

TYRONE

I wouldn't give a damn if you ever displayed the slightest sign of gratitude. The only thanks is to have you sneer at me for a dirty miser, sneer at my profession, sneer at every damned thing in the world – except yourself.

JAMIE

That's not true, Papa. You can't hear me talking to myself, that's all.

TYRONE

"Ingratitude, the vilest weed that grows"!

JAMIE

I could see that line coming! God, how many thousand times - ! All right, Papa. I'm a bum. Anything you like, so long as it stops the argument.

TYRONE

If you'd get ambition in your head instead of folly! You're young yet. You could still make your mark. You had the talent to become a fine actor! You have it still. You're my son - !

JAMIE

Let's forget me. I'm not interested in the subject. Neither are you. What started us on this? Oh, Doc Hardy. When is he going to call you up about Edmund?

TYRONE

Around lunch time. And what could the finest specialist in America do for Edmund, after he's deliberately ruined his health by the mad life he's led ever since he was fired from college? Even before that when he was in prep school, he began dissipating and playing Broadway sport to imitate you, when he's never had your constitution to stand it. You're a healthy hulk like me – or you were at his age – but he's always been a bundle of nerves like his mother. I've warned him for years his body couldn't stand it, but he wouldn't heed me, and now it's too late.

JAMIE

What do you mean, too late? You talk as though -

TYRONE

Don't be a damned fool! I meant nothing but what's plain to anyone! His health has broken down and he may be an invalid for a long time.

JAMIE

I know it's an Irish peasant idea consumption is fatal. It probably is when you live in a hovel on a bog, but over here, with modern treatment -

TYRONE

Don't I know that! What are you gabbing about, anyway? And keep your dirty tongue off Ireland, with your sneers about peasants and bogs and hovels! The less you say about Edmund's sickness, the better for your conscience! You're more responsible than anyone!

JAMIE

That's a lie! I won't stand for that, Papa!

TYRONE

It's the truth! You've been the worst influence for him. He grew up admiring you as a hero! A fine example you set him! If you ever gave him advice except in the ways of rottenness, I've never heard of it! You made him old before his time, pumping him full of what you consider worldly wisdom, when he was too young to see that your mind was so poisoned by your own failure in life, you wanted to believe every man was a knave with his soul for sale, and every woman who wasn't a whore was a fool!

JAMIE

All right. I did put Edmund wise to things, but not until I saw he'd started to raise hell, and knew he'd laugh at me if I tried the good advice, older brother stuff. All I did was make a pal of him and be absolutely frank so he'd learn from my mistakes that - Well, that if you can't be good you can at least be careful. That's a rotten accusation, Papa. You know how much the Kid means to me, and how close we've always been - not like the usual brothers! I'd do anything for him.

TYRONE

I know you may have thought it was for the best, Jamie. I didn't say you did it deliberately to harm him.

JAMIE

Besides it's damned rot! I'd like to see anyone influence Edmund more than he wants to be. His quietness fools people into thinking they can do what they like with him. But he's stubborn as hell inside and what he does is what he wants to do, and to hell with anyone else! What had I to do with all the crazy stunts he's pulled in the last few years - working his way all over the map as a sailor and all that stuff. I thought that was a damned fool idea, and I told him so. You can't imagine me getting fun out of being on the beach in South America, or living in filthy dives, drinking rotgut, can you? No, thanks! I'll stick to Broadway, and a room with a bath, and bars that serve bonded Bourbon.

TYRONE

You and Broadway! It's made you what you are! Whatever Edmund's done, he's had the guts to go off on his own, where he couldn't come whining to me the minute he was broke.

JAMIE

He's always come home broke finally, hasn't he? And what did his going away get him? Look at him now! Christ! That's a lousy thing to say. I don't mean that.

TYRONE

He's been doing well on the paper. I was hoping he'd found the work he wants to do at last.

JAMIE

A hick town rag! Whatever bull they hand you, they tell me he's a pretty bum reporter. If he weren't your son - No, that's not true! They're glad to have him, but it's the special stuff that gets him by. Some of the poems and parodies he's written are damned good. Not that they'd ever get him anywhere on the big time. But he's certainly made a damned good start.

TYRONE

Yes. He's made a start. You used to talk about wanting to become a newspaper man but you were never willing to start at the bottom. You expected -

JAMIE

Oh, for Christ's sake, Papa! Can't you lay off me!