

# SIDE 'D' WILL, CARL, GRACE, LYMAN

DR. LYMAN. Aren't there any Indian tribes around here that have war dances?

ELMA. (*Laughing*) No, silly! We're very civilized.

DR. LYMAN. I'll make my own judgment about that. Meanwhile, you may fix me a double shot of rye whiskey . . . on the rocks. (*Rises, moves R.*)

ELMA. (*Leads on counter.*) I'm sorry, sir. We don't sell drinks.

DR. LYMAN. You don't sell drinks?

ELMA. Not intoxicating drinks. No, sir.

DR. LYMAN. Alas!

ELMA. We have fresh coffee, homemade pies and cakes, all kinds of sandwiches . . .

DR. LYMAN. No, my girl. You're not going to sober me up with your dainties. I am prepared for such emergencies. (*Draws a pint bottle of whiskey from his overcoat pocket.*) You may give me a bottle of your finest lemon soda. (*Elma gets bottle of lemon soda from refrigerator.*)

ELMA. (*Whispering*) You'd better not let Will see you do that. You're not supposed to.

DR. LYMAN. Who is he, the sheriff?

ELMA. Yes. Lots of people do spike their drinks here and we never say anything, but Will would have to make you stop if he saw you.

DR. LYMAN. I shall be most cautious. I promise. (*She sets the bottle of soda before him as he smiles at her benignly. He pours some soda in a glass, then some whiskey, and ambles over to a table, far R., sitting down with his drink before him. Will rises, moves over to Carl, who's at the end of the counter chiding Grace, where the two of them have been standing, talking in very personal voices that can't be overheard.*)

WILL. I sure don't envy ya, Carl, drivin' in weather like this. (*Grace crosses behind counter.*)

CARL. (*Making it sound like a personal observation.*) Yah! March its comin' in like a lion.

WILL. This all the passengers ya got?

CARL. There's a coupla crazy cowboys rolled up in the back seat, asleep. I thought I woke 'em, but I guess I didn't.

WILL. Shouldn't you go out and do it now?

CARL. I'd jet as soon they stayed where they're at. One of 'em's a real troublemaker. You know the kind, first time off a ranch and

with as a bronco. He's been on the make for this blondie down here . . . (*Indicates Cherie.*)

WILL. She was tellin' me.

CARL. I've had a good mind to put him off the bus, the way he's been actin'. I say, there's a time and place for ev'rythin'.

WILL. That bus may get snowbound purty soon.

CARL. I'll go wake 'em in a minute, Will. Just lemme have a lil' time here. (*Will sizes up the situation as Carl returns his attention to Grace, then Will picks up a copy of the Kansas City Star, sitting down close to the fire to read. Carl leans over counter.*)

Ya know what, Grace? This is the first time you and I ever had more'n twenty minutes t'gether.

GRACE. (*Coolly.*) So what?

CARL. Oh, I dunno. I'll prob'ly be here mosta the night. It'd sure be nice to have a nice lil' apartment to go to, some place to sit and listen to the radio, with a good lookin' woman . . . somethin' like you . . . to talk with . . . maybe have a few beers.

GRACE. That wouldn't be a hint or anything, would it?

CARL. (*Faking innocence.*) Why? Do you have an apartment like that, Grace?

GRACE. Yes, I do. But I never told you about it. Did that ornery Dobson fella tell you I had an apartment over the restaurant?

CARL. (*In a query.*) Dobson? Dobson? I can't seem to remember anyone named Dobson. (*Elma is washing, drying dishes behind counter.*)

GRACE. You know him better'n I do. He comes through twice a week with the Southwest Bus. He told me you and him meet in Topeka sometimes and paint the town.

CARL. Dobson? Oh, yah, I know Dobson. Vern Dobson. A prince of a fella.

GRACE. Well, if he's been gabbin' to you about my apartment, I can tell ya he's ony been up there once, when he come in here with his hand cut, and I took him up there to bandage it. Now that's the ony time he was ever up there. On my word of honor.

CARL. Oh, Vern Dobson speaks very highly of you, Grace. Very highly.

GRACE. Well . . . he better. Now, what ya gonna have?

CARL. (*Sits on stool at counter.*) Make it a ham and cheese on rye.

GRACE. I'm sorry, Carl. We got no cheese.

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SIDE 'D'

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CARL. What happened? Did the mice get it?

GRACE. None of your wise remarks.

CARL. O.K. Make it a ham on rye, then.

GRACE. (At breadbox.) I'm sorry, Carl, but we got no rye, either.

DR. LYMAN. (Chinning in, from his table.) I can vouch for that, sir. I just asked for rye, myself, and was refused. (Elma, at stove, watches.)

CARL. (Turns.) Look, Mister, don't ya think ya oughta lay off that stuff till ya get home and meet the missus?

DR. LYMAN. The missus, did you say? (He laughs.) I have no missus, sir. I'm free. I can travel the universe, with no one to await my arrival anywhere.

CARL. (Sits on stool at counter. To Grace, bidding for a little sympathy.) That's all I ever get on my bus, drunks and hoodlums. (Dr. Lyman signals Elma for more soda.)

GRACE. How's ter whole wheat, Carl?

CARL. O.K. Make it whole wheat. (Elma gets soda from refrigerator, takes it to Dr. Lyman.)

DR. LYMAN. (To Elma, as she brings him more soda.) Yes, I am free. My third and last wife deserted me several years ago . . . for a ballplayer. (He chuckles as though it were all a big absurdity.)

ELMA. (Starts back to counter, stops. A little astounded.) Your third? (Grace makes sandwich, gives it and coffee to Carl, stands behind counter talking to him as he eats.)

DR. LYMAN. (Elma sits at his table.) Yes, my third! Getting married is a careless habit I've fallen into. Sometime, really, I must give it all up. Oh, but she was pretty! Blonde, like the young lady over there. (He indicates Cherie.) And southern, too, or pretended to be. However, she was kinder than the others when we parted. She didn't care about money. All she wanted was to find new marital bliss with her ballplayer, so I never had to pay her alimony . . . as if I could. (He chuckles, sighs and recalls another.) My second wife was a different type entirely. But she was very pretty, too. I have always exercised the most excellent taste. If not the best judgment. She was a student of mine, when I was teaching at an eastern university. Alas! she sued me for divorce on the grounds that I was incontinent and always drunk. (Elma rises, starts L.) I didn't have

a chance to resign from that position. (Still be manages to chuckle about it.)

CHERIE. (From the counter.) Hey! how much are them doughnuts? (She is counting the coins in her purse.)

ELMA. (Leaving Dr. Lyman, hurrying back to counter.) I'll make you a special price, two for a nickel.

CHERIE. O.K.

DR. LYMAN. (Musingly he begins to recite as though for his own enjoyment.)

"That time of year thou may'st in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those boughs —"

CHERIE. (She shivers, Elma hands her doughnuts on a plate, Cherie gives Elma money and crosses to stove.) I never was so cold in my life.

ELMA. Do you honestly work in a night club?

CHERIE. (Brightening with this recognition.) Sure! I'm a chanteuse. I call myself Cherie.

ELMA. That's French, isn't it?

CHERIE. I dunno. I just seen the name once and it kinda appealed to me.

ELMA. It's French. It means "dear one." Is that all the name you use?

CHERIE. (Sits at a table.) Sure. Thess all the name ya need. Like Hildegarde. She's a chanteuse, too.

ELMA. (Crosses to Cherie with coffee.) Chanteuse means singer.

CHERIE. How come you know so much? (Grace sits at counter with Carl.)

ELMA. I'm taking French in high school.

CHERIE. Oh! (A reflective pause.) I never got as far as high school. See, I was the oldest girl left in the family after my sister Violet ran away. I had two more sisters, both younger'n me, and five brothers, most of 'em older. Was they mean! Anyway, I had to quit school when I was twelve, to stay home and take care a the house and do the cookin'. I'm a real good cook. Honest!

ELMA. (Sits L. of Cherie at table.) Did you study singing?

CHERIE. (Shaking her head.) Huh-uh. Jest picked it up listenin' to the radio, seein' movies, tryin' to put over my songs, as good as them people did.

ELMA. How did you get started in the night club?