

Scene 1 Courtroom: RACHEL, MEEKER, CATES

RACHEL

I want to see Bert Cates. Is he all right?

MEEKER

Don't know why he shouldn't be. I always figured the safest place in the world is a jail.

RACHEL

Can I go down and see him?

MEEKER

Ain't very proper for a minister's daughter.

RACHEL

I only want to see him for a minute.

MEEKER

Sit down, Rachel. I'll bring him up. You can talk to him right here in the courtroom. (*RACHEL sits on one of the chairs. MEEKER starts out, then pauses*) Long as I've been bailiff here, we've never had had nothin' but drunks, vagrants, couple of chicken thieves. (*A little dreamily*) Our best catch was that fella from Minnesota that chopped up his wife; we had to extradite him. (*Shakes his head*) Seems kinda queer havin' a schoolteacher in our jail. (*Shrugs*) Might improve the writin' on the walls.

(MEEKER goes out. Nervously, RACHEL looks around the cold, official furnishings of the courtroom. MEEKER returns to the courtroom, followed by BERT CATES. CATES is a pale, thin young man of 24. He is quiet, shy, well-mannered, not particularly good-looking. RACHEL and CATES face each other expressionlessly, without speaking. MEEKER pauses in the doorway.)

MEEKER

I'll leave you two alone to talk. Don't run off, Bert.)

(MEEKER goes out. RACHEL and CATES look at each other.)

RACHEL

Hello, Bert.

CATES

Rache, I told you not to come here.

RACHEL

I couldn't help it. Nobody saw me. Mr. Meeker won't tell.
(*Troubled*) I keep thinking of you locked up here -

CATES

(*Trying to cheer her up*)

You know something funny? The food's better than at the boarding house. And you'd better not tell anybody how cool it is down there, or we'll have a crime wave every summer.

RACHEL

I stopped at your place and picked up some of your things. A clean shirt, your best tie, some handkerchiefs.

CATES

Thanks.

RACHEL

(*Rushing to him*)

Bert, why don't you tell 'em it was all a joke? Tell 'em you didn't mean to break a law, and you won't do it again!

CATES

I suppose everybody's all steamed up about Brady coming.

RACHEL

He's coming in on a special train out of Chattanooga. Pa's going to the station to meet him. Everybody is!

CATES

Strike up the band.

RACHEL

Bert, it's still not too late. Why can't you admit you're wrong? If the biggest man in the country - next to the President, maybe - if Matthew Harrison Brady comes to tell the whole world how wrong you are -

CATES

You still think I did wrong?

RACHEL

Why did you do it?

CATES

You know why I did it. I had the book in my hand, Hunter's *Civic Biology*. I opened it up, and read my science class Chapter 17,

Darwin's *Origin of the Species*. (RACHEL starts to protest) All it says is that man wasn't just stuck here like a geranium in a flower pot; that living comes from a *long* miracle, it didn't just happen in seven days.

RACHEL

There's a law against it.

CATES

I know that.

RACHEL

Everybody says what you did is bad.

CATES

It isn't as simple as that. Good or bad, black or white, night or day. Do you know at the top of the world the twilight is six months long?

RACHEL

But we don't live at the top of the world. We live in Hillsboro, and when the sun goes down, it's dark. And why do you try to make it different? (RACHEL gets the shirt, tie, and handkerchiefs from the suitcase) Here.

CATES

Thanks, Rache.

RACHEL

Why can't you be on the right side of things?