

# SIDE 'M' BO, VIRGIL, CHERIE, LYMAN, WILL, ELMA, GRACE

DR. LYMAN. (Beginning to feel that he cannot continue.)

"By a name

I know not how to tell thee . . . who I am:

My name, dear saint, is . . . is hateful to myself."

(He stops here. For several moments there is a wondering silence.

Elma signals Virgil.)

VIRGIL. (Prompting.) "Because it is an enemy to thee."

DR. LYMAN. (Leaving the scene of action, repeating the line dumbly, making his way stumblingly back to the counter.)

"My name . . . is hateful . . . to myself . . ."

(Elma burries to Dr. Lyman's side. Virgil grabs hold of Bo, pulls him back to the floor and shames him.)

ELMA. Dr. Lyman, what's the matter?

DR. LYMAN. My dear . . . let us not continue this meaningless little act!

ELMA. Did I do something wrong?

DR. LYMAN. You couldn't possibly do anything wrong . . . if you tried.

ELMA. I can try to say the lines differently.

DR. LYMAN. Don't. Don't. Just tell your audience that Romeo suddenly is fraught with remorse. (He drops to a stool. Elma remaining by him a few moments, uncertainly. Bo turns to Virgil.)

BO. Virge, if thass the way to make love . . . I'm gonna give up.

ELMA. (Crosses R. to Virgil.) I'm afraid he isn't feeling well.

VIRGIL. (To Elma.) I tried to prompt him.

ELMA. (To herself.) Well, we've only got one more number. (Crosses to Cherie.) Are you ready?

CHERIE. (Rises.) Sure.

ELMA. (Crosses R. above table.) Ladies and gentlemen, our next number is Mademoiselle Cherie, the international chanteuse, direct from the Blue Dragon night club in Kansas City, Cherie! (All applaud as Cherie comes forth, Virgil playing an introduction for her. Bo puts his fingers through his teeth and whistles for her. Cherie hands her robe to Virgil. Elma clears central table, Cherie climbs up on it.)

CHERIE. (Whispering to Elma.) Remember, I don't allow no table service during my numbers.

ELMA. O.K. (She crosses to counter, sits on D. S. stool. In the background now, we can observe that Dr. Lyman is drinking heavily from the bottle in his overcoat pocket. Cherie gets up on

46

one of the tables and begins singing her song with a chord accompaniment from Virgil. Her rendition of the song is a most dramatic one, that would seem to have been created from Cherie's observations of numerous torch-singers. But she has appeal, and if she is funny, she doesn't seem to know it. Anyway, she rekindles Bo's most fervent love, which he cannot help expressing during her performance.)

BO. (About the middle of the song.) Ain't she beautiful, Virge?

VIRGIL. (Trying to keep his mind on his playing.) Shh, Bo!

BO. I'm gonna git her, Virge.

VIRGIL. Sssh!

BO. (Pause. He pays no attention to anyone.) I made up my mind. I told myself I was gonna git me a gal. Thass the only reason I entered that rodeo, and I ain't takin' no fer an answer.

VIRGIL. Bo, will you hush up and lemme be!

BO. Anything I ever wanted in this life, I went out and got and I ain't gonna stop now. I'm gonna git her. (The song ends now and Cherie is enraged. She jumps down from her table and whistles her audience applauds, she goes straight to Bo and slaps him stingingly on the face.)

CHERIE. You ain't got the manners God gave a monkey.

BO. (Shamed.) Cherry!

CHERIE. . . . and if I was a man, I'd beat the livin' daylight out of ya, and thass what some man's gonna do some day, and when it happens, I hope I'm there to see. (She flources back to her dressing room and crouches down behind counter, as Bo gapes. By this time Dr. Lyman has drunk himself almost to insensibility, and we see him weaving back and forth on his stool, mumbling almost incoherently.)

DR. LYMAN. "Romeo . . . Romeo . . . wherefore art thou? Wherefore art thou . . . Romeo?" (He laughs like a loon, falls off the stool and collapses on the floor. Elma and Virgil rush to him. Bo remains rooted, glaring at Cherie with puzzled hurt.)

ELMA. (Deeply concerned.) Dr. Lyman! Dr. Lyman!

VIRGIL. The man's in a purty bad way. Let's get him on the bench. (Elma and Virgil manage to get Dr. Lyman to his feet as Bo glides across the room, scales the counter in a leap and takes Cherie in his arms.)

BO. I was tellin' Virge I love ya. Ya got no right to come over and slap me.

47

START  
SIDE 'M'

CHERIE. (*Twisting*.) Lemme be.

BO. (*Picking her up*.) We're goin' down and wake up the justice of the peace and you're gonna marry me tonight.

CHERIE. (*As he takes her in his arms and transports her to the door, just as Elma and Virgil are helping Dr. Lyman onto the bench*.) Help! Virgil, help!

BO. Shut up! I'll make ya a good husband. Ya won't never have nothin' to be sorry about.

CHERIE. (*As she is carried to the door*.) Help! Sheriff! Help me, someone! Help me! (*The action is now like that of a two-ringed circus for Elma and Virgil, whose attention suddenly is diverted from the plight of Dr. Lyman to the much noisier plight of Cherie. Bo gets her, kicking and protesting, as far as the front door when it suddenly opens and Bo finds himself confronted by Will who leaves the door open.*)

WILL. Put her down, cowboy!

BO. (*Trying to forge ahead*.) Git outta my way.

WILL. (*Shoving Bo back as Cherie manages to jump loose from his arms and runs L. behind counter*.) You gonna do as I say.

BO. I ain't gonna have no one interferin' in my ways. (*The makes an immediate lunge at Will, which Will is prepared for, coming up with a fist that sends Bo back reeling*.)

VIRGIL. (*Hurrying to Bo's side*.) Bo, ya can't do this, Bo. Ya can't pick a fight with the sheriff.

BO. (*Slowly getting back to his feet*.) By God, Mister, there ain't no man ever got the best a me, and there ain't no man ever gonna.

WILL. I'm ready and willin' to try, cowboy. Come on. (*Bo lunges at him again. Will steps aside and lets Bo send his blow into the empty doorway as he propels himself through it, outside. Then Will follows him out, where the fight continues. Virgil immediately follows them, as Elma and Cherie hurry to the window to watch*.)

CHERIE. I knowed this was gonna happen. I knowed it all along.

ELMA. Gee! I'd better call Grace. (*Starts for the rear door but Grace comes through it before she gets there. Grace happens to be wearing a dressing gown.*)

GRACE. Hey, what the hell's goin' on?

ELMA. Oh, Grace, they're fighting. Honest! It all happened so suddenly, I

GRACE. (*Hurrying to R. of window. Elma stands L. of window*.) Let's see.

CHERIE. (*Leaving the window, not wanting to see any more, going to a chair by one of the tables*.) Gee, I never wanted to cause so much trouble t'anyone.

GRACE. Wow! Looks like Will's gettin' the best of him.

ELMA. (*At the window, frightened by what she sees*.) Oh!

GRACE. Yap, fill put my money on Will Masters any time. Will's got it up here. (*Points to her head*.) Lookit that cowboy. He's green. He just swings out wild.

ELMA. (*Leaving the window. Cherie sits in chair by table*.) I

... I don't want to watch any more.

GRACE. (*A real fight fan, she reports from the window*.) God, I love a good fight. C'mon, Will—c'mon, Will—give him the old uppercut. That'll do it every time. Oh, oh, what'd I tell you, the cowboy's down. Will's puttin' handcuffs on him now. (*Cherie sobs softly. Elma goes to her*.)

ELMA. Will'll give him first aid. He always does.

CHERIE. Well . . . you gotta admit. He had it comin'.

GRACE. (*Leaving the window now*.) I'm glad they got it settled outside. (*Looks around to see if anything needs to be straightened up*.) Remember the last time there was a fight in here, I had to put in a new window. (*She goes out rear door, and we become aware once more of Dr. Lyman, who gets up from the bench and weaves his way C.*)

DR. LYMAN. It takes strong men and women to love . . . (*About to fall, he grabs the back of a chair for support*.) People strong enough inside themselves to love . . . without humiliation. (*The sighs heavily and looks about him with blurred eyes*.) People big enough to grow with their love and live inside a whole, wide new dimension. People brave enough to bear the responsibility of being loved and not fear it as a burden. (*The sighs again and looks about him wearily*.) I . . . I never had the generosity to love, to give my own most private self to another, for I was weak. I thought the gift would somehow lessen me! (*She laughs wildly and starts for the rear door*.) Romeo! Romeo! I am disgusting! (*Elma burries after him, stopping him at the door*.)

ELMA. Dr. Lyman! Dr. Lyman!

DR. LYMAN. Don't bother, dear girl. Don't ever bother with a foolish old man like me.

ELMA. You're not a foolish old man. I like you more than anyone I've ever known.

STOP - SIDE M