

~~NUMBER 10 SYCAMORE STREET~~

MRS. CARSON: Quarter after seven. That's the plan. (She looks at her watch and gets up) It's near seven now. They're very angry people, Mr. Blake. I don't think it'd be right for anyone to get hurt. That's why I'm here. If you take my advice, you'll just put some stuff together in a hurry and get out. I don't think there's any point in your calling the police either. There's only two of 'em in Eastmont and I don't think they'd do much good against a crowd like this.

JOE: Thank you, Mrs. Carson.

MRS. CARSON: Oh, don't thank me. It's like I said. I don't know you people, but there's no need for anyone getting hurt long as you move out like everybody wants. No sir. I don't want no part nor parcel to any violence where it's not necessary. Kaow what I mean?

JOE: Yes, I know what you mean.

MRS. CARSON: I don't know why a thing like this has to start up anyway. It's none of my business, but a man like you ought to know better than to come pushing in here . . . a fine old neighborhood like this! After all, right is right.

JOE (Controlled): Get out, Mrs. Carson.

MRS. CARSON: What? Well I never! You don't seem to know what I've done for you, Mr. Blake.

ANNA: Joe . . .

JOE: Get out of this house.

He goes to a chair in which lies Mrs. Carson's coat. He picks it up and thrusts it at her. She takes it, indignant and a bit frightened. Joe turns from her. She begins to put her coat on.

MRS. CARSON: Well, I should think you'd at least have the decency to thank me. I might've expected this though. People like you!

ANNA: Mrs. Carson, please . . .

JOE: Anna, stop it!

He strides to the door and holds it open. Mrs. Carson walks out.

MRS. CARSON: I think maybe you'll be getting what you deserve, Mr. Blake. Good night.

She goes out. Joe slams the door.

ANNA: It's true. I can't believe it! Joe! Did you hear what she said? (She goes to Joe, who still stands at the door, shocked) Well, what are you standing there for?

JOE (Amazed): I don't know.

ANNA: Joe, I'm scared. I'm so scared, I'm sick to my stomach. What are we going to do?

Joe puts his arms around her as she begins to sob. He holds

60

her close till she quiets down. Then he walks her slowly over to his mother.

JOE (To his mother): Will you read to Judy for a few minutes, Mother? It's time for her story. (Mrs. Blake starts to get up) Winnie the Pooh. She'll tell you what page.

Mrs. Blake nods and gets up and goes into Judy's room.

ANNA: What are you doing, Joe? We've only got fifteen minutes. . . . Don't you understand?

JOE (Quietly): What do you want me to do? I can't stop them from coming here.

She goes to him and looks up at him, pleading now.

ANNA (Whispering): Joe. Let's get out. We've got time. We can throw some things into the car. . . .

JOE: Isn't it a remarkable thing? A quiet street like this and people with thunder in their hearts.

ANNA: Listen to me, Joe—please. We can get most of our clothes in the car. We can stop at a motel. I don't care where we go. Anywhere. Joe, you're not listening. (Loud) What's the matter with you?

JOE: We're staying.

ANNA (Frightened): No!

JOE: Anna, this is our home and we're staying in it. No one can make us get out of our home. No one. That's a guarantee I happen to have since I'm born.

ANNA (Sobbing): Joe, you can't! Do you know what a mob is like? Do you know what they're capable of doing?

JOE: It's something I've never thought of before . . . a mob. I guess they're capable of doing ugly things.

ANNA: Joe, you're talking and talking and the clock is ticking so fast. Please . . . please . . . Joe. We can run. We can go somewhere else to live. It's not so hard.

JOE: It's very hard. Anna, when it's not your own choice.

ANNA (Sobbing): What are you talking about? What else've we got to do? Stand here and fight them? We're not an army. We're one man and one woman and an old lady and a baby.

JOE: And the floor we stand on belongs to us. Not to anyone else.

ANNA: They don't care about things like that. Joe, listen to me, please. You're not making sense. Listen . . . Judy's inside. She's six years old now and she's only really known you for a few weeks. We waited four years for you, and she didn't remember you when you picked her up and kissed her hello, but, Joe, she was so happy. What are you gonna tell her when they set fire to her new house?

61

JOE: I'm gonna tell her that her father fought like a tiger to stop them.

ANNA (Crying): Oh, no! No! No! What good will that do? Joe . . . please . . . please . . .

JOE (Thundering): Stop it! (Anna turns away from him and covers her face. After a long pause, quietly) It's this way, Anna. We have a few things we own. We have this house we've just bought with money left from before . . . money you could have used many times. We have a mortgage and a very old car and a few pieces of furniture. We have my job.

ANNA (Bitterly): Selling pots and pans at kitchen doors. JOE (Patiently): We have my job. And we have each other and that's what we have. Except there's one more thing. We have the right to live where we please and how we please. We're keeping all of those things, Anna. They belong to us.

He comes up behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders. She sinks down in a chair, turned away from him, and sobs. He stands over her. She continues to sob. He holds her and tries to quiet her. The bedroom door opens and Judy bounces into the room. Joe gets up and goes to her as Anna tries to dry her tears.

JUDY-Grandma says I'm supposed to go to bed now. Do I have to, Daddy?

JOE (Smiling): It's time, honey.

JUDY (Disappointed): Gee whiz. Some night, I'm gonna stay up until four o'clock in the morning!

JOE: Some night, you can. (He kisses her) Good night, baby. Give Mommy a kiss.

Judy goes to Anna and speaks as she is kissing her.

JUDY: Really? I really can stay up till four o'clock?

JOE: Really.

JUDY: Night, Mommy.

ANNA: Good night, darling.

Judy runs off gleefully to the bedroom.

JUDY: Oh boy! (Calling) Grandma . . . The door closes. Anna gets up and goes to window. She is still terrified, but a bit calmer now. She looks out and then turns to Joe. He watches her.

ANNA: What've we done to hurt them? What've we done? I don't understand.

JOE (Softly): Well, I guess maybe they think we've destroyed the dignity of their neighborhood, darling. That's why they've thrown garbage on our lawn.

62

ANNA: Dignity! Throwing garbage. Getting together a mob. Those are dignified things to do. Joe, how can you want to stay? How can you want to live on the same street with them? Don't you see what they are?

JOE: They're people, Anna. And I guess they're afraid, just like we are. That's why they've become a mob. It's why people always do.

The bedroom door opens and Joe's mother enters. She goes to her rocker and sits in it and begins to rock.

ANNA: What are they afraid of? JOE: Living next door to someone they think is beneath them.

An ex-convict. Me.

Anna runs to Joe and grips him excitedly.

ANNA: What do they think you did? They must think you're a thief or a murderer.

JOE: Maybe they do.

ANNA: Well, they can't. You'll tell them. You'll tell them, Joe. JOE: Anna, listen . . .

ANNA: It could've happened to any one of them. Tell them you're not a common criminal. You were in an accident, and that's all it was. An accident. Joe, they'll listen. I know they will.

JOE: No, Anna . . .

ANNA (Eagerly): All you have to do is tell them and they'll go away. It's not like you committed a crime or anything. You were speeding. Everybody speeds. You hit an old man, and he died. He walked right in front—

JOE: They're not asking what I did, Anna.

ANNA (Pleading): Joe, please. Look at me. I'm so frightened. . . . You have to tell them.

JOE: Anna, we have our freedom. If we beg for it, then it's gone. Don't you see that?

ANNA (Shouting): No!

He comes to her and grips her, and speaks to her with his face inches from hers.

JOE: How can I tell it to you? Listen. Anna, we're only little people, but we have certain rights. Judy's gonna learn about them in school in a couple of years . . . and they'll tell her that no one can take them away from her. She's got to be able to believe that. They include the right to be different. Well, a group of our neighbors have decided that we have to get out of here because they think we're different. They think we're not nice. (Strongly) Do we have to smile in their faces and tell them we are nice? We don't have to

63

win the right to be free! It's the same as running away, Anna. It's staying on their terms, and if we can't stay here on our terms, then there are no more places to stay anywhere. For you—for me—for Judy—for anyone, Anna. She sees it now and she almost smiles, but the tears are running down her cheeks and it's difficult to smile. Joe kisses her forehead.

JOE (Quietly): Now we'll wait for them.

Anna goes slowly to a chair and sits in it. Mrs. Blake rocks rhythmically on her rocking chair. Joe stands firm at one side of the room and they wait in silence. Suddenly the ticking of the clock on the mantelpiece thunders in our ears and the monotonous beat of it is all we hear. They wait. Anna looks at Joe and then speaks softly.

ANNA: Joe. My hands are shaking. I don't want them to shake. Joe walks over to her, stands over her strongly and clasps both her hands together. Then he holds them in his till they are still. The clock ticks on, and now we cut to it. It reads ten after seven. Dissolve to a duplicate of the clock which now reads quarter after seven. Cut to long shot of room as we begin to hear the tramping of the feet down the street. They wait. The rocker rocks. The clock ticks. The tramping grows louder. Joe stands in the center of the room, hard and firm. Then he turns to his mother and speaks gently and softly.

JOE: Go inside, Mother.

MRS. BLAKE (Slowly): No, Joe. I'm staying here. I want to watch you. I want to hear you. I want to be proud. She continues to rock and now the tramping noise reaches a crescendo and then stops. For a moment there is silence, absolute silence, and then we hear a single angry voice.

CHARLIE DENTON (Shouting): Joseph Blake! (There is a chorus of shouts and a swelling of noise) Joseph Blake . . . come out here!

The noise from outside grows in volume. Inside only the rocking chair moves.

FIRST MAN (Shouting): Come out of that house!

The noise, the yelling of the crowd, continues to grow. Inside the room no one gives a signal that they have heard.

SECOND MAN (Shouting): We want you, Joseph Blake!

FRANK MORRISON (Shouting): Come out—or we'll drag you out!

The yelling continues, grows louder. Still the Blakes do not move. Then suddenly a rock smashes through the window.

64

Glass sprays to the floor. The pitch of the noise outside rises even more. Joe begins to walk firmly to the door. ANNA (Softly): Joe . . .

But he doesn't hear her. He gets to the door and flings it open violently and steps outside. As he does, the shouting, which has reached its highest pitch, stops instantly and from deafening noise we plunge into absolute silence, broken only by the steady creaking of the rocking chair inside. Joe stands there in front of his house like a rock. Now for the first time we see the crowd. The camera plays over the silent faces watching him—the faces of the men and women and children. The Morrisons are directly in front, Charlie Denton is further back. Mrs. Carson is there. And far to the rear we see Arthur Hayes and Phyllis. Still the silence holds. Then, little by little, the people begin to speak. At first we only hear single voices from different parts of the crowd.

FIRST MAN (Shouting): Look at him, standing there like he owns the block!

There is a chorus of ad-lib approvals.

SECOND MAN (Shouting): Who do you think you are busting in where decent people live?

Another chorus of approvals. Joe stands like a fierce and powerful statue.

FIRST WOMAN (Shouting): Why don't you go live with your own kind . . . in a gutter somewhere?

Another chorus of approvals. The camera moves about catching the eagerness, the mounting temper of the crowd, then the shame and anguish of Arthur Hayes, then the giant strength of Joe.

FIRST MAN (Shouting): Your limousine is waiting, Mr. Blake. You're taking a one-way trip!

There are a few laughs at this, and now the crowd, although not moving forward, is a shouting mass again. Joe still waits quietly.

CHARLIE DENTON (Shouting): Well, what are we waiting for? Let's get him!

The intensity of the noise grows and the mob begins to move forward. Then, with a tremendous roar, Frank Morrison stops them.

FRANK (Roaring): Quiet! Everybody shut up.

The noise dies down gradually.

FRANK (To crowd): Now listen to me! This whole thing is gonna be handled the way we planned at the meeting. Roger, standing next to Frank, looks at him adoringly. Chris holds Clarice's hand and looks around calmly.

65