

SIDES: LESTER/JERRY

LESTER (male/late 40s-early 60s) A wealthy yet generous owner of a chemical plant which has been commissioned by the government to make war-related products. He is confident and good natured, but struggles to accept the role forced upon him, and searches for a way to change his legacy.

JERRY (male/late 40s-early 60s) A tired and practical accountant who is charged by his old college friend to help him find a way to leave a meaningful post-war legacy. Yet with his son fighting overseas, he has his own more pressing worries.

1940s. The study inside Lester's house. Jerry, Lester's old friend, has been looking over his expenses. Lester has also revealed that the government has requested the use of his chemical plant for photographic development for the war.

LESTER

It's not just for the Signal Corps though. What they want to do.

(pause)

JERRY

So what is it?

LESTER

I can't...uh...Jerry, they want to make something else here.

JERRY

Well.

(pause)

Well, then you make it.

(pause)

LESTER

(quietly)

Our government says we're not using chemical warfare. The Nazis are. They're killing people with it. Children too, you know that? But we're not like them. We're not supposed to be like them.

JERRY

And we aren't. Lester, we are nothing like the Nazis.

LESTER

I know we're not really like them.

JERRY

Nothing like them.

LESTER

But, Jerry...our government, they want to...You're my oldest friend and I'm not allowed to tell you.

(pause)

I shouldn't have to do something I'm not allowed to tell you.

(pause)

JERRY

Mustard gas.

(pause)

LESTER

(shakes his head)

You know the American position on chemical warfare. So I can't say more than that, Jerry. But I'm not sleeping at night. I'll tell you that. And I'll tell you another thing—they want to construct a building near the tennis court. And that building? Nothing to do with developing film for the Signal Corps. Nothing.

(pause)

JERRY

Did you decline?

LESTER

Can I decline?

(pause)

JERRY

(shakes his head)

They'll just requisition it.

LESTER

They can do that?

JERRY

They *will* do that.

LESTER

So what do I...

JERRY

It's the government. You can't—you can't uninvite the United States government.

LESTER

I never invited them!

(pause)

JERRY

You could retire.

LESTER

Then Teddy would take this over. That boy can't shoot a dying deer in the woods. Have this blood on his hands? Out of the question.

(pause)

JERRY

You could donate your company to the government. You might have to sell your house in the Hamptons with the income loss, but your conscience would be clearer.

LESTER

Jerry. Anna loves that beach house in Southampton. Be serious now.

JERRY

You think I'm joking? Okay, to be serious, to be really serious now—

LESTER

Yes.

(pause)

JERRY

All's fair in love and war.

LESTER

But it's not. Nothing's fair in love or war.

JERRY

That's what the expression means, Lester. Look, you don't wanna give those Nazi bastards an inch.

LESTER

I know, I know.

(pause)

You know my parents were from Germany—

JERRY

You're the son of immigrants. Aren't we all. But you're not German, Lester. You're American.

(pause)

You gotta have some faith in your country.

LESTER

Why?

JERRY

Because what's the alternative.