

I – Kate (w/Chris & Ann)

anymore. In five minutes thirty-nine strange people are sitting at the table telling her their life story.

KATE. If I can't ask Annie a personal question...

KELLER. Askin' is all right, but don't beat her over the head. You're beatin' her, you're beatin' her. *(They are laughing.)*

ANN. *(To Mother. Takes pan of beans off stool, puts them on floor under chair and sits.)* Don't let them bulldoze you. Ask me anything you like. What do you want to know, Kate? Come on, let's gossip.

KATE. *(To Chris and Keller.)* She's the only one is got any sense. *(To Ann.)* Your mother...she's not getting a divorce, heh?

ANN. No, she's calmed down about it now. I think when he gets out they'll probably live together. In New York, of course.

KATE. That's fine. Because your father is still...I mean he's a decent man after all is said and done.

ANN. I don't care. She can take him back if she likes.

KATE. And you? You... *(Shakes her head negatively.)* ...go out much? *(Slight pause.)*

ANN. *(Delicately.)* You mean am I still waiting for him?

KATE. Well, no, I don't expect you to wait for him but...

ANN. *(Kindly.)* But that's what you mean, isn't it?

KATE. ...Well...yes.

ANN. Well, I'm not, Kate.

KATE. *(Faintly.)* You're not?

ANN. Isn't it ridiculous? You don't really imagine he's...?

KATE. I know, dear, but don't say it's ridiculous, because the papers were full of it; I don't know about New York, but there was half a page about a man missing even longer than Larry, and he turned up from Burma.

CHRIS. *(Coming to Ann.)* He couldn't have wanted to come home very badly, Mom.

KATE. Don't be so smart.

CHRIS. You can have a helluva time in Burma.

ANN. *(Rises and swings around in back of Chris.)* So I've heard.

CHRIS. Mother, I'll bet you money that you're the only woman in the country who after three years is still...

KATE. You're sure?

CHRIS. Yes, I am.

KATE. Well, if you're sure then you're sure. *(She turns her head away an instant.)* They don't say it on the radio but I'm sure that in the dark at night they're still waiting for their sons.

CHRIS. Mother, you're absolutely—

KATE. *(Waving him off.)* Don't be so damned smart! Now stop it! *(Slight pause.)* There are just a few things you *don't* know. All of you. And I'll tell you one of them, Annie. Deep, deep in your heart you've always been waiting for him.

ANN. *(Resolutely.)* No, Kate.

KATE. *(With increasing demand.)* But deep in your heart, Annie!

CHRIS. She ought to know, shouldn't she?

KATE. Don't let them tell you what to think. Listen to your heart. Only your heart.

ANN. Why does your heart tell you he's alive?

KATE. Because he has to be.

ANN. But why, Kate?

KATE. *(Going to her.)* Because certain things have to be, and certain things can never be. Like the sun has to rise, it has to be. That's why there's God. Otherwise anything could happen. But there's God, so certain things can never happen. I would know, Annie—just like I knew the day he *(Indicates Chris.)* went into that terrible battle. Did he write me? Was it in the papers? No, but that morning I couldn't raise my head off the pillow. Ask Joe. Suddenly, I knew. I knew! And he was nearly killed that day. Ann, you *know* I'm right!

(Ann stands there in silence, then turns trembling, going upstage.)

ANN. No, Kate.

KATE. I have to have some tea.

(Frank appears from L. carrying ladder.)

FRANK. Annie! *(Coming down.)* How are you, gee whiz!

ANN. *(Taking his hand.)* Why, Frank, you're losing your hair.

