

Left to himself, Mr. Smeeth slowly knocked out his pipe in the coal-scuttle and then stared into the fire, brooding.

He was always catching himself grumbling about the children now, and he did not want to be a grumbling father. He had enjoyed them when they were young, but now, although there were times when he felt a touch of pride, he no longer understood them. George especially, the elder of the two, and once a very bright promising boy, was both a disappointment and a mystery. George had had opportunities that he himself had never had. But George had shown an inclination, from the first, to go his own way, which seemed to Mr. Smeeth a very poor way. He had no desire to stick to anything, to serve somebody faithfully, to work himself steadily up to a good safe position. He simply tried one thing after another, selling wireless sets, helping some pal in a garage (he was in a garage now, and it was his fourth or fifth), and though he always contrived to earn something and appeared to work hard enough, he was not, in his father's opinion, getting anywhere. He was only twenty, of course, and there was time, but Mr. Smeeth, who knew very well that George would continue to go his own way without any reference to him, did not see any possibility of improvement...

The truth was, of course, that Mr. Smeeth's children *were* foreigners, not simply because they belonged to a younger generation but because they belonged to a younger generation that existed in a different world. Mr. Smeeth was perplexed because he applied to them standards they did not recognize...

...Their world was at once larger and shallower than that of their parents. They were less English, more cosmopolitan. Mr. Smeeth could not understand George and Edna, but a host of youths and girls in New York, Paris and Berlin would have understood them at a glance.

**J. B. Priestley**