

QUENTIN. But they've investigated you, what more damage could they do?

LOU. Another attack might knock me off the faculty. It's only Mickey's vote that saved me the last time. He made a marvelous speech at the Dean's meeting when I refused to testify.

QUENTIN. Well, that's Mickey.

LOU. Yes, but Elsie feels . . . I'd just be drawing down the lightning again to publish now. And yet to put that book away is like a kind of suicide to me—everything I know is in that book.

QUENTIN. Lou, you have a right to publish; a radical past is not leprosy—we only turned Left because it seemed the truth was there. You mustn't be ashamed.

LOU. (*In pain.*) Goddamit, yes! . . . Except . . . I never told you this, Quentin. . . . (*He holds his position, de-animated.*)

QUENTIN. (*To Listener, as he comes down to the edge of the stage.*) —Yes, the day the world ended and nobody was innocent again. God how swiftly it all fell down!

LOU. (*Speaking straight front.*) When I returned from Russia and published my study of Soviet law . . . I left out many things I saw. I lied. For a good cause, I thought, but all that lasts is the lie. (*Elsie and Louise enter, talking together intimately and un-beard.*) And it's so strange to me now—I have many failings, but I have never been a liar. And I lied for the Party, over and over, year after year. And that's why now, with this book of mine, I want so much to be true to myself! You see it's no attack I fear, but being forced to defend my own incredible lies! (*He turns, surprised, to see Elsie.*)

ELSIE. Lou, I'm quite surprised. I thought we'd settled this. (*Father and Dan appear u.*)

LOU. Yes, dear, I only wanted Quentin's feeling. . . .

ELSIE. Your shirt's out, dear. (*He quickly tucks it into his shorts. And to Quentin.*) You certainly don't think he ought to publish.

QUENTIN. But the alternative seems . . .

ELSIE. (*With a volcanic, suppressed alarm.*) But, dear, that's the situation! Lou's not like you, Quentin; you and Mickey can function in the rough and tumble of private practice, but Lou's a purely academic person. He's incapable of going out and . . . (*Mother appears beside Father.*)

LOU. (*With a difficult grin and chuckle.*) Well, dear, I'm not all that delicate, I . . .

ELSIE. (*With a sudden flash of contempt, to Lou.*) This is hardly the time for illusions!

MOTHER. You idiot!! (*Quentin is shocked, turns quickly to Mother, who stands accusingly over the seated Father.*) My bonds?

QUENTIN. (*Watching Mother go.*) Why do I mourn things falling apart? Were they ever whole? And who's to blame? (*Mother exits, Father and Dan stay on in darkness, frozen. Louise now stands up.*)

LOUISE. Quentin? I've decided to go into psychoanalysis.

QUENTIN. (*To Listener.*) I don't believe in blame, but if all of us are innocent where does all this evil come from?

LOUISE. I want to talk about some things with you.

QUENTIN. (*Glancing at Louise who is facing empty air.*) Or am I calling evil what is only truth breaking out?

LOUISE. (*At a loss for an instant.*) Sit down, will you? (*She gathers her thoughts. He hesitates, as though pained at both the memory, and also because at the time he lived this it was an agony. And as he approaches his chair . . . to the Listener.*)

QUENTIN. It was like . . . a meeting. In seven years we had never had a meeting. (*Sitting.*)

LOUISE. We don't seem . . . (*A long pause while she peers at a forming thought.*) married.

QUENTIN. We?! (*It is sincere, what she says, but she has had to learn the words, so there is the faintest air of a formula in her way of speaking.*)

LOUISE. You don't pay any attention to me.

QUENTIN. (*To help her.*) You mean like Friday night?—When I didn't open the car door for you?

LOUISE. Yes that's part of what I mean.

QUENTIN. But I told you; you always opened the car door for yourself.

LOUISE. I've always done everything for myself, but that doesn't mean it's right. Everybody notices it, Quentin.

QUENTIN. What?

LOUISE. The way you behave toward me. I don't exist. People are supposed to find out about each other. I am not all this uninteresting. Many people, men and women, think I am interesting.

QUENTIN. Well, I . . . (*Breaks off.*) I . . . don't know what you mean.

LOUISE. You have no conception of what a woman is.
QUENTIN. But I do pay attention—just last night I read you my whole brief.
LOUISE. Quentin, you think reading a brief to a woman is talking to her?
QUENTIN. But that's what's on my mind.
LOUISE. But if that's all on your mind what do you need a wife for?
QUENTIN. Now what kind of a question is that?
LOUISE. Quentin, that's the question!
QUENTIN. (*Slight pause, with fear, astonishment.*) What's the question?
LOUISE. What am I to you? Do you . . . do you ever ask me anything? Anything personal?
QUENTIN. (*With rising alarm.*) But Louise, what am I supposed to ask you? I know you!
LOUISE. No. (*She stands with dangerous dignity.*) You don't know me. (*Pause. She proceeds now with caution.*) I don't intend to be ashamed of myself any more, I used to think it was normal; or even that you don't see me because I'm not worth seeing. But I think now that you don't really see any woman. Except in some ways your mother. You do sense her feelings; you do know when she's unhappy or anxious, but not me. Or any other woman. (*Elsie appears on second platform, about to drop her robe as before.*)
QUENTIN. That's not true though. I . . .
LOUISE. Elsie's noticed it too.
QUENTIN. (*Guiltily snapping away from the vision of Elsie.*) What?
LOUISE. She's amazed at you.
QUENTIN. Why, what'd she say?
LOUISE. She says you don't seem to notice when a woman is present.
QUENTIN. Oh. (*He is disarmed, confused, and silent.*)
LOUISE. And you know how she admires you. (*Elsie disappears. Quentin nods seriously. Suddenly he turns to the Listener and bursts into an agonized, ironical laughter. He abruptly breaks it off, and returns to silence before Louise. She continues with uncertainty, it is her first attempt at confrontation.*) Quentin? (*He*

stands in silence.) Quentin? (*He is silent.*) Silence is not going to solve it any more, Quentin. I can't live this way.
QUENTIN. (*Pause. He gathers courage.*) Maybe I don't speak because the one time I did tell you my feelings you didn't get over it for six months.
LOUISE. (*Angered.*) It wasn't six months, it was a few weeks. I did over-react, but it's understandable. You come back from a trip and tell me you'd met a woman you wanted to sleep with?
QUENTIN. That's not the way I said it.
LOUISE. It's exactly the way. And we were married a year.
QUENTIN. It is not the way I said it, Louise. It was idiotic, but I still say I meant it as a compliment; that I did not touch her because I realized what you meant to me. And for damn near a year you looked at me as though I were some kind of a monster who could never be trusted again. . . . (*Immediately to the Listener.*) And why do I believe she's right!—Maybe 'cause she is right. What a thought! But I'm willing to be wrong. The question is whether you can ever hope to be innocent. Is it the proper aim in life? And yet, you have to want it, don't you?—Aren't the innocent good? (*The Tower lights.*) For instance, I walk through this slaughterhouse—I don't quite feel innocent. Not quite guilty either but . . . as though an accomplice were inside my bones. . . . How can I feel guilt for what I never did? (*He turns toward Mother who appears.*) In what sense treacherous?
MOTHER. What poetry he brought me! He understood me, Strauss. And two weeks after the wedding, Papa hands me the menu. To read!
QUENTIN. Huh! Yes! And to a little boy . . . who knows how to read; a powerful reader, that little boy!
MOTHER. I want your handwriting beautiful, darling; I want you to be . . .
QUENTIN. . . . An accomplice! . . .
MOTHER. (*Turning on Father who still sits dejectedly.*) My bonds?! And you don't even tell me anything . . . are you a moron?! You idiot!
QUENTIN. (*He watches her and Father go dark, and to the Listener.*) But why is the world so treacherous? (*Mickey appears u., faces Louise in silence.*) Shall we lay it all to mothers?—And I'll go further—is it altogether good to be not-guilty for what