

**American Literature & Culture**  
**Prof. Aysha Iqbal Vishwamohan**  
**Department of Humanities and Social Science**  
**Indian Institute of Technology, Madras**  
**Mod 05 Lecture Number 33**  
**Lillian Hellman The Children's Hour (Lecture 27)**

(Refer Slide Time 00:17)



(Professor – student conversation starts)

Professor: Page 46.

Student: Yeah

Student: Ok

Student: You are a very impertinent lady. Why shouldn't I marry Karen?

Student: Because there is something wrong with Karen, something horrible.

Professor: The door bell is heard to ring loud and long.

Student: I cannot allow you to say things like that.

Student: I have good reason for saying it. Who's that?

Student: Mrs. Tilford, Agatha, is she in?

Professor: Shilpa, read for Agatha.

Student: Yes ma'am, come on in.

Student: I won't have her here.

Student: What are you talking about?

Student: Yes ma'am, come on in.

Student: Then you don't want me here either.

Professor: Turns to face Karen who with Martha has rushed in.

Student: Darling what

Professor: Karen stops when she sees him, puts her hands over her eyes.

Student: Is it a joke, Joe?

Student: We have come to find out what you are doing.

Student: What is it?

Student: It's crazy, it's crazy. What did she do it for?

Student: What are you talking about? What do you mean?

Student: You shouldn't have come here.

Student: What's all this, what happened?

Student: I tried to reach you. Hasn't she told you?

Student: Nobody told me anything. I haven't heard anything but wild talk. What is it, Karen?

Professor: She starts to speak and then dumbly shakes her head.

Student: What has happened, Martha?

Student: An insane asylum has been let loose. How would we know what happened?

Student: What was it?

Student: We didn't know what it was. Nobody would talk to us. Nobody would tell us anything.

Student: I will tell you. I will tell you. You see if you can make any sense out of it. At dinner time, Mrs. Munn's chauffeur said that Evelyn must be sent home right away. At half past seven, Mrs. Burton arrived to tell us that she wanted Helen's things packed and that she would wait outside. She didn't want to enter a place like ours. Five minutes later, the Wells' butler came for Rosalie.

Student: What was?

Student: It was a madhouse, the people rushing in and out; the children being pushed into car.

Student: Mrs. Rogers finally told us.

Student: What, what?

Student: That Martha and I are, in love with each other, in love with each other, Mrs. Tilford told them.

Professor: Cardin for a moment stands staring at her incredulously. Then he walks across the room, stares out of the window and finally turns to Mrs. Tilford.

Student: Did you tell them that?

Student: Yes

Student: Are you sick?

Student: You know I am not sick.

Student: Then what did you do it for?

Student: Because it is true.

Student: You think it's true, then?

Student: You fool, you damn vicious

Student: Do you realize what you are saying?

Student: I realize it very well and

Student: You realize nothing, nothing, nothing.

Student: And that's why I don't think you should have come here. I shall not call you names and I will not allow you to call me names. It comes to this. I cannot trust myself to talk about it with you now or ever.

Student: What's she talking about, Joe? What she mean? What is she trying to do to us? What is everybody doing to us?

Student: Pushed around. We are being pushed around by crazy people.

Professor: Shakes herself slightly

Student: That's an awful thing. And we are standing here.

Professor: Cardin puts his arm around Karen, walks with her to the window. They stare there together. They stand there together.

Student: We are standing here, taking it. Didn't you know we would come here? Were we supposed to lie down and grin while you kicked us around with these lies?

Student: This can't do any of us any good, Miss Dobie.

Student: This can't do any of us any good. Listen, listen. Try to understand this. You are not playing with paper dolls. We're human beings, see. It's our lives you are fooling with; our lives, that's serious business for us. Can you understand that?

Student: I can understand that. And I understand a lot more. You have been playing with a lot of children's lives and that's why I stopped you. I know how serious this is for you.

Student: How serious this is for all of us.

Student: I don't think you do know.

Student: I wanted to avoid this meeting because it can't do any good. You came here to find out if I have made this charge. You have found out. Let's end it here.

Professor: I don't want to

Student: I don't want you in this house. I am sorry. This had to be done to you, Joseph.

Student: I don't like your sympathy.

Student: Very well. There is nothing I need to do, nothing I want to do. There is nothing anybody can do.

Student: You have already done a terrible thing.

Student: I have done what I had to do. What they are may possibly be their own business. It becomes a great deal more than that when children are involved.

Student: It's not true. Not a word of it is true, can't you understand that?

Student: There won't be any punishment for either of you. But there mustn't be any punishment for me either, and that's what this meeting is. This, this thing is your own. Go away with it. I don't understand it and I don't want any part, I don't want any part of it.

Student: So you thought we would go away.

Student: I think that's the best for you.

Student: There must be something we can do to you and whatever it is, we will find out.

Student: That would be very unwise.

Student: You have right to be afraid.

Student: I am not afraid, Karen.

Student: But you are old, and you are irresponsible.

Student: You know that's not true.

Student: I don't have to do anything with your mess, do you hear me? It makes me feel dirty and sick to be forced to say this.

Student: But here it is. There isn't a single word of truth in anything you said. We are standing here defending ourselves; and against what? Against a lie, a great awful lie.

Student: I am sorry. I am sorry that I can't believe that.

Student: Damn you!

Student: But you can believe this. They have worked 8 long years to save enough money to buy that farm, to start that school. They did without everything that young people ought to have. You wouldn't know about that. The school meant things to them, self respect; Self respect and bread and butter. Do you know what it is to try so hard for anything? Well, now it's gone.

Professor: Suddenly hits the side of the table with his had

Student: What the hell did you do it for?

Student: It had to be done.

Student: Righteousness is a great thing.

Student: I know how you must feel.

Student: You don't know anything about how I feel. And you don't know how they feel either.

Student: I have loved you as much as I loved my own boys. I wouldn't have spared them. I cannot spare you.

Student: What is there to do to you? What can we do to you? There must be something, something that makes you feel the way do tonight. You don't want any part of this, you said, but you will get a part, more than you bargained for. Listen, are you willing to stand by everything you have said tonight?

Student: Yes

Student: Alright that's fine. Don't get this idea that we will let you whisper this lie. You made it and you will come out with it. Shriek it to your town of Lancer. We will make you shriek it. And we will make you do it in a courtroom. Tomorrow Mrs. Tilford you will have a libel suit on your hand.

Student: That would be very unwise.

Student: Very unwise for you.

Student: For you I am thinking of. I am frightened for you. It was wrong of you to raise any doubt here tonight. It would be criminally foolish of you to brazen it out in public. That can bring you nothing but pain. I am an old woman, Miss Dobie and I have seen too many people out of trying act affront, in the end they punish themselves.

Student: And you feel you are too old to be punished, that we should spare you?

Student: You know that is not what I mean.

Student: So you took a child's word for it?

Student: I knew it too.

Student: That is really where you got it. I can't believe it couldn't be. Why, she is a child.

Student: She is not a child any longer.

Student: Oh my God. It all fits so well now. That girl has hated us for a long time. We never knew why. We never could find out. There didn't seem to be any reason.

Student: There wasn't any reason. She hates everybody and everything.

Student: Your Mary is a strange girl, a bad girl. There is something awful the matter with her.

Student: I was waiting for you to say that Miss Wright.

Student: I am telling you the truth. We should have told you long ago. It's no use

Student: Where is she? Bring her out and let's see what she has to say.

Student: You cannot see her.

Student: Where is she?

Student: I won't have that, Joseph.

Student: I want to talk to her.

Student: You came here demanding

Professor: I won't have her go through with that again.

Student: I won't have her go through with that again. You came here demanding explanations. It was I who should have asked it from you. You attack me, you attack Mary. I have told you I didn't mean you any harm. I still don't. You claim that it isn't true. It may be natural that you should say that but I know that it is true. No matter what you say. You know very well. I would not have acted until I was absolutely sure. All I wanted was to get those children away. That has been done. There won't be any talk about it or about you. I will see to that. You have been in my house long enough. Get out.

Student: The wicked very young and the wicked very old. Let's go home.

Professor: You understand the connotation here? The wicked very young, that is Mary, the wicked very old, yeah. Do you, you know if you want you can apply the principles of child psychology here. Why is Mary the way she is? The way she is acting, the way she is spreading lies, only a very evil person would do that; but a very evil 12 year old person? Do we really have such people? What is Lillian Hellman trying to tell us here? Ok, that we have evil 12 year old running around all over the place? Is that what she is telling us? What is there, what is it at the core of this Mary's very strange and extremely brutal behavior. We will talk about it but I want you to start thinking along those lines, yeah. Please carry on.

Student: Sit down. When two people come with their lives spread on the table for you to cut pieces, then the only honest thing to do is to give them a chance to come out whole. Are you honest?

Student: I have always thought so.

Student: Then where is Mary?

Professor: After a moment, she moves her head to door, right. Quickly, Cardin goes to the door and opens it.

Student: Mary, come here.

Professor: After a moment, Mary appears, stands nervously near door. Her manner is shy and afraid.

Student: Sit down, dear and don't be afraid.

Student: Make her tell the truth.

Student: Look, everybody lies all the time. Sometimes they have to, sometimes they don't. I lied myself for a lot of different reasons (( )) there was never turning back, if I had been given a second chance, I would have taken back the lie and told the truth. Lucky, you have got that chance. I am telling you this because I want to ask you a question. Before you answer the question, I want to tell you if you have,

Professor: If you have, I

Student: I, if you made a mistake, you must take this chance and say so. You won't be punished for this. Do you get all that?

Student: Yes, Cousin Joe.

Student: Alright, let's get started. Were you telling your grandmother the truth this afternoon, the exact truth about Miss Wright and Miss Dobie?

Student: Oh yes.

Professor: Karen sighs deeply. Martha, her fists closed tight turns her back to the child. Cardin smiles as he looks at Mary

Student: Alright, that was your chance. You passed it on. Now let's find out things.

Student: She's told you. Aren't you thorough?

Professor: Through

Student: Through?

Student: Not by a long shot. You have started something and we will finish it for you. Will you answer some more questions, Mary?

Student: Yes, Cousin.

Student: Stop that sick, sweet tone.

Professor: Mrs. Tilford half rises. Cardin motions her back.

Student: Why don't you like Miss Dobie and Miss Wright?

Student: Oh, I do like them. They just are not liking me. They never.

Student: How do you know?

Student: They are always picking on me. They are always punishing me for everything that happens. No matter what happens, it's always me.

Student: Why do you think they do that?

Student: Because, because they, because they, Grandma

Student: Alright, we will skip that. Did you get punished today?

Student: Yes, and just because Peggy and Evelyn heard them, so they took it out on me.

Student: That's a lie.

Student: Heard what?

Student: Mrs. Mortar told Miss Dobie there was something funny about her. She said that she had a funny feeling about Miss Wright. Mrs. Mortar said that it was very unnatural. That was why we got punished just because of that.

Student: That was not the reason they got punished.

Student: Miss Dobie?

Student: My aunt is a stupid woman. What she said was unpleasant. It was said to annoy me, meant nothing more than that.

Student: And Cousin Joe she said, every time you came to the school, Miss Dobie got jealous and that she didn't want you to get married.

Student: She said that too.

Student: For God's sake, can't you see what is happening? This child is taking little things, little family things and making them have meanings that

Professor: Stops suddenly, regards Mary with a combination of disgust and interest.

Student: Where did you learn so much in so little time?

Student: What do you think Mrs. Mortar meant by all that, Mary?

Student: Stop it Joseph

Student: I don't know. But it was always funny, and she always said things like that and all the girls would talk about it when Miss Dobie went and visited Miss Wright at night.

Student: And we go to the movies at night and sometimes we read at night and sometimes we drink tea at night. Those are guilty things too, Mrs. Tilford?

Student: And there are always funny sounds and we would stay awake and listen because we couldn't help hearing and I get frightened because the sounds were like

Student: Be still

Student: No, no. You don't want her still now. What else did you hear?

Student: Grandma, I

Student: You are trying to make her name it, aren't you?



Student: Go on.

Student: I don't know. There were just sounds.

Student: What did you think they were? Why did they frighten you?

Student: I don't know

Student: She doesn't know.

Student: I saw things too. One night there was so much noise. I thought somebody was sick or something and I looked through the keyhole and they were kissing and saying things. And I got scared because it was different sort of

Student: That child, the child is sick.

Student: Ask her again how she could see us.

Student: How could you see Miss Dobie and Miss Wright?

Student: I, I

Student: Tell him what you whispered to me.

Student: It was at night and I was leaning down by the keyhole.

Student: There is no keyhole on my door.

Student: What?

Student: There is no keyhole on my door.

Student: It wasn't her room, Grandma; it was the other room I guess, Miss Dobie's room. I saw through the keyhole of Miss Dobie's room.

Student: How did you know anybody was in Dobie's room?

Student: I told you, I told you. Because we heard, everybody heard.

Student: I share room with my aunt. It is on the first floor at the other end of the house. It is impossible to hear anything from there. Tell her to come and see for herself.

Student: What is this, Mary? Why did you say, you saw through a keyhole? Can you hear from your room?

Student: Everybody is really; I don't know what I am saying with everybody mixing me. I did see. I did see it.

Student: What did you see? Where did you see? I want the truth now, the truth whatever it is.

Student: We can go home. We are finished here. It is not a pleasant place to be.

Student: Stop that crying, Mary. Stand up.

Professor: Mary gets up, heads down still crying hysterically. Mrs. Tilford goes and stands directly.

Student: I want the truth.

Student: Alright.

Professor: What is the truth?

Student: It was Rosalie who saw that. It was I just said it was me so that I don't have to tattle Rosalie.

Student: Oh, my God.

Student: It was Rosalie, Grandma. She told us all about it. She said she heard all about it in a book and she knew. You just ask Rosalie, you just ask Rosalie. She will tell you. We used to talk about it all the time. That's the truth, the honest truth. She said it was when the door was open once and she told all about it. I am trying to save Rosalie and everybody jumps

Student: Please, wait a minute. Rosalie

Student: You are giving yourself an awful beating and you deserve whatever you got.

Professor: Mrs. Tilford stands waiting for Rosalie, passes her hand over her face.

Student: I don't know. I don't know any more. May be it is what I deserve.

Professor: As Rosalie, frightened appears at the door, making bows to everybody, she takes the child gently by the hand, brings her down center, talking nervously.

Student: I am sorry to keep you up so late, Rosalie. You must be tired. Mary says there has been a lot of talk in the school lately about Mrs. Wright and Mrs. Dobie. Is that true?

Student: I don't know what you mean.

Student: The things have been puzzling you girls?

Student: What things? I never, I

Student: Don't be frightened.

Student: What was that talk about, Rosalie?

Student: I don't know what she means, Miss Wright.

Student: Rosalie, Mary has told her grandmother that certain things at school have been puzzling you girls, you particularly

Student: History puzzles me, I guess. I am not very good at history and Helen helps me sometimes. Is that

Student: No, that was not what she meant. She says that you told her that you saw certain, certain acts between Miss Dobie and myself. She says that once, when the door was open, you saw us kissing each other in a way that

Professor: Unable to bear the child's look, she turns her back

Student: women don't kiss one another.

Student: No Miss Wright, I didn't, I didn't. I didn't. I never said such a thing.

Student: That's true, my dear?

Student: I never saw any such thing. Mary always makes things up about me and everybody else. I never said any such thing ever. Why, I never could have thought of

Student: Yes, you did it, Rosalie. You are just trying to get out of it. I remember just when you said it. I remember it because it was the day when Helen Burton's bracelet was

Student: I never did. I hear this

Student: It was the day when Helen's bracelet was chosen and nobody knew who did it, and Helen said that if her mother found out, she would have the thief put in jail.

Professor: Karen puzzled as the others by the sudden change in Rosalie's manner.

Student: There is nothing to cry about. You must help us by telling the truth. Why what's the matter, Rosalie?

Student: Grandma there is something I have got to tell you.

Student: Yes, yes I did see it. I told Mary. What Mary said was right. I said it, I said it.

Professor: Throws herself on the couch, weeping hysterically. Martha stands leaning against the door. Karen, Cardin and Mrs. Tilford are staring at Rosalie. Mary slowly sits down as the curtain falls.

Ok, let's have a discussion over this. What is the highlight of the second act?

Student: Act of interrogation

Professor: Act of interrogation, Ok, do you think, again I am extremely interested in Mary's character. I will keep coming back to that. That how could a child be that insidious? It is almost like certain determination she destroys, but the play has been critiqued once upon the time about the way it has been, you know the plot. The plot has been constructed. That it is just not possible for a bunch of grownups to get swayed by a mere child's lie. So how do we respond to that sort of criticism?

Student: I mean, the particular kind of accusation that is being made that, sort of dissolves any rational critique about it.

Professor: Ok

Student: So, in a way, similarly (()), you see somebody and normally anybody will not question that.

Professor: Yes

Student: If somebody says you are anti-national at this point in India, we will just be put in the jail, nobody will ask questions. Nobody will wonder whether it's true or not.

LOL

Professor: Yes. Ok, is the kind, we were just talking about, in the previous classes, we were talking about how, homosexuality or any accusation of homosexuality was enough to finish off any one and people were ostracized and if they were in jobs, they were stripped off their jobs; if they were in a society, in a locality, in a community, then they would be completely ostracized, cut off from the society. At times they were even beaten up for this crime, so-called crime of homosexuality. So perhaps Mary and other children could have read these things in the newspapers around them, quite possible. Yeah. This is possible because these children are; I mean we read all kinds of news around. The other day I read something very interesting about two grown-up boys who are so engrossed in video gaming that they don't have baths, they don't even get up, they don't eat, they don't take bath, they have stopped going to the college. Not in our country, somewhere outside, yeah. So they are so much addicted to it. These are the kinds of stories that naturally, normal, I mean attract people. Such kinds of acts of aberrations are happening all around us. Perhaps they have also got but, yes, being a playwright she wouldn't refer to all those things but how does she understand so much? And exactly she understands that what kind of accusation would lead these people into trouble. But my question is that, awareness of this thing is one thing. But why is Mary so full of hatred? Why is Mary so much full of hatred? I mean she is a pampered child. All these girls, Rosalie and Evelyn, they have so much, they, I mean you have been given enough information about them. You know they have bracelets and they have chauffeurs and they have butlers and what not and they have housekeepers, so in those societies, only the very rich people can afford such kind of services and help. So when they are, people are so rich, and these people are so well off and so privileged, what fills Mary with this kind of animosity, hatred, resentment call it whatever. What could possibly? Just because I have asked you that you came late for the class, get out, I mean would you go around spreading rumors about your teacher. Perhaps, yes teacher is bad-tempered but why did she go to such extent?

Student: It is her nature and she is very intelligent child, very pampered and she is unable to get along with normal (()) and that. I don't know there is any extraneous explanation.

Student: I think she is so; it is like a human tendency. Like it is very natural in the way that you, your self defense and also you tend to go against people who do not agree to what you

want to do. So, hatred, I don't know. I think, I don't think really she hates anybody. There is no reason to

Professor: There is no reason to hate but the way she goes after these two women and knowing exactly what kind of allegation or accusation is going to nail them or finish them. Means even if we hate somebody extremely, I mean they haven't really done anything to deserve this kind of punishment.

Student: I don't think she realizes the potential of what she what she has done.

Professor: Ok

Student: For her, it is just something that a stone she has found and she is throwing at somebody who has hurt her.

Professor: Ok

Student: It is that basic. Here

Student: She doesn't know how much damage she has cost

Student: Yeah, she knows a little bit (( )) would get them hurt but I don't think she realizes the potential.

Professor: At one point she nearly debases Rosalie. Remember that? That is from now onwards you are going to be

Student: Yeah

Professor: Do you think that is also she is not really aware of what she is doing? I think she is in complete control of her senses and consciousness. But to debase a friend like this, that you know, I have caught you doing this, now you are completely in my control. You are going to do whatever I am going to, I want you to do.

Student: That is interesting because the way she terms it, it is not control or slavery. It will be you are mine or something.

Professor: No, no.

Student: I am the knight and you have to do as I say.

Professor: Vassal is complete subjugation, yeah.

Student: Even that part is romanticized as a child story.

Professor: That is what children read.

Student: Yeah that's what

Professor: Our generation children, I mean, children my son's age, they read Harry Potter and Percy Jackson and related stories. So that's what the mythical elements are so contemporarised for them, so they fail to distinguish between what is real, what is mythology,

what is contemporary. That is what is happening, so perhaps in her mind also there is too much of romantic imagination. But would there be another, let's now, drawing your attention to the role of family as a structure, as a societal structure. Do you think she is...? She is a child who has been brought up without parents, yeah and by a doting grandmother. Do you think that grandmother has something to do with the way Mary has turned out to be?

Student: Yeah, I don't think she did necessarily. I just think she just wants to stay at home with her grandmother and she finds that may be this accusation will keep her home and she won't have to go to school after this and I think she just thoughtlessly goes ahead with the life because now she said it, she can't take it back.

Professor: Yeah, so don't you think that there is another, yeah, reason to point or to accuse grandmother of giving over attention or excessive attention. She never let go off her grandmother's apron strings. Perhaps she wants to be back but because she has been indulged so much, because she has been showered with so much of attention, yeah that she has been told that, it is alright to do whatever you want to do. There has been no control. So it's, we are looking at that kind of a personality, yeah. So to some extent, I think it's the playwright's intention to implicate the grandmother as well. Grandmother is just, is not just an innocent bystander here.

Student: None of these, what we discussed, taken singly can account for...

Professor: Her behavior.

Student: Her, yeah, planned acts. So we discussed that (( )) used to (( )) another class, there is no real explanation for the way he acts at the end of the day. Some sort of personality disorder, perhaps and I think what the playwright is trying to say that the apology here is not in the homosexuality but its origin is elsewhere. But that is never examined. When they keep on saying something wrong with this child, we need to speak to her, but it is not even taken into account. It's constantly that the (( )) are natural, whatever. So that's

Student: I think also the stubbornness which you can draw parallels between the play and the child. Because she started something up and she doesn't want to waver from it. I am going to stick to it, no matter what.

Professor: That is what he says, I mean once you start on something, there is no going back because you are playing with fire and you have started a dangerous game. There is no going back because going back is just going to lead you into trouble.

Student: Exactly your lying

Professor: Yeah

Student: With one lie, you cannot open

Professor: Open, yeah and that too a lie

Student: Yeah

Professor: Of such a nature.

Student: That in front of all your teachers

Professor: Yeah, that in front of all your teachers, your friends, so she, a child's psychology, I mean they are very intuitive and they also have this innate sense of self-preservation. Yeah. So they know how to save themselves. So they will lie and they lie and they lie. I think Lillian Hellman is also implicating the elders in the society. Now who are the elders? We were talking; we were situating this in context with entire atmosphere of lying and accusation and in the past, not in the past but in the Cold War America, when people were accused of being communists. We are not talking about McCarthy, Senator McCarthy burst on the scene rather late. Not when the play was written Ok, but when the play was written the Winds of Terror, rather. They had already started. That we are going, anyone can accuse anyone of being a communist and ruin the person. So perhaps what Lillian Hellman is trying to do is situate, because her own, she was also one of the accused later on, as one of those anti-national, anti-American writers and more importantly her partner, she had a relationship with the great Dashiell Hammett. Dashiell Hammett is the writer of the Maltese Falcon. He was a pulp fiction, Nora writer. He also worked on several Nora films. Those who are interested in detective fiction, they want to look at the works of Dashiell Hammett. So she, they were in a relationship and Dashiell Hammett was actually imprisoned for anti-American acts, Ok, for harboring communist feelings or speaking out against the country. So you were right. Whatever is happening, Ok that was happening there. So what she is trying to do? Lillian Hellman had been a, she had anticipated the McCarthy madness. When Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman were, the time when the play was written, things had started happening. I mean, the fire had already started. It was later than Dashiell Hammett's first imprisonment but what she is trying to do is that there will always be a fringe group and Mary represents, children represents a fringe group. So you can read it as a metaphor. There will always be a fringe group that will indulge in such mischief but it is the elders and here she implicates the government, the judiciary, the executive, all those, the powers that be. So Mrs. Tilford and the other elders, they represent the state, the judiciary, and the media perhaps. Ok, so that's something. It's not just Mrs. Tilford versus children, or Karen and Martha. It is something more.

And then the final act, the final confession that yes, I did have lesbian feelings towards you; that's what Martha confesses. That can also have another reading that yes, there were people who harbored communist feelings but they were not necessarily anti-national. Just by harboring, just by wishing someone dead, Ok, I wish you, yeah, you are not going to actually, you cannot be accused of actually murdering someone. Well, in our anger, in fit of temper we say these things; many things to many people, but everything cannot be, you cannot be tried for everything that you say. That's the idea. So again Martha's confessions, yes I did have feelings for you, I do, I am in love with you, I never admitted it. That can be read as; people who were actually, because when people were accused of being communists, yes they were attending meetings. There was a thing called the Group Theater. There was a thing called Federal Theater Project where all these people would come and read Russian works, Russian masters, invite people from across Europe and have intellectual discussions on various forms of government, yeah. So those things were very much there. We were talking about Sergei Eisenstein the other day, yeah. Just inviting Sergei Eisenstein for a meeting would amount to or would account for being a communist and being a communist would account for being a

Student: Anti American

Professor: Being anti-national, being an antinational element, yeah. So that's how we have to approach the play, alright. About the unities, I was drawing your attention to the unities earlier, so look at the unities.

(( ))

Professor: The room has changed. It is not dirty but it is dull and dark and unkempt for the windows are tightly shut; the curtains tightly drawn. Karen is sitting in the large center, right center, feet flat on floor. Martha is lying on the couch, her face buried against the pillows, her back to Karen. It is a minute or two after the rise of the curtain before either speaks.

Student: It's cold in here.

Student: Yes

Student: What time is it?

Student: I don't know. What's the difference?

Student: None.

Student: I was hoping it's time for my bath.

Student: Take it early today.



Student: Oh, I couldn't do that. I look forward all day to that bath. It's my last touch with full life. It makes me feel important to know that there is one thing ahead of me, something I got to do.

Student: You ought to get something like that. I tell you, at 5 o'clock every day, you comb your hair. How's that? It's better for you. Take my word. You wake up in the morning and you say to yourself, the day is not entirely empty. Life is rich and full. At 5 o'clock I will comb my hair.

Professor: They fall back into silence. A moment later, phone rings. Neither of them pays the slightest attention to it. But the ringing becomes too insistent. Karen rises, takes the receiver off, goes back to her chair and sits down.

Student: It is raining.

Student: Hungry?

Student: No, you?

Student: No. I would like to be hungry again. Remember how much we used to eat at college.

Student: That was 10 years ago.

Student: And maybe we would be hungry in another 10 years.

Student: It is cheaper this way.

Student: What is this whole thing of time being more nourishing than bread?

Student: Yeah, may be

Student: Joe's late today. What time is it?

Student: We have been sitting here for 8 days asking each other the time. And you heard there isn't any time any more.

Student: It has been days since we have been out of this house.

Student: Well, we will have to get out of these chairs sooner or later. In a couple of months, they will need dusting.

Student: What will we do when we get off?

Student: God knows.

Student: It's awful.

Student: Let's not talk about it. What about eggs for dinner?

Student: Alright

Student: I will make some potatoes with onions, the way you used to like them.

Student: It is a week ago Thursday. It never seemed real until the last day.

Student: It seems real enough now alright.

Student: Now and forever after.

Student: Let's go out.

Student: Where to?

Student: We will take a walk.

Student: Where will we walk?

Student: Why shouldn't we take a walk? We won't see anybody and suppose we do; what of it? We will just, come on. We will go through the park.

Student: They might see us.

Student: (())

Student: Let's not go.

Professor: Martha goes back, lies down again/

Student: We will go tomorrow.

Student: Stop kidding yourself.

Student: Joe says we ought to go out. He says all the people who think it is true will begin to wonder if we keep hiding this way.

Student: Makes you feel better to think that there are such people, go ahead.

Student: He says we ought to go to town and go shopping and act as though

Student: Shopping, that's a sound idea. There aren't 3 stores in Lancet that will sell us anything.

Professor: Now they would be completely ostracized. They wouldn't be even attended to in shops. They would be turned out in shops. Yes?

Student: Hasn't he heard of the ladies clubs and their meetings and their circulars and their visits and their

Student: Yeah, so ladies club are circulating these notices, typically. Yeah, that some women must be destroyed, yeah

Student: Don't tell him

Student: I won't.

Professor: There are footsteps in the hall and the sound of something being dragged.

Student: That's our friend.

Professor: A grocery boy appears lugging a box. He brings it into the room, stands, sorry, stands staring at them. Giggles a little, walks towards Karen, stops, examines her. She stands tense, looking away from him. Without taking his eyes from Karen, he speaks. Ram?

Student: Yeah

Professor: Grocery boy

Student: I knocked on the kitchen door but nobody answered.

Student: You said that yesterday, alright. Thanks. Good bye.

Student: Make him stop it.

Student: Here are the things

Professor: Giggles, moves towards Martha, stands looking at her. Suddenly Martha thrusts her hand in the air

Student: I have got 8 fingers, see. I am a freak.

Student: There is a car coming here.

Professor: Gets no answer. Starts backing out of door, still looking familiarly

Student: Good bye

Professor: Exits

Student: You still think we should go to town?

Student: I don't know. I don't know about anything anymore.

Student: Martha, Martha, Martha.

Student: What is it, Karen?

Student: What are we going to do? It is all so cold and unreal and it is like a dark hour of the night when half awake, you struggle through the black mess you have been dreaming. And suddenly you wake up and you see your own bed or your own night gown and you know you are back again in the solid world.

Student: But now it is all the nightmare. There is no solid world. Oh Martha, why did it happen? What happened? Why are we doing here like this?

Student: Waiting

Student: For what?

Student: I don't know.

Student: We got to get out of this place. I can't stand it anymore.

Student: You will be getting married soon.

Student: Everything will be alright again.

Student: Yes

Student: What is it?

Student: Nothing.

Student: There mustn't be anything wrong between you and Joe, never.

Student: Nothing is wrong.

Professor: As footsteps are heard in the hall, her face lights up.

Student: That's Joe now.

Professor: Mrs. Mortar, small suitcase in her hand, stands in the doorway, her face pushed coyly forward. , (( )) read for Mrs. Mortar.

Student: Here I am, hello, hello.

Professor: She has been put out. She is back again. She has turned over her back, and is staring at her aunt. She speaks to Karen.

Student: The Duchess, isn't it? Returned at long last; Come on in. We are delighted to see you. Are you tired from your journey? Is there something I can get you?

Student: I am very glad to see you both and I am very glad to see the old place again. How is everything?

Student: Everything is fine. We are splendid, thank you. You are just in time for tea.

Student: You know I should like some tea if it isn't too much trouble.

Student: No trouble at all, some small sandwiches and little brandy?

Student: Why Martha?

Student: Where the hell have you been?

Student: Around, around, had the most interesting time.

Student: Why didn't you answer my telegram?

Student: Things have changed in the theater, drastically changed, I must say.

Student: Why didn't you answer my telegrams?

Student: Oh Martha, there is your temper again

Student: Answer me and don't bother about my temper.

Student: I was moving around a great deal. You know, I think it will throw a very revealing light on the state of the new theater when I tell you that Lycuum in Rochester now has a toilet backstage.

Student: To hell with the toilet in Rochester. Where were you?

Student: Moving around, I tell you

Student: What difference does it all make now?

Student: Karen is quite right. Let bygones be bygones. As I was saying, there is effete something in the theater now and that accounts for

Student: Isn't she wonderful? Why did you refuse to come back here and testify for us?

Student: Why Martha? I didn't refuse to come back you know. That's a wrong way to look at it. I was on a tour. It's a moral obligation. Now don't let's talk about unpleasant things anymore. I will go up and unpack a few things. Tomorrow is plenty of time to unpack my trunk.

Student: Things have changed here, you know.

Student: She doesn't know. She expected to walk right up to a comfortable fire and sit down and she very carefully waited until the whole thing was over. Listen Karen Wright and Martha Dobie brought a libel suit against a woman called Tilford because her grand child had accused them of what the judge called sinful, sexual knowledge of one another.

Professor: Mrs. Mortar holds up her hand in protest and Martha laughs.

Student: Don't like that, do you? Well the great part of the defense's case based on the remarks made by Lily Mortar, actress in the toilets of Rochester.

LOL

Student: Against her niece Martha. And the greater part of the defense's case rested on the telling fact that Mrs. Mortar would not appear in court to deny or explain those remarks. Mrs. Mortar had a moral obligation to the theater. As you probably read in the newspapers, we lost the case.

Student: Well, I didn't think that way, Martha. It couldn't have done any good for all of us to get mixed up in that unpleasant notoriety. Now that you have explained it, why, I do see it your way and I am sorry I didn't come back. But now I have entered, I am going to stand shoulder to shoulder with you. I know what you have gone through, but the body and heart do recover, you know. I will be here working right along with you and

Student: There is 8 o'clock train. Get on it.

Student: Martha.

Student: You came to pick the bones dry? Well, there aren't bones any more. There is nothing here for you.

Student: How can you talk to me like that?

Student: Because I hate you, always hated you.

Student: God will punish you for that.

Student: He is doing alright.

Student: When you wish to apologize I will be temporarily in my room.

Professor: Starts to exit, almost bumps into Cardin, steps back with dignity. Yeah, carry on Pranjai.

Student: Look who is here. Little late, aren't you?

Student: So it's you. I call that loyal. A lot of men wouldn't still be here. They would have felt

Student: Get out of here.

LOL

Professor: That's a good one.

Student: Sorry, yeah.

Student: Get out of here.

Student: I will call you when it's time for your train.

Student: Now what do you think brought her back?

Student: God knows

Student: I know. She was broke.

Student: Don't let her worry this time, Martha. We will give her some money and get rid of her. Been out today darling?

Student: We started to go out.

Student: Feel alright?

Professor: Karen leans over to kiss him. Almost imperceptibly, he pulls back. You see, that's the immediate , intuitive reaction that he doesn't want her kiss. But he is a gentleman. He won't let them down in public but he recoils in horror.

Student: Why did you do that?

Student: Karen, do what?

Student: Draw back that way?

Professor: Laughs, kisses her.

Student: If we sit here much longer, we will all be bats. I sold my place to Foster.

Student: You did what?

Student: We will get married this week, then we will be going, all 3 of us.

Student: You can't leave here. I won't have you do this for me. What about the hospital and

Student: Shut up, darling. It's all fixed. We are going to Vienna and we are going quick.

Fischer wrote to me I can have my old place back.

Student: No, no I am not going to let you.

Student: It is already done. Fischer can't pay me much, but it will be enough for 3 of us. Plenty if we live cheap.

LOL

Professor: That is really linguistic

LOL

Student: I couldn't go with you Joe.

Professor: Laughing fits, most of you are having laughing fits.

Student: Nonsense, Martha, we all are going. We are going

Student: You don't want to go back to Vienna?

Student: No

Student: Then why?

Student: Look. I don't want to go to Vienna. I rather would stay here.

Student: You don't want to go to Vienna? You would rather stay here. Well, to hell with that. You can't stay here. And Vienna offers eat and sleep and drink beer. Now don't object anymore, please darling, alright?

Student: Alright,

Student: I can't go. It is better for all of us if I don't.

Student: Not now, you stay with us now. Later on if you want that way, alright?

Student: Alright.

Student: Swell. I will buy you good coffee cakes and take you both Ischgl for honeymoon.

Professor: Martha picking up grocery box. She starts for door.

Student: A big coffee cake with lot of raisins. It would be nice to like something again.

Student: I will be going back with a pretty girl who belongs to me. I will show you off all over the place. Dr. Engelhardt,

Professor: Doctor Engelhardt

Student: Engelhardt and the nurse at the desk, and to the fat gal at the cake shop and to Fischer. The last time I saw him was at the railroad station. He took me back of the baggage car. Joseph, he said. You will be a good doctor. I will trust you to cut up my Minna. But you are not a great doctor and you will never will be. Go back where you were born and take care of your sick. Leave the fancy work to others. I came home.

Student: You will be coming home again someday.

Student: No, let's not talk about it. You need some clothes?

Student: A few. Oh, your Doctor Fischer was so right. This is where you belong.

Student: I need an overcoat and a suit. You will need a lot of things. It is cold there now, colder than you expect.

Student: I have done this to you. I have taken you from everything you want.

Student: But it's lovely in the mountains and that's where we will go for a month.

Student: They have done it. They have taken away every chance we had, everything we wanted, everything we were going to be.

Student: And we have got to stop talking like that.

Professor: Takes her by the shoulder.

Student: We have got a chance, but it is just one chance. And if we miss it, we are done for. It means that we have got to start putting the whole business behind us. Now Karen, what you have done, you have done. And that's that.

Student: What I have done.

Professor: Ok, we stop here; Because what you have done; and this is a very telling remark.

Student: Yeah

Professor: It seems like there is a tinge of suspicion in his mind. Ok, what's done is done, let's forget it.

(Professor – student conversation ends)

(Refer Slide Time 49:14)



Student are requested to complete reading  
the last few pages of *The Children's Hour* on their own