All My Sons Guilt and Blame Quotes

Keller: She thinks he's coming back, Chris. You marry that girl and you're pronouncing him dead. Now what's going to happen to Mother. Do you know? I don't. (1.208)

Joe needs Kate's support. In his effort to sustain a delicate situation, Joe tries to guilt Chris into protecting his mother.

Mother: Everybody was in such a hurry to bury him. I said not to plant it yet. [To Keller] I told you to…! (1.272)

Kate blames Joe for accepting Larry's death too soon – and perhaps for the romance unfolding between Chris and Ann that she's anxious to prevent.

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Mother: You above all have got to believe, you…

Keller: [rises] Why me above all?

 Mother: …Just don't stop believing…

Keller: What does that mean, me above all? (1.309-312)

Kate doesn't say much, but she says it clearly enough for Joe to understand. He above all has to believe that Larry is still alive, because if Larry is dead, then Joe killed him.

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Chris: I felt wrong to be alive, to open the bank-book, to drive the new car, to see the new refrigerator. (1.541)

When he returns from the war, Chris suffers survivor's guilt. This guilt is informed not only by his own experience of war, but by his buried suspicion that his father is a war profiteer.

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Keller: It's crazy, but it comes to my mind. She don't hold nothin' against me, does she? (1.573)

With George calling from the prison where his father is held, Joe gets paranoid. Perhaps Ann has come to trap him too? A guilty conscience starts to dampen his good mood.

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George: He's a little man. That's what happens to suckers, you know. It's good I went to him in time – another year there'd be nothing left but his smell. (2.225)

This is George's introduction to the topic of "Ann, there's no way in hell you are marrying into this family." George includes Chris in his condemnation of Joe.

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Keller: That's the way they do, George. A little man makes a mistake and they hang him by the thumbs; the big ones become ambassadors. (2.411)

Joe tries to deflect George's anger and blame by sympathizing with Steve.

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Ann: I'll do nothing about Joe, but you're going to do something for me. You made Chris feel guilty with me. Whether you wanted to or not, you've crippled him in front of me. (3.86)

Ann has her own selfish motivations here. She wants Kate to clear the slate so she can get on to building a life with Chris.

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Chris: Yesterday they flew in a load of papers from the States and I read about Dad and your father being convicted. I can't express myself. I can't tell you how I feel – I can't bear to live any more. (3.162)

We learn from his letter that Larry takes the full weight of his father's guilt on himself. As Chris says in an earlier monologue, it's the really brave ones who never made it back from the war.

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Mother: Don't, dear. Don't take it on yourself. Forget now. Live. (3.182)

We don't know, guys. What do you think? Should Chris just forget? Isn't that what Joe and Kate have been trying to do all along?

**Wealth**

****

The house is two stories high and had seven rooms. It would have cost perhaps fifteen thousand in the early twenties when it was built. (1.1)

Miller establishes in the setting that the Kellers' financial comfort defines them.

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Chris: If I have to grub for money all day long at least at evening I want it beautiful. I want a family, I want some kids, I want to build something I can give myself to. Annie is in the middle of that. (1.219)

Chris hopes he can maintain a balance of making money and building a life he can believe in. His idealism prevents him from acknowledging the reality of the business he's inheriting.

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Keller: I can afford another bag of potatoes. (1.238)

Keller threw the potatoes away because he thought they were garbage. This wastefulness provides an interesting contrast to his crime of saving machine parts (which actually were garbage) and selling them to the military.

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Keller: I don't know, once upon a time I used to think that when I got money again I would have a maid and my wife would take it easy. Now I got money, and I got a maid, and my wife is workin' for the maid. (1.245)

Keller is a self-made man and is proud of all his financial success.

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Keller: Kid, walkin' down the street that day I was guilty as hell. Except I wasn't, and there was a court paper in my pocket to prove I wasn't, I and I walked… past… the porches. Result? Fourteen months later I had one of the best shops in the state again, a respected man again; bigger than ever. (1.446)

What matters to Keller is that he eventually restored his business to prosperity. Material success is the ultimate goal.

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Ann: And the money, there's nothing wrong in your money. Your father put hundreds of planes in the air, you should be proud. A man should be paid for that…

Chris: Oh Annie, Annie… I'm going to make a fortune for you! (1.545)

Chris just called his money "loot" from the war. But with Ann's blessing he quickly comes around to a perspective that more closely resembles his father's.

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Sue: Research pays twenty-five dollars a week minus laundering the hair shirt. You've got to give up your life to go into it. (2.65)

While Kate and Ann both downplay their interest in economic comfort, Sue is very upfront about it. She openly encourages her husband to pursue money and resents anyone standing in the way of that.

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George: I saw your factory on the way from the station. It looks like General Motors. (2.400)

For George, the successful factory is a symbol of the injustice Joe inflicted on his father. Joe gets rich; Steve gets imprisoned.

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Keller: I don't know what you mean! You wanted money, so I made money. What must I be forgive? You wanted money, didn't you? (3.61)

Joe feels betrayed by Kate turning on him now. Like her neighbor Sue, she must have at some point encouraged him to make the family comfortable. Both Joe and Kate hide from their own responsibility in this matter.

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Keller: Who worked for nothin' in that war?… It's dollars and cents, nickels and dimes; war and peace, it's nickels and dimes, what's clean? Half the Goddam country is gotta go if I go! (3.150)

Joe uses the dominant American ideology, capitalism, to excuse his actions.

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**Justice and Judgement**

Mother: Stop that, Bert. Go home. [Bert backs up, as she advances.] There's no jail here. (1.318)

Kate doesn't want Joe to play the jail game with the neighbor kids because it reminds everyone that Joe's partner is in jail – and that he put him there.

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Mother: That's why there's God. Otherwise anything could happen. But there's God, so certain things can never happen. (1.410)

It may be a mushy personal theology, but Kate needs it. If she accepts that Larry was killed, she has to also accept the evil of her husband's crime and her own complicity with it.

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Ann: He knowingly shipped out part that would crash an airplane. And how do you know Larry wasn't one of them?

 Mother: I was waiting for that. [Going to her] As long as you're here, Annie, I want to ask you never to say that again. (1.464)

Ann doesn't know it, but she's damning the people she's talking to. No wonder Joe is so forgiving and compassionate in his judgment of her father. He's guilty himself.