempt to fit people, especially women, into fixed social roles.

Spouted: Grew suddenly or developed (used here to refer to puberty).

Rattle: A gurgling sound made in the throat when dying.

Nympho: A woman with a mental disorder marked by compulsive sexual behaviour.

Jilted in Love: Abandoned by a lover.

Saint/Sinner: Dualities used to explore the complexity of identity

Comprehension

I. Answer the following questions in about a page.

1. How does Kamala Das assert her identity in the poem “Introduction”?
2. Explain the important role that language plays in the poem.
3. What does the poem say about gender roles and expectations?
4. Discuss the significance of the line “I too call myself I.”
5. How does the poet blend the personal and the political in this poem?
6. In what ways does the poem challenge conventional notions of femininity?

II. Answer the following questions in about two pages.

1. Discuss how “Introduction” exemplifies Kamala Das’s feminist voice.
2. Analyze the theme of identity and alienation in the poem.
3. How does Kamala Das use poetic form and language to explore her complex selfhood?
4. Examine the role of resistance and self-expression in “Introduction.” How does the poem act as a protest against patriarchal norms?

Suggested Reading

- "My Story": Kamala Das
- "An Introduction": Sylvia Plath
- "The Looking Glass": Kamala Das
- "Still I Rise": Maya Angelou

ALL MY SONS



Arthur Miller (1915–2005)

Pre-Reading Activities:

- What does it mean to live a “good life”?
- What responsibilities do business owners have beyond making profit?
- “A business that generates only profit, without adding value to society, is fundamentally lacking.” – Examine this viewpoint and reflect on the role of social responsibility in modern business.
- Reflect on the importance of morality, compassion, conscience, sin, and confession in modern society. Are these values still meaningful in today’s fast-paced, profit-oriented world?
- Critically evaluate the idea that business decisions should be made without emotional considerations, human empathy, or ethical reflection. Do you agree or disagree with this view?
- Discuss the viability of upholding ethical practices in the business world. Is it realistically achievable to incorporate ethics into business operations and decision-making?
- How does war change people, even those who don’t go to the battlefield?

About the Playwright

Arthur Miller was one of the most influential American dramatists of the twentieth century. Born in New York City, Miller's works are marked by a deep concern for social justice, moral responsibility, and the individual's role in society. He used theatre as a platform to critique the American Dream and reveal the ethical dilemmas faced by ordinary people.

Miller gained fame with “All My Sons” (1947), a powerful drama that explores the repercussions of unethical business practices during wartime. His subsequent major work, “Death of a Salesman” (1949), cemented his reputation, winning the Pulitzer Prize for Drama and becoming a staple of modern American theatre. This play sharply critiques materialism and examines the disillusionment of the common man.

Among his other important plays are “A View from the Bridge”, “After the Fall”, “The Price”, and “The Crucible” (1953), a powerful allegory on McCarthyism set during the Salem witch trials. Between February 1692 and May 1693, colonial Massachusetts experienced a series of accusations and trials targeting individuals accused of practising witchcraft. Over 200 people faced accusations, and 20 were executed. This episode remains a strong symbol of intolerance and injustice in American history. In addition to his dramatic work, Miller wrote essays, short stories, and a novel (Focus, 1945), exploring themes of identity, morality, and social conflict.

Miller's plays are noted for their emotional depth, psychological insight, and ethical inquiry. His legacy endures because he combined personal tragedy with larger societal concerns, making his work timeless and socially relevant.

About the Play

All My Sons (1947) is a compelling three-act drama that unfolds over approximately eighteen hours, spanning from Sunday morning to early Monday morning. Set in post-World War II America, the play examines the devastating consequences of unethical business practices, the burden of guilt, and the moral responsibilities of individuals within society.

The central conflict centers on Joe Keller, a successful industrialist who has a government contract to produce airplane cylinder heads during the war. To prevent financial loss, Keller approves shipping defective parts, which leads to the deaths of twenty-one pilots. Although he initially escapes legal punishment, the consequences of his decision and its effects on his family and community gradually become clear. His son, Chris, an idealist, eventually confronts him with the truth, pushing Keller to a moment of tragic self-awareness. Unable to bear the guilt and disillusionment within his family, Keller ultimately takes his own life.

Miller skillfully combines the personal and political, using the domestic setting to reflect broader social issues. The play criticises the pursuit of personal profit at the expense of human values, emphasising the tension between individual success and the common good. The characters are deeply connected to this moral dilemma, embodying themes of denial, accountability, and ethical decision-making.

The play explores several powerful themes: responsibility, guilt, and the American Dream. It centers on Joe Keller, an industrialist whose decision to ship defective airplane parts during World War II led to the deaths of twenty-one pilots. A key theme is a tension between moral responsibility and business interests—Miller questions whether financial success can justify ethical compromises. The theme of family loyalty is also closely linked to personal

accountability. Joe tries to protect his family's future at the expense of others, but this ultimately results in tragic consequences. Guilt and denial pervade the play, particularly as characters confront their past actions and their impact on loved ones. Another important theme is the illusion of the American Dream, where the pursuit of prosperity blinds characters to the broader social and moral effects of their choices. Through these themes, Miller criticizes a post-war society that values success over integrity, urging audiences to reflect on the price of self-deception and unchecked ambition.

“All My Sons” remains strikingly relevant today, as it prompts audiences to reflect on the ethical implications of business, the importance of conscience, and the consequences of moral compromise. Through this work, Miller challenges society to consider the true cost of success when it comes at the expense of human life and integrity.

Characters

JOE KELLER (60):	An industrialist/businessman
KATE (Above 50):	Joe's wife
CHRIS (32):	Their son
ANN DEEVER (26):	Chris's lady love
GEORGE (32):	Ann's brother
Dr JIM BAYLISS (40):	Neighbour
SUE (40):	Jim's wife
FRANK LUBEY (32):	Neighbour
LYDIA (27):	Frank's wife
BERT (8):	Son of Jim and Sue

A Short Overview of the Characters

Joe Keller is the central character in the play—a successful businessman who values family above all else. He appears friendly, hardworking, and a devoted father and husband, but beneath this surface lies a man burdened by guilt. During World War II, Joe knowingly allowed defective airplane cylinder heads to be shipped from his factory, leading to the deaths of 21 pilots. He justified his decision by saying he did it to secure his family's future and keep the business running. However, the truth of his actions gradually unfolds, revealing his deep moral failure. Joe's tragedy is his inability to understand that his responsibility extends beyond his family to society as a whole. When he finally recognizes the consequences of his actions—including the role his decision played in his son Larry's death—he is overwhelmed by guilt and ultimately takes his own life.

Chris Keller is Joe's surviving son and an idealist shaped by his war experiences. He advocates for honesty, responsibility, and living by principles. Chris idolizes his father and envisions a future founded on moral integrity, especially in his plan to marry Ann Deever, Larry's former fiancée. However, his world shatters when he learns that Joe was responsible for the pilots' deaths. This betrayal triggers a deep moral and emotional crisis, leaving him torn between love for his father and loyalty to his values. Though greatly disappointed, he ultimately chooses not to report Joe, illustrating the painful complexity of familial love. Chris symbolizes the voice of conscience in the play, consistently urging others to face the truth and embrace accountability.

Kate Keller is a mother consumed by denial and grief. She refuses to believe that her son Larry is dead, clinging to hope even years after his disappearance during the war. This denial is not just emotional—she must avoid facing the truth about Joe's role in the wartime tragedy. If she admits Larry is dead, she must also accept that Joe's actions were indirectly responsible. Kate is a strong yet emotionally

fragile woman who manipulates others—particularly Chris—into maintaining the illusion that their family is intact. Despite her motherly warmth and devotion, she is complicit in Joe’s moral failing. Ultimately, it is her insistence on facing reality that forces Joe to confront his guilt, making her both a tragic and pivotal figure in the play.

Ann Deever is Larry’s former fiancée and now Chris’s love interest. She is composed, intelligent, and deeply in love with Chris, determined to build a new life with him. Ann has distanced herself from her father, Steve Deever, who was jailed for the defective parts scandal, believing he was solely to blame. However, she knows the whole truth and carries a letter from Larry, written before his suicide, which reveals that he took his own life after learning of Joe’s involvement. Ann is a catalyst for truth in the play, though she tries to avoid conflict, she reveals the letter when it becomes necessary to open the eyes of those around her. Her character reflects the painful necessity of facing facts and letting go of the past to build a better future.

George Deever, Ann’s brother, is a lawyer torn between loyalty to his family and feelings of betrayal. Initially, he believed his father was guilty, but after visiting Steve in prison, he came to think that Joe Keller was the real culprit. He arrives at the Keller house to prevent Ann from marrying Chris and to confront Joe. Though briefly charmed by the Keller family's warmth and familiarity, a comment from Kate confirms his suspicions about Joe’s guilt. George serves as a moral disruptor in the play, forcing the past into the present and confronting characters with the consequences of their actions. His character emphasises the lasting effects of hidden truths and the importance of justice and acknowledgement.

Dr. Jim Bayliss is a disillusioned doctor and neighbour of the Kellers. Once idealistic, Jim is now worn down by the realities of a financially driven world. He left his home to pursue medical research inspired by noble ideals, but returned due to pressure from his materialistic wife, Sue. Although intelligent and compassionate, Jim is cynical about his profession, lamenting that doctors are underpaid and underappreciated compared to celebrities. He harbours quiet suspicions about Joe Keller's guilt. Still, he avoids open confrontation to preserve the illusion of stability in the neighbourhood and to protect Chris, whom he deeply respects and considers morally superior. Jim is torn between the practical demands of life and his suppressed yearning for a more meaningful existence, which he recognizes in Chris's idealism but no longer dares to pursue himself.

Sue Bayliss, Jim's wife, is a pragmatic and outspoken woman who values financial security and comfort more than idealism. She is cautious about her husband's old dreams of medical research, worried they could jeopardize their stable financial life. Sue strongly resents Chris Keller's influence on Jim, as she believes Chris encourages him to pursue unprofitable ideals. Although she maintains friendly relations with the Kellers, Sue privately admits that the neighborhood knows Joe was guilty and criticizes the Kellers for avoiding justice. She also suspects that Ann is marrying Chris for money and sees Chris as a hypocrite who preaches sacrifice while enjoying the luxuries gained from tainted money. Sue embodies practicality and self-interest in the play, creating a sharp contrast to Chris's moral idealism.

Frank Lubey is a well-meaning, superstitious neighbour who believes in astrology and avoids reading newspapers because of their negativity. He missed serving in the war due to age restrictions, and instead focused on domestic life, marrying Lydia and having three children. Frank plays a crucial role in keeping Kate Keller's hope alive by preparing Larry's horoscope, which supposedly

shows that the day Larry went missing was astrologically favourable, implying he might still be alive. His faith in astrology leads him to misjudge serious situations, such as Joe's crime, and while he means no harm, his actions inadvertently help prolong Kate's denial. Frank embodies the type of neighbour who values peace and routine over truth, serving as a symbol of naïve escapism.

Lydia Lubey is a warm, cheerful, and affectionate woman who lives a contented life with her husband Frank and their children. Once romantically involved with George Deever, Lydia married Frank during George's absence in the war and Steve Deever's imprisonment. She is admired for her domestic skills and good nature, and her happy family life becomes a painful reminder to George of what he lost because of the scandal involving his father. Lydia symbolizes the simplicity of domestic happiness and the life that might have been, adding a layer of personal loss to the play's larger moral conflicts.

Bert is an innocent eight-year-old boy, the son of Frank and Lydia. He shares a playful relationship with Joe Keller, engaging in imaginative games where Joe pretends to be a policeman and Bert acts as his assistant, guarding a fictional jail in Keller's basement. This harmless play takes on a darker undertone, reflecting Joe's hidden guilt and the looming threat of exposure. Though Bert's role is small, his presence subtly highlights the contrast between children's innocence and the moral failures of adults.

Glossary

Airplane Cylinder Heads: A vital part of an aircraft engine. In the play, Joe Keller's factory is contracted to produce these during the war, but he knowingly ships defective parts, resulting in the deaths of twenty-one pilots

All nerved up: Tense, excited

Allegory: A narrative that has both literal and symbolic meaning. Although “All My Sons” is rooted in realism, it can also be interpreted as an allegory about post-war American capitalism and moral compromise

American Dream: The ideal that everyone can achieve success and prosperity through hard work. The play critiques this dream, showing how it can lead to ethical lapses when tied solely to material gain

Andy Gump: Popular comic strip between 1920 and 1940

Crabbing about: Complaining about

Dast: Dares to

Don Ameche: Famous film actor of the 1930s and 40s

Eagle Scouts: The highest rank among the Boy Scouts of America. A very upright and kind boy

Eyes peeled: Eyes wide open, keen on noticing

Fella: Fellow

G.B. Shaw: A witty Irish playwright who worked smoothly and fast

Gee whiz!: An expression of surprised admiration

General Motors: It has one of the largest factories in the world

Gimme: Give me

Haberdashery: Selling small articles of dress, ribbons, etc.

Hair-shirt... broadcloth...: To wear a hair-shirt is to punish oneself for a sin, and to wear a broadcloth is to enjoy a delicate garment in celebration

I’m yellow: I am a coward

Joe McGuts: A made-up name suggestive of being gutsy and courageous

Mother McKeller: Means he was motherly and took care of everyone

Nickels and dimes: Money (US) five-cent coin and coin worth one-tenth of a dollar, respectively

Oilstone: A stone on which a knife or blade is sharpened

Patsy: One who is duped or victimised

Phoney idealism: False idealism, hypocritical

Playland: A permanent fairground near New York City

Poplar: A tall, fast-growing tree

Post-War America – Refers to the period after World War II, marked by economic growth and unresolved ethical questions about profit, patriotism, and justice

Russian wolfhound: Expensive pet dog

Scoured: Washed thoroughly

Self-effacing: One who avoids being noticed

Sod: Green turf

Stolid mind: Unimaginative mind

Sucker: Fool; person easily deceived

Swanson's: An expensive restaurant

The great roué: Roué (a French word for a man with loose sexual habits), but here an affectionate term used by Chris to his father

Trellised arbor: A wooden framework around a grassy seat

Warner Bros: A Film company in Hollywood

Wartime Contracts: Agreements made between governments and manufacturers to supply goods during war. In the play, Keller's factory has a wartime contract with the government, which sets the stage for the central conflict

Warts: Small, hard growths on the skin

Zeppelin: A cigar-shaped airship used in the early thirties, named after its designer, Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin

Comprehension

I Answer the following questions in about a page each.

1. Describe the relationship of the Kellers with their neighbours.
2. Why does Kate object to the marriage of Chris and Ann?
3. How does Keller explain to Ann the conditions of wartime production of cylinders?

4. Why is Steve, Ann's father, arrested and convicted? Was he guilty?
5. What was the turnaround when Chris and Ann formally announced their intentions to get married?
6. George's trunk call from Columbus creates turmoil in Keller's mind. Explain.
7. Who is Larry? Why is he considered 'missing'?
8. What does Kate say about Larry's disappearance?
9. How does Kate advise Joe Keller about winning back the trust and love of their son, Chris?
10. Write a note on Ann, who was engaged to Larry to get married, and the lady love of Chris later.
11. Chris rejects Joe Keller's defence/justification of criminal conduct. Why?
12. Describe Kate as a mother caught between two sons- one 'missing' and the other alive.
13. How does the play bring out the conflict between being a good husband or a good son and the deeper loyalty to one's self and conviction?
14. Describe the relationship between Chris and Ann.
15. Write a note on Joe Keller as
 - a husband
 - a father
 - a businessman/ an industrialist

II. Answer the following questions in about two pages each:

1. Arthur Miller argues strongly for a positive relationship between the individual and society and decries injustice, competition and vested interests. Explain.
2. How does the play bring out the facets of the contemporary American Society and its values?
3. The play is a classic example of virtue and vice as well as sin and confession. Discuss.

4. “Sure, he was my son, but I think to him they were all my sons”. Explain the aptness of the title ‘All My Sons’ with reference to Keller's parting words.
5. How does Chris transform the mind of Joe Keller?
6. George’s visit to the Columbus Jail to meet his father is crucial in the play. Elaborate.
7. Do you think Kate knew about Larry’s death and indulged in deceit by not believing it?
8. In ‘All My Sons’, Chris condemns not only his father but the short-sightedness of the typical businessman’s creed. Substantiate.
9. Keller’s suicide at the end brings a tragic note to the play. Is Joe Keller a tragic hero who understood the need to sacrifice his life? Discuss.
10. ‘Miller’s characters are not merely characters, but they come alive.’ Discuss.
11. ‘All My Sons’ is Miller’s critique of social responsibility and ethical uprightness. Elaborate.
12. Discuss the conflict in the relationship between Joe Keller and Chris.

Suggested Reading

- “On Buying and Selling”- Kahlil Gibran
- *Death of a Salesman* - Arthur Miller
- *Where There Is a Will* - Mahesh Dattani

QUESTION PAPER PATTERN

**B.B.A. AND OTHER PROGRAMS COMING UNDER THE FACULTY
OF MANAGEMENT**

GENERAL ENGLISH

III SEMESTER

Time: 3 Hours

Marks :80

SECTION - A

(Literary Component – 40 marks)

UNIT – 1

LITERARY SKILLS

(PLAY)

I. Answer in a page (Two questions out of Three)

2x5=10

II. Answer in about 2 – 3 pages (1 question out of 2)

1x10=10

(Short Story, Speech and Poems)

III. Answer in a page (4 questions out of 6)

4x5=20

MODEL QUESTION PAPER

B.B.A. AND OTHER PROGRAMS COMING UNDER THE FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT

GENERAL ENGLISH

III SEMESTER

Time: 3 Hours

Marks :80

SECTION - A

(Literary Component – 40 marks)

UNIT – 1

LITERARY SKILLS

(PLAY)

I. Answer any TWO in about a page each: (2x5=10)

1. Write a note on the relationship between Chris and Joe Keller.
2. Sketch the character of Kate Keller.
3. What causes the final confrontation between Joe and Chris?

II. Answer any ONE in about two pages: (1x10=10)

1. How does Arthur Miller show the effects of war on individuals and families?
2. What leads to Joe Keller's downfall? Explain the events leading up to the final scene.

(Short Story, Speech and Poems)

III. Answer any FOUR in about a page each: (4x5=20)

1. What is the significance of the name "Black Cobras" in the story?
2. The story "Black Cobras" highlights the intersection of gender and communal identity. Explain.
3. How does Rahul Dravid portray cricket as a unifying force in India?

4. What values does Dravid emphasize through his tribute to Sir Don Bradman?
5. In what ways does “Redemption Song” convey hope and resistance in the face of suffering?
6. Discuss Kamala Das’s assertion of her identity within a male-dominated society as depicted in the poem An Introduction.

All My Sons

ALL MY SONS

a play in three acts

by Arthur Miller

Characters:

Joe Keller (Keller)

Kate Keller (Mother)

Chris Keller

Ann Deever

George Deever

Dr. Jim Bayliss (Jim)

Sue Bayliss

Frank Lubey

Lydia Lubey

Bert

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 right and left 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 right, beside the house, the entrance of the driveway can be seen, but the poplars cut off view of its continuation downstage. In the left 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 right is a small, trellised arbor, shaped like a sea shell, with a decorative bulb hanging from its forward-curving roof. Carden 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 judgements must be dredged out of experience and a peasant-like common sense. A man among men.

Doctor Bayliss is nearly 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 left, 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, fings a pouch, and sits there on the bench, filling his pipe.

Keller: Gonna rain tonight.

Jim: Paper says so?

Keller: Yeah, right here.

Jim: Then it can't rain.

Frank Lubey enters, 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 pleasantly 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'. Walking off my breakfast. {looks up at the sky} That beautiful? Not a cloud in the sky.

Keller: {looking 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 anymore. 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?

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: {shaking 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 think. {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. {turning to Keller} What did Kate say?

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

Frank: {struck} You know? Its funny.

Keller: What?

Frank: Larry was born in August. He'd be 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 twenty-fifth, right?

Keller: Yeah?

Frank: Well, then, we assume that if he was killed it was on November twenty-fifth. Now, what Kate wants...

Keller: Oh, Kate asked you to amke a horoscope?

Frank: Yeah, what she wants to find out is whther November twenty-fifth 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 the 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 twenty-fifth?

Frank: That's what I'm working on to find out. It takes time! See, the point is, if November twenty-fifth 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: He's alright. He's just completely out of his mind, that's all.

Frank: {peevied} 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: {getting up} What a problem. One look at a girl and he takes her temperature. {goes to the 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: {looking 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. Here 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: {pointing at him, laughing} That's very good, Jim.

Jim: {looking toward house} Well, where's the beautiful girl that 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.

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. {Sue, Jim's wife, enters. 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. {pointing to their house:} And give her a nasty answer. I can smell the 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 you son wants to play golf tell him I'm ready. Or if he'd like to take a trip around the world for about thirty years. {he exits}

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

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

Keller: Yeah, sure. {Sue goes to parsley box and pulls some parsley} You were a nurse too long, Susie. You're too ... too ... realistic.

Sue: {laughing, pointing at him} Now you said it!

Lydia Lubey enters. 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 insisently} 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! {He exits}

Sue: {Laughing} 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. {she exits}

Lydia: Is shee 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 of 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 offstage.

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

Lydia: {embarrassed, laughing} 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, 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 the other.

Keller: You want the paper?

Chris: That's all right, just the book section.

He bends down and pulls out part of the paper on porch floor.

Keller: You're always reading the book section and you never buy a book.

Chris: {coming down to settee} I like to keep abreast of my ignorance.

He sits on the settee.

Keller: What is that, every week a new book comes out?

Chris: Lots of new books.

Keller: All different?

Chris: All different.

Keller shakes his head, puts knife down on bench, takes oilstone up to the cabinet.

Keller: Psss! Annie up yet?

Chris: Mother's giving her breakfast in the dining room.

Keller: {looking at the broken tree} See what happened to the tree?

Chris: {without looking up} Yeah.

Keller: What's mother going to say?

Bert runs up 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 the 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: {pulling him down by the lapel and whispering 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 chuckles and winks at Chris, who is enjoying all this.

Keller: 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: {grabbing him by the shirt and pulling 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.

Bert: 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.

Bert: About what?

Keller: Just in general. Be v-e-r-y careful.

Bert: {nodding in bewilderment} Okay. {he exits}

Keller: {laughing} 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 there 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: {after slight pause} What was she doing out here at that hour? {Chris silent. With 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 home 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 no grave, so where are you?

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

Keller looks at him searchingly a moment

Keller: 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}

Keller: Well, that's only your business, Chriss.

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.

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 that I can give myself to. Annie is in the middle of that. Now ... where to 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: {after a 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.

Keller: {putting a fist up to Chris's 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 overwhelming 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 back 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. {moves} That wid did some job on this place. {of the tree} So much for that, thank Got.

Keller: {indicating chair beside him} Sit down, take it easy.

Mother: {pressing 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, stands there smelling them in her hand, then sprinkles them over plants.

Mother: No more roses. It's so funny... everything decides to happen at the same time. This month is is 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: {as her nods halt, to Keller} The only think 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 string beans 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 have 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. She gets up and goes aimlessly toward the trees on rising.

Mother: 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: {looking 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: {pressing the top of her head} Get me an aspirin, heh?

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

Mother: Fine. {to Keller} We can do it tonight.

Keller: Swell with me!

Chris: Sure, let's have some fun. {to Mother} You'll start with this aspirin. {he goes up and into the 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 about 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 dast take her faith away, Joe. Strangers might. But not his father, not 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! Laugh. Laugh at me. {She points to tree} But why did that happen the very night she came back? She goes to sleep in his room and his memorial breaks in pieces. Look at it. Look. {She sits on bench} 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: {rising} Why me above all?

Mother: Just don't stop believing.

Keller: What does that mean, me above all?

Bert comes rushing on.

Bert: Mr. Keller! Say, Mr. Keller... {pointing up the 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, "Oh-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, and 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 the 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. Chriss, 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 gor...

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: {as she runs to fence} Boy, the poplars got thick, didn't they? {Keller moves to settee and sits.}

keller: 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: {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 you 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. An you and my brother are doing algebra, and Larry trying to copy my homework. Gosh, those dear dead days beyond recall.

Jim: Well, I hope that doesn't meen you want me to move out?

Sue: {calling from offstage} 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: {resigned} 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 offstage} Jim?

Jim: At once! {Turns and goes off} At once. {He exits}

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, becomes suddenly lively, crosses to Keller on settee, sits on his lap.

Ann: 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 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 storie.

Mother: If I can't ask Annie a personal question ...

Keller: Asking her is all right, but don't beat her over the head. You're beatin' her, you're beatin' her. {they are laughing}

Ann takes pan of beans off the stool, butts them on floor under chair and sits.

Ann: {to Mother} 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 meant, 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 in 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 for an instant} They don't say it on the radio but I'm sure that in the dark of 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 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 Got. Otherwise anything could happen. But there's God, so certain things can never happen. I would know, Annie ... just like 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 stands there in silence, then turns trembling, going upstage.

Ann: No, Kate.

Mother: I have to have some tea.

Frank appears, carrying a ladder.

Ann: {taking his hand} Why, Frank, you're loosing your hair.

Keller: He's got responsibility.

Frank: Gee whiz!

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! {funereally} 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 horoscope tonight, Kate. {embarrassed} See you later, Ann, you look wonderful. {he exits. They look at Ann}

Ann: {to Chris, as she 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: 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 get 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}

Mother: Except that they didn't get it confused. {to Ann} He hands out police badges from the Post Toasties boxes. {they laugh}

Ann rises and comes to Keller, putting her arm around his shoulder.

Ann: {wonderously at them, happy} 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 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 know 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-40s crash in Australia. Kid, walkin' down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I wasn't, and there as a court apper 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?

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, Kate? Don't you feel any ...?

Keller: (to Ann) The next ime you write Dad ...

Ann: I don't write him.

Keller: (struck) Well, every now and then you ...

Ann: (a little shamed, 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 lookat him. He knowingly shipped out parts what 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 ...

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 when into P-40s only. What's the matter with you? You know Larry never flew a P-40.

Chris: So who flew those P-40s, 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 take out his tools and he ... covers over the cracks. Alright, 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 mustn'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 out 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 the 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 at Chris) Look at him, he's blushin' (He exits, laughing, into the 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 know 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. (finally) I love you. (Pause. She waits) I have no imagination That's all I know to tell you. (Ann is 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 for ever. You're sure.

Ann: I almost got married two years ago.

Chris: Why didn't you?

Ann: You started to write 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: (looks toward house, then at her, trembling) Give me a kiss, Ann. Give me a ...(they kiss) God, I kissed you, Annie, I kissed Anni. 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)

Ann: It wouldn't work this way. (Slight pause)

Chris: (speaks quietly, factually at first) 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 take 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 hd. 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 onto 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 chaged 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 gues that included you.

Ann: And you still feel that way?

Chris: I want you know, 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 hundereds 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: (thumbing toward house) Hey, Ann, your brother... (They step apart shyly. Keller comes down, and wryly) What's 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!

Chris: 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 borother?

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: (takes a steep 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 indecisively) 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 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 day in court the man blamed it all on me... and his is his daughter. I mean if she was sent here to find out something?

Chris: (angered) Why? What's 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?

Ann: (still on the 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 the 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. Goodbye.

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 postcard.

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: (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: (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 downstage, stiffly, staring, seeing.

CURTAIN.

As twilight falls, that evening.

On the rise, Chris is discovered 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 more light with that thing gone?

Chris: My 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: 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 upstage 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 the 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?

Mother: What's the difference, dear. There are certain people, y'know, the sicker they get, the longer they live. (She goes into the 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. Ann 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 jst a little silly about the dark.

Sue: (looks about) It's 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.

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 the 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 gues 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 intern. 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.

Ann: Is that bad?

Sue: My husband has a family, dear. Everytime he has a session with Chris he feels as though he's compromising by not giving up everything for research. 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?

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 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 the 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, heh? 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 of people think my father was guilty, and I assumed there might be some question in your mind.

Ann: But I never once suspected him.

Chris: Nobody says it.

Ann: Chris, I know how much you love him, but it could never...

Chris: Do you think I could forgive him if he'd done that thing?

Ann: I'm not here out of blue sky, Chris. I turned my back on my father, if there's anything wrong here now...

Chris: I know that, Ann.

Ann: George is coming from Dad, and I don't think it's with a blessing.

Chris: He's welcome here. You've got nothing to fear from George.

Ann: Tell me that... just tell me that.

Chris: The man is innocent, Ann. Remember he was falsely accused once and it put him through hell. How would you behave if you were faced with the same thing again? Annie, believe me, there's nothing wrong for you here, believe me, kid.

Ann: All right, Chris, all right. (They embrace as Keller appears quietly on the porch. Ann simply studies him)

Keller: Every time I come out here it looks like Playland! (they break and laugh in embarrassment)

Chris: I thought you were going to shave?

Keller: (sitting on bench) In a minute. I just woke up, I can't see nothin'.

Ann: You look shaved.

Keller: Oh, no. (massages his jaw) Gotta be extra special tonight. Big night, Annie. So how's it feel to be a married woman?

Ann: (laughs) I don't know, yet.

Keller: (to Chris) What's the matter, you slippin'? (He takes a little box of apples from under the bench as they talk)

Chris: The great roue'!

Keller: What is that, roue'?

Chris: It's French.

Keller: Don't talk dirty. (they laugh)

Chris: (to Ann) You ever meet a bigger ignoramus?

Keller: Well, somebody's got to make a living.

Ann: (as they laugh) That's telling him.

Keller: I don't know, everybody's gettin' so Goddam educated in this country there'll be nobody to take away the garbage. (they laugh) It's gettin' so the only dumb ones left are the bosses.

Ann: You're not so dumn, Joe.

Keller: I know, but you go into our plant, for instance. I got so many lieutenants, majors and colonels that I'm ashamed to ask somebody to sweep the floor. I gotta be careful I'll insult somebody. No kiddin'. It's a tragedy: you stand on the street today and spit, you're gonna hit a college man.

Chris: Well, don't spit.

Keller: (breaks the apple in half, passing it to Ann and Chris) I mean to say, it's comin' to a pass. (he takes a breath) I been thinkin', Annie... your brother, George. I been thinkin' about your brother George. When he comes I like you to brooch something to him.

Chris: Broach.

Keller: What's the matter with brooch?

Chris: (smiling) It's not English.

Keller: When I when to night school it was brooch.

Ann: (laughing) Well, in day school it's broach.

Keller: Don't surround me, will you? Seriously, Ann... You say he's not well. George, I been thinkin', why should be know himself out in New York with that cut-throat competition, when I got so many friends here... I'm very friendly with some big lawyers in town. I could set George up here.

Ann: That's awfully nice of you, Joe.

Keller: No, kid, it ain't nice of me. I want you to understand me. I'm thinking of Chris. (slight pause) See... this is what I mean. You get older, you want to feel that you... accomplished something. My only accomplishment is my son. I ain't brainy. That's all I accomplished. Now, a year, eighteen months, your father'll be a free man. Who is he going to come to, Annie? His baby. You. He'll come, old, mad, into your house.

Ann: That can't matter any more, Joe.

Keller: I don't what that to come between us. (gestures between Chris and himself)

Ann: I can only tell you that that could never happen.

Keller: You're in love now, Annie, but believe me, I'm older than you and I know... a daughter is a daughter, and a father is a father. And it could happen. (he pauses) I like you and George to go to him in prison and tell him... "Dad, Joe wants to bring you into the business when you get out."

Ann: (surprised, even shocked) You'd have him as a partner?

Keller: No, no partner. A good job. (pause. He sees she is shocked, a little mystified. He gets up, speaks more nervously) I want him to know that when he gets out he's got a place waitin' for him. It'll take his bitterness away. To know you got a place...

Ann: Joe, you owe him nothing.

Keller: I owe him a good kick in the teeth, but he's your father.

Chris: Then kick him in the teeth! I don't want him in the plant, so that's that! You understand? And besides, don't talk about him like that. People misunderstand you!

Keller: And I don't understand why she has to crucify the man.

Chris: Well, it's her father if she feels...

Keller: No, no.

Chris: (almost angrily) What's it to you? Why...?

Keller: (a commanding outburst in high nervousness) A father is 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 likeable.

Chris: (a little peaved at the man's stupidity) Shave, will you?

Keller: Right again.

As he turns to porch Lydia comes hurrying from her house.

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, Lidia?

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: (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 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 and pulls him down 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 kit 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 some place else.

Ann: (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.

Chris: 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, 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 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) George! (George turns) Mrs. Bayliss.

Sue: How do you do.

George: (removing his hat) You're the people who bought our house, aren't you?

Sue: That's right. Come and see what we did with it before you leave.

George: (walks down and waay from her) I liked it the way it was.

Sue: (after a brief pause) He's frank, isn't he?

Jim: (pulling her off) See you later... Take it easy, fella. (they exit)

Chris: (calling after them) Thanks for driving him! (Turning to George) How about some grape juice? Mother made it especially for you.

George: (with forced appreciation) Good old Kate, remembered my grape juice.

Chris: You drank enough of it in this house. HOw've you been, George? ...Sit down.

George: (keeps moving) It take me a minute. (looking around) It seems impossible.

Chris: What?

George: I'm back here.

Chris: Say, youve gotten a little nervous, haven't you?

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

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

George: I don't know. When I was studying in the hospital is seemed sensible, but outside there doesn't seem to be much of a law. The trees got thick, didn't they? (points to stump) What's that?

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

George: Why, afraid you'll forget him?

Chris: (starts for George) What kind of remark is that?

Ann: (breaking in, putting a restraining hand of Chris) When did you start wearing a hat?

George: (discovers hat in his hand) Today. From now on I decided to look like a lawyer, anyway. (He hold is up to her) Don't you recognize it?

Ann: Why? Where...?

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

Ann: How is he?

George: He got smaller.

Ann: Smaller?

George: Yeah, little. (holds out his hand to measure) He's a little man. That's what happens to suckers, you know. It's good I want to him in time... another year there'd be nothing left but his smell.

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

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

Chris: What does that mean?

George: (to Ann) You're not married yet, are you?

Ann: George, will you sit down and stop...?

George: Are you married yet?

Ann: No, I'm not married yet.

George: You're not going to marry him.

Ann: Why am I not going to marry him?

George: Because his father destroyed your family.

Chris: Now look, George...

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

Chris: George, you don't want to be the voice of God, do you?

George: I'm...

Chris: That's been your trouble all your life, George, you dive into things. What kind of statement is that to make? You're a big boy now.

George: I'm a big boy now.

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

George: Don't civilize me!

Ann: Shhh!

Chris: (ready to hit him) Are you going to talk like a grown man or aren't you?

Ann: (quickly, to forestall an outburst) Sit down, dear. Don't be angry, what's the matter? (He allows her to seat him, 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 back 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 know he was a liar the first time, but in the appeal they believed the 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 are 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 me 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 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.

George: Any my father, that frightened mouse who'd never buy a shirt without somebody along... That man would do such a thing on his own?

Chris: On his own. And because he's a frightened mouse this is another thing he'd do... Throw the blame on somebody else in court but it didn't work, but with a fool like you it works!

Ann: (deeply shaken) Don't talk like that!

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

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

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

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

George: How can he tell you? It's his father. (To Chris) None of these things ever even cross your mind?

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

George: He knows, Annie. He knows!

Chris: The voice of God!

George: Then why isn't your name on the business? Explain that to her!

Chris: What the hell has that got to do with... ?

George: Annie, why isn't his hame on it?

Chris: Even when I don't own it!

George: Who're you kidding? Who gets it when he dies? (To Ann) Open your eyes, you know the both of them, isn't that the first thing they'd do, the way they love each other? ...J. O. Keller and Son? (Pause. Ann looks from him to Chris) I'll settle it. Do you want to settle it, or are you afraid to?

Chris: What do you mean?

George: Let me go up and talk to your father. In ten minutes you'll have the answer. Or are you afraid of the answer?

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

George: Let me go to him.

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

George: (To Ann) What more do you want! (There is a sound of footsteps in the house).

Ann: (turns her head suddenly toward house) Someone's coming.

Chris: (to George, quietly) You won't say anything now.

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

George: You're coming with me.

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

George: You're coming with me.

Ann: You understand? Don't... George, you're not going to start anything now! (She hears footsteps) Shhh!

Mother enters on porch. She is dressed almost formally. Her hair is fixed. They are all turned toward her. On seeing George she raises both hands, comes down toward him.

Mother: Georgie, Georgie.

George: (he has always liked her) Hello, Kate.

Mother: (cups his face in her hands) They made an old man out of you. (Touches his hair) Look, you're grey.

George: (her pity, open and unabashed, reaches into him, and he smiles sadly) I know, I...

Mother: I told you when you went away, don't try for medals.

George: (laughs, tiredly) I didn't try, Kate. They made it very easy for me.

Mother: (actually angry) Go on. You're all alike. (To Ann) Look at him, why did you say he's fine? He looks like a ghost.

George: (relishing her solicitude) I feel alright.

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

Ann: He just hasn't any appetite.

Mother: If he ate in my house he'd have an appetite. (to Ann) I pity your husband! (To George) Sit down. I'll make you a sandwich.

George: (sits with an embarrassed laugh) I'm really not hungry.

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

George: (with deep feeling for her) You... you haven't changed at all, you know that, Kate?

Mother: None of us changed, Georgie. We all love you. Joe was just talking about the day you were born and the water got shut off. People were carrying basins from a block away... A stranger would have thought the whole block was on fire! (they laugh. She sees the juice. To Ann) Why didn't you give him some juice!

Ann: (defensively) I offered it to him.

Mother: (scoffingly) You offered it to him! (thrusting glass into George's hand) Give it to him! (To George, who is laughing) And now you're going to sit here and drink some juice... and look like something!

George: (sitting) Kate, I feel hungry already.

Chris: (proudly) She could turn Mahatma Ghandi into a heavyweight!

Mother: (to Chris, with great energy) Listen, to hell with the restaurant! I got a ham in the icebox, and frozen strawberries, and avocados, and...

Ann: Swell, I'll help you!

George: The train leaves at eight thirty, Ann.

Mother: (to Ann) You're leaving?

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

Ann: (breaking through it, going to George) You hardly got here. Give yourself a chance to get acquainted again.

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

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

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

George: (gets up politely, nicely, for Kate's sake) Now wait a minute, Chris...

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

Mother: (at last confessing the tension) Why should he argue? (she goes to him. 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 the 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: (As they shake hands eagerly, warmly) Hello, Laughy. What'd you do, grow?

Lydia: I'm a big girl now.

Mother: Look what he 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... Youve 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 to 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 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.

Chris: 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 horoscope?

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!

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 din'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: (eagerly) 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 hooked already! (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: Seargent George.

Mother: He's a very kind man!

Chris: He looks like a gorilla.

Mother: (to George) He never shot anybody.

They all burst out laughing as Keller appears in the doorway. George rises abruptly and stares at Keller, who comes rapidly down to him.

Keller: (the laughter stops. With strained joviality) Well! Look who's here! (Extending his hand) Georgie, good to see ya.

George: (shaking hands. Somberly) How're you, Joe?

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

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

Ann: I'll call a cab for you. (She goes 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. (They laugh) I wear the pants and she beats me with the belt.

George: I saw your factory on the way from the station. It looks like General Motors.

Keller: I wish it was General Motors, but it ain't. Sit down, George. Sit down. (Takes cigar out of his pocket) So you finally went to see your father, I hear?

George: Yes, this morning. What kind of stuff do you make now?

Keller: oh, little of everything. Pressure cookers, an assembly for washing machines. Got a nice, flexible plant now. So how'd you find Dad? Feel alright?

George: (searching Keller, speaking indecisively) No, he's not well, Joe.

Keller: (lighting his cigar) Not his heart again, is it?

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

Keller: (blowing out smoke) Uh huh....

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

Keller: Leave him be.

George: (to Chris, indicating Keller) I'd like to talk to him.

Keller: Sure, he just got here. That's the way they do, George. A little man makes a mistake and they hang him by his thumbs. The big ones become ambassadors. I wish you'd-a told me you were going to see Dad.

George: (studying him) I didn't know you were interested.

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

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

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

Mother: Steve was never like that.

George: He's like that now. He'd like to take every man who made money in the war and put him up against a wall.

Chris: He'll need a lot of bullets.

George: And he'd better not get any.

Keller: that's a sad thing to hear.

George: (with bitterness dominant) Why? What's you expect him to think of you?

Keller: (the force of his nature rising, but under control) I'm sad to see he hasn't changed. As long as I know him, twenty five years, the man never learned how to take the blame. You know that, George.

George: (he does) Well, I...

Keller: But you do know it. Because the way you come in here you don't look like you remember it. I mean in nineteen thirty seven when we had the shop on Flood Street. And he damn near blew us all up with that heater he left burning for two days without water. He wouldn't admit that was his fault, either. I had to fire a mechanic to save his face. You remember that.

George: Yes, but...

Keller: I'm just mentioning it, George. Because this is just another one of a lot of things. Like when he gave Frank that money to invest in oil stock.

George: (distressed) I know that, I...

Keller: (driving in, but restrained) But it's good to remember those things, kid. The way he cursed Frank because the stock went down. Was that Frank's fault? To listen to him Frank was a swindler. And all the man did was to give him a bad tip.

George: (gets up, moves away) I know those things...

Keller: Then remember them, remember them. (Ann comes out of house) There are certain men in the world who rather see everybody hung before they'll take blame. You understand me, George?

They stand facing each other, George trying to judge him.

Ann: (coming downstage) The cab's on its way. Would you like to wash?

Mother: (with the thrust of hope) Why must he go? Make the midnight, George.

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

Ann: How about it? Why not? We're eating at the lake, we could have a swell time.

A long pause, as George looks at Ann, Chris, Keller, then back to her.

George: All right.

Mother: now you're talking.

Chris: I've got a shirt that'll go right with that suit.

George: Is Lydia...? I mean, Frank and Lydia coming?

Mother: I'll get you a date that'll make her look like a... (she starts upstage)

George: (laughing) No, I don't want a date.

Chris: I know somebody just for you! Charlotte Tanner! (he starts for the house)

Keller: Call Charlotte, that's right.

Mother: Sure, call her up. (Chris goes into house)

Ann: You go up and pick out a shirt and tie.

George: (stops, looks around at them and the place) I never felt at home anywhere but here. I feel so... (he nearly laughs, and turns away from them) Kate, you look so young, you know? You didn't change at all. It ... rings an old bell. (turns to Keller) You too, Joe, you're amazingly the same. The whole atmosphere is.

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

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

Keller: Except my flu during the war.

Mother: Huhh?

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

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

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

George: She said you've never been sick.

Mother: I said he was sick, George.

George: (going to Ann) Ann, didn't you hear her say...?

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

Frank enters briskly from driveway, holding Larry's horoscope in his hand. He comes to Kate.

Frank: Kate! Kate!

Mother: Frank, did you see George?

Frank: (extending his hand) Lydia told me, I'm glad to... you'll have to pardon me. (pulling mother over) I've got something amazing for you, Kate, I finished Larry's horoscope.

Mother: You'd be interested in this, George. It's wonderful the way he can understand the...

Chris: (entering from house) George, the girl's on the phone...

Mother: (desperately) He finished Larry's horoscope!

Chris: Frank, can't you pick a better time than this?

Frank: The greatest men who ever lived believed in the stars!

Chris: Stop filling her head with that junk!

Frank: Is it junk to feel that there's a greater power than ourselves? I've studied the stars of his life! I won't argue with you, I'm telling you. Somewhere in this world your brother is alive!

Mother: (instantly to Chris) Why isn't it possible?

Chris: Because it's insane.

Frank: Just a minute now. I'll tell you something and you can do as you please. Just let me say it. He was supposed to have died on November twenty fifth. But November twenty fifth was his favorite day. That's known, that's known, Chris!

Mother: Why isn't it possible, why isn't it possible, Chris!

George: (to Ann) Don't you understand what she's saying? She just told you to go. What are you waiting for now?

Chris: Nobody can tell her to go. (A car horn is heard)

Mother: (to Frank) Thank you, darling, for your trouble. Will you tell him to wait, Frank?

Frank: (as he goes) Sure thing.

Mother: (calling out) They'll be right out, driver!

George: You heard her say it, he's never been sick!

Mother: He misunderstood me, Chris! (Chris, looks at her, struck)

George: (to Ann) He simply told your father to kill pilots, and covered himself in bed!

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

Mother: I packed your bag, darling.

Chris: What?

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

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

Chris: That's all! How get out of here, George!

Mother: (to Chris) But if that's how he feels...

Chris: That's all, nothing more till Christ comes, about the case or Larry as long as I'm here! (to George) Now get out of here, George!

George: (to Ann) You tell me. I want to hear you tell me.

Ann: Go, George!

They disappear up the driveway, Ann saying, "Don't take it that way, Georgie! Please don't take it that way".

Chris: (turning to his mother) What do you mean you packed her bag? How dare you pack her bag?

Mother: Chris...

Chris: How dare you pack her bag?

Mother: She doesn't belong here.

Chris: Then I don't belong here.

Mother: She's Larry's girl.

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

Mother: Never, never in this world!

Keller: You lost your mind?

Mother: You have nothing to say!

Keller: (cruelly) I got plenty to say. Three and a half years you been talking like a maniac...

Mother smashes him across the face.

Mother: Nothing. You have nothing to say. Now I say. He's coming back, and everybody has got to wait.

Chris: Mother, Mother...

Mother: Wait, wait...

Chris: How long? How long?

Mother: (rolling out of her) Till he comes. Forever and ever till he comes!

Chris: (as an ultimatum) Mother, I'm going ahead with it.

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

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

Mother: I'll never let him go and you'll never let him go!

Chris: I've let him go. I've let him go a long...

Mother: (with no less force, but turning from him) Then let your father go. (pause. Chris stands transfixed)

Keller: She's out of her mind.

Mother: Altogether! (To Chris, but not facing them) Your brother's alive, darling, because if he's dead, your father killed him. Do you understand me now? As long as you live, that boy is alive. God does not let a son be killed by his father. Now you see, don't you? Now you see. (Beyond control, she hurries up and into the house)

Keller: (Chris has not moved. He speaks insinuatingly, questioningly) She's out of her mind.

Chris: (in a broken whisper) Then... you did it?

Keller: (with the beginning of plea in his voice) He never flew a P-40...

Chris: (struck. Deadly) But the others.

Keller: (insistently) She's out of her mind. (he takes a step toward Chris, pleadingly.)

Chris: (unyielding) Dad... you did it?

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

Chris: (still asking, and saying) Then you did it. To the others.

Both hold their voices down.

Keller: (afraid of him, his deadly insistence) What's the matter with you? What the hell is the matter with you?

Chris: (quietly, incredibly) How could you do that? how?

Keller: What's the matter with you!

Chris: Dad... Dad, you killed twenty one men!

Keller: What, killed

Chris: You killed them, you murdered them.

Keller: (as though throwing his whole nature open before Chris) how could I kill anybody?

Chris: Dad! Dad!

Keller: (trying to hush him) I didn't kill anybody!

Chris: then explain it to me. What did you do? Explain it to me or I'll tear you to pieces!

Keller: (horrified at his overwhelming fury) Don't, Chris, don't...

Chris: I want to know what you did, now what did you do? You had a hundred and twenty cracked engine heads, how what did you do?

Keller: If your going to hang me then I...

Chris: I'm listening. God almighty, I'm listening!

Keller: (their movements are those of subtle pursuit and escape. Keller keeps a step out of Chris's range as he talks: You're a boy, what could I do! I'm in business, a man is in business. A hundred and twenty cracked, you're out of business. You got a process, the process don't work you're out of business. You don't know how to operate, your stuff is no good, they close you up, they tear up your contracts. What the hell's it to them? You lay forty years into a business and they knock you out in five minutes, what could I do, let them take forty years, let them take my life away? (his voice cracking) I never though they'd install them. I swear to Got. I thought they'd stop 'em before anybody took off.

Chris: Then why'd you ship them out?

Keller: By the time they could spot them I thought I'd have the process going again, and I could show them they needed me and they'd let it go by. But weeks passed and I got no kick-back, so I was going to tell them.

Chris: Then why didn't you tell them?

Keller: it was too late. The paper, it was all over the front page, twenty one went down, it was too late. They came with handcuffs into the shop, what could I do? (He sits on bench) Chris... Chris, I did it for you, it was a chance and I took it for you. I'm sixty one years old, when would I have another chance to make something for you? Sixty one years old you don't get another chance, do ya?

Chris: You even knew that they wouldn't hold up in the air.

Keller: I didn't say that.

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

Keller: But that doesn't mean...

Chris: It means you knew they'd crash.

Keller: It don't mean that.

Chris: Then you thought they'd crash.

Keller: I was afraid maybe...

Chris: You were afraid maybe! God in heaven, what kind of a man are you? Kids were hanging in the air by those heads. You knew that!

Keller: For you, a business for you!

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

Keller: Chris... My Chris...

CURTAIN

Two o'clock the following morning, Mother is discovered on the rise, rocking ceaselessly in a chair, staring at her thoughts. It is an intense, slight, sort of rocking. A light shows from upstairs bedroom, lower floor windows being dark. The moon is strong and casts its bluish light.

Presently Jim, dressed in jacket and hat, appears, and seeing her, goes up beside her.

Jim: Any news?

Mother: No news.

Jim: (gently) You can't sit up all night, dear, why don't you go to bed?

Mother: I'm waiting for Chris. Don't worry about me, Jim, I'm perfectly all right.

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

Mother: I can't sleep. (slight pause) You had an emergency?

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 loose, and they're cracked as coconuts. Money. 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: (shaking her head) You're so childish, Jim! Sometimes you are.

Jim: (looks at her a moment) Kate. (Pause) What happened?

Mother: 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: (after 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 up at window, then at her): What'd Joe do, tell him?

Mother: (stops rocking) 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 compromise 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. 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 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 slippers. He goes upstage...To alley. Jim goes to him.

Jim: I have the feeling he's in the park. I'll look 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?

Mother: His friend is not home.

Keller: (comes down to her. His voice is husky) 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 it 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 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: 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 asking 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 to 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 coming 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 nothing 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 going 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!

Mother: You stop that!

Keller: You heard me. Now you know what to tell him. (Pause. He moves from her. Halts) But he wouldn't put me away though... He wouldn't do that... Would he?

Mother: He loved you, Joe, you broke his heart.

Keller: But to put me away...

Mother: I don't know. I'm beginning to think we don't really know him. They say in the war he was such a killer. Here he was always afraid of mice. I don't know him. I don't know what he'll do.

Keller: Goddam, If Larry was alive he wouldn't act like this. He understood the way the world is made. He listened to me. To him the world had a forty foot front, it ended at the building line. This one, everything bothers him. You make a deal, overcharge two cents, and his hair falls out. He don't understand money. Too easy, it came too easy. Yes, sir. Larry. That was a boy we lost. Larry. Larry. (He slumps on chair in front of her) What am I gonna do, Kate?

Mother: Joe, Joe, please... you'll be alright, nothing is going to happen.

Keller: (desperately, lost) For you, Kate, for both of you, that's all I ever lived for....

Mother: I know, darling, I know. (Ann enters from the house. They say nothing, waiting for her to speak)

Ann: Why do you stay up? I'll tell you when he comes.

Keller: (rises, goes to her) You didn't eat supper, did you? (to mother) Why don't you make her something?

Mother: Sure, I'll...

Ann: Never mind, Kate, I'm all right. (they are unable to speak to each other) There's something I want to tell you. (She starts, then halts) I'm not going to do anything about it.

Mother: She's a good girl! (To Keller) You see? She's a ...

Ann: I'll do nothing about Joe, but you're going to do something for me. (Directly to Mother) You made Chris feel guilty with me. I'd like you to tell him that Larry is dead and that you know it. You understand me? I'm not going out of here alone. There's no life for me that way. I want you to set him free. And then I promise you, everything will end, and we'll go away, and that's all.

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

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

Keller: You'll tell him.

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

Mother: My dear, if the boy was dead, it wouldn't depend on my words to make Chris know it... Thenight he gets into your bed, his heart will dry up. Because he knows and you know. To his dying day he'll wait for his brother! No, my dear, no such thing. You're going in the morning, and you're going alone. That's your life, that's your lonely life. (she goes to porch, and starts in)

Ann: Larry is dead, Kate.

Mother: (she stops) Don't speak to me.

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

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

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

Mother: (moving on her) What's enough for me? What're you talking about? (She grasps Ann's wrists)

Ann: You're hurting my wrists.

Mother: What are you talking about! (Pause. She stares at Ann a moment, then turns and goes to Keller)

Ann: Joe, go in the house.

Keller: Why should I...

Ann: Please go.

Keller: Lemme know when he comes. (Keller goes into house)

Mother: (as she sees Ann taking a letter from her pocket) What's that?

Ann: Sit down. (Mother moves left to chair, but does not sit) First you've got to understand. When I came, I didn't have any idea that Joe... I had nothing against him or you. I came to get married. I hoped... So I didn't bring this to hurt you. I thought I'd show it to you only if there was no other way to settle Larry in your mind.

Mother: Larry? (snatches letter from Ann's hand)

Ann: He wrote to me just before he... (mother opens and begins to read letter) I'm not trying to hurt you, Kate. You're making me do this, now remember you're... Remember. I've been so lonely, Kate... I can't leave here alone again. (a long low moan comes from Mother's throat as she reads) You made me show it to you. You wouldn't believe me. I told you a hundred times, why wouldn't you believe me!

Mother: Oh, my God.....

Ann: (with pity and fear) Kate, please, please...

Mother: My God, my God...

Ann: Kate, dear, I'm so sorry... I'm so sorry.

Chris enters from the driveway. He seems exhausted.

Ann: Where were you? ... You're all perspired. (mother doesn't move) where were you?

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

Ann: Where do I go? I have nowhere to go.

Chris: (to Mother) Where's Dad?

Ann: Inside lying down.

Chris: Sit down, both of you. I'll say what there is to say.

Mother: I didn't hear the car...

Chris: I left it in the garage.

Mother: Jim is out looking for you.

Chris: Mother... I'm going away. There are a couple of firms in Cleveland, I think I can get a place. I mean, I'm going way for good. (To Ann alone) I know what you're thinking, Annie. It's true. I'm yellow. I was made yellow in this house because I suspected my father and I did nothing about it, but if I know that night when I came home what I know now, he'd be in the district attorney's office by this time, and I'd have brought him there. Now if I look at him, all I'm able to do is cry.

Mother: What are you talking about? What else can you do?

Chris: I could jail him! I could jail him, if I were human any more. But I'm like everybody else now. I'm practical now. You made me practical.

Mother: But you have to be.

Chris: The cats in that alley are practical, the bums who ran away when we were fighting were practical. Only the dead ones weren't practical. But now I'm practical, and I spit on myself. I'm going away. I'm going now.

Ann: (going up to him) I'm coming with you.

Chris: No, Ann.

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

Chris: You do, you do.

Ann: I swear I never will.

Chris: in your heart you always will.

Ann: Then do what you have to do!

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

Ann: There's reason, there's reason!

Chris: What? Do I raise the dead when I put him behind bars? Then what'll I do it for? We used to shoot a man who acted like a dog, but honor was real there, you were protecting something. But here? This is the land of the great big dogs, you don't love a man here, you eat him! That's the principle; the only one we live by... it just happened to kill a few people this time, that's all. The world's that way, how can I take it out on him? What sense does that make? This is a zoo, a zoo!

Ann: (to Mother) You know what he's got to do! Tell him!

Mother: Let him go.

Ann: I won't let him go. You'll tell him what he's got to do...

Mother: Annie!

Ann: Then I will!

Keller enters from house. Chris sees him, goes down near arbor.

Keller: What's the matter with you? I want to talk to you!

Chris: (pulling violently away from him) Don't do that, Dad. I'm going to hurt you if you do that. There's nothing to say so say it quick.

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

Chris: (with an edge of sarcasm) It bothers me.

Keller: If you can't get used to it, then throw it away. You hear me? Take every cent and give it to charity, throw it in the sewer. Does that settle it? In the sewer, that's all. You think I'm kidding? I'm tellin' you to do it, if it's dirty then burn it. It's your money, that's not my money. I'm a dead man, I'm an old dean man, nothing's mine. Well, talk to me! What do you want to do.

Chris: It's not what I want to do. It's what you want to do.

Keller: What should I do? (Chris is silent) Jail? You want me to go to jail? If you want me to go, say so! Is that where I belong? Then tell me so! (Slight pause) What's the matter, whay can't you tell me? (Furiously) You say everyting else to me, say that! (Slight pause) I'll tell you why you can't say it. Because you know I don't belong there. Because you know! (with growing emphasis and passion, and a persistent tone of desperation) Who worked for nothin' in that war? When they ship a gun or a truck outa Detroid before they got their price? Is that clean? It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go! That's why you can't tell me.

Chris: That's exactly why.

Keller: Then... Why am I bad?

Chris: I know you're no worse than most men but I thought you were better. I never saw you as a man. I saw you as my father. (Almost breaking) I can't look at you this way, I can't look at myself!

He turns away, unable to face Keller. Ann goes quickly to Mother, takes letter from her and starts for Chris. Mother instantly rushes to intercept her.

Mother: Give me that!

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

Keller: Larry!

Mother: Chris, it's not for you. (he starts to read) Joe... go away...

Keller: (mystified, frightened) Why'd she say, Larry, what...?

Mother: (desparately pushes him toward alley, glancing at Chris) Go to the street, Joe, go to the street! (she comes down beside Keller) Don't, Chris... (pleading with her whole soul) Don't tell him.

Chris: (quietly) Three and one half years... talking, talking. Now you tell me what you must do... This is how he died, now tell me where you belong.

Keller: (pleading) Chris, a man can't be a Jesus in this world!

Chris: I know all about the world. I know the whole crap story. Now listen to this, and tell me what a man's got to be! (Reads:) "My dear Ann: ...", you listening? He wrote this the day he died. Listen, don't cry.... Listen! "My Dear Ann: it is impossible to put down the things I feel. But I've got to tell you something. Yesterday they flew in a load of papers from the States and I read about Dad and your father being convicted. I can't express myself. I can't tell you how I feel... I can't bear to live any more. Last night I circled the base for twenty minutes before I could bring myself in. How could he have done that? Every day three or four men never come back and he sits back there doing 'business'.... I don't know how to tell you what I feel.... I can't face anybody... I'm going out on a mission in a few minutes. They'll probably report me as missing. If they do, I want you to know that you mustn't wait for me. I tell you, Ann, if I had him there now I could kill him..." (Keller grabs the letter from Chris's hand and reads it. After a long pause) Now blame the world. Do you understand that letter?

Keller: (speaking almost inaudibly) I think I do. Get the car. I'll put on my jacket. (he turns and starts slowly for the house. Mother rushes to intercept him)

Mother: Why are you going? You'll sleep, why are you going?

Keller: I can't sleep here. I'll feel better if I go.

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

Keller: (looking at letter in his hand) Then what is this if it isn't telling me? Sure, he was my son. But I think to him they were all my sons. And I guess they were, I guess they were. I'll be right down. (exits into house)

Mother: (to Chris, with determination) You're not going to take him!

Chris: I'm taking him.

Mother: It's up to you, if you tell him to stay he'll stay. Go and tell him!

Chris: Nobody could stop him now.

Mother: You'll stop him! How long will he live in prison? Are you trying to kill him?

Chris: (holding out letter) I thought you read this!

Mother: (of Larry, the letter) The war is over! Didn't you hear? It's over!

Chris: Then what was Larry to you? A stone that fell into the water? It's not enough for him to be sorry. Larry didn't kill himself to make you and Dad sorry.

Mother: What more can we be!

Chris: You can be better! Once and for all you can know there's a universe of people outside and you're responsible to it, and unless you know that, you threw away your son because that's why he died.

A shot is heard in the house. They stand frozen for a brief second. Chris starts for porch, pauses at step, turns to Ann.

Chris: Find Jim! (He goes on into the house and Ann runs up driveway. Mother stands alone, transfixed.

Mother: (softly, almost moaning) Joe... Joe... Joe... Joe... (Chris comes out of house, down to Mother's arms.)

Chris: (almost crying) Mother, I didn't mean to...

Mother: Don't dear. Don't take it on yourself. Forget now. Live.

Chris stirs as if to answer. Shhh.... She puts his arms down gently and moves toward porch. Shhh... As she reaches porch steps she begins sobbing.

CURTAIN