

ALICE. I'm only trying to get a practical matter accomplished . . .

GENE. You don't have to destroy him in the process.

ALICE. I wasn't discussing his competence. . . . Although that will be a matter for discussion soon.

GENE. Look, Alice, just leave it . . . now . . . the way it is. Don't say any more.

ALICE. With you staying on.

GENE. Yes. You can go with a clear conscience.

ALICE. My conscience is clear.

GENE. I am doing this because I want to.

ALICE. You're doing it because you can't help yourself.

GENE. Look, when I want to be analyzed, I'll pay for it.

ALICE. (*Pleading.*) But I saw you. Didn't you see yourself there . . . when he started to rage. Didn't you feel yourself pull in? You shrank.

GENE. I shrank at the ugliness of what was happening.

ALICE. You're staying because you can't stand his wrath. The day you say, "Dad, I'm leaving." . . . You've never been able to stand up to his anger. He's cowed you.

GENE. Look, Alice . . .

ALICE. He'll call you ungrateful . . . and you'll believe him. He'll lash out at you with his sarcasm, and that will kill this lovely, necessary image you have of yourself as the good son. . . . Can't you see that?

GENE. (*Lashing out.*) What do you want us to do? Shall we get out a White Paper? Let it be known that we . . . Alice and Gene, have done all that we can do to make this old man happy in his old age . . . without inconveniencing ourselves, of course. . . . And he has refused our help. So, if he falls and hits his head and lies there until he rots, it is not our fault. . . . Is that it?

ALICE. You insist on—

GENE. (*Running on.*) —Haven't you learned on the couch that people do *not* always do what you want them to do. . . . It is sometimes *we* who have to make the adjustments?

ALICE. The difference between us is that I accept the inevitable sadness of this world without an acute sense of personal guilt. You don't. I don't think anyone expects either of us to ruin our lives for an unreasonable old man.

GENE. It's not going to ruin my life.

ALICE. It is.

GENE. A few weeks . . . a month.

ALICE. Forever!

GENE. Alice, let's not go on discussing it. I know what I am going to do. Maybe I can't explain my reasons to you. I just know I can't do anything else. Maybe there isn't the same thing between a Mother and a Daughter . . . but the "old man" in me feels something very deep . . . wants to extend some kind of mercy to that old man. . . . And . . . I never had a Father . . . I ran away from him. . . . He ran away from me. . . . Maybe he's right. Maybe it is time we found each other.

ALICE. I find that sentimental crap! . . . I think this is all a rationalization to make tolerable a compulsion you have to stay here. You hate the compulsion, so you've dressed it up to look nice.

GENE. How do you know what you're saying isn't a rationalization to cover up a callousness, a selfishness, a coldness in yourself? To make it smell nice?

ALICE. What do you think you'll find?

GENE. I don't know.

ALICE. You hope to find love. Couldn't you tell from what he just said what you're going to find? Don't you understand he's got to hate you? He may not think it in his head or feel it in his heart, but you are his enemy! From the moment you were born a boy, you were a threat to this man and his enemy.

GENE. That sounds like the textbooks, Alice.

ALICE. He wants your balls . . . and he's had them! (*Gene stands . . . starts to leave the room.*) I'm sorry. I want to shock you. When has he ever regarded you as a man, an equal, a male? When you were a Marine. And that you did for him. Because