

STAGE DOOR

~~Steel. A cacophony made up of protesting brakes, automobile horns, taxi drivers' shouts, a laugh or two.)~~

~~1ST VOICE. (Off.) Hey, buddy, back her up a bit, will you?~~

~~2ND VOICE. (Off.) O. K., Bill.~~

~~(From her dresser KAYE takes a black eyeshield and adjusts it over her eyes after she is in bed. TERRY does same, then shouts a Good night! loudly enough to be heard above the street din. KAYE'S Good night is equally loud. Simultaneously they turn out their bed lights. For a second—but only a second—the room is in darkness. Then the reason for TERRY's eyeshield becomes apparent. A huge electric advertising sign on an adjacent roof flashes on, off, on, off, full up, alternately flooding the room with light and plunging it into darkness.)~~

~~TERRY. (Shouting.) Funny if we both did get jobs tomorrow!~~

~~KAYE. Huh?~~

~~TERRY. (Colder.) I say, it would be funny if we both got jobs tomorrow!~~

~~KAYE. Certainly would.~~

~~(A moment of silence. The door bursts open. JEAN comes in, bringing with her a quiver of excitement. She is in dinner clothes.)~~

~~***START***
JEAN. (Jumps on light full up except bed lamps and bureau lamp. Electric sign dims one-half.) Terry! Wake up!~~

~~TERRY. What's the matter?~~

~~JEAN. (Startled.) We're in the movies!~~

~~TERRY. What?~~

~~JEAN. Both of us! We're in the movies! They just heard from the Coast.~~

~~TERRY. Jean! How do you know? What happened?~~

~~JEAN. Mr. Kingsley just got the telegram. They liked the tests, and we're to go to the office tomorrow to sign our contracts. We leave for the Coast next week! Terry! Can you believe it!~~

~~TERRY. (Startled.) Yes. Yes. You mean—right away?~~

~~JEAN. Of course we'll only get little parts in the beginning. But there's that beautiful check every week, whether you work or not.~~

And the swimming and the sunshine and those little ermine jackets up to here. No more running around to offices and having them spit in your eye. And a salary raise every six months if they like us. So at the end of three years it begins to get pretty good, and after five years it's wonderful, and at the end of seven years it's more money than you ever heard of.

TERRY. Seven years! What do you mean—seven years!

JEAN. Yes, it's a seven-year contract—that is, if they take up the options.

TERRY. But what about the stage? Suppose I wanted to act?

JEAN. Well, what do you think this is—juggling? Motion picture acting is just as much of an art as stage acting, only it's cut up more. You only have to learn about a line at a time, and they just keep on taking it until you get it right.

TERRY. ~~(Steering at Terry.)~~ ~~(Terry.)~~ Oh, no.

JEAN. What?

TERRY. I couldn't.

JEAN. Couldn't what?

TERRY. That isn't acting, that's piecework. You're not a human being, you're a thing in a vacuum. Noise shut out, human response shut out. But in the theatre, when you hear that lovely sound out there, then you know you're right. It's as though they'd turned on an electric current that hit you here. And that's how you learn to act.

JEAN. You can learn to act in pictures. You have to do it till it's right.

TERRY. Yes, and then they put it in a tin can, like Campbell's Soup. And if you die the next day it doesn't matter a bit. You don't even have to be alive to be in pictures.

JEAN. I suppose you call *this* being alive! Sleeping three in a room in this rotten dump. It builds you up, eh?

TERRY. I'm not going to stay here all my life. This is only the beginning.

JEAN. Don't kid yourself. You've been here three years, and then it's three years more, and then another three and where are you? You can't play ingenues forever. Pretty soon you're a character woman, and then you're running a boarding house like old Orcutt. That'll be nice, won't it?

TERRY. I don't know. You make me sound like a fool, but I know I'm not. All I know is I want to stay on the stage. I just don't

want to be in pictures. An actress in the theatre, that's what I've wanted to be my whole life. It isn't just a career, it's a feeling. The theatre is something that's gone on for hundreds and hundreds of years. It's—I don't know—it's part of civilization.

JEAN. All right, you stay here with your civilization, eating those seminars and tapiocas they shove at us, toeing the mark in this female seminary, buying your clothes at Klein's. That's what you like, eh?

TERRY. Yes, I like it!

JEAN. And I suppose you like this insane racket going on all night!

~~(She opens the window, street outside.)~~

TERRY. ~~(Calling someone outside.)~~ Yes, I do!

JEAN. And that Cadillac car sign going on and off like a damned lighthouse! ~~(She turns off light. Again, the flash of electric sign off on off on full on and flashing faster.)~~ I suppose you've got to have that to be an actress!

TERRY. Yes! Yes! Yes! Yes!

JEAN. ~~(She springs forward.)~~ Well, not for me. I'm going out where there's sunshine and money and fun and —

TERRY. ~~(She turns on the light.)~~ And little ermine swimming pools up to here!

~~(The light goes out, the flashing sign goes on and off faster.)~~

JEAN. ~~(She turns on the light.)~~ I'm going to make something out of my life. I'm not going to stay in this lousy dump.

~~GERMAIN~~

—end