"Why don't you be real late," she said, "and don't go back at all."

I don't know why I stopped to listen. Something in her manner told me that maybe I'd better listen.

She explained that Sam Goldwyn had rounded up a bevy of bathing beauties, actresses, models and a few other assorted gals of commendable physical proportions to be used in a film he was going to make in Hollywood with Eddie Cantor as the star. However, at the last minute, the mother of one of the girls refused to let her daughter go west and they were in a bind for a replacement.

Don't ask me how it happened, but a few minutes later I was up in Jim Mulvey's office, willing to fill the vacancy.

"You're in," he said abruptly after a cursory glance. "We leave in the morning."

The job was suppose to last for six weeks. It lasted for six months. I've been here ever since. And it was fun working on that Cantor movie. I lived with some of the girls in an apartment on North Formosa, about two blocks from the studio. I bought a bicycle and peddled it to work. At night, if I felt like living it up, I'd hire a taxi, put the bike in the trunk and ride home in luxury.

It's ironical, but in my first film roles—and they were pretty small—I was cast as—a show girl. However, I never objected to the parts they handed me in those days. I was making money, but more important, I was saving it. My career took a sudden upswing after I played a small part in RKO's "Roberta," which starred Irene Dunne, Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. They put me under contract and I gained plenty of experience by acting in the studio's little theater. I felt that I'd gotten over the mousy stage of my career.

I took everything that came along in the way of a role. It got so the casting directors automatically said, "Give it to Ball," when they came across a bit that defied casting. You can get pretty tired doing this sort of thing. As a matter of fact, I finally did get tired. After a round of roles that would have tried the patience of Martha Washington, I developed my first case of temperament.

One day I was on the back lot, dressed to the hilt in some sort of beaded Arabian Nights costume for a big swashbuckler. It was unbearably hot and I began to get dizzy. I fainted into a big helpless heap on the dusty ground. When I came to I said to myself, "Ball, old girl, you've had it. It's about time you shook your contract in somebody's face."

I felt that I'd been a good old pal long enough and that I

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LUCILLE BALL MET DESI ARNAZ (THIRD FROM LEFT) IN RKO'S 'TOO MANY GIRLS' Also starred were Richard Carlson (L) and Eddie Bracken (extreme right)

It's Desi Arnaz, age 6

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LUCILLE BALL

Continued

should ask the studio for something a cut above a horse opera.

They answered my request by giving me a bigger role in a new picture—and a boost in the salary department. So you see, it doesn't hurt to ask, even if they do call you tempermental. Frankly, I felt a trifle abashed about the whole thing, considering how they reacted.

But it worked.

My next role was in "The Girl From Paris." It also brought me an eastern offer to do a play. It was called "Hey Diddle Diddle." It went nowhere, but it satisfied my yen to do a Broadway play.

When I came back to Hollywood, RKO put me in "Stage Door," with Ginger Rogers and Katharine Hepburn. That was the beginning of a series of good pictures for me. I got my biggest role in "Too Many Girls," in which I also got a chance to sing some of the top tunes of the year. However, another thing happened during the making of that film which was more important than anything else.

A handsome young guy by the name of Desi Arnaz was costarred with me. We fell in love and were married.

When I came back from my honeymoon, I got what I considered my best Hollywood break—a role in "The Big Street," a film based on a Damon Runyon story. I think it was that film that made me a star. In case you don't remember, I played the part of the paralyzed show girl.

(**Tomorrow:** Lucille and Desi combine their careers, go on vaudeville tour, invade television, emerge as year's top husband-wife comedy team.)

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