

## ACT ONE

## SCENE III

*The Mother's apartment; 3:30 P.M.*

THE GIRL *is seated in front of the T.V. set, smoking. She rises, crosses to the landing, looks down the stairs, comes back into the room, slamming the doors, sits on sofa and watches television. She gets up, goes to phone and dials.*

THE GIRL. Where have you been, for Pete's sakes, Marilyn? This is Betty. I must have called you twenty times. Wait a minute. *(She crosses to the T.V. set and turns it off; returns to the phone)* I called you around eleven o'clock. I called you every half hour on the half hour and it's three-thirty now. Well, how's Frank and the kids? No, I'm at my mother's house. Well, who told you? Oh, really, when was this? You mean George called you at four o'clock in the morning? Then you know all about it. Listen Marilyn, can I come over and stay with you for a couple of nights? I'll sleep on the couch, but I'm over here at my mother's and I'm going out of my mind. Well, when will Frank get home? I'm not blaming George, Marilyn. Listen, he's a nice guy, but— I can't talk about it over the phone, Marilyn. Can I come over and see you for a few minutes? Can I come over after dinner then? Listen, I wouldn't ask you but I need to talk to somebody— Oh, I'm sorry. How seriously sick is she? Well, give Frank my best. No, no, no, it's all right, Marilyn. No, I'm all right, Marilyn. No, it's— No, I'll call you late tonight. Sure— Okay, I'll see you. *(She puts cigarette out in ash tray, knocking it on floor)* Oh, for God's sakes! For God's sakes! For God's sakes!

*(THE MANUFACTURER, on landing, pushes door buzzer. There is snow on his coat and hat.)*

*(THE GIRL picks up cigarette, ash tray, goes to door)* Hello, there, Betty. Oh, Mr. Kingsley. I didn't expect you personally. I thought they were going to send the boy up.

THE MANUFACTURER. It was on my way. I live in this neighborhood.

THE GIRL. Well, come in for a minute, Mr. Kingsley. *(She goes back into the room for slippers.)*

THE MANUFACTURER. *(Following her to foyer door)* Perhaps it would be better if I waited out here.

THE GIRL. There's nobody home, Mr. Kingsley.

THE MANUFACTURER. I was under the impression that someone was sick in your family.

THE GIRL. Oh, no, no, please come in. Please excuse the condition of the room, Mr. Kingsley. Here are the slippers, Mr. Kingsley. I hope they're the ones. *(She crosses Left; picks up cigarettes from floor, bedding, etc.)*

THE MANUFACTURER. *(Coming into room)* You seem very distraught. Is there something I could do?

THE GIRL. No, no, Mr. Kingsley, no, that's all right. I'm all right. Well, I'll tell you what it is. I had a fight with my husband. *(She breaks into tears; sits in chair Left)* I'm sorry, Mr. Kingsley.

THE MANUFACTURER. Don't worry about me.

THE GIRL. Excuse me, Mr. Kingsley.

THE MANUFACTURER. Isn't there somebody home with you here? Your mother or somebody?

THE GIRL. Could you stay with me a minute, Mr. Kingsley?

THE MANUFACTURER. Well, Betty, I don't know—

THE GIRL. I'm sorry about this, Mr. Kingsley.

THE MANUFACTURER. *(Crosses to down Right; sits in chair)* Don't be so embarrassed. Sometimes life gets so complicated, the only thing you can do it scream.

THE GIRL. *(Rises; comes Center)* It just burst out of me. I've been sitting here trying to think out what's the matter with my marriage, but I just can't think clearly at all. I've been calling my friends all day, but none of them are home. It's just one of those days. He's a nice guy, really, my husband. Everybody likes him.

He's a piano player. No, he's more than that. He's a pianist. He plays classical as well as jazz. He's very good-looking, by the way. He flirts a lot, but I don't think he ever did anything. That's just one of his little vanities, that he's so attractive, and I don't mind it really. No, that's not true. I do mind it a lot. But that isn't it, his flirting, I mean. Oh, Mr. Kingsley, you'd better grab those sales slips and escape. (*Moves away*) Don't let me take advantage of you like this.

THE MANUFACTURER. Please, Betty, don't worry about me.

THE GIRL. (*Crosses in*) You know what my husband would do if he came in like you just did and found me breaking down like I just did, do you know what he'd do? He'd turn on the television set, do you know what I mean, Mr. Kingsley? Or else he'd invite the neighbors in. Anything except sit down with me and talk things out. Oh, I'm not being fair to him. He tried, he really tried, but I tried too. I tried everything. You just can't imagine how naive I was about marriage, Mr. Kingsley. I really thought you lived happily ever after. Look, Mr. Kingsley, if I sound like I'm blaming my husband, I don't want to sound that way. This is me. I wanted poor George to make up for everything I never had in my life. I wanted him to be my father and my mother—my father ran away when I was six years old. Oh, Mr. Kingsley, here I go again. (*Crosses to chair Left*) You'd better get out of here because I've been building up all day like a volcano.

THE MANUFACTURER. Please don't worry about me.

THE GIRL. (*Holds on to chair; faces front*) Did you ever go downtown in the afternoon by the Paramount Theater? Did you ever see those fourteen, fifteen-year-old kids hanging around, cutting school. They're the loneliest looking kids in the world. Well, that's just what I was like when I was a kid. I used to go to the Paramount three or four times a week. I didn't cut school though. I was always very good in school. (*Crosses in to him*) Can I get you something to eat or drink, Mr. Kingsley? I don't

know what we have in the house. I haven't eaten all day, but do you know what I mean by lonely kids, Mr. Kingsley? (*Pause. Begins to cry again. Moves away*) I'm sorry, Mr. Kingsley, but just seeing you sitting there, listening to me— Boy, you came here just to pick up a couple of sales slips. Oh, Mr. Kingsley, I'm so glad you came— (*Gets control of herself. Sits end of sofa*) My husband, George, the last couple of months we've hardly talked to each other. He comes home and I ask him what happened during the day. He always says, "Nothing." We never eat home anymore. We go to a restaurant and we just sit there, eating. (*Rises and paces*) He doesn't know what to do with me, do you know what I mean? I'm his wife, so he comes home for dinner. But it's nothing, do you know what I mean? There's no love or anything. Well, I can't stand that. I want him to love me. I want him to be pleased to see me. I want him to come home and tell me all that's happened to him and how he feels about things. And I want to tell him how I feel. I—I want something. I mean, is this what marriage is? Is this what life is? Boy, life isn't much if that's what it is. The other night we had this big fight and he came in the next morning—

(*LIGHTS fade to out for time passage. THE MANUFACTURER takes off his coat. THE GIRL changes position on sofa.*)

THE GIRL. (*As the LIGHTS come up*) It sounds funny now, but it was awful then. So anytime we have a fight, that's just what happens. So, one time, you know what happened?

THE MANUFACTURER. (*Looks at wrist watch*) Betty, do you know what time it is?

THE GIRL. Boy, I've been talking your head off.

THE MANUFACTURER. It's half past six. Do you mind if I use your phone? (*Pulls light switch.*)

THE GIRL. Mr. Kingsley, I'm terribly sorry I used up your afternoon like this. Gee, half past six. I don't know

where my family is. Would you like to stay for dinner, Mr. Kingsley?

THE MANUFACTURER. No, I don't think so, dear. I have to make a call though.

THE GIRL. (*Points to phone*) The phone's right there.

(THE MANUFACTURER reaches for the phone.)

(THE GIRL rises; crosses Left) So what do you think I ought to do? I've been considering a divorce for a couple of months now, but it seems so complicated. I don't know anybody who's divorced, so I don't know how you go about it. My mother, she won't hear about divorce. My grandmother was Catholic. My mother's a Lutheran, but even so. My husband, it would just kill him. His vanity would be so hurt.

THE MANUFACTURER. Betty, tell me something. How old are you?

THE GIRL. I'll be twenty-four in March.

THE MANUFACTURER. (*Puts phone down*) Twenty-four years old. (*Rises. Crosses to Center*) Well, I have a daughter of my own, twenty-five years old, lives out in New Rochelle. She's married now and has a fine baby boy, and you make me think of her when she was ten years old. So I'm going to talk to you like I was your father. Now about twenty times tonight, you've asked me: "What should I do about my husband?" Betty, this is a decision you have to make for yourself. Don't expect your mother to make it for you, or your husband's mother, and don't worry so much about hurting your husband.

THE GIRL. Because I know this would hurt him.

THE MANUFACTURER. The only person you have to worry about hurting is yourself. You have to do what you want to do, not what other people want you to do; otherwise you and everyone else concerned will be miserable. You have to say to yourself: "Do I want to go back to him or do I think I can find something better for my life?"

THE GIRL. I don't want to go back to him.

THE MANUFACTURER. All right, there's your decision. If it means a divorce, then you go ahead and get one. You

go to a lawyer and he'll tell you what you'll have to do. It may be a little complicated, but nothing is too complicated. Then you start going out on dates again, and take my word for it, you'll run across some young fellow who will understand that what you need is a lot of kindness. There are plenty of nice young fellows around, believe me.

THE GIRL. You know something? I really feel much better now—

THE MANUFACTURER. Sure you do—

THE GIRL. —talking it all out this way.

THE MANUFACTURER. Well, you made a decision, and suddenly there's not such big, black clouds in the sky, and it isn't going to rain and life isn't so terrible. Life, believe me, can be a beautiful business. And you're a young kid, and you've got plenty of joy ahead of you. So go wash your face, I want to make a phone call. (*He goes to phone.*)

THE GIRL. I want to thank you very much, Mr. Kingsley.

THE MANUFACTURER. There's nothing to thank, sweetheart.

THE GIRL. No, no, I want to thank you very much.

(*He dials.*)

Your wife must have had a wonderful life with you.

THE MANUFACTURER. That's a very sweet thing for you to say, my dear.

THE GIRL. Well, I'll go wash my face. (*She exits to foyer.*)

THE MANUFACTURER. (*On the phone*) Hello, Evelyn, this is Jerry. No, I'll tell you what happened. Is Lillian still there? Remember I told you about this girl in the office today who was sick. I didn't tell you? No, Betty Preiss, the very pretty one. She sits by the reception window. You know her. The very pretty one. So I had to stop off at her house to pick up some papers she had, she didn't come in today. So I came up here and I tell you this girl was in an emotional state. So to cut a long story short, I talked to her, and it turns out she's leaving her

husband. That's why she couldn't come in today, it poured out of her, the whole story. No, no, no, the blonde girl, the very pretty one. The fat one is Elaine. The exceptionally attractive one. This girl is a real beauty. I've seen lots of girls on television who aren't so beautiful. An intelligent girl, a good worker, but emotionally very immature. Oh, don't be foolish. What do you mean, I'm showing a marked interest in how beautiful she is? It so happens that she's a very pretty girl. All right, all right. Well, look it's half past six and I tell you I'm very, very tired right now. So why don't you drive out with Lillian, and I'll catch a bite around the corner, and you can take the train in from New Rochelle tomorrow.

(THE GIRL returns to the room; arranges pillows.)  
No, I'll be fine. Apologize to Lillian for me. Absolutely, why should you stay in the house? Fine, give my regards to Jack and the baby. All right, I'll see you. (He hangs up.)

THE GIRL. I don't know what happened to my family.

THE MANUFACTURER. (Rises) Well, I'll take the slippers here with me.

THE GIRL. I hope I didn't inconvenience you too much, Mr. Kingsley.

(THE MANUFACTURER puts on coat. THE GIRL helps him.)

THE MANUFACTURER. No, no, Betty, it was no inconvenience. I was supposed to go out to the factory but it can wait until tomorrow. This was more important. You didn't eat anything today, did you?

THE GIRL. You know, I don't think I did.

THE MANUFACTURER. Well, it's almost seven o'clock. Go eat something now. Listen, you want a bite to eat? Come on, I'll buy you a bite to eat.

THE GIRL. I'd like to very much, Mr. Kingsley. I have to put some make-up on.

THE MANUFACTURER. Well, hurry up, put some make-up on.

THE GIRL. I'll just be a minute, Mr. Kingsley. (She hurries into bedroom.)

THE MANUFACTURER. You like Italian food? There's a very good restaurant here on Seventy-Ninth Street. (To himself) Jerk. Jerk. What are you doing, jerk?

CURTAIN