

(CHARLEY is alone in the place, straightening a chair or two. He hums a tune that is a bewildering mash-up of "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing" and "Hava Nagila.")

(The song is interrupted by a rhythmic knock at the door.)

(CHARLEY looks through the peephole and opens the door to let in the tall and burly BLONDY SWANSON.)

BLONDY: Hello, Charley.

CHARLEY: Right on time.

BLONDY: By my watch, five minutes late. But I stop to talk with The Dutchman.

CHARLEY: I hear he has been in Chicago.

BLONDY: Well, then the Windy City blows him no good. What he needs at this moment is hot Tom and Jerry.

CHARLEY: This is all anyone needs.

BLONDY: Of course, two Gs would also help.

(CHARLEY moves to the bar.)

CHARLEY: Have a seat. Tom is ready and waiting for Jerry.

(BLONDY goes over to a table near the bar and sits.)

(Meanwhile, CHARLEY produces a punch bowl filled with liquid from behind the bar. As he and BLONDY talk, he carefully pours in cognac and rum, then stirs the mixture to create a foaming masterpiece.)

CHARLEY: My heart goes out to all and sundry who fall on hard days. But I am a most fortunate man. This has been a busy season. I hope and trust that business is thriving with you, Blondy.

BLONDY: I have no business. I retire from business.

(CHARLEY nearly drops a bottle.)

CHARLEY: If J Pierpont Morgan or John D Rockefeller step up and tell me they retire from business, I will not be more astonished. Thousands of citizens depend on Blondy Swanson for their merchandise. Why do you get this notion?

BLONDY: Well, I retire from business because I consider myself one hundred per cent American citizen. In fact, I am a patriot. One year I even pay an income tax.

CHARLEY: Then as a patriot, it is your duty to serve the thirsty people of this great but exceedingly dry nation. (He carries the drinks over to BLONDY.)

BLONDY: I am a bootie for a long time, but I can see into the future and I can see that one of these days they are going to repeal this prohibition law. And then it will be most unpatriotic to bring in wet goods from foreign parts. So I retire.

CHARLEY: Well, Blondy, your sentiments certainly do you credit. (Lifts his glass to BLONDY) If we have more citizens as high minded as you are, this will be a better country.

BLONDY: Furthermore, Charley, there is no money in booting anymore. All the booties in this country are broke. I am broke myself.

CHARLEY: It is hard times.

BLONDY: I just lose the last piece of property I own in this world, which is the twenty-five G home I build in Atlantic City, figuring to spend the rest of my days there with Miss Clarabelle Cobb.

CHARLEY: I always consider Miss Clarabelle Cobb a most pleasant doll. Even if she does take a run-out powder on you.

BLONDY: If I only listen to Miss Clarabelle Cobb six years ago.