

ness, are employed behind the counter. Elma is a big-eyed girl still in high school. Grace is a more seasoned character in her thirties or early forties. A bus is expected soon and they are checking, somewhat lackadaisically, the supplies. Outside, the powerful, reckless wind comes and goes, blasting against everything in its path, seeming to shake the very foundation of the little restaurant building, then subsiding, leaving a period of uncertain stillness. When the curtain goes up, Elma stands far R., looking out the large plate-glass window, awed by the fury of the elements. Grace is at the telephone, an old-fashioned wall phone behind counter U. L.

Start

ELMA. (U. R., drying a glass.) Listen to that wind. March is coming in like a lion. (Grace jiggles the receiver on the telephone with no results.) Grace, you should come over here and look out, to see the way the wind is blowing things all over town.

GRACE. Now I wonder why I can't get th' operator.

ELMA. I bet the bus'll be late.

GRACE. (Finally hanging up.) I bet it won't. The roads are O.K. as far as here. It's ahead they're havin' trouble. I can't even get the operator. She must have more calls than she can handle. (Crosses D. L. behind counter, clears dishes from D. S. end of counter.)

ELMA. (Still looking out the window.) I bet the bus doesn't have many passengers.

GRACE. Prob'ly not. But we gotta stay open even if there's only one. (Takes dishes to sink.)

ELMA. I shouldn't think anyone would take a trip tonight unless he absolutely had to.

GRACE. Are your folks gonna worry, Elma?

ELMA. No—Daddy said, before I left home, he bet this'd happen.

GRACE. Well, you better come back here and help me. The bus'll be here any minute and we gotta have things ready.

ELMA. (Leaving the window, following Grace.) Nights like this, I'm glad I have a home to go to.

GRACE. (Washing and drying.) Well, I got a home to go to, but there ain't anyone in it.

ELMA. (Puts tops on three sugar bowls on counter.) Where's your husband now, Grace?

GRACE. How should I know?

ELMA. (Crosses R. with two sugars.) Don't you miss him?

GRACE. No!

ELMA. (*Puts sugars on tables.*) If he came walking in now, wouldn't you be glad to see him?

GRACE. You ask more questions.

ELMA. I'm just curious about things, Grace.

GRACE. Well, kids your age *are*. I don't know. I'd be happy to see him, I guess, if I knew he wasn't gonna stay very long.

ELMA. (*Crosses back to u. s. end of counter.*) Don't you get lonesome, Grace, when you're not working down here?

GRACE. Sure I do. If I didn't have this restaurant to keep me busy, I'd prob'ly go nuts. Sometimes, at night, after I empty the garbage and lock the doors and turn out the lights, I get kind of a sick feelin', 'cause I sure don't look forward to walkin' up those stairs and lettin' myself into an empty apartment.

ELMA. Gee, if you feel that way, why don't you write your husband and tell him to come back?

GRACE. (*Thinks a moment, leans on D. s. end of counter.*) 'Cause I got just as lonesome when he was here. He wasn't much company, 'cept when we were makin' love. But makin' love is *one* thing, and bein' lonesome is another. The resta the time, me and Barton was usually fightin'.

ELMA. (*u. of Grace.*) I guess my folks get along pretty well. I mean . . . they really seem to like each other.

GRACE. Oh, I know *all* married people aren't like Barton and I. Not all! (*Goes to u. L. telephone again. Elma goes to sink, dries glasses which she puts D. s. on counter.*) Now, maybe I can get the operator. (*Jiggles receiver.*) Quiet as a tomb. (*Hangs up.*)

ELMA. I like working here with you, Grace.

STOP GRACE. Do you, honey? I'm glad, 'cause I sure don't know what I'd do without ya. Week ends especially.

ELMA. You know, I dreaded the job at first.

GRACE. (*Kidding her.*) Why? Thought you wouldn't have time for all your boy friends? (*Elma looks a little sour. Grace gets rag from sink, wipes counter.*) Maybe you'd have more boy friends if you didn't make such good grades. Boys feel kind of embarrassed if they feel a girl is smarter than they are.

ELMA. What should I do? Flunk my courses?

GRACE. (*Puts rag on sink.*) I should say not. You're a good kid and ya got good sense. I wish someone coulda reasoned with me when I was your age. But I was a headstrong brat, had to have my own way. I had my own way all right, and here I am now, a grass