

'cause you're strong you can show your muscles and nobody'll know what a pitiful specimen you are. But you won't stay young forever, didja ever thinka that? What'll become of you then? You'll end your life in the gutter and it'll serve you right, 'cause the gutter's where you came from and the gutter's where you belong.

*(She has thrust her face into HAL's and is spitting her final words at him before HOWARD finally grabs her, almost as though to protect her from herself, and holds her arms at her sides, pulling her away)*

HOWARD Rosemary, shut your damn mouth.

*(HAL withdraws to the far edge of the porch, no one paying any attention to him now, his reaction to the attack still a mystery)*

MRS. POTTS *(Comes out of kitchen)* Millie's going to be perfectly all right, Flo. Alan held her head and let her be sick. She's going to be perfectly all right, now.

FLO *(A general announcement, clear and firm)* I want it understood by everyone that there's to be no more drinking on this picnic.

HOWARD It was all my fault, Mrs. Owens. My fault.

*(ALAN escorts a sober MILLIE out on the porch)*

MRS. POTTS Here's Millie now, good as new. And we're all going on the picnic and forget it.

ALAN *(Quick to accuse HAL)* Hal, what's happened?

*(HAL does not respond)*

FLO *(To ALAN)* Millie will come with us, Alan.

ALAN Sure, Mrs. Owens. Hal, I told you not to drink!

*(HAL is still silent)*

FLO Madge, why did you wear your new dress?

MADGE *(As though mystified at herself)* I don't know. I just put it on.

FLO Go upstairs and change, this minute. I mean it! You come later with Rosemary and Howard!

*(MADGE runs inside)*

MRS. POTTS Let's hurry. All the tables will be taken.

ALAN Mr. Bevans, tell Madge I'll see her out there. Hal, the baskets are all in the Ford. Get goin'.

*(HAL doesn't move. ALAN hurries off)*

FLO Millie, darling, are you feeling better?

*(FLO and MILLIE go off through alley, right)*

MRS. POTTS *(To HAL)* Young man, you can follow us and find the way.

*(MRS. POTTS follows the others off. We hear the Cadillac drive off. HAL is sitting silent and beaten on the edge of the porch. HOWARD and ROSEMARY are on the lawn by MRS. POTTS' house)*

HOWARD He's just a boy, Rosemary. You talked awful.

ROSEMARY What made me do it, Howard? What made me act that way?

HOWARD You gotta remember, men have got feelings, too—same as women. *(To HAL)* Don't pay any attention to her, young man. She didn't mean a thing.

ROSEMARY *(Has gone up to the gate)* I don't want to go on the picnic, Howard. This is my last night of vacation and I want to have a good time.

HOWARD We'll go for a ride, honey.

ROSEMARY I want to drive into the sunset, Howard! I want to drive into the sunset!

*(She runs off toward the car, HOWARD following. HOWARD'S car drives away. HAL sits on the porch, defeated. MADGE soon comes out in another dress. She comes out very quietly and he shows no recognition of her presence. She sits on a bench on the porch and finally speaks in a soft voice)*

MADGE You're a wonderful dancer . . .

HAL *(Hardly audible)* Thanks.

MADGE . . . and I can tell a lot about a boy by dancing with him. Some boys, even though they're very smart, or very successful in some other way, when they take a girl in their arms to dance, they're sort of awkward and a girl feels sort of uncomfortable.

HAL *(He keeps his head down, his face in his hands)* Yah.

MADGE But when you took me in your arms—to dance—I had the most relaxed feeling, that you knew what you were doing, and I could follow every step of the way.

HAL Look, baby, I'm in a pretty bad mood.

*(He stands suddenly and walks away from her, his hands*



*thrust into his pockets. He is uncomfortable to be near her, for he is trembling with insult and rage)*

MADGE You mustn't pay any attention to Miss Sydney. (HAL is silent) Women like her make me mad at the whole female sex.

HAL Look, baby, why don't you beat it?

MADGE (She is aware of the depth of his feelings) What's the matter?

HAL (Gives up and begins to shudder, his shoulders heaving as he fights to keep from bawling) What's the use, baby? I'm a bum. She saw through me like a goddamn X-ray machine. There's just no place in the world for a guy like me.

MADGE There's got to be.

HAL (With self-derision) Yah?

MADGE Of course. You're young, and—you're very entertaining. I mean—you say all sorts of witty things, and I just loved listening to you talk. And you're strong and—you're very good-looking. I bet Miss Sydney thought so, too, or she wouldn't have said those things.

HAL Look, baby, lemme level with you. When I was fourteen, I spent a year in the reform school. How ya like that?

MADGE Honest?

HAL Yah!

MADGE What for?

HAL For stealin' another guy's motorcycle. Yah! I stole it. I stole it 'cause I wanted to get on the damn thing and go so far away, so fast, that no one'd ever catch up with me.

MADGE I think—lots of boys feel that way at times.

HAL Then my old lady went to the authorities. (He mimics his "old lady") "I've done everything I can with the boy. I can't do anything more." So off I go to the goddamn reform school.

MADGE (With all the feeling she has) Gee!

HAL Finally some welfare league hauls me out and the old lady's sorry to see me back. Yah! she's got herself a new boy friend and I'm in the way.

MADGE It's awful when parents don't get along.

HAL I never told that to another soul, not even Seymour.

MADGE (At a loss) I—I wish there was something I could say—or do.

HAL Well—that's the Hal Carter story, but no one's ever gonna make a movie of it.

MADGE (To herself) Most people would be awfully shocked.

HAL (Looking at her, then turning away cynically) There you are, baby. If you wanta faint—or get sick—or run in the house and lock the doors—go ahead. I ain't stoppin' you. (There is a silence. Then MADGE, suddenly and impulsively, takes his face in her hands and kisses him. Then she returns her hands to her lap and feels embarrassed. HAL looks at her in amazement) Baby! What'd you do?—

MADGE I . . . I'm proud you told me.

HAL (With humble appreciation) Baby!

MADGE I . . . I get so tired of being told I'm pretty.

HAL (Folding her in his arms caressingly) Baby, baby, baby.

MADGE (Resisting him, jumping to her feet) Don't. We have to go. We have all the baskets in our car and they'll be waiting. (HAL gets up and walks slowly to her, their eyes fastened and MADGE feeling a little thrill of excitement as he draws nearer) Really—we have to be going. (HAL takes her in his arms and kisses her passionately. Then MADGE utters his name in a voice of resignation) Hal!

HAL Just be quiet, baby.

MADGE Really . . . We have to go. They'll be waiting.

HAL (Picking her up in his arms and starting off. His voice is deep and firm) We're not goin' on no goddamn picnic.

CURTAIN

