

I WANTED a job! But even for a stranger in a strange city, without the necessary brains, beauty, and influential friends, the looking wasn't hard. It was *finding*. And I was finding it hard.

I picked up the morning paper.

The matrimonial market was poor. I glanced at the "Situations Vacant." They presented two alternatives: "Factory . . . Smart Young Ladies Required, Etc., Etc., . . . Phone 12345." "Factory . . . Female Factory Hands Wanted for Box Factory . . . Phone 67890."

Loth to join the ranks of the "smart young ladies," I phoned 67890.

I: I want a job.

HE: How old are you?

I: Twenty-two.

HE: Experience?

I: No

HE: Report at the factory 8 a.m. Monday.

(Pause)

I (blankly): Eh?

HE: What?

I recovered myself, thanked him humbly, and on Monday morning at 8 o'clock presented myself at the box factory. The box-and-carton factory, a dark grey iron building, quivered almost imperceptibly from the grinding monotone of machinery.

The forewoman was kind. She motioned a pink overall from a side room, and pointed to me.

"Take this girl to the cloak-room."

I followed. Down a sawdust aisle flanked with water buckets, and cardboard, and paper, and brushes, and lashings of paste, and women. The morning was raw. Their hands were blue, and their fingers stiff.

I shivered.

Suddenly my pilot disappeared down a flight of steep wooden stairs. I stopped shivering and galloped after her — and into the cloak-room.

It was dim—and damp—and the faint stench of sand-soap and "cloak-room" made me sick. The room, barely six feet high, was filled with little tables. Grubby little tables.

"Is this the—?"

"Cloak room."

"What are the tables for?"

"Lunch."

"Oh!"

"Eh?"

"Nothing. Shall I leave my lunch on the table?"

"The rats'll get it."

"Rats!"

"Yeah. Ready? Come on."

I was ready.

Ready to be initiated into the art of pasting paper on cardboard. Someone handed me a bucket of water, a scrubbing brush, and a lump of soap. I didn't understand, but I figured it was all

# FACTORY



... She glanced at me from under sandy lashes, and said nothing. Suddenly—  
"Got a boy friend?"

tangled up in the intricacy of making boxes. I could ask questions later.

I was told what to do, what not to do, and introduced to my neighbour. She glanced at me from under sandy lashes, and said nothing. Suddenly —

"Got a boy friend?"

I countered.

"Have you?"

"Only three or four."

I was impressed. I stared fascinated at the pale eyelashes, ginger hair, purple lipstick, and long, blood-red talons.

I was more than impressed. But how, entangled as I was in a morass of glue and gold paper, to pursue so delicate a conversation? I didn't have to. She launched into a vivid account of her reactions to whisky. Whisky was fire water. Three or four shots of whisky and she could fight like !!!!!

I was awed into silence. But not for long. She glanced obliquely at me.

"What do you do at night?"

"Go to bed."

It hadn't occurred to me before that it wasn't the normal thing to do, but this siren with the purple mouth was openly scornful.

"Well, what do you do?"

"Go out."

"Who with?"

"Boy-friends."

"Every night?"

"Betcha. Except Sunday. Long night Saturday, too."

"What's your mother say?"

"Nothing."

"What about your father?"

"Aw, Dad's narrow-minded. I don't take any notice of narrow-minded people."

I giggled.

"What's so funny?"

I apologised.

I gathered that her ambition in life was a fur coat, a diamond ring, three hundred and sixty-five parties in a year, and a husband. And then she was shifted for talking. I wasn't shifted for listening.

She was replaced by a young tow-haired Diana. She stared at me solemnly.

"Hullo."

"Hullo."

"Like it here?"

"Yes, thank you."

"Aw, you'll soon get sick of it."

"Sweet girl."

She giggled.

"Dad says I'm a !!!!!!"

A mental knock-out from one so young. I recovered. "What's he say that for?"

"I dunno. What'd you have for breakfast?"

"What did you have?"

"Plate of porridge and cream. Four sausages, and some bacon, and three pieces of bread and jam."

I didn't believe her.

"Some one having a party?"

Later I learned it was her staple diet (or maybe I'm still the mug). And I learned lots of other things.

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I learned that the busy little woman, who had nine children and a drunken husband, was a confirmed spinster, with

a tongue. I learned this just in time. I was on the point of extending deepest sympathies.

I learned that a well-known announcer had (per his touching little talks and dulcet tones) endeared himself to such an extent with the female factory heart that one young matron was determined (and with malice aforethought) to call her next baby after him.

And I learned that the big I AM who roamed the factory with his eyes pasted to the floor had not an inferiority complex but a "bad" neck.

Certainly no complex.

He found me standing in a doorway.

"Don't stand there!"

His manner inflamed me with an unholy desire to put his teeth down that "bad" neck. So next time I sat on a baby step-ladder. Anyway, my feet were sore from standing all day.

"Get off that ladder! Blockin' up the door like that! You ought to have more sense!"

I reckon I didn't have much sense, and I did have sore feet. Half a minute later he snooped back.

I was sitting on the step ladder.

He blew up!

But it was weeks before I left. And in one way I was sorry. I was learning, and I loved it.

For instance — a simple and most effective phrase, guaranteed to cover any given situation, and deal with any given person, at any given time or place:

"Get out yuh twerpl! Or I'll bash yuh!"

## IS IT WORTH IT?

Nowadays we have a far better chance of living to a reasonable old age than our ancestors had. At the time of Queen Elizabeth the average span of life was only 20 years. Even one hundred years ago an infant could expect to live only 35 years on the average. Today the expectation of life has risen to 59 years. That is the result of a great victory over diseases in early life. There's no corresponding victory to record as one gets older. When we reach 35 years, for instance, we can expect to live another 25 years, and that's much the same as it was for a man who lived 100 years ago.

There are ten rules if you wish to live to a fine old age: First you must choose your ancestors carefully, you must not eat too much, nor drink too much, you must choose your food carefully, you must not smoke too much, you must be careful not to get run over, must be calm tempered and never worry, must have regular sleep, take moderate and regular exercise, and you must be careful not to let the microbes get you. If you pay attention to these rules you have a moderate chance of living to a fine old age. The question is: Is it worth it?

—Australian Broadcaster.