

L – Bert & Keller

CHRIS. Lot of new books.

KELLER. All different.

CHRIS. All different.

KELLER. (*Shakes his head, puts knife down on bench, takes oil stone up to the cabinet.*) Psss! Annie up yet?

CHRIS. Mother's giving her breakfast in the dining room.

KELLER. (*Crosses D.S. of stool, looking at broken tree.*) See what happened to the tree?

CHRIS. (*Without looking up.*) Yeah.

KELLER. What's Mother going to say? (*Bert runs on from driveway. He is about eight. He jumps on stool, then on Keller's back.*)

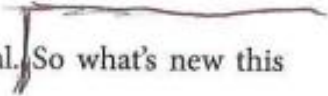
BERT. You're finally up.

KELLER. (*Swinging him around and putting him down.*) Ha! Bert's here! Where's Tommy? He's got his father's thermometer again.

BERT. He's taking a reading.

CHRIS. What!

BERT. But it's only oral.

KELLER. Oh, well, there's no harm in oral.  So what's new this morning, Bert?

BERT. Nothin'. (*He goes to broken tree, walks around it.*)

KELLER. Then you couldn't've made a complete inspection of the block. In the beginning, when I first made you a policeman, you used to come in every morning with something new. Now, nothin's ever new.

BERT. Except some kids from Thirtieth Street. They started kicking a can down the block, and I made them go away because you were sleeping.

KELLER. Now you're talkin', Bert. Now you're on the ball. First thing you know I'm liable to make you a detective.

BERT. (*Pulls him down by the lapel and whispers in his ear.*) Can I see the jail now?

KELLER. Seein' the jail ain't allowed, Bert. You know that.

BERT. Aw, I betcha there isn't even a jail. I don't see any bars on the

cellar windows.

KELLER. Bert, on my word of honor, there's a jail in the basement. I showed you my gun, didn't I?

BERT. But that's a hunting gun.

KELLER. That's an arresting gun!

BERT. Then why don't you ever arrest anybody? Tommy said another dirty word to Doris yesterday, and you didn't even demote him.

KELLER. *(He chuckles and winks at Chris, who is enjoying all this.)* Yeah, that's a dangerous character, that Tommy. *(Beckons him closer.)* What word does he say?

BERT. *(Backing away quickly in great embarrassment.)* Oh, I can't say that.

KELLER. *(Grabs him by the shirt and pulls him back.)* Well, gimme an idea.

BERT. I can't. It's not a nice word.

KELLER. Just whisper it in my ear. I'll close my eyes. Maybe I won't even hear it.

BERT. *(On tiptoe, puts his lips to Keller's ear, then in unbearable embarrassment steps back.)* I can't Mr. Keller.

CHRIS. *(Laughing.)* Don't make him do that.

KELLER. Okay, Bert. I take your word. Now go out, and keep both eyes peeled.

BERT. *(Interested.)* For what?

KELLER. For what! Bert, the whole neighborhood is depending on you. A policeman don't ask questions. Now peel them eyes!

BERT. *(Mystified, but willing.)* Okay. *(He runs off R. back of arbor.)*

KELLER. *(Calling after him.)* And mum's the word, Bert.

BERT. *(Stops and sticks his head thru the arbor.)* About what?

KELLER. Just in general. Be v-e-r-y careful.

BERT. *(Nods in bewilderment.)* Okay. *(Bert exits D. R.)*

KELLER. *(Laughs.)* I got all the kids crazy!

CHRIS. One of these days, they'll all come in here and beat your brains out.