

wild as a bronco. He's been on the make fer this li'l blonde 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'rything.

WILL. That bus may get snowbound purty soon.

*Star* CARL. I'll go wake 'em in a minute, Will. Just lemme have a li'l 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. (*Coyly.*) So what?

CARL. Oh, I dunno. I'll prob'ly be here mosta the night. It'd sure be nice to have a nice li'l 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.

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. (*Chiming 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 fer 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 *mé* 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