

REPORTER. What would you do? To ease your last suffering days on earth? What would you do with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars?

SHOPGIRL. I'd buy a wardrobe like Irene Castle's.

CUSTOMER. I'd give it all to charity.

SHOPGIRL. Then I'd travel around the world—first class. With all my friends.

STORE OWNER. I'd play the stock market.

MALE SHOPPER. I'd buy my wife a fur coat and a diamond the size of New Hampshire.

*(GRACE appears, walking with a cane.)*

GRACE. I'd use it to pay my medical bills. *(Reaction from CROWD.)* And pay off the second mortgage on our house. The one my father took out to pay for my last operation. *(Reactions of sympathy.)*

SOB SISTER. Pretty Grace Fryer sits at home

REPORTER. ...suffering bravely through this entire ordeal.

SOB SISTER. ...struggling valiantly to keep up her flagging spirits—

REPORTER. ...for the sake of her family and her friends.

GRACE. It hurts to smile. But I try to smile. I know if I don't smile—I'll go crazy. *(Approval from the CROWD.)*

SOB SISTER. Tell us—Miss Fryer—how does it feel, knowing you have so little time left?

GRACE. I try not to think about it.

STORE OWNER. But it must get to ya sometimes—

CUSTOMER. Knowing what you've been through—

SHOPGIRL. And the company's gettin' fat off your labor!

MALE SHOPPER. And all they have to say about it is—

EVERYONE. No comment!

REPORTER. Don't you just wanna punch somebody?

GRACE. Oh, no. That won't do no good. I'd rather just think about...how it's gonna be. When justice prevails! Then I can do something nice for the folks. Maybe send 'em on a trip. They never did have no honeymoon.

SOB SISTER. What a fine example of womanhood! We can only aspire to bear our cross in life as nobly as this young girl.

*(Applause from ensemble—GRACE blushes modestly. CROWD disperses as WILEY congratulates GRACE, then cross to:)*

## SCENE 2

*(Berry's office. BERRY, MARKLEY and WILEY MARKLEY is waving a newspaper.)*

MARKLEY. Mr. Berry! I must object to this kind of histrionics.

BERRY. I had nothing to do with that, Mr. Markley.

MARKLEY. I've been in this game a long time, Mr. Berry. When I see a story like this...move over the wires. I am not so naive as to believe that a plaintiff's attorney has nothing to do with it.

BERRY. What's your proposal, Mr. Markley?

MARKLEY. Fifteen hundred dollars. For each girl.

BERRY. Fifteen hundred dollars?

WILEY. That's not even a year's wages!

MARKLEY. We think it's very generous. Considering your case won't survive the statute of limitations.

BERRY. This is a case in equity, sir. The chancery court will come to a different conclusion.

MARKLEY. The chancery court can't rewrite the law. And the law is clear: two years from the date of injury. Your clients are out of time.

BERRY. Two years from the date the *cause* of injury is discovered.

MARKLEY. Very creative, Mr. Berry. Very clever. I have to admire your imagination. But you've a long way to go before you convince the judge.

WILEY. And in the meantime, Mr. Markley—the press will continue to take a great interest in this story, and in the company's complete indifference to its workers.

MARKLEY. No doubt that will prove to be good press for the Consumer's League. And you accuse us of exploiting these girls.

WILEY. You're the one hiding behind the statute of limitations—

MARKLEY. Hiding Miss Wiley?

WILEY. You know very well the law never anticipated a situation like this. These girls were dying years before anyone knew the cause—

MARKLEY. Before *anyone* knew? Does that include the U.S. Radium Corporation, Miss Wiley? (*Barely able to keep from laughing.*) When—or I should say if—this case goes to trial, I only hope that's your opening argument, Mr. Berry. You will have made our defense. See you at the hearing. (*Exit MARKLEY.*)

WILEY. The arrogance of that man!

BERRY. Tell me again the purpose of these articles, Miss Wiley?

WILEY. Public sympathy, Mr. Berry. That's the engine of reform.

BERRY. You are antagonizing the company.

WILEY. Then the strategy is working.

BERRY. And what about the girls? How does it help them, to read in a dozen different newspapers that they have so little time to live?

WILEY. Mr. Berry. Surely you can see. The U.S. Radium Corporation cares nothing about the girls it has poisoned—but the average housewife in Orange cares very deeply—and so do millions of other women across the country. These women shop. They buy watches. Markley can be as smug as he likes, but the Consumer's League campaign will lead to only one outcome—and he knows it. That is why he was here today.

BERRY. I only hope you're right, Miss Wiley.

WILEY. Public sympathy, Mr. Berry. Wait and see.

(*Cross to:*)

### SCENE 3

(*Lights up on an ELDERLY WIDOW.*)

ELDERLY WIDOW. Dear Miss Schaub. I read of your sad story in the Boston Globe and am so sorry for your plight. It seems in this time of rapid advancement the well-being of the average worker is overlooked. I would like to share with you girls the key to my own good health at the age of ninety-two! It is called Christian Science.