

STARKEEPER

Don't yell.

BILLY

I didn't yell.

STARKEEPER

Well, don't.

(He takes a star off the line. To 1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND.)

This one's finished. Brother Joshua, please hang it over Salem, Mass.

1ST HEAVENLY FRIEND

(Crossing over and taking star.)

A-yah.

(Exits off left.)

STARKEEPER

(Taking a notebook out of his pocket.)

Now, this is a routine question I gotta ask everybody. Is there anythin' on earth you left unfinished? The reason I ask you is you're entitled to go back fer one day – if you want to.

BILLY

I don't know.

(Doggedly)

Guess as long as I'm here, I won't go back.

STARKEEPER

(Jotting down in a notebook.)

“Waives his right to go back.”

BILLY

Can I ask you somethin'? I'd like to know if the baby will be a boy or a girl.

STARKEEPER

We'll come to that later.

BILLY

But I'm only askin' –

STARKEEPER

Jest let me do the askin' – you do the answerin'. I got my orders. You left yer wife hevin' that baby comin' – with nothin' fer 'em to live on. Why'd you do that?

BILLY

I couldn't get work and I couldn't bear to see her –

(Pause)

STARKEEPER

You couldn't bear to see her cry. Why not come right out and say it? Why are you afraid of sayin' the right word? Why are you ashamed you loved Julie?

BILLY

I ain't ashamed of anything.

STARKEEPER

Why'd you beat her?

BILLY

I didn't beat her - I wouldn't beat a little thing like that - I hit her.

STARKEEPER

Why?

BILLY

Well, y'see - we'd argue. And she'd say this and I'd say that - and she'd be right - so I hit her.

STARKEEPER

Hmm! Are you sorry you hit her?

BILLY

Ain't sorry for anythin'.

STARKEEPER

(Taking his basket coming down off the ladder.)

→ You ken be as sot and pernicketty as you want. Up here patience is as endless as time. We ken wait.

(He turns to BILLY in a more friendly way.)

Now look here, son, it's only fair to tell you - you're in a pretty tight corner. Fact is you haven't done enough good in yer life to get in there - not even through the back door.

BILLY

(Turning away.)

All right. If I can't get in - I can't.

STARKEEPER

(Testily)

I didn't say you can't. Said you ain't done enough so far. You might still make it - if you tried hard enough.

BILLY

How?