

A – Keller & Chris

KELLER. The only one still talks about it is my wife.

KATE. 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 got 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.)*

KATE. Except that *they* didn't get it confused. *(To Ann.)* He hands out police badges from the Post Toasties boxes. *(They laugh.)*

ANN. *(Wondrously at them, happily. She rises and comes to Keller, putting her arm around his shoulder.)* 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 and yelling that word... She's still around, I suppose?

KATE. 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.

KATE. 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 knew 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 was a court paper 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.

KATE. (*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 time you write Dad...

ANN. I don't write him.

KELLER. (*Struck.*) Well every now and then you...

ANN. (*A little ashamed, 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?

KATE. 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