

# SIDE 'I' BO & VIRGIL

CHERIE. Mebbe I'm a sap.

ELMA. Why do you say that?

CHERIE. I dunno why I don't go off to Montana and marry him.

I might be a lot better off'n I am now.

ELMA. He says he loves you.

CHERIE. He dunno what love is.

ELMA. What makes you say that?

CHERIE. Ah he wants is a girl to throw his arms around and hug

and kiss, that's all. The resta the time, he don't even know I exist.

ELMA. What made you decide to marry him in the first place?

CHERIE. (*Giving Elma a wise look.*) Ya ain't very experienced, are ya?

ELMA. I guess not.

CHERIE. I never ~~did~~ decide to marry him. Everything was goin' fine till he brought up that subject. Bo come in one night when I was singin' 'That Old Black Magic.' It's one a my best numbers. And he liked it so much, he jumped up on a chair and yelled like a Indian, and put his fingers in his mouth and whistled like a steam engine. Naturally, it made me feel good. Most a the customers at the Blue Dragon was too drunk to pay any attention to my songs.

ELMA. And you liked him?

CHERIE. Well . . . I thought he was awful cute. (*She shows a mischievous smile.*)

ELMA. I think he looks a little like Burt Lancaster, don't you?

CHERIE. Mebbe. Anyway . . . I'd never seen a cowboy before.

Oh, I'd seen 'em in movies, a course, but never in the flesh . . .

Anyway, he's so darn healthy lookin'; I don't mind admittin', I was attracted, right from the start.

ELMA. You were?

CHERIE. But it was only what ya might call a sexual attraction.

ELMA. Oh!

CHERIE. The very next mornin', he wakes up and hollers, "Yip-pee! We're gittin' married." (*Bo rises, walks L. Virgil pulls him down to sit.*) I honestly thought he was crazy. But when I tried to reason with him, he wouldn't listen to a word. He stayed by my side all day long, like a shadow. At night, a course, he had to go back to the rodeo, but he was back to the Blue Dragon as soon as the rodeo was over, in time fer the midnight show. If any other fella claimed t have a date with me, Bo'd beat him up.

ELMA. And you never told him you'd marry him?

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CHERIE. No! He kep tellin' me all week, he and Virge'd be by the night the rodeo ended, and they'd pick me up and we'd all start back to Montana together. I knew that if I was around the Blue Dragon that night, that's what'd happen. So I decided to beat it. One a the other girls at the Blue Dragon lived on a farm 'cross the river in Kansas. She said I could stay with her. So I went to the Blue Dragon last night and just sang fer the first show. Then I told 'em I was quittin' . . . I'd been wantin' to find another job anyway . . . and I picked up my share of the kitty . . . but darn it, I had to go and tell 'em I was takin' the midnight bus. They had to go and tell Bo, a course, when he come in a f'ol after eleven. He paid 'em five dollars to find out. So I went down to the bus station and hadn't even got my ticket, when here come Bo and Virge. (*Bo rises walks slowly to window.*) He jest steps up to the ticket window and says, "Three tickets to Montana!" I din know what to say. Then he dragged me onto the bus and I been on it ever since. And somewhere deep down inside me, I gotta funny feelin' I'm gonna end up in Montana. (*She sits now in troubled contemplation as Elma resumes her work. On the other side of the stage, Bo comes D. S., straddles a chair after a period of gestation, begins to question Virgil.*)

BO. Tell me somethin', Virge. We been t'gether since my folks died, and I allus wondered if mebbe I din spoil yer chances a settin' down.

VIRGIL. (*Laughs.*) No, you never, Bo. I used to tell myself ya did, but I just wanted an excuse.

BO. But you been lookin' after me since I was ten.

VIRGIL. I coulda married up, too.

BO. Was ya ever in love?

VIRGIL. Oncet. B'fore I went to work on your daddy's ranch.

BO. What happened?

VIRGIL. Nuthin'.

BO. Ya ask her to marry ya?

VIRGIL. Nope.

BO. Why not?

VIRGIL. Well . . . there comes a time in every fella's life Bo, when he's gotta give up his own ways . . .

BO. How ya mean?

VIRGIL. Well, I was allus kinda uncomfortable around this gal,

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'cause she was sweet and kinda refined. I was allus scared I'd say or do somethin' wrong.

BO. I know how ya mean.

VIRGIL. It was cowardly of me, I s'pose, but ev'ry time I'd get back from courtin' her, and come back to the bunkhouse where my buddies was sittin' around talkin', or playin' cards, or listenin' to music, I'd jest relax and feel m'self so much at home, I din wanta give it up.

BO. Yah! Gals can scare a fella.

VIRGIL. Now I'm kinda ashamed.

BO. Yare?

VIRGIL. Yes I am, Bo. A fella can't live his whole life dependin' on buddies. (Bo takes another reflective pause, then asks directly.)

BO. Why don't she like me, Virge?

VIRGIL. (Hesitant.) Well . . .

BO. Tell me the truth.

VIRGIL. Mebbe ya don't go about it right.

BO. What do I do wrong?

VIRGIL. Sometimes ya sound a li'l bullheaded and mean.

BO. I do?

VIRGIL. Yah.

BO. How's a fella s'posed to act?

VIRGIL. I'm no authority, Bo, but it seems t'me you should be a little more gallant.

BO. Gall—? Gallant? I'm as gallant as I know how to be. You hear the way Hank and Orville talk at the ranch, when they get back from sojournin' in town, 'bout their women.

VIRGIL. They like to brag, Bo. Ya can't b'lieve ev'rything Hank and Orville say.

BO. Is there any reason a gal wouldn't go fer me, soon as she would fer Hank or Orville?

VIRGIL. They're a li'l older'n you. They learned a li'l more. They can be gallant with gals . . . when they wanta be.

BO. I ain't gonna pretend.

VIRGIL. I can't blame ya.

BO. But a gal oughta like me. I kin read and write, I'm kinda tidy and I got good manners, don't I?

VIRGIL. I'm no judge, Bo. I'm used to ya.

BO. And I'm tall and strong. Ain't that what girls like? And if I do say so, m'self, I'm purty good lookin'.

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VIRGIL. Yah.

BO. When I get spruced up, I'm just as good lookin' a fella as a gal might hope to see.

VIRGIL. I know ya are, Bo.

BO. (Suddenly seized with anger at the injustice of it all. Jumps up, crosses U. S.) Then hellfire and damnation! Why don't she go back to the ranch with me? (His hands in his hip pockets, he begins pacing, returning to his corner like a panther, where he stands with his back to the others, watching the snow fly outside the window.)

ELMA. (Having observed Bo's disquiet.) Gee, if you only loved him!

CHERIE. That'd solve ev'rything, wouldn't it? But I don't. So I jest can't see m'self goin' to some God-forsaken ranch in Montana where I'd never see no one but him and a lotta cows.

ELMA. No. If you don't love him, it'd be awfully lonely.

CHERIE. I dunno why I keep expectin' m'self to fall in love with someone, but I do.

ELMA. (Sits on stool by Cherie.) I know j expect to, some day.

CHERIE. I'm beginnin' to seriously wonder if there is the kinda love I have in mind.

ELMA. What's that?

CHERIE. Well . . . I dunno. I'm oney nineteen, but I been goin' with guys since I was fourteen.

ELMA. (Astounded.) Honest?

CHERIE. Honey, I almost married a cousin a mine when I was fourteen, but Pappy wouldn't have it.

ELMA. I never heard of anyone marrying so young.

CHERIE. Down in the Ozarks, we don't waste much time. Any-way, I'm awful glad I never married my cousin Malcolm, 'cause he turned out real bad, like Pappy predicted. But I sure was crazy 'bout him at the time. And I been losin' my head 'bout some guy ever since. But Bo's the first one wanted to marry me, since Cousin Malcolm. And natur'ly, I'd like to get married and raise a family and all them things but . . .

ELMA. But you've never been in love?

CHERIE. Mebbe I have and din know it. Thass what I mean. Mebbe I don't know what love is. Mebbe I'm expectin' it t'be somethin' it ain't. I jest feel that, regardless how crazy ya are 'bout some guy, ya gotta feel . . . and it's hard to put into words,

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