

JASON

Lily's telling you this for your own good, George; we all got your good at heart.

*(At phone)*

Gimme New York – Lackawanna 6100 *(Line's busy)* Don't take it so hard - just a few cuts here, a line or so there, a little different slant on the ending and there you are ...

HERRICK

*(Gloomily)*

Suppose Shakespeare had changed his plays?

JASON

How do you know he didn't?

HERRICK

It isn't honest – to write something I don't believe.

JASON

Oh, my God ... Will you tell me why it isn't just as honest to let'em leave the theatre with a pleasant taste in their mouth as a bad? I've never seen a depressing show yet I'd give a nickel for!

HERRICK

Look at O'Neill –

JASON

And that goes for O'Neill too – I wouldn't give a nickel for O'Neill either. My God, can you tie it! All on account of a half dozen critics who wouldn't know a show if they saw one, and who are always wrong anyway - and even they just said it was depressing - and you read 'em and decide you're Shakespeare and Ibsen and O'Neill – who else? Sure you're not Socrates and some of them other Romans?

*(Rises and paces up and down, now chewing cigar)*

You been trying to sell this play now for two years. And just because I was big-hearted and gave you a five hundred dollar advance when you'd 'a' took two-fifty –

HERRICK

*(White)*

I – I appreciate all you've done, Mr. Jason.

JASON

*(Goes into his act)*

Oh, no, you don't – you don't appreciate nothing. I've never seen an author yet that did. You give 'em one of the biggest stars in the country and a supporting cast that's second to none – and what do you get -

*(A neat sardonic imitation)*

“You've ruined my play, my beautiful play!”

*(Suddenly gives a shriek)*

Gott in Himmel, you haven't GOT a play! If the audience won't sit through it, it ain't a play. And last night they walked out ...

*(Returns to phone, gets message, mutters, bangs up)*

What's the matter, Philadelphia? I get London quicker than this. *(to HERRICK)* After all I'm trying to do to help you: here you've got a chance to make fifteen hundred dollars a week –

HERRICK

*(eagerly)*

But I don't want that much. I'd rather have less – half that, a third, a quarter - with the play as I wrote it.

JASON

But you can't have less – it's that or nothing. You'd be willing to let it run for a hundred a week or nothing maybe, but who's going to pay the actors?

*(He's talking like mad and walking to the same rhythm, wheeling to the limits of the room)*

And the stage hands! And the theatre's got to be paid for.

*(Grimly)*

Believe me, Kid, it's got to show life the first week! Notices like this in New York and you fold up the Saturday after we open!

HERRICK

It isn't fair! A statue isn't smashed, a canvas isn't torn to pieces, a symphony isn't discarded, if the public doesn't flock to buy the first week! The Theatre's the only art in the world that has to pay its way from the start or be killed!

JASON

Yeah, and it's the only baby that eats up ten thousand a week to stay alive, and don't you forget that either! ... And here's another thing: It's not just yours now. Those actors have rehearsed three weeks for nothing, betting on you. Lily's turned down fifty other plays. I've put up my time and thirty thousand so far, and it'll be forty by time we ring up– and you're letting us all down.

*(This lands – he mellows and follows)*

I don't mind for myself so much and Lily can always get plays – it's the actors I'm thinking of...

*(There's a long silence, thicker and thicker the gloom)*

HERRICK

*(Quietly)*

I'll do what I can, Mr. Jason – but –

JASON

*(Cuts in with a hearty slap on the back)*

Sure – I knew you would! You got a heart – not always thinking of yourself!

*(phone rings)*

Hello... Hello... Lackawanna 6100?... Is Joe there?... Well, Listen, Morrie, you tell him I want to come in a couple of weeks later – yeah, finish out here, lay off a week to re-write, play Atlantic City and then come in ...

*(Enthusiastically)*

Got a great idea – you won't know it's the same show ... Sure it will be changed – that's what I'm telling you – that's why we need the extra time ... All right, tell him to call me and ask him will he hold the theatre ...

*(Hangs up)*

You lousy.... *(A frantic knocking at the door)*