

A close-up photograph of a woman's face, focusing on her nose and mouth. She is wearing bright red lipstick. A silver microphone is positioned near her mouth, and a portion of a grey, textured microphone grille is visible in the bottom left corner. The background is a plain, light color.

OPEN  
DOORS

Kathy Page had been blinded at birth.

She had been born two months early, and at that time doctors had not yet realized that giving a new baby pure oxygen to breathe would destroy the sensitive nerves at the back of its eyes.

But that was then. Kathy Page was now a leading journalist in British radio. She was best known for her intelligent, but tough, interviews of public figures and people in the news. A recent interview was typical of her style:

'So, your election promise to uncover political dishonesty, does that include the bribing of government ministers?'

'Of course. This government will not tolerate dishonesty of any sort.'

'Would that include the money you received from foreign businessmen and didn't tell your government about?'

'Er... that was a misunderstanding... I can explain everything.'

'Can you explain the government contracts given to those same businessmen shortly afterwards?'

'Well... er...'

'Thank you, Minister. And now over to the newsdesk.'

Kathy Page had no patience with any attempts to hide the truth.

She had a voice that was gentle and calm, almost motherly at times, which men found attractive. Nearly everybody she interviewed tended to relax more when she spoke. That was when Kathy was at her most effective. More than one politician had cause to be sorry for a careless reply to the relaxing manner of her voice.

Kathy knew better than most people how to listen to the human voice. She couldn't see all the little tricks people sometimes used with body language and the expressions on their faces to give false ideas of their real feelings. She could only hear what they said. It was almost impossible for the people she interviewed to hide the tiny changes of expression in their voices that showed what they really thought. No matter how hard they tried to cover it up, she could always tell when a person was feeling uncomfortable and could usually understand the reason why.

Kathy would be kind to guests who were not used to being the center of attention. For example, she understood the natural shyness of an old lady who had been given a prize for her work with the poor. But if she thought a guest was lying she would not stop questioning until she had discovered the truth. If a lie had been told she always made sure her listeners knew it.

Politicians and businessmen often thought that somehow they could fool her. They rarely did.

Kathy was too good at her job for that.

Her listeners loved her. She was their star. They knew that if anyone could find out the truth, it was Kathy Page.

Kathy had been in the business of radio reporting for thirty of her fifty years in the world. She was happy in her work. She had never married, though she was often told that she was attractive. She was. Her black hair was long and shiny without a touch of grey; her face was pretty without being weak, and the few lines which showed made it more interesting. Many hours of yoga had kept her figure in good shape. No, she was not short of male admirers. Occasionally she would allow one to take her to dinner if he could hold an interesting conversation, but she mostly preferred the company of her colleagues, her books and Trudy, her much loved six-year-old guide dog.

She loved music and the arts. She regularly went to the theatre for old, as well as new, productions. It was a favourite activity of hers. The only thing she ever regretted was that she could not see paintings. She had read a lot about great artists and their work and often wished that she could see a great painting, even if it were just for a short while. But then she would put away such thoughts; they were silly and senseless. It would never happen.

Television producers had often, over the years, tried to get Kathy to present her own chat show on television. They knew she was a favourite with the public, and they wanted to attract the large audience that such a show would surely bring. Kathy always turned them down. She felt at home with the radio. It didn't matter what you looked like; it was what you said that you would be judged by. That's what she always told everybody.

And besides, Kathy Page, the queen of radio interviews, was shy about her appearance.

'She turned you down? Again? Are you sure you told her just how much money we're offering?'

Mick Dean, the current favourite of his television company, waved his other arm around as he held the telephone. There was nobody else in the office but he waved anyway - it was just a way of showing his feelings. He couldn't understand how anybody could turn down an offer like this. He had had similar conversations before, all about Kathy Page.

'OK, but don't give up. Try again in a week. Yes... bye.'

Mick Dean put the telephone down. He was the company's youngest producer and was responsible for many of its newest and most successful shows. He was particularly good at producing chat shows and more 'serious' shows that interviewed people in the news. He believed that a lively argument was the best way to entertain viewers; it would make more people watch the next time. 'They like to see a good fight,' he would always say. 'And they like fighters.'

That was why he had always wanted Kathy Page to present one of his shows. 'Not only is she a good fighter, she looks great, too, and people respect her. She'd be a sure winner and I want her before anybody else gets her!'

Yet again his best man had failed to persuade Kathy to join him. But Mick Dean was not the kind to give up. He had not been the first producer to try to win Kathy Page over to television, but he was determined to be the last.

Kathy's radio show was one of the most popular shows on the station. She would interview people in the news and deal with serious issues. As well as the usual politicians and businessmen, she often spoke to artists, writers and scientists. The shows got more interesting for the listeners when Kathy questioned her guests, especially when the guests said things that Kathy found hard to believe. That really made things exciting.

It was getting towards the end of her morning show and her final guest was coming on. He was an American scientist, Dr Woodrow Percival, who was an expert in eye surgery. He interested Kathy because he had said that he could replace damaged eye nerves with tiny computer chips that would work just as well as real nerves, perhaps even better. Kathy took a personal interest in this. He had said, in fact, that he could make the blind see.

What's more, he had said that he could make her see.

Kathy had come across other 'experts' before. Sometimes they were more interested in getting publicity for themselves than in telling the truth, saying that a small discovery was greater than it really was. If this guy had any real doubts about his methods, Kathy thought, she would know it. It was wrong to raise the hopes of people who might otherwise have accepted their disability and got on with their lives. If he was offering false hope to people, he should be found out - and she was just the person to do it.

She introduced Dr Percival to her listeners and began.

'Dr Percival, you're going to give a talk later today about your new treatment. Could you, in simple language, explain how this treatment works?'

'Certainly.'

And that was exactly what he did. Kathy was waiting for any little changes in his voice that might suggest that he was not sure about what he was saying. His voice was calm.

It was not the voice of an old man - he was forty - but it had a quality that suggested strength of character. She questioned him at frequent intervals, listening carefully for any signs that might show his answers to be false. There were none. Everything Dr Percival said was said in a way that suggested he was being completely truthful. All of his answers were clear and open. Kathy could find no fault with the man's voice or his reasoning. Finally, she asked the question she knew all her listeners were waiting for.

'Dr Percival, you said that you could give me the means to see. That was a very personal thing to say. Were you being serious?'

Kathy listened. He had been good so far. If he was going to show weakness, it would surely be

now.

'Miss Page, let me apologise...'

'This is it!' thought Kathy. 'He's going to weaken! He knows he can't seriously support the things he says he can do!'

... for what the papers reported. They named you in particular when, in fact, I had only used you as an example. What I actually said was that people whose nerves had been damaged - in the way yours had, for example - could be helped by my treatment.'

But Kathy, though she heard no sign of doubt in his voice, wanted him to be very exact with his answer. She knew her listeners expected no less.

'Dr Percival, are you saying that you could make me see?'

'Well, I'd have to see your medical records in more detail, but I think so. Yes. Yes, I could.'

It was time for the end of the programme. Kathy thanked her guests and the closing music was played. She felt excited, yet guilty, for feeling that way. She had always thought that even if she had been given the chance to see she would choose not to, not after a lifetime without sight. But at that time there had been no hope. There had been no point in hoping. Hope was like a door shut and with no key to open it. Ever.

But now, this doctor sounded sure of himself. She was certain of that.

For the first time since she was a girl she allowed herself the hope of sight. She found that she did want to see. She wanted to see those pictures in the museums, the faces of her friends, the sky at dawn and the stars at night. She realized she wanted it very much indeed.

Dr Woodrow Percival had to rush off to his talk. He thanked her and left.

Kathy heard the door of the studio close behind him. She knew that he might hold the key to doors that had been closed to her since birth. Could those doors really be opened for her? She knew she had to find out.

The newspapers the next day were full of headlines about the interview:

**FAMOUS BLIND RADIO STAR PROMISED SIGHT BY AMERICAN EXPERT.**

**WILL THIS MAN GIVE KATHY PAGE HER SIGHT?**

**GO FOR IT, KATHY!**

The readers and listeners loved it. Mick Dean loved it.

He immediately offered to pay all the costs involved if Kathy would work for his television company for just a few shows.

But Kathy hated all the publicity. She was not afraid to speak up for her listeners, but she hated the idea of strangers making unwanted investigations into her private life. And this, as far as she was concerned, was a very private matter indeed. She refused all interviews on the subject and turned down Mick Dean's offer straight away. She thought it was nobody's business but her own and that was final. No further mention was made of the subject on her show. Guests were asked not to raise the matter. They agreed, largely because they respected Kathy and could understand her situation.

But Kathy had been busy. She didn't want the world to know about her personal life, so she had arranged to meet Dr Woodrow Percival again in private. She met him at the house of her agent, away from her home and safe from the eyes of the public.

Kathy was a wealthy woman. She had made, over the years, a lot of money from her work. She could afford the cost of the operation in Dr Percival's hospital in California, USA.

Dr Percival was as calm as ever and was glad to help her. He drank his tea as he sat in an armchair, looking at Kathy as she fed Trudy a biscuit.

'I must repeat,' he said, 'that you'll be the first person to receive this treatment. It has worked in all the tests and all the computer trials. Having said that, I must also remind you of the risk involved...'

'I understand, Dr Percival,' Kathy answered quickly. 'I'm willing to take that risk. This is something I've made up my mind about. If it works for me it will work for others. It'll be worth it.'

'Now don't misunderstand me, Miss Page; by risk I don't mean to your life - that risk is no more than it would be for any other operation. I mean the risk to your hopes. I am confident the operation will work but I'm not God. Nobody can say for certain that you will have the use of your eyes at the end of all this. All I can say is there is no reason I can see why the operation shouldn't be a success. Are you still sure you want to go through with it?'

Kathy took a deep breath then answered.

'Absolutely sure. When can you start?'

The operation took place one month later at the hospital in California. Dr Percival thought the operation went well. All that was needed now was a few weeks for the tiny computer parts to join with Kathy's sensitive damaged eye nerves. During that time Kathy would need to rest in bed with a bandage over her eyes. Her brain would be checked regularly. When it showed signs that the eye nerves were working they would take the bandages off.

In those few weeks Kathy had plenty of time to think about what she had done. There were

moments of doubt, almost panic, when she asked herself if she had done the right thing. She thought she had long since put away the foolish hopes for sight she had once held as a girl. Yet here she was, hoping like a girl again. She felt afraid, yes, but also excited at the thought of entering a world that would be totally new to her, a world where she could see. It would be like being born a second time.

She wondered what colour would be like. Although it was a word she had often used and heard before, she had never experienced colour. She just could not imagine it, no matter how hard she tried. Kathy gave up trying and waited patiently for the day her bandages would be removed.

The day came.

Dr Percival decided that Kathy's brain signals were doing all that he had expected of them. Things looked very promising. It was time to see if the operation had been a success. He closed all the curtains in Kathy's room so that the light was low. He turned to her and spoke.

'Now, Kathy, we have to take things slowly. Even if things go well you won't have full eyesight to begin with. First of all, let's see if your eyes are recognizing light. I'm going to take the bandage off and hold a light in front of your eyes. If you can see anything you won't need me to tell you - you'll know. But you won't see anything clearly yet, that will come later. Are you ready?'

Kathy nodded.

Dr Percival held a small light in front of her eyes as a nurse slowly and carefully removed her bandages. Kathy sat up with her eyes still closed. Slowly she opened them and stared at the light. Quickly, she turned her face away.

'Ow! What was that? It felt strange - there's something there, trying to get into my head!'

Dr Percival told the nurse to replace the bandages and then turned to Kathy.

'Kathy,' he said with obvious delight, 'that "something" is light! You've seen light for the first time! Congratulations - you can see!'

Kathy could tell from his voice that he was pleased. She felt confused.

'But... I thought there would be more to it than this... I mean... I mean... Oh, I don't know what I mean!'

'Don't worry, Kathy,' he said as he smiled. 'All you saw then was pure light. It will take a while for your eyes to get used to seeing colours and shapes. Your brain has a lot of sorting out of new information that it has never had to deal with before. It's bound to take a little while, even with the advanced training methods I've developed. The main thing is that you can see!'

'I can see!' said Kathy softly.

And underneath her bandages she was crying.

Over the next few weeks Kathy was progressively allowed to use her eyes more often. Soon she could tell dark from light, then she could recognise colours and shapes. But, for a while, she found it very difficult to deal with the huge amounts of extra information that her new sense was giving her every day. One of her most difficult problems was judging distance: she found it hard to tell the difference between near and far objects. She would reach out for things across the room as if they were near to her, or she would walk into close objects without realizing how near they were.

But Dr Percival was patient. Kathy was taken on walks around the hospital gardens, taken for drives in the car and shown videos and television programmes. Her eyes were gently exercised until they worked well.

'In fact, Kathy,' Dr Percival told her, your eyes are better than mine are. I need glasses and you don't!

What Kathy enjoyed most was seeing the pleasing effects shapes and colours produced. She would see ordinary things as objects of great beauty - the black and white squares on a chess board, the shape of a hand, the colours of a flower. Sounds, for the first time in her life, took second place. Colours and shapes now filled her mind with pleasure beyond her powers to describe.

But most of all she was deeply fascinated by the changing expressions on the faces of people. She viewed every face she saw as a new world to explore, full of things to be discovered. Every smile, every frown was wonderful to her.

When Kathy finally left the hospital it was as if she were leaving home for the first time. She was nervous but excited and her heart felt light as she opened the door to leave. Of course, all the newspapers were soon full of the story:

AMERICAN SURGEON GIVES SIGHT TO BLIND WOMAN

THE GIFT OF SIGHT!

KATHY PAGE CAN SEE! - Brilliant American doctor performs miracle operation!

Woodrow Percival had tried to keep things quiet, at least until he was sure that Kathy had recovered fully from the operation, but he couldn't stop the news from spreading any more than he could stop the sun from rising. Soon he had film companies wanting to make a movie about him, publishers wanting his life story and a long line of newspapers and magazines wanting interviews. The scientific community wanted to honour him while businessmen saw many ways of marketing his ideas.

Dr Woodrow Percival's future was looking very bright indeed.

Kathy wanted to rest at home.



There was plenty for her to do there. For the first time in her life she could actually see her most valued possessions. Best of all, she could see her friends for the first time. And, of course, her dear dog Trudy, who had had to stay at home while she had been away.

Kathy discovered that the human face had a powerful effect on her feelings. It was as if there had been a great hunger in her life that had been so much a part of her that she had never questioned it. Not until now. She had never before realized what a smile looked like, and it often moved her to tears to see her friends smiling.

Then there was her taste in clothing. Before, she had always had to depend on the judgments of others to provide her with clothes that felt comfortable but looked smart. When she looked in her wardrobe she saw nothing but dark colours or pale things that looked like they had no colour at all.

'They've got to go!' she said, as she took some of the clothes out and threw them onto the floor. She was determined that from now on she would only wear clothes that were in colours she liked. After all, she could now decide for herself what clothes she could wear!

She arranged to go shopping with Carla, her agent, the very next day. Trudy came, too. Kathy had still not fully learned how to judge distances very well, and Trudy was almost as useful to her now as she had been before.

Kathy enjoyed choosing her new clothes. She was surprised at how good she looked in them. It was a feeling she liked.

As Kathy was paying for them, Carla - who had a particular interest in fashion - said, 'Well, Kathy, you've certainly brightened up your wardrobe now! I like the new look; it suits you!'

Kathy had bought clothing that was food for her eyes. Her clothes had always been rather dull before - more than she had realized. These new clothes were colourful and cheerful. They made her feel happy.

Kathy found that she was watching a lot of television. She had never really bothered with it before. Now she watched it with deep interest. Quiz and game show presenters, and singers smiled all the time against a background of bright colours. Their smiles made them seem to be such lovely honest people, yet on the few occasions she had listened to such shows before her operation she had thought they sounded stupid and shallow. It was confusing but she was almost too happy to care. Almost.

Kathy discovered that she could now dream in colour and with pictures, too! Before this her dreams were made of sounds, voices and music. Now she could also see in her dreams and she was delighted. She took up photography and loved to see how pictures from life could be caught by the camera, like frozen pieces of memory.

The next thing to do was to go to a museum with Carla to see paintings by great artists, just as she had always wanted!

She could hardly wait. Kathy was used to getting up early - she loved the colours of the early morning - and she planned to visit as many London museums as she could during the day. By eight thirty in the morning she had had her breakfast and was dressed and ready to leave. The doorbell rang.

Kathy went to the door. She was expecting to see Carla. But it wasn't Carla; it was a young man who was smiling at her. He had a nice smile, she thought.

'Hello, Miss Page. We've met before. You may remember me from the television studios. My name is Mick Dean.'

Kathy had not been to a studio since before her operation. She had decided to take at least one year off work, no matter how the operation turned out. She had been thinking of writing a book about her life. It would be a challenge and she liked challenges.

But now she had a new challenge: Mick Dean had given her a television show of her own to present. He had wanted her to do it so much, he had told her, that he just had to talk to her himself. And that was exactly what he had done: he had just turned up at her door. It was totally unexpected. She probably would not have spoken to him otherwise. Kathy decided she liked him for it.

She had never really taken much notice of Mick Dean before. In fact, she remembered that he had sounded far too sure of himself for her liking. But she must have been mistaken. He had offered her her own show where she could interview people in the news. He had looked so honest and enthusiastic about it that she thought she really ought to give the show a chance. And he had such a nice smile. His teeth were lovely and white, apart from the shiny gold one at the side, which was rather attractive. And his eyes! She had never realized that eyes could be so... so colourful! His eyes were a lovely blue with a few fine little red lines around the white parts. Kathy decided she would do the show. Just one - to see what it was like.

Three months later the show was ready and about to start. Kathy had soon got used to all the things that went on in a television studio: all the lights, the people who were needed to make sure everything worked right and, of course, the excited studio audience waiting for the show to begin. Kathy was behind the scenes, wearing her new cheerful clothes and drinking a cup of tea. She was reading Braille notes with her fingertips - it was still quicker than trying to read written notes - about her first guest, an ageing actor called Archie Mason. He had written a book about his life in which he had told his readers all about his wives, his lovers and the famous actors he had known. He had given away a great many details about their private lives and the kinds of things they did. This had, of course, guaranteed big sales of his book. Kathy was sure that much of what he had written wasn't true and her aim in the interview was to make him admit it.

When the show began, Kathy was given a warm welcome. The audience was glad to see her back, though there were a few surprised looks at her colourful choice of dress. Archie Mason was introduced and he made his entrance. He was a man in late middle age, with dark hair, a moustache and dressed in a smart blue suit with a red tie and white shirt. He was still handsome and knew it as he smiled at the audience with his perfect white teeth, waving and showing an expensive gold watch on his wrist. He then turned his smile to Kathy as he gave her a kiss on the cheek before sitting down.

'He has a nice smile,' Kathy thought as she looked at his perfectly shaped teeth. She liked to see things that were bright and evenly shaped.

Kathy at once started to question Archie Mason about some of the more doubtful details of his book.

'I swear to you, Kathy, that nothing in my book is untrue. Honest,' said Archie as he smiled and showed his white teeth. Kathy's ears were hearing a voice that did not sound honest at all, but her eyes saw a big warm smile that looked open and truthful. Her brain listened to her ears but her heart looked at the smile. It was hard to believe that a man with a smile like that could ever lie. For the first time during a live interview she doubted her judgment. She decided to believe him.

From that moment on she was no longer sure of her own judgment. To the audience, it seemed as if Archie was the one in control, not Kathy. So long as he gave her a big smile he could say whatever he liked. Kathy simply nodded and said 'yes' and 'really?' to him. This was not what the audience expected. Where was the Kathy Page they knew? She should have known right away how to deal with a self-important old fool like this.

Her next guest was a politician who had broken some of his election promises. At least, everybody thought, she would sort him out; he was more like what she was used to. But the politician had been prepared well. He had a boyish look, though he was well over forty. But, most of all, he had a nice smile. She didn't know what to think of all the different signals she was getting from this man: his voice told her not to trust him while his smile told her he was honest. She could no longer trust her judgment. She felt confused. The politician said almost anything he wanted. Kathy knew she should have been asking more questions but she just didn't have the confidence in her abilities anymore. She was too slow and the politician was too quick.

After the show, Kathy knew she had done badly. She felt terrible. She was not surprised when she heard, not long afterwards, that her show would not be put on again.

She heard no more from Mick Dean.

Kathy finally found the time to write her autobiography. She began it soon after her appearance on television. It took her almost a year, but it became a huge success and made her a lot of money. Once again, she was in public demand. Because of her renewed popularity, she was asked by a different producer to make another television show. She turned down the offer. She didn't want to go through that again! Instead, she decided to return to radio and soon her old show was back.

Kathy wanted to show her fans that she was as good as ever. As her first guest, she chose the politician she had interviewed during her disastrous television show. Naturally, he expected an easy time of it again. He smiled as he looked at Kathy across the table. He didn't smile for long.

'Could you tell us, Minister, about your promise to reduce unemployment?' she asked him.

The minister began. 'Of course, Kathy, but you must realize these things take a long time...'

'Oh really? That's not what you said last month.'

She then went on to tear him apart, taking each of his promises in turn and showing how they had all been broken. He was, before a listening audience of millions, shown to be false and dishonest, just as she had first thought. This was what her listeners had been waiting for!

As the politician left, Kathy sat back and took off the black scarf she had tied around her head to cover her eyes throughout the interview.

Kathy Page - the queen of radio interviews and star of her listeners - was back!

- THE END -

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