

(THE DUTCHMAN leads DANCING DAN to a corner of the barn, where they kneel down and busy themselves with the floorboards.)

(BLONDY pulls a chair over beside CLARABELLE's bed.)

CLARABELLE: I don't suppose I should even ask what you are doing here, Blondy.

BLONDY: I cannot blame you for thinking the worst, but the honest truth is I am here to help a friend on a legitimate business enterprise. I put the old days behind me.

CLARABELLE: I never thought I would see you again, Blondy.

BLONDY: After you take a run-out—after you go back to Akron, Ohio, I promise myself I will pack up hauling wet goods and look you up and marry you.

CLARABELLE: I was waiting, Blondy, and hoping. I waited a long time.

BLONDY: I keep putting it off and putting it off. And then one day I hear you marry a legitimate guy in Akron, Ohio.

CLARABELLE: Yes. Joseph Hatcher. *(Holds back a sob)* You would like him.

BLONDY: If he treats you wrong, I will not like him much.

CLARABELLE: Oh, no, he's very good to me. Of course, he never tried to give me presents like diamond bracelets and fur coats.

BLONDY: You never accept one gift from me.

CLARABELLE: I enjoyed all the flowers and the candy. But I couldn't keep those other things. No nice girl could. You know when I returned that sable coat that very cold day, the girls in the dressing room said there is a limit even to eccentricity.

BLONDY: You was always a nice girl. From the day I hear you are married, I never look at another doll. Or anyway, not much.

CLARABELLE: I'm sorry I left without saying goodbye in person.

BLONDY: Well, I got your letter. Who knows, it could be you do the right thing. But why is your ever-loving husband not here? Where is this Joseph Hatcher anyhow?

(DANCING DAN and THE DUTCHMAN, holding a gripsack, rejoin BLONDY at CLARABELLE's bedside.)

CLARABELLE: *(With a sob)* Oh, Blondy, my Joseph is in big trouble!

BLONDY: What does he pull?

CLARABELLE: No, he did not do anything. That's the trouble. You see, my Joseph is a bookkeeper, and we were so happy in Akron, and then his firm sent him out here to Pennsylvania, and now he's in jail, but he didn't do anything.

BLONDY: He is framed?

CLARABELLE: Yes! His trial is coming up, and they say it is an open-and-shut case, but it is all a lie! I've tried everything to get him out. I spent every dime of our money, and I had to move out of our house.

BLONDY: How do you end up here?

CLARABELLE: Doc Kelton—he took good care of us when we were sick last year—is letting me stay here. This is his barn. He has a wife and three children. There's no room in the house.

BLONDY: Tell me what happens with Joseph Hatcher.

CLARABELLE: Oh, it's a terrible story. I don't know how we'll ever recover. It all happened one night about nine months ago. My Joseph is working late in his office—