

bleak three roomed shack. The room into which they step is bare of all furniture save those necessary for strict utility. There is a stove, a table, three ricketty chairs, boxes, and an old wheezy organ. Buck looks about the place proudly and says:

"Pretty cosey, what? Built the shack meself.

Homesteaded here, I did. Boss Dayton bought me out, and you've got the place just as I left it. Aint charging nothing extra for the furniture. " To the stunned Birdie, he adds:

"You put the kids to bed, I'll light the fire, and you" to Dick, "can get the dinner.

"Me ---cook!

"Sure be. You got to learn to do it in this country. Never know when you'll be on your own out here. Aint many ladies in this country, and ^{the} your missus might croak any day or run off with the other fellow. Can't trust a lady out here. Too many temptations, bo. You see we're short of females in this country and the ladies is at premium".

Birdie dumbly retires to the bedroom indicated by Buck with the now whimpering twins clinging to her skirts. ~~She~~
~~is~~~~un~~~~hardened~~~~by~~

She lays the children on one of the two beds in the room, and they are so tired that they do not miss being undressed, and drop off, snugly under the sheepskins still about them.

Birdie, with a horrified and st unned expresson surveys her new room. There are two beds, iron and ugly, and suspiciously dingy, half a cracked marring set rakily on an upturned soap box, and nails on the wall on which to hang clothes. Birdie hurries