

*(As GRACE heads to the door, enter MARKLEY and MRS. FRYER.)*

MARKLEY. Miss Fryer. Edward Markley. *(He holds out his hand to shake. GRACE doesn't take it. GRACE looks at him, folds her letter away.)*

GRACE. Ma said you brought papers.

MARKLEY. Yes. The terms spelled out as we explained in our letter. Fifteen hundred dollars to you— I've got a check right here. All we need is your signature. *(He gives her the papers. She flips through them.)* It's in triplicate. *(She tries to read, but can't focus.)*

MRS. FRYER. Grace. Mr. Markley is a very busy man.

MARKLEY. Oh, no. Please. Take your time. Look it over carefully. If you prefer, I can leave it and come back tomorrow.

MRS. FRYER. No, no. We'll do this now.

GRACE *(swallows hard)*. What's "hold harmless"?

MARKLEY. You agree to hold the company harmless from any further action.

GRACE. No more lawsuits.

MARKLEY. Correct.

GRACE. Is that just me or anybody in my family?

MARKLEY. Your entire family. It precludes a wrongful-death action also.

GRACE *(looks at the paper again)*. This is a confidential settlement.

MARKLEY. Yes.

GRACE. You didn't say nothin' about it being confidential.

MARKLEY. That's standard for most legal settlements, Miss Fryer. We like to protect our privacy. And your

privacy also. It cuts both ways. You agree to keep silent about the terms of the settlement, and so do we.

MRS. FRYER. That seems fair.

MARKLEY. Need a pen? (*MARKLEY takes out a pen, hands it to GRACE. She takes it, looks back at the pages.*)

GRACE. I have another question.

MRS. FRYER. Grace. Mr. Markley already explained the settlement to you.

GRACE. Ma.

MARKLEY. I don't mind.

GRACE. What is contributory negligence, Mr. Markley? (*MARKLEY is puzzled. He looks at the document.*) It's not in that one. It was in them other papers. That you filed. When we did the lawsuit. The radium company said its defense was the statute of limitations and contributory negligence.

MARKLEY. I'm not sure what you're asking, Miss Fryer.

GRACE. It means it's our fault. Don't it?

MARKLEY. It's a standard defense, Miss Fryer. I wouldn't take it personally.

GRACE. How else can I take it?

MRS. FRYER. Mr. Markley. Grace has had an awful headache all day. Maybe you could leave the papers—

GRACE. Maybe he can just answer the question.

MRS. FRYER. Why are you doing this?

GRACE. Why didn't you tell me Miss Wiley was here?

MRS. FRYER. You already made up your mind. She'd only try to talk you out of it.

GRACE. What did she say about Kathryn?

MRS. FRYER. Mr. Markley, if you'll leave the papers, Grace will sign them later.

GRACE. Ma! What did she say about Kathryn?

MRS. FRYER. She said. It don't look good. (*A moment.*)

MARKLEY. Perhaps I should come back later, when Miss Fryer is feeling better.

GRACE. You didn't answer my question, Mr. Markley. And I'd really like an answer. Because, let me tell you: I quit school at fifteen! I went to work at the radium plant because my folks needed the money. At your factory, they told us what to do. When to do it. How to do it. My folks didn't raise me to make trouble. So I didn't make trouble. I did what I was told. I never asked questions! How do you get contributory negligence out of that?

MARKLEY. As I said, it's a standard defense.

GRACE. There's nothin' standard about what happened to me.

MARKLEY. We deeply regret your situation. But there is no evidence to tie your condition to any actions by the U.S. Radium Corporation.

GRACE. Then why are you givin' me this money?

MARKLEY. It's...it's a humanitarian gesture.

GRACE (*laughs*). A humanitarian gesture?

MRS. FRYER. Mr. Markley. I'll take them papers.

GRACE (*blocking her*). Humanitarian! Month after month you put us off! Delay after delay. Knowin' how sick we were. How tired. And desperate. Humanitarian! You're waiting for us to die!

MRS. FRYER (*confidentially*). Grace. Please. Stop this now.

GRACE. Ma. One by one, I watched my friends get sick. And die. In the most horrible way. And you think. I should be grateful? For any spare change they throw at me?

MARKLEY. Miss Fryer. This is a very generous offer, under the circumstances. I would advise you to take it. Because it won't be on the table very long.

MRS. FRYER. What do you mean?

MARKLEY. If Miss Fryer does not sign within twenty-four hours, we will be forced to withdraw our offer. Permanently.

MRS. FRYER. Grace.

GRACE. He's lying.

MARKLEY. I beg your pardon, miss!

GRACE. You're trying to tell me if I don't sign these now—but I came back a week from now and said I changed my mind, you'd still rather go to court? You'd still rather some judge get a look at me...and take your chances I won't win on sympathy alone? Twenty-four hours. You're just trying to bully me.

MARKLEY. Very well, then. Miss Fryer. I'll take that for a no. And we'll see you in court. (*MARKLEY packs up his briefcase and exits as MRS. FRYER sees him out.*)

GRACE. Yes you will! You will see me. If they have to carry me in there, you'll see me. You and Mr. Roeder both!

MRS. FRYER. You call that man back.

GRACE. I'm goin' to court, Ma.

MRS. FRYER. What are you trying to prove? You know you can't win!

GRACE. I want those people to look at me! I want them to look at me and explain how it's my fault I got sick working in their factory!

MRS. FRYER. And what will that get ya? What?

GRACE. Ma. All my life, I've done what other people told me to do. I quit school. Because you said I should. I put