

Billie, Paul, Brock,

as they can be. A world full of ignorant people is too dangerous to live in.

BILLIE. (*Sitting.*) I know, that's why I wish I was doin' better.

PAUL. You're doing wonderfully.

BILLIE. Yeah, but it's just no use. I bet most people would laugh at me if they knew what I was tryin' to.

PAUL. I'm not laughing.

BILLIE. I am. I'm sort of laughin' at myself. (*Her throat clenches.*) Who do I think I am anyway?

PAUL. What's the matter?

BILLIE. (*In tears.*) All them books!

PAUL. (*Crossing L. to sofa, sitting beside HER.*) It isn't only books, Billie. I've told you a hundred times.

BILLIE. It's mostly.

PAUL. Not at all. Listen, who said this? "The proper study of mankind is man."

BILLIE. (*Gaining control.*) I don't know.

PAUL. You should.

BILLIE. Why?

PAUL. I've told you.

BILLIE. I forgot.

PAUL. Pope.

BILLIE. The Pope?

PAUL. No, not *the* Pope. *Alexander* Pope.

BILLIE. "The proper study of —"

PAUL. " —mankind is man."

BILLIE. " —mankind is man." Of course, that means womenkind, too?

PAUL. Yes.

BILLIE. (*Impatiently.*) Yes, I know.

PAUL. Don't worry about books so much. (*SHE blows her nose. The tea's end.*)

BILLIE. I been studying different mankind lately. The ones you told me? Jane Addams last week, and this week Tom Paine. And then all by myself I got to thinkin' about Harry. Like he works so hard to get what he wants. For instance. But he doesn't know what he wants.

PAUL. More of what he's got, probably.

BILLIE. Money.

PAUL. Money, more people to push around, money.

BILLIE. Well, he's not so bad as you think he is.

PAUL. I know. He's got a brain of gold. (*Sound of key in door. BROCK comes in.*)

BROCK. Hello.

PAUL. Hello, Harry. We were just talking about you.

BROCK. (*Removing hat and coat and putting them on chair L. of door.*) Yeah? Well, that ain't what I pay ya for. (*Goes to chair R. of door, looks through mail, selects large envelope.*) She knows enough about me. Too much, in fact. (*Crossing to chair L. of desk.*) Ed here?

BILLIE. No.

BROCK. God damn it! He's supposed to meet me. (*PAUL and BILLIE watch as HE sits and takes off his shoes.*)

PAUL. (*To BILLIE.*) What did you find out about Tom Paine?

BILLIE. Well, he was quite a fella.

PAUL. Where was he born, do you remember?

BILLIE. London? No. Or England. Some place like that.

BROCK. What d'you mean London or England? It's the same thing. BILLIE. It is?

BROCK. London is *in* England. It's a city, London. England's a whole country.

BILLIE. I forgot.

BROCK. (*To PAUL.*) Honest to God, boy! You got some patience! PAUL. Take it easy.

BROCK. How can anybody get so dumb?

PAUL. We can't all know everything, Harry.

BILLIE. (*To BROCK.*) Who's Tom Paine, for instance?

BROCK. What?

BILLIE. You heard me. Tom Paine?

BROCK. What the hell do I care who he is?

BILLIE. I know.

BROCK. So what? If I wanted to know who he is so I'd know who he is. I just don't care. (*To PAUL.*) Go ahead. Don't let me butt in.

PAUL. (*To BILLIE.*) Which of his books did you like best?

BILLIE. Well, I didn't read *by* him, yet—only *about* him.

PAUL. Oh.

BILLIE. But I made a list of — (*She turns to get pad from end table.*)

BROCK. (*Interrupting suddenly.*) Who's Rabbit Maranville?

BILLIE. (*Turning quickly.*) Who?

BROCK. (*Over-enunciating.*) Rabbit Maranville.

BILLIE. I don' know any rabbits!

BROCK. . . . think you're so smart.

PAUL. Used to play shortstop for the Braves, didn't he?

BROCK. (*To PAUL.*) What're you? Some kind of a genius?

PAUL. No.

BROCK. (*Rising, crossing behind desk.*) I hire and fire geniuses every day.

PAUL. I'm sure you do. (*HE turns to BILLIE.*) Where's that....?

BILLIE. (*Handing over her list.*) Here. (*BROCK crosses D.R. to front of desk, thinking hard.*)

PAUL. (*Studying list.*) Well, suppose you start with "The Age of Reason."

BILLIE. (*Writing it down.*) "The-Age-of-Reason."

PAUL. Then, next, you might —

BROCK. (*Front of desk.*) Who's Willie Hop?

PAUL. (*Turning slightly.*) National billiard champion. And it's pronounced — Hoppe.

BROCK. That's what I said. Anyways, I didn't ask you. I asked her. (*HE crosses R. and behind desk.*)

PAUL. Sorry. (*He turns back to BILLIE.*) Where were we?

BILLIE (*With a look of disgust in BROCK's direction.*) "Age of Reason."

PAUL. All right, then try "The Rights of Man."

BILLIE. (*Writing.*) "The-Rights-of-Man." (*BROCK slowly crosses to C.*)

PAUL. I think that'll give you a rough idea of what —

BROCK. (*Suddenly, crossing to them.*) What's a peninsula?

BILLIE (*Waving him off.*) Sshhh!!

BROCK. Don't give me that Sshhh —! You think you know so much — *what's a peninsula?*

PAUL. It's a —

BROCK. Not you.

BILLIE. (*Confidently and with condescending superiority.*) It's that new medicine!!! (*BROCK turns away, throwing up his hands in surrender, crosses to front of desk, D.R. then comes back to sofa.*)

BROCK. It is not!

BILLIE. What then?

BROCK. (*As a schoolboy, arms stiffly at his sides.*) It's a body of land surrounded on three sides by water. (*He relaxes.*)

BILLIE. So what's that to know?

BROCK. So what's this — this Sam Paine to know?

BILLIE. (*Straghtening up.*) Some difference! Tom Paine — not Sam Paine — Tom Paine practically started this whole country.

BROCK. You mean he's dead?

BILLIE. Of course.

BROCK. (*Yelling at PAUL.*) What the hell you learnin' her about dead people? I just want her to know how to act with *live* people!

PAUL. Education's pretty hard to control, Harry. One thing leads to another. It's a matter of awakening curiosity—imagination—

independence—first thing you know—

BROCK. (*Crossing R. to chair L. of desk.*) Work on her, not me.

PAUL. No extra charge.

BROCK. I don't need nothin' you can tell me.

PAUL. (*With meaning.*) Oh, I'm sure we could tell each other lots of interesting things, Harry.

BROCK. What the hell's that mean?

PAUL. Just trying to be friendly.

BROCK. (*Crossing to chair L. of desk and sitting.*) Who asked ya? You know, the more I see you I don't like you as much. For a

chump who's got no place, you're pretty fresh. You better watch out—I got an eye on you.

PAUL. All right. Let's both watch out.

BROCK. If I wanted I could knock your block off if I wanted.

PAUL. Yes, I know

BROCK. All right, then—just go ahead and do what you're supposed to—and that's all.

PAUL. Well, we'll stop for now.

BROCK. (*With honest interest.*) No, go ahead. I wanna see how you do it. (*Stilles back and waits.*)

PAUL. (*Rising and moving to door.*) Not just now if you don't mind—I've got to go lie down. (*He stops, turns back.*) You don't

realize how hard I work.

BILLIE. Ha ha! Some joke.

BROCK. (*Victimized.*) Two hundred bucks a week and I can't even watch! (*Rises and crosses back of desk.*)

PAUL. . . . take you on separately, Harry. Glad to. I've got a special course for backward millionaires! (*HE goes. BROCK cannot decide*

whether or not he has been insulted. HE puts his attention on the material in large envelope. BILLIE curls up with her "David Copperfield.")

BROCK. (*Looking at BILLIE pityingly.*) London or England! Hon-