**ALL MY SONS**

**Act 2**

**Short Summary**

Act 2 opens with Chris sawing off the broken tree. This symbolizes for us the complete breaking of the Keller home. It is Sunday evening and the Keller family is preparing for their big night out together. Kate comes out and joins Chris. Her relief at having gotten rid of Larry's tree is obvious: "*You notice there's more light with that thing gone*." For Kate, the breaking of the tree is a sign from God that Larry is still alive. "Light" here symbolizes hope – in Kate's heart the hope of Larry is being alive has only been strengthened.

Kate asks Chris for help and protection since she fears that the case might be reopened. "*We're dumb, Chris. Dad and I are stupid people. We don't know anything. You've got to protect us."* Chris, in thinking that his mother is just being silly, is presented to us as a bit naïve. He doesn't realize "*how people can hate".* In addition, he is unaware of his parents' real fear until Kate explicitly points it out to him. Keller's sleeping "*so much*" is an obvious sign that he is greatly worried (for Keller sleep is another way of avoiding/ignoring trouble/reality).

Ann gossips with the neighbor Sue for a while. Sue complains that her husband resents her for having put him through medical school, saying that "you can never owe somebody without resenting them." Sue says that Jim wants to do medical research and that Chris is the one who put idealistic thoughts of helping the world into her husband's head. She thinks that Chris makes other men feel guilty about their lives, while Chris lives on his father's business--she implies that this is not clean money. According to Sue, Chris has no right preaching about moral values when he himself is compromising his ideals by taking "*dirty"* money from his father's business. Ann is very upset to hear Sue call Chis a "*phony idealist*". For Ann Chris symbolizes honesty (*"whenever she needs someone to tell her the truth, she's always thought of Chris…")*

The tension rises as George, Ann's brother, comes to the Kellers after visiting his father, Steve Deever, in jail. George took a flight to Columbus right after Ann had left for Kellers. He knew how much his father loved Ann, and realized that it would be wrong not to inform him that she was going to get married.

He, too, objects to the marriage, but for different reasons. He has just heard his father's version about what happened at the plant. According to Steve, he was alone at the plant when a batch of cylinder heads came out cracked. He called Joe at home and Joe told him on the phone to weld the cracks and ship out the parts. Keller also told him that he would take full responsibility. Steve did just that and as a result 21 pilots died when their planes crashed. Later, in court, Joe denied that telephone call, thus leaving Steve, his best friend and partner, to bear all the blame. Joe was exonerated and Steve was serving his time in prison.

George, of course, is bitter and angry and wants to take Ann away. He was received warmly by the Kellers. Kate made grape juice for him because she knew it was his favorite drink. Keller suggested he and his father should come back to the neighborhood, and he would provide them with goof jobs, and Kate suggested arranging a date for him. Keller convinced him by giving examples that his father had never been able to take the blame. Finally they succeeded to come him down so well that at a certain moment George felt so good he could nothing against the Kellers, and he wanted to leave.

An argument breaks out and when George is almost convinced that he is wrong, Kate makes a slip of the tongue which leads to the turning point and to the revelation of the truth.

She responds proudly that her husband has not been sick for fifteen years. Keller hastily adds the exception of his flu during the war. Kate takes a moment before she realizes what he is talking about, and George notices the awkwardness. His suspicion is reawakened.

Frank enters and announces that he has finished Larry's horoscope. The day he disappeared was his favorable day, so Larry probably could not have been killed on that day. Mother insists that Larry is alive, and she says that she has packed Ann's bag and it is time for her to go. George keeps insisting on returning to Mother's slip-up on the matter of Keller's flu during the war, and George tries to get Ann to leave with him.

The Kellers are left alone. Chris yells at his mother for packing Ann's bag, but she replies that everybody has to wait for Larry to come home. She is very insistent on this point. Chris says that he has let Larry go a long time ago. Mother cries that Larry is alive, because if he is dead, then Keller killed him. "As long as you live, that boy is alive. God does not let a son be killed by his father." She runs out.

Chris turns to Keller, finally understanding. Keller does not deny it; he ordered those cracked cylinder heads to be shipped out. Yet, they did not go into the type of plane that Larry flew. Chris says that Keller killed twenty-one men, and Chris then calls him a murderer. Keller explains that it was a matter of business: you work forty years, and in one moment, one failed shipment, the contracts can be torn up and you can lose everything. He thought that the military would notice the cracks anyway and that if they did not, he would warn them. But it was too late--the news was all over the papers that the planes had crashed, and the police were knocking on the door.

Chris is shocked that his father suspected the planes would crash. Furious and betrayed, he asks why his father would do such a thing. For him, his father replies--for Chris, for the family, for the business. Enraged, Chris rants about his father's small-mindedness, in particular his lack of empathy with his countrymen and the human race. "No animal kills his own, what are you? What must I do to you?" He stumbles away, weeping, as his broken father cries out to him.

**Vocabulary Act 2**

bitterness -

(to) bully –

(to) cast aspersions –

desperation –

distressed -

horrified –

(to) overwhelm –

(to) pacify –

phony –

plant/factory –

(to) relish –

(to) resent –

(to) reveal –

solicitude –

twilight –

unabashed –

unyielding –