**"All My Sons"/ Arthur Miller**

**Act 1**

**Short Summary**

The stage directions describe the Keller home as situated in an American suburb. It's August 1947.The house is comfortable and well-kept, as is the yard. There is an apple tree stump. The trunk and branches are toppled beside it.

Joe Keller is in his yard reading the want ads. He's a self-made businessman of about sixty. Doctor Jim Bayliss, his neighbor, is about forty. He's reading the paper too. Joe's neighbor on the other side, Frank, enters. He's 32.

Frank notices the fallen tree. It was struck by lightning in the night. He observes how strange it is that the tree planted in memory of Larry was struck down in his birth month. Larry is Joe's son. He would have been twenty-seven this August, which Frank remembers because he's working on Larry's horoscope. What Frank is trying to figure out – at the request of Kate, Joe's wife – is whether the day on which Larry was reported missing was his "favorable day," when, astrologically speaking, odds are he wouldn't die.

Talk turns to Annie, a young woman who used to live next door. She's visiting the Kellers and is upstairs asleep for now.

Jim's fat wife' Sue, enters, nagging him about a patient's phone call.

Frank's wife Lydia comes in, also curious about Annie. Is she engaged? She was Larry's girlfriend.

Chris Keller enters. He's 32. He starts reading the book section.

Joe and Chris start to talk about Larry's tree when eight-year-old neighbor Bert enters. He's Joe's "deputy" and tattles on some of the other kids on the street. He asks to see the jail Joe keeps in his basement, but Joe won't let him.

Bert exits; talk turns back to the tree. Mom saw it last night, says Chris. She was outside when it broke, then she came in and cried.

Kate Keller still believes Larry is coming back, even though it's been three years. Chris thinks they should puncture the illusion; Joe wants to keep it intact.

Chris sits his dad down. Listen up, pop, he says – I'm going to propose to Annie. But Mom still thinks she's Larry's girl. Chris threatens to leave town – and the family business – if his father doesn't encourage his mother to support this marriage. Joe is shocked.

Kate enters, a woman in her early fifties. She's happy the tree blew down, because it affirms for her that Larry is still alive. They were in a rush to memorialize him with that tree.

Kate recalls a dream she had about Larry last night. When she heard the wind, she imagined it was Larry flying by in his fighter plane. Kate turns to Joe and wags her finger at him: they shouldn't have planted that tree. They gave up too soon. Kate wants Joe to believe with her that Larry will come back. He asks her to calm down.

They're again interrupted by Bert, who brings up the jail. Kate reacts sharply, telling him there is no jail there.

Ann enters from the house. She's beautiful and beautifully dressed. She's been living in New York.

When Chris shows his admiration for Ann, Kate comments lightly that she has put on a little weight.

Ann remarks on the little changes in the neighborhood: trees, a missing hammock. She's introduced to Jim, who now lives in her old house. When Ann mentions Larry, Kate is relieved. Eventually she asks Ann directly if she's waiting for Larry. Ann says no.

Frank enters and dispels the tension. A little small talk, and then Frank mentions Ann's father. He's in prison. Ann is sensitive; she wants to know if the neighbors still talk about her father and his crime. Chris and Joe say no. Ann remembers the neighbors screaming "Murderers" at her father, Steve, and at Joe.

In a long monologue, Joe recalls the day he was cleared of the crime. He and Steve had been accused of selling cracked cylinder heads to the Air Force, causing twenty-one planes to crash. Joe was exonerated; Ann's father was imprisoned. When Joe returned home, he walked down the street with defiance and pride. He suggests the same for Steve when he's released. Ann admits that neither she nor her brother keep in touch with their father anymore. They blame him for knowingly shipping out faulty parts, resulting in the death of so many American pilots. She wonders aloud whether this was responsible for Larry's death. That really sets Kate off. Ann should never say that again.

Keller tells his version of the story. There was a mad rush for parts, and when the cylinders came out cracked, cowardly Steve just decided to send them out. He was afraid that Joe and the military would be displeased with the mistake, so he kept quiet about it.

Chris breaks in. He just wants a change of subject. So they talk about steak and champagne instead, and Keller exits.

The long-awaited proposal occurs. Chris asks; Ann says yes. Now they just have to figure out how to tell Kate. Chris has something to get off his chest. It's about the war. Leading a company, he lost all his men. Then he returned to the States and felt that nobody noticed; that the sacrifice of the men who died meant nothing substantial to the people at home. He has survivor's guilt. Chris feels as though he doesn't deserve life and doesn't deserve her. Ann sets him straight – he does deserve her. And he better kiss her right now.

Joe interrupts them. There's a phone call from George, Ann's brother. Chris tells Joe the news of his engagement to Ann. But Joe is more interested in this phone call. He's afraid George will want to open up his father's case again, and that Ann is on his side. Ann emerges. George is coming there to settle something. He wouldn't say what.

This rattles Joe and Kate. Kate tells Joe to be smart.