

BILLY: A little later on, when I'm earning a bit more, do you think we might have a shot at getting married!

QUEENIE (*turning away*): Oh Bill, how do I know—you might be in China or anywhere—you might have forgotten all about me by then.

BILLY: More likely to be the other way round. A pretty kid like you, working at being a manicurist, talking to all sorts of different fellows all day long . . .

QUEENIE: It isn't all jam being a sailor's wife, is it?

BILLY: It wouldn't be so bad, if I get me promotion all right and get on—don't say anything now, just think it over . . .

QUEENIE (*with a rush*): Oh, Billy, I wouldn't be the right sort of wife for you, really I wouldn't. I want too much—I'm always thinking about the kind of things I want and they wouldn't be the kind of things you'd want me to want.

BILLY: How do you mean?

QUEENIE: Oh, I know it sounds silly, but I'm not like Vi, she's a quiet one. I'm different. Mum sometimes says that all I think of is having a good time, but it isn't only that . . .

BILLY: I don't see no harm in wanting to have a good time—that's what everybody wants in one way or another.

QUEENIE: I'll tell you something awful. I hate living here, I hate living in a house that's exactly like hundreds of other houses. I hate coming home from work in the Tube. I hate washing up and helping Mum darn Dad's socks and listening to Aunt Sylvia keeping on about how ill she is all the time, and what's more I know why I hate it too, it's because it's all so common! There! I expect you'll think I'm getting above myself, and I

Billy and Queenie

wouldn't blame you—maybe I am, but I can't help it—that's why I don't think I'd be a good wife for you, however much I loved you—and I do . . . I really do . . . Oh, Billy . . . (*She bursts into tears.*)

BILLY (*putting his arms round her*): Here, hold on, dear, there isn't anything to cry about—I know what you mean all right, it's only natural that you should feel that way about things.

QUEENIE: You don't think I'm awful then, do you? And mean?

BILLY: Of course I don't—come on now, cheer up, you don't want to have red eyes on Christmas Day, do you?

QUEENIE (*dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief*): I'm sorry, Bill, please forgive me . . .

*She suddenly kisses him and runs out of the room.*

*He stands looking after her in perplexity for a moment, and then with a sigh goes up towards the window. He has nearly reached it when FRANK comes in. He hasn't really changed very much in the last six years. His figure is perhaps a shade thicker and his hair a shade greyer and thinner. At the moment he is still wearing the paper hat he got out of a cracker.*

FRANK: Billy! What are you doing in here all by yourself?

BILLY: I've been talking to Queenie.

FRANK: Was that her rushing upstairs just now?

BILLY: Yes—I think it was.

FRANK (*quizzically*): Oh, I see.

BILLY: I just popped in to say good-bye—

FRANK: A bit miserable having to go back to work on Christmas Day, isn't it?

BILLY: Oh, I dunno—it's all right once you're there.