

LOUISE How did you know my name?

BILLY Somebody told me you lived here. I knew your father.

LOUISE My father!

BILLY I heard what that little whippersnapper said. It ain't true -- any of it.

LOUISE It is true -- all of it.

BILLY Did your mother tell you that?

LOUISE No, but every kid in town knows it. They've been throwin' it up at me ever since I kin remember . . . I wish I was dead.

BILLY What -- what did her mother say about -- him?

LOUISE Oh, she's told me a lot of fairy stories about how he died in San Francisco -- and she's always sayin' what a handsome feller he was --

BILLY Well, he was!

LOUISE Was he -- really?

BILLY He was the handsomest feller around here.

LOUISE You really knew him, did you? And he was handsome?

(BILLY nods his head.)

What else about him? Know anythin' else good about him?

BILLY Well-ll . . . He used to tell funny jokes at the carousel and make people laugh.

LOUISE Did he?

(They both laugh.)

What else?

BILLY Look -- I want to give you a present.

LOUISE [Backs up.] Don't come in, mister. My mother wouldn't like it.

BILLY I don't mean you any harm, child -- I want to give you somethin'.

LOUISE Don't come any closer. You go 'way with yer white face. You scare me.

BILLY Don't chase me away. I want to give you a present -- somethin' pretty, somethin' wonderful -- [Looks at HEAVENLY FRIEND. Takes the star from pocket.]

(LOUISE looks at the star, then BILLY, reaches for it.)

LOUISE What's that?

BILLY Pst! A star. [He points to the sky. Takes Louise by the wrist.]

LOUISE Go away!

BILLY Darling please -- I want to help you.

LOUISE Don't call me darling -- Let go my arm --

BILLY I want to make you happy -- take this --

LOUISE No!

BILLY Please!

(LOUISE pulls away from him, holding out her arm to keep him away.)

Please -- dear --

LOUISE No! Go away!

(Impulsively, involuntarily, he slaps her hand. She is startled. Looks at her hand, then at him and runs into the house.)

LOUISE Mother! Mother!

(BILLY holds his head, looks after her, looks to HEAVENLY FRIEND, then puts the star on the chair.)

HEAVENLY FRIEND Failure! Failure! Whenever things don't turn out the way you want, all you ever do is hit someone you love. Failure!

Music No. 30 -- Porch Scene

JULIE [Coming out of the house.] Where is he?

BILLY [To HEAVENLY FRIEND, but looking at JULIE.] I don't want her to see me.

HEAVENLY FRIEND Then she doesn't.

BILLY She looks like she saw me before I said that.

LOUISE [Coming out of the house towards BILLY, almost touching him.] Oh, he's gone! [Turning to JULIE.] I didn't make it up, Mother. Honest there was a strange man here and he hit me -- hard -- I heard the sound of it -- but it didn't hurt, Mother! It didn't hurt at all -- it was jest as if he -- kissed my hand!

JULIE Go into the house, child.

LOUISE What's happened, Mother?

(JULIE just stares.)