

Billie, Paul

I don't want nobody doin' me no favors.
DEVERY. Why not talk it over with him and see what—? (BROCK opens door. PAUL comes in.)
BROCK. (Heartily.) Come on in, pal. Come on in.
PAUL. Thanks.
BROCK. (Slapping PAUL's shoulder.) Have a drink.
PAUL. No, thanks. I'm just in the middle of something. (BROCK points to L. end of sofa.)
BROCK. Sit down, I wanna ask you sump'n. (PAUL sits.)
PAUL. Sure.
BROCK. How much you make a week?
PAUL. (Leaning back on a sofa in imitation of BROCK, his arms spread wide.) How should I know? What am I, an accountant?
(BROCK is delighted to hear himself quoted. Laughs.)
BROCK. (To DEVERY.) I love this guy! (To PAUL, as he sits beside him.) What's your name again?
PAUL. Verrall.
BROCK. No, I mean your—uh—regular name?
PAUL. Paul.
BROCK. Listen, Paul. Here's the layout. I got a friend. Nice kid. I think you probably seen her in here before. Billie?
PAUL. Oh, yes.
BROCK. (In confidence.) Well, she's a good kid. Only to tell you the truth, a little on the stupid side. Not her fault, y'understand. I got 'er out of the chorus. For the chorus she was smart enough, but I'm scared she's gonna be unhappy in this town. She's never been around with such kind of people, you know what I mean?
PAUL. No.
BROCK. Well, I figure a guy like you could help her out. And me, too.
PAUL. How?
BROCK. (Persuasively.) Show 'er the ropes, sort of. Explain 'er what goes on and all like that. In your spare time. What do you say?
PAUL. No, I don't think I could handle it, Mr. Brock.
BROCK. Means a lot to me. I'll give you two hundred bucks a week.
PAUL. All right, I'll do it. (All three are surprised.)
BROCK. (To DEVERY.) I'm tellin' you. I love this guy!
PAUL. When do I start?
BROCK. Right now. Why not right now?
PAUL. Fine.

BROCK. Let me like introduce you and you take it from there.
PAUL. Good.
BROCK. (Rises, crosses a step U.C., gestures derivitively to DEVERY. Shouts up stairs.) Billie!
BILLIE'S VOICE. What?
BROCK. Come on down here a minute! (To PAUL.) She's a hell of a good kid. You'll like 'er. (BILLIE comes out onto landing, brushing hair. She wears a resplendent negligee, which reveals and explains much. Almost anyone could succeed in it. PAUL rises.)
BILLIE. (A tone of complaint.) I'm gettin' dressed. (Stops as she sees PAUL.)
BROCK. It's all right. It's all right. He's a friend of the family. (BILLIE hesitates.) Come on, I'm tellin' you!! (BILLIE drops brush on ottoman, comes down.) Nowey, this is Paul Verrall.
BILLIE. Yes, I know.
BROCK. (Propels her toward PAUL.) He wants to talk to you.
BILLIE. What about?
BROCK. You'll find out. Sit down. (HE seats her.) Come on up a minute, willya, Ed?
DEVERY. Sure.
BROCK. Bring the stuff. (BROCK looks at PAUL, cheers him on with a fisted gesture of confidence. DEVERY picks up brief-case, follows BROCK out of room. A long pause. BILLIE is seemingly disinterested and unconcerned. PAUL is wondering how to begin. He cannot imagine. Finally.)
PAUL. Your—friend Mr. Brock has an idea he'd like us to spend a little time together. You and me, that is.
BILLIE. (Without looking at him.) You don't say.
PAUL. Yes.
BILLIE. (Turning to PAUL.) What're you? Some kind of a gigolo?
PAUL. (Smiling.) Not exactly.
BILLIE. (Unsmiling.) What's the idea?
PAUL. Nothing special. (PAUL sits at opposite end of sofa.) He just wants me to put you wise to a few things. Show you the ropes. Answer any questions.
BILLIE. I got no questions.
PAUL. I'll give you some.
BILLIE. (Bored.) Thanks.
PAUL. . . . might be fun for you, in a way. There's a lot to see down here. I'd be glad to show you around.
BILLIE. (Looking at him.) You know this Supreme Court?

PAUL. Yes.
BILLIE. I'd like to take that in.
PAUL. Sure. We're on, then?
BILLIE. (*Suspiciously.*) How do you mean?
PAUL. The arrangement.
BILLIE. I don't mind. I got nothin' much to do.
PAUL. Good.
BILLIE. (*Looking up at BROCK'S door.*) What's he payin' you?
PAUL. Two hundred.
BILLIE. You're a sucker. You could of got more. He's got plenty.
PAUL. I'd have done it for nothing. (*BILLIE throws him a look of rare disbelief, makes the sound of a mirthless, mocking laugh.*)
BILLIE. Hah!
PAUL. (*Protesting.*) I would.
BILLIE. Why?
PAUL. This isn't work. I like it.
BILLIE. He thinks I'm too stupid, huh?
PAUL. Why, no —
BILLIE. He's right. I'm stupid and I like it.
PAUL. You do?
BILLIE. Sure. I'm happy. I got everything I want. Two mink coats. Everything. If there's sump'n I want, I ask. And if he *don't* come across, I don't come across. (*PAUL is startled.*) If you know what I mean.
PAUL. (*Replying swiftly.*) Yes, I do.
BILLIE. (*Practically.*) So as long as I know how to get what I want, that's all I wanna know.
PAUL. As long as you know what you want.
BILLIE. Sure. (*A pause.*) What?
PAUL. As long as you know what you want.
BILLIE. (*Annoyed.*) . . . you tryin' to mix me up?
PAUL. No.
BILLIE. (*Rising, crossing R. to chair L. of table.*) I tell you what I would like.
PAUL. Yes?
BILLIE. (*Back of chair L. of table.*) I'd like to learn how to talk good.
PAUL. All right.
BILLIE. (*Turning to him.*) Is it hard to learn?
PAUL. I don't think so.
BILLIE. What do I have to do?

PAUL. Well, I might give you a few books to start with. Then, if you don't mind, I'll correct you now and then.
BILLIE. (*Crossing back to sofa.*) Go ahead.
PAUL. When I know, that is. I don't—talk so good myself.
BILLIE. You'll do.
PAUL. Fine. (*We sense that she is warming to him.*)
BILLIE. (*Sighing.*) I never say "ain't." Did you notice that? Never.
PAUL. I do.
BILLIE. Well, I'll correct you, then.
PAUL. Do that.
BILLIE. Since I was very small I never say it. We had this teacher. She used to slug you if you did it.
PAUL. Did what?
BILLIE. Said "ain't."
PAUL. Oh.
BILLIE. So I got outa the habit.
PAUL. You think it was worth the slugging?
BILLIE. Well, not hard.
PAUL. It's the principle of the thing. There's too much slugging. I don't believe in it.
BILLIE. (*Aping his seriousness.*) All right, I don't believe in it, either.
PAUL. Good.
BILLIE. (*Softly, leaning toward him with a smile.*) I learn pretty fast, don't I?
PAUL. (*Smiling.*) You're great, Miss Dawn.
BILLIE. (*Correcting him.*) Billie.
PAUL. Billie. (*A tiny pause.*) Sort of an odd name, isn't it?
BILLIE. (*Surprised.*) What're you talkin'? Half the kids I know are named it. Anyway, it's not my real name.
PAUL. What is?
BILLIE. (*Has to think a moment before she can answer.*) My God! —Emma.
PAUL. What's the matter?
BILLIE. Do I look to you like an Emma?
PAUL. No. You don't look like a Billie, either.
BILLIE. So what do I look like?
PAUL. To me?
BILLIE. Yuh, to you.
PAUL. You look like a little angel. (*A pause.*)
BILLIE. Lemme ask you—(*Looks at BROCK'S door, then leans to-*