

THE EGG HEAD

START Here

another, sensing accusation.) I was reading. (To Donahue.) I thought that you thought Perry was working with him or something. (Crosses in front of sofa.)

FINNEY. (Crosses L. to Sally.) Why were you reading that material?

SALLY. (Below sofa.) Now, Mr. Finney, I'll read anything I like. People have to make up their own minds, don't they?

FINNEY. That's what they say.

DONAHUE. (u. r.) Finney. It's time we were getting along.

FINNEY. Good-bye, Professor. Good-bye, Mrs. Parson. (He passes Donahue as he goes out r. Sotto voce.) Her mind!

START DONAHUE. I'm sorry we had to disturb you again. (He goes out r. The front door closes.)

SALLY. (r. of sofa.) What an awful job! Now they've got to be suspicious of me and you and Harvey and Madeline and Gottfried Roth and Amanda and Roger. I think that Mr. Finney thinks we've got a cell.

HANK. (r. below sofa.) What have you been up to?

SALLY. (Crosses above sofa.) Nothing. Did you know they're not allowed to drink?

HANK. Come on. What is it?

SALLY. (Crosses below sofa. Plunges.) There isn't much time. Perry's coming —

HANK. (Faces Sally.) Of course he's coming.

SALLY. I think he's guilty.

HANK. Of what?

SALLY. I think he's simply what they say and I don't think you ought to let him speak.

HANK. You listen to those guys!

SALLY. I thought so before.

HANK. Sal, darling, all they said was guesswork and insinuation. You haven't had experience —

SALLY. I'm not a child, Hank. And I have a right to my opinion.

HANK. Opinion isn't evidence.

SALLY. I knew you'd say that! And I do have evidence—I think. Only there's no time to check it — (She starts for the study. Hank stops her.)

HANK. Sal, you're tired. And I'm tired! (He crosses r. around swivel chair.) I've been attacked and pressured all day long.

SALLY. What happened? I wish you wouldn't keep things from me.

HANK. Oh, I don't mind attacks. They pep me up. (He sinks into the swivel chair.) What's painful—is the people who avoid me.

SALLY. (r. of coffee table.) Who? Tell me.

HANK. Amanda, for one.

SALLY. (o. l. of swivel chair.) Amanda!

HANK. Yup.

SALLY. That's positively eerie.

HANK. Then, funny, there's support where you least expect it. Some old judge down in Edwardsville . . . (He pulls the country paper from his pocket.) Here. Some old Yankee. Got his dander up. I must remember to show it to my class. It illustrates how wrong the Marxists are when they allow only economic motivation.

SALLY. Hank, I meant what I said.

HANK. Let's not discuss it.

SALLY. I will discuss it.

HANK. Sal, please. I've had about as much as I can take and I've got a headache.

SALLY. Can I get you an aspirin? Coffee? Tea?

HANK. Coffee'd be fine. That's the first human thing you've said.

SALLY. (Crosses u. r.) I'll put it on.

HANK. I'm disappointed in Harvey. I guess that's why I've got a headache.

SALLY. (Crosses o. r.) What did he do?

HANK. Oh, he's acting chicken.

SALLY. He's decided that Madeline has a subversive past.

HANK. What?

SALLY. She told me. She was here.

HANK. I'm surprised she came.

SALLY. Well, after all, I think, if I'm right —

HANK. Lay off, Sal.

SALLY. How about some free speech for me around here? If I'm right and if you let Perry go ahead and speak—don't you see?—it'll be a mess—for the whole college—including us.

HANK. I'm not going to act out of fear.

SALLY. You put out all those statements—can't you see how you'll look if it turns out you let yourself be used?

HANK. If I can't act from a supposition. An hysterical supposition. (He gets up, crosses r. of swivel chair.)

SALLY. (r. of sofa.) I'm not hysterical! And I'm not a child!

HANK. Then show me a basis.

SALLY. He ran for office on the Communist Party ticket!

HANK. (Above swivel chair.) Even your friends the FBI admitted that's a lie! What else?

SALLY. (Back l. between sofa and coffee table.) . . . People he went around with . . .

HANK. (Follows her.) He went around with people who accepted him!

SALLY. . . . Things he said . . . and things that he belonged to . . . and the talk . . . (She runs down like an old-fashioned victrola.) I sound like Porky Wells. (Sits on sofa.)

HANK. (Crosses to study steps.) Yes, you do.

SALLY. You're disappointed in me.

HANK. I wish you were with me.

SALLY. I suppose in your first marriage, Barbara carried all the banners!

HANK. Barbara understood. I've been wrong not to involve you more.

SALLY. Oh, Barbara understood! Well, I've been told many times that Barbara had ABSOLUTELY NO SENSE OF HUMOR AT ALL. I'll start your coffee. (She marches out r.)

HANK. She didn't have much humor. (He sags with fatigue. Retreats to his study, starts to pick up his mail. Finds the open file drawer, closes it, and sees file on cabinet. Turns the papers, puzzled. Begins to read one of them.)

SALLY. (Coming back.) I'm sorry I said that. Where are you? (She joins him in the study.) I'm sorry I said —

HANK. (The papers in his hand.) What's this?

SALLY. It's things that Perry wrote. I found them in your file. I read them. Do you mind?

HANK. I guess not.

SALLY. Papers and letters. You do mind.

HANK. It seems like spying.

SALLY. (Wrought up.) I want to know about him. Hank, our whole future has gotten tied up with him. I want to know.

HANK. Will you do something for me? (Puts folder on file.) You've got a good instinct for people. When Perry gets here, will you look him in the face? Forget the debates—pro—con. See him as a human being.

SALLY. All right. But I know you're going to let him speak.

HANK. I worry more than you do about the future, the children—about how we'd manage if something happened and I lost this appointment. But the thing that has to come first is what's right.

That's the first heritage we have to leave the children. . . . They won't get much out of the bank account. (Perry crosses the porch, tapping the windows as he passes them.) He's here! (He hurries to throw open the front door. Off u. r.) Welcome!

PERRY. (In the hall.) Hey! How are you?

HANK. I recognized your tap at the window. (They come in, arms about each other's shoulders. Perry is in his early thirties. His clothes are inexpensive but subdued and well pressed for his appearance at the college and he carries a plain briefcase. Even at first sight, he appears volatile and highly charged. He is truly glad to see Hank—though he suffers the self-consciousness of any student come back to a former teacher.)

PERRY. It's wonderful to see you.

HANK. (Hearty. His energy has slowed back with this meeting. r. of c.) It's good to have you back. It's been too long. You and Sally know each other. . . .

SALLY. (Coming from the study, she and Perry shake hands.) Hello, Perry. How are you?

PERRY. (Puts briefcase on telephone chair. Hank helps him off with coat, hands it to Sally.) Doing pretty well—for a man who's been accused of everything from mayhem to taking Moscow gold.

HANK. You're looking wonderful. A little older. . . .

PERRY. Time passes. You've got a little grey up there.

HANK. I deny it.

PERRY. Same I bank. Mind over matter.

HANK. Something's different about you. Where'd you get that suit?

PERRY. Anything wrong with it? (He is concerned yet defiant, defiant yet concerned. This man has a lot of emotion.)

HANK. It's almost flagrantly conservative.

PERRY. Got to keep up with the times. . . . How old are you, Hank? Fifty?

HANK. God damn it! I am not!

PERRY. Same old God damn it. (To Sally.) Does he still terrorize his classes?