

*Eleanor considers.*

ELEANOR: Why have you stayed married, under the circumstances?

ABEL: Made things easier for everyone. Got me out of a few tight spots through the years. Crazy situation I know.

*Eleanor is silent.*

I know you said our deal is off. But I'd like you to reconsider.

*Eleanor considers for a long beat, makes her decision*

**START** ELEANOR: (*Constant.*) Our deal is off. And I want my money back.

*Abel takes this in.*

(*Clearing the blackberries, cool as can be.*) Thank you for the blackberries. I have a cobbler recipe they'll be perfect for.

*Abel is silent.*

If you don't mind helping, I want to take the leaf out of this table.

*Abel helps clear the table in silence.*

*Table cleared, Eleanor and Abel stand at opposite sides.*

*A sad end for each of them.*

I'm selling the cottage — as is. I should have done it a long time ago.

*They pull the table apart in unison.*

*Abel removes the leaf, returns to the table opposite Eleanor.*

*They push the table closed.*

ABEL: Well — then I don't think I'll be stayin' in Groverdell.

ELEANOR: (*Committed to her choice.*) You can do whatever you'd like, Abel.

*Eleanor takes the blackberries to the sink.*

*Abel is quiet.*

*Eleanor finally turns and sees him.*

Abel?

*Abel steps away from the table, trying to remain calm.*

Abel, what's wrong?

*Abel explodes in frustration.*

*The sparks fly.*

ABEL: YOU ARE THE MOST EXASPERATING PERSON I HAVE EVER MET IN MY LIFE!!

ELEANOR: (*Shocked.*) WHAT DID I DO?!

ABEL: WHAT DID YOU DO?! (*Counting on his fingers. Spelling out the truth with a mixture of frustration and desperation and understanding and love.*) YOU'VE JUDGED ME! YOU'VE CURSED ME!

ELEANOR: (*Defensively countering Abel's fury.*) WHEN DID I CURSE YOU?!

ABEL: You've called me names! I've had the police on my tail more than once thanks to you! You've picked apart every word out'a my mouth! I'm flyin' up and down the state'a Texas like a madman! AND YOU'VE HEMMED AND HAWED ABOUT THAT DAMNED HONEYMOON COTTAGE LIKE IT WAS THE HOLY LAND ITSELF!! I CAN DO WHATEVER I'D LIKE?! (*Pacing the room, a cyclone of emotions.*) I've done my share of askin' 'round about you while I've been here, Eleanor. I'm free to do that, y'know. Know what I heard? Not one bad thing. The most level-headed woman in town. Pushed

every student to dream big. I don't know if it's that old crow 'cross the street squawkin' in your ear, or if I've just rubbed you the wrong way from the start, BUT I SURE WOULD LIKE TO MEET THAT WOMAN EVERYONE KEEPS TELLIN' ME ABOUT! (*Pacing. More truth.*) I didn't need a book to learn the definition of insolence, Eleanor. You ARE the definition!

ELEANOR: SAYS THE MAN WHO JUST CALLED MY BEST FRIEND AN OLD CROW!!

ABEL: SHE IS AN OLD CROW! What Bill Taylor sees in her, I do not know!

ELEANOR: WHAT DOES BILL TAYLOR HAVE TO DO WITH GRACE BODELL?!

ABEL: HE'S HAD A CRUSH ON'ER FOR THIRTY YEARS! You two ever left your HEN HOUSE, you might LEARN a thing or two!!

ELEANOR: The fact of the matter is, Grace thought very highly of you after our supper together!

ABEL: Oh, forget about Grace. I've got nothin' against Grace. You just got me fired up. (*Standing before Eleanor, still bristling with a mix of emotions.*) I don't know what else to say, Eleanor. I've spoken from the heart since the beginning, and you've called me a liar. I've acted from the heart, and you've called me a con man. If you're confused, well fine. I'm not ashamed to say I'm just as confused as you are. We're independent people — you and me both. We're used to that — and we like it. (*Sparking.*) I'M NOT AN UNHAPPY MAN!

ELEANOR: (*Sparking as well.*) I'M NOT AN UNHAPPY WOMAN!

ABEL: WELL, THEN — THERE WE ARE!

ELEANOR: THERE WE ARE!

*Eleanor and Abel face away from each other, thinking.*

*Eleanor turns first.*

Abel —

ABEL: Steer clear of me right now, Eleanor — Please.

END

*Eleanor steers clear, gives Abel another moment.  
Her pride has started to fall away as well.*

ELEANOR: *(Sincerely, with a new understanding.)* Abel. The day you fixed the roof, you talked about things — *lighting up* again. I said that I didn't know what you meant, but I did. I'd been feeling something like that for a while. You've traveled down so many roads. I haven't. I took the road I was given — and I was happy with that. But that road ended — and I'm still here. Time didn't stop. I haven't known what to do with that. And then there you were — out of nowhere!

ABEL: *(Calming, listening.)* I'm not from nowhere, Eleanor. I'm from Oklahoma.

*Eleanor is silent.*

I'm no prince from some fairy tale. I'm a man with a trailer — in a kitchen. How'd I get here? I don't know. A lake, and a hole in a roof. Only thing I know is if I hadn't been trav'lin', and if you hadn't been waitin', this might never'a happened. Nothing unique in that. That's how all livin' creatures have been findin' each other since the beginnin'a time. Only thing special this time — is that it's our turn.

*Eleanor is silent, listening.*

*(With understanding.)* Every love story has the exact same start, Eleanor. Two people, finally meeting.

*Eleanor takes this in slowly, dazed by what Abel has just said.*

ELEANOR: You think this is a love story, Abel?