

Karen

KAREN: *(to Joe, gently)* No, Martha and I have never touched each other. That's all right, darling, I'm not mad. I am glad you asked me. I know that after a while you weren't sure, that maybe there was just a little truth – that's the way these things go. That's the way they are meant to go. You've been a good, loyal friend. Don't be ashamed of what you felt. You're a fine man, and maybe you believe me. But I'd never know if you did, and your saying it won't do it. And it doesn't even matter any more whether you do believe me. All that I know is I'd be frightened you didn't, and that's the way it would be. We'd be hounded by it. You don't get over things by just saying you do. I don't believe you could touch my arm without my wondering why you didn't kiss me, and I don't think you could kiss me without my wondering if you really wanted to. And then I'd hate myself for all that..and I'd hate you too. *(Joe reacts.)* Ahh, Joe, what happens between people, happens, and after a while it doesn't much matter how it started. But there it is. I'm here...you're there. We're in a room we've been in so many times before. Nothing seems changed. My hands look just the same, my face is just the same, even my dress is old. I'm nothing too much; I'm like everybody else, the way I always was. I can have the things that other people have. I can have you, and children, and I can take care of them, and I can go to market, and read a book, and will talk to me - - - only I can't. I can't. And I don't know why. Go home, darling.

Martha

MARTHA: *(to Karen)* But maybe I love you *that* way. The way they said I loved you..I don't know. *(Karen turns away.)* Listen to me. **I have loved you the way they said.** There's always been something wrong. Always – as long as I can remember. But I never knew it until all this happened. *(Karen reacts.)* You're afraid of hearing it; I'm more afraid than you. You've got to know it. I can't keep it to myself any longer. I lie in bed night after night praying it isn't true. But I know about it now. It's there. I don't know how. I don't know why. But I did love you. I do love you. I resented your marriage; maybe because I wanted you; maybe I wanted you all these years; I couldn't call it by a name but maybe it's been there ever since I first knew you – I never felt that way about anybody but you. I've never loved a man – *(Stops; Softly.)* I never knew why before. Maybe it's that. It's funny. It's all mixed up. There's something in you and you don't do anything about it because you don't know it's there. Suddenly a little girl gets bored and tells a lie – and then, that night, you see it for the first time, and you say it yourself, did she see it, did she sense it?? She found the lie with the ounce of truth. I guess they always do. I've ruined your life and I've ruined my own. I swear I didn't know it, I swear I didn't mean it – *(in a wail)* Oh, I feel so God-damned sick and dirty – I can't stand it any more.