

*squirms, his head still lower.*) It was bad enough for you to let me and Arthur see you, but to appear like that before your mother and Mildred—! And I wonder if Muriel would think you were so fine if she ever saw you as you looked and acted then. I think she'd give you your walking papers for keeps. And you couldn't blame her. No nice girl wants to give her love to a stupid drunk!

RICHARD. (*Crimson and writhing*) I know, Pa.

MILLER. (*After a pause—quietly but definitely*) All right. Then that settles the booze end of it. (*He sizes RICHARD up searchingly—then suddenly speaks sharply*) But there is another thing that's more serious. (*Rises; comes down to chair #4; sits; leans over table*) How about that tart you went to bed with at the Pleasant Beach House?

RICHARD. (*Flabbergasted—stammers*) You know? (*A moment before RICHARD continues. MILLER reacts—thinks the boy has admitted guilt; looks away from him, hurt.*) But I didn't! (*MILLER reacts; looks quickly and searchingly at RICHARD.*) If they've told you about her down there, they must have told you I didn't! I gave her the five dollars just so she'd let me out of it. She made everything seem rotten and dirty—and—I didn't want to do a thing like that to Muriel—no matter how bad I thought she'd treated me—even after I felt drunk, I didn't. Honest!

MILLER. How'd you happen to meet this lady, anyway?

RICHARD. I can't tell that, Pa. I'd have to snitch on someone—and you wouldn't want me to do that.

MILLER. (*A bit taken back*) No, I suppose I wouldn't. Hmm. Well, I believe you—and I guess that settles that. (*Then, after a quick, furtive glance at RICHARD, he nerves himself for the ordeal and begins with a shamefaced, self-conscious solemnity. Rises and crosses R.; looks about room*) But listen here, Richard—hmm—it's about time you and I had

a serious talk about—hmm—certain matters pertaining to—and now that the subject's come up of its own accord, it's a good time—I mean, there's no use in procrastinating further—so, here goes. (*But it doesn't go smoothly, and as he goes on he becomes more and more guiltily embarrassed and self-conscious and his expression more stilted.* RICHARD *sedulously avoids even glancing at him, his own embarrassment made tenfold more painful by his father's. Slaps RICHARD on the back affectionately—then says with gusto*) Richard— (*Crosses to chair #4 and sits*)—you have now come to the age when—well, you're a fully developed man, in a way—and it's only natural for you to have certain—hmm—desires of the flesh, to put it that way—I mean, pertaining to the opposite sex—hmm—certain natural feelings and temptations—that'll want to be gratified—and you'll want to gratify them. (*New attack*) Well, there are a certain class of women—always have been and always will be as long as human nature is what it is— (*Excuses*) It's wrong, maybe, but what can you do about it? I mean, girls like that one you— (*Looks about room quickly to be sure no one will hear this*)—girls there's something doing with—and lots of 'em are pretty, and it's human nature if you— But that doesn't mean to ever get mixed up with them seriously! Don't think I'm encouraging you to— If you can stay away from 'em, all the better—but if—why—hmm— Here's what I'm driving at, Richard. They're apt to be whited sepulchres. I mean, your whole life might be ruined if—so, damn it, you've got to know how to—I mean, there are ways and means— (*Suddenly he can go no farther and explodes helplessly*) But, hell, I suppose you boys talk this over among yourselves and you know more about it than I do. I'll admit I'm no authority. (*Speaks now with serious strength and force—driving home his advice*) I never had anything to do with

such women, and it'll be a hell of a lot better for you if you never do!

RICHARD. (*Without looking at him. Quietly*) I'm never going to, Pa. (*Then shocked indignation coming into his voice—looks at MILLER*) I don't see how you could think I could—now—when you know I love Muriel and am going to marry her. I'd die before I'd—!

MILLER. (*Immensely relieved—enthusiastically rises*) That's the talk! By God, I'm proud of you when you talk like that! (*Then hastily*) And now that's all of that. (*Crosses to RICHARD*) There's nothing more to say and we'll forget it, eh? (*Slaps him on neck affectionately. Crosses down L.C. to up L. and then down L. After a pause.*)

RICHARD. Oh, Pa.

MILLER. (*Blowing his nose as he crosses to down L.*) Huh?

RICHARD. How are you going to punish me, Pa?

MILLER. (*Smiling—crosses to L. of him*) I was sort of forgetting that, wasn't I? Well, I'd thought of telling you you couldn't go to Yale—

RICHARD. (*Eagerly—jumps to his feet*) Don't I have to go? Gee, that's great! Muriel thought you'd want me to. I was telling her I'd rather you gave me a job on the paper because then she and I could get married sooner. (*Then with a boyish grin—sits on the R. arm of chair #1*) Gee, Pa, you picked a lemon. (*Laughs*) That isn't any punishment. You'll have to do something besides that.

MILLER. (*Grimly—but only half concealing an answering grin. Crosses to RICHARD—angrily*) Then you'll go to Yale and you'll stay there till you graduate, that's that answer to that! Muriel's got good sense and you haven't! (*RICHARD accepts this philosophically.*) And now we're finished. You better call your mother. (*Crosses to up C. RICHARD crosses to up L. and calls "Ma," toward screen door, and a*

