

How a Kitten Saved Sweet Jesus

A One-Act Play
by Pilliard Dickle

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Genre: Western comedy, set in a saloon

Set: Saloon doors sit near the front edge of stage. Beside them is a big window frame. We're looking through the window and the invisible wall into the saloon. Inside we see a bar, and a table and chairs. One bar stool is at the bar, on the right.



Rough depiction of the main elements of the set

Cast:

MISS KELI

Owens the saloon, tends the bar. Fairly well-spoken.
(She attended college a little back East.)

CLEMSON

A local pig farmer who has a thing for Miss Keli but has no idea what to do other than drop cheesy compliments.

ABNEY

Another local. (Clemson and Abney both are both kind of hick. Clemson more so than Abney.)

FLABIN

(Pronounced FLAB-in.) A slightly gruff but likable old drunk with his own tabletop whiskey still, who occasionally hiccups words from the future.

JACKSON and DERKLE

Two cowboys passing through town. Both are fully decked out in cowboy gear. Jackson is rather good-looking and fairly well-spoken. Derkle is loveably yazoo.

REVEREND PREACHER

A literate, well-dressed gentleman and self-styled playwright.

MISS KELI stands behind the bar, in the middle (her usual spot), wiping glasses.

FLABIN is on a stool at the end of the bar, fooling with his miniature still.

CLEMSON and ABNEY are sitting at the table playing cards.

REVEREND PREACHER is sitting at the table jotting notes in a small composition book.

CLEMSON

Well, Abney, that's a rightly-fine hand there. Rightly-fine.

(He throws down his cards)

I guess I'm out.

ABNEY

(Scooping up a few coins)

Thank you kindly, Clem.

CLEMSON

(Standing up)

Well, I'mo mosey on over and see what Miss Keli here is up to.

Clemson sidles up to the bar and touches the tip of his hat.

CLEMSON

Miss Keli, you're a-lookin' rightly fine today, ma'am.

MISS KELI

Clemson, don't you be giving' me no guff now.

CLEMSON

Don't you mean gruff?

MISS KELI

What?

CLEMSON

It's "Don't you give me no gruff." Not guff.

MISS KELI

Clemson, you've got no place lecturing me about grammar. I went to college back East, you know.

CLEMSON

Well, I ain't never heard of nothin' called "guff." It must be Latin or somethin'.

MISS KELI

Well gruff sure isn't the right word. "Gruff" means, well ornery. Like, "you're being rightly gruff today, Clemson."

CLEMSON

Well, I'd have to say you're bein' kinda gruff today yourself, Miss Keli. So I guess I'm just givin' you some of it back. Real polite-like, though.

MISS KELI

No, "guff" is what your givin' me.

CLEMSON

Guff ain't even a word.

MISS KELI

It is, and if I had a dictionary, I'd look it up.

FLABIN

Google it.

CLEMSON

What'd Flabin just say? Googlit?

MISS KELI

That was acid reflux. You now how Uncle Flabin gets to gurgling when drinks.

Suddenly the saloon doors swing open. In walk JACKSON and DERKLE, decked out to the nines in cowboy regalia. They stop in the middle of the room. Everyone is looking at them. Derkle stands bowlegged, his thumbs tucked into his belt. Derkle has a big pair of binoculars around his neck.

DERKLE

We're cowboys.

CLEMSON

Yeah. We can tell.

JACKSON

Now how can you tell?

CLEMSON

By lookin' atcha!

DERKLE

Oh? How so?

ABNEY

Well, for one thing, you've got on cowboy hats and cowboy boots.

JACKSON

Well you know, any moron can walk in a store and buy a cowboy hat.

DERKLE

Yeah, and who round these parts don't wear boots?

CLEMSON

Well, y'all are standin' like cowboys. Looks like you're still on a horse.

ABNEY

And you've got on chaps. I think that's a pretty fair indication you've been out ridin' the range.

DERKLE

(Looks down)

Oh yeah. I meant to take these off.

(Looks at Jackson)

OK, Jackson, I'll give 'im that.

CLEMSON

And we can tell not just by looking at ya, we can tell by SMELLIN' at ya.

JACKSON

What's that supposed to mean?

CLEMSON

I just mean, you boys smell like cows.

DERKLE

He's got us there, Jackson. We do probably smell like
cows.

REVEREND PREACHER

I don't think Clemson meant that in a derogatory
fashion, gentlemen. I mean, it just stands to reason.
If you work with cows, you're going to smell like cow.
That's not necessarily a bad thing. There's nothing
wrong with the smell of cattle. I mean, who doesn't
savor the aroma of a new pair of leather boots, or a
fresh steak?

ABNEY

Reverend Preacher makes a good point.

CLEMSON

He always does, don't he?

MISS KELI

Reverend Preacher, the master wordsmith.

CLEMSON

So, what are you fellas' names?

DERKLE

I'm Derkle. This here's Jackson.

Jackson tips his hat.

REVEREND PREACHER

(Standing and extending his hand)

"Jackson and Derkle." Welcome to Sweet Jesus, boys.

ABNEY

(At the table, extending his hand up to Jackson)

Yep, Sweet Jesus Wyoming. Where a quarter'll get you a
room across the street.

CLEMSON

AND a hot bath.

All laugh.

JACKSON

Yeah, we saw the sign on the way in.

DERKLE

But we wanted to come in here smellin' like cowboys.

JACKSON

Plus, we thought we'd scout around first for the best deal on a hotel before we committed to a reservation. Lookin' for something in the 16-17 cents range.

DERKLE

Is there a ramada here in town?

ABNEY

A what?

DERKLE

A ramada. That's what my mama's housekeeper used to call it. Her name was Gigi.

ABNEY

So "ramada" is french for hotel?

DERKLE

No, Spanish. She was Mexican.

MISS KELI

The Howdy Doo across the street is the best western hotel you're gonna find in this town. And the only.

REVEREND PREACHER

It's where Marshall Tucker stays when he's in town.

ABNEY

And Marshall McLuhan, too.

MISS KELI

It's a quality inn.

CLEMSON

It's rightly-fine.

ABNEY

I can't think of one that's finer.

FLABIN
(Hiccups)

Hilton!

MISS KELI

Uncle Flabin, you got the whiskey-hiccups again?

FLABIN

Y'all come shake my hand, fellas. I cain't stand up.

Jackson and Derkle step to the bar and shake hands with Flabin.

DERKLE

Pleased to meet ya', Mr. Flabin.

ABNEY

It's UNCLE Flabin.

FLABIN

The pleasure is all mine.

CLEMSON

Uncle Flabin's our obligatory drunk.

FLABIN

Every saloon's gotta have one—I figure I might as well be it.

DERKLE

So whose uncle are you, Uncle Flabin?

ABNEY

He's all our uncles! Wait, that sentence don't work.
All of us are his uncles... No, I mean, he's the uncle
to...

MISS KELI

What Abney's trying to say is, Flabin's been around
the block.

ABNEY

(Holding up finger,
finally getting the sentence right)

He's everybody's uncle!

CLEMSON

He might even be YOUR uncle, Derkle.

DERKLE

I ain't got no uncle.

Clemson studies Derkle's face closely, pointing his
finger at his eyebrow

CLEMSON

I dunno... Look how this here brow turns down.

Clemson then scrutinizes Flabin's eyebrow brow for comparison.

DERKLE

Oh that's not congenial. That was from a corn huskin' accident.

Abney, curious, stands up and steps to the bar, scrutinizing Derkle's face.

ABNEY

Check out this left nostril.

Clemson looks at Derkle's left nostril, then Flabin's.

CLEMSON

Abney, that ain't nuthin' like Flabin's left nostril.

ABNEY

Yeah, but it's the spittin' image of his right one.

FLABIN

Lemme ax you somethin' Derkle. Did you have an aunt named Cialis?

DERKLE

Yeah...

FLABIN

What was her name?

DERKLE

Ain't Cialis.

FLABIN

Hefty gal? Brown hair? Ponytail? Glass eye?

DERKLE

Yeah... 'cept she didn't never wear no ponytail.

FLABIN

Oh well. I guess it was a different Cialis.

CLEMSON

Well, I shall see you fine people on the morrow.

ABNEY

Where you headed, Clem?

CLEMSON

Miss Amanda said she was gonna be pickelin' some okra today for the Egg Devilin' Jubilee. I'mo go by and give her a hand.

MISS KELI

You're gonna give her a hand, all right, I'm sure.

ABNEY

Or maybe two.

CLEMSON

You boys stop it, Miss Amanda is a rightly-fine lady.

MISS KELI

That she is, Clemson. And you just keep it that way.

CLEMSON

Nice meetin' you boys.

Clemson exits the saloon through the swinging doors.

MISS KELI

So, Jackson, Derkle...what can I do you boys for?

JACKSON

We want to drink some bad whiskey and get in a card game with some locals. Preferably one that doesn't end well.

DERKLE

Yeah, we been out on the range rustling' cattle and we're ready for a little R&R.

Eyebrows rise.

MISS KELI

Oh?? You boys are...cattle rustlers??

DERKLE

(Looking proud)

Shore am, Ma'am!

JACKSON

Not rustlers, Derkle. Wranglers. We been WRANGLING cattle, not rustling 'em.

DERKLE

Wranglin', rustlin'.

JACKSON

It's not the same. Wrangling means herding 'em
and driving 'em from one place to another.

DERKLE

So what does rustlin' mean?

EVERYBODY

Stealin' 'em!

DERKLE

Aw hell, no wonder them folks back in God-Dam got
so pissed off. I told 'em we was cattle RUSTLERS.

JACKSON

Derkle, I swear.

DERKLE

I ain't never stolt no cow. Well, I did once,
back in Tucson. But it was an acci-dent.

MISS KELI

So you boys from Goddam?

(She pronounces it GOD'um, as do the other locals)

JACKSON

No, we just passed through a couple nights ago.

CLEMSON

Rightly-fine town, God'um. Ran over my third ex-wife
in God'um.

DERKLE

We're on our way to Hell.

Saloon doors swing open. Clemson bursts in.

CLEMSON

SABBATH IS COMIN'!! He's walking down the street right
now!!

REVEREND PREACHER

Which street? I mean, you really need to be more
specific .

CLEMSON

The big wide dirt road out front. The only one in
town.

REVEREND PREACHER

Thank you.

CLEMSON

He's on the north side, if you want to get technical about it. He's walkin' south. And he's totin' a pistol. And he's wearin' all black.

MISS KELI

Sabbath always wears black. And he always totes a pistol. I wouldn't get too riled up about it if I were you, Clem.

CLEMSON

Yeah, but I ain't told you the bad news yet.

ABNEY

Well, maybe you shoulda told us the bad news right up front.

CLEMSON

(Continuing to talk in hurried, distressed manner)

Well, some people like to hear the bad news first, and some people like to hear the good news first.

ABNEY

So give us the bad news first.

CLEMSON

Well it's too late now. I done told you the other news. And anyway, if I'da told you the bad news first, it wouldn't-a been bad news. It'd just be news. It wouldn't'a become bad news til I told you about Black Sabbath.

REVEREND PREACHER

Woah! Watch it there, Clemson. We're not supposed to use that phrase, you know.

CLEMSON

Why not? That's all he ever wears. Black.

MISS KELI

He claims he owns that name.

ABNEY

Says it's his property. Just like them silver spurs.

CLEMSON

Hell, a name ain't property. Property is...dirt!

REVEREND PREACHER

It's his "intellectual" property.

CLEMSON

So I cain't say "black" and then say "Sabbath"?

ABNEY

Not if Sabbath or his boys catch wind of it.

REVEREND PREACHER

Unless you say other words in between. Like you just did. Or at least cough a couple of times.

JACKSON

That's ridiculous. There are lots of , you know,
"men in black."

Keli, Abney, Reverend Preacher hold their hands out in a stifling gesture, distressed that Jackson said that. They make objection noises, like Woah! and Shhh...

Jackson rolls his eyes and throws his hands up in frustration that he can hardly say anything.

FLABIN

So what was it you were gonna tell us, Duckle?

DERKLE

Derkle.

FLABIN

Derkle / Duckle

DERKLE

Duckle was my pig's name, actually. But he...

ABNEY

Oh Sweet Jesus, Derkle, just tell us the news!

REVEREND PREACHER
(In an admonishing tone)

Ab-ney? What have we said about taking the town's name
in vain?

ABNEY

Sorry, Reverend Preacher.

CLEMSON

OK, here's the bad news. Prickly Pete is out there,
too. Right down the street, on the south side,
right out in the middle of the road.

A wave of alarm sweeps through the saloon. Those seated stand up.

Jackson
(To Miss Keli)

Dang, the whole mood of this place just turned on a dime.

MISS KELI

Yep. There's bad blood between those two. Bad blood everybody knew would be dealt with sooner or later.

ABNEY

Yeah, looks like that day has come.

Clemson, still near the door, is cautiously peering out the window.

MISS KELI

Is Pete facing north, toward Sabbath?

ABNEY

Is Sabbath squintin' his eyes?

FLABIN

Is some unseen person playing a few notes on a flute?
Or a whore-monica?

REVEREND PREACHER

Is Sabbath holding his hand near the pearl handle of
his Smith & Wesson, flexing his fingers almost
imperceptibly?

CLEMSON

They ain't doin' none of that. Pete's crouched down in
the middle of the street. Kneeling' down like he's tyin
his shoelace or something. He don't even see Sabbath.

ABNEY

"Tyin his shoelace"? Don't nobody wear shoes with
laces in this town.

MISS KELI

I do.

She pulls up her dress and hikes her leg out, revealing
fancy laced boots.

CLEMSON

And those are some rightly-fine laces, too, ma'am, if
I may say so.

MISS KELI

Oh shut up, Clemson.

(Pauses)

I mean thank you.

(Pauses)

AND shut up. I mean both of those.

FLABIN

Let's get back to talking about this impending
tragedy.

ABNEY

Better yet, let's look at it out the window, like
Clemson's doin'.

Everybody moves toward the window, except for Flabin,
who remains seated at the bar finagling with his
paraphernalia.

JACKSON

It's like a ghost town out there.

REVEREND PREACHER

Yes, everybody vanishes when Sabbath comes to town.

CLEMSON

Hey, Flabin, you comin'?

FLABIN

(Still sitting at the bar)

I gotta tend my still. She's bein' kinda finicky today. Anyways, I'm too drunk to look out no window.

They all peer out the window, hard right (toward the south).

ABNEY

Yup, Pete's tyin' his shoelace, awright.

CLEMSON

How can you tell? Can you see it?

ABNEY

No, but what else could he be doing?

DERKLE

Maybe he's started wearing sneakers.

FLABIN

What the hell are sneakers?

DERKLE

You know, the kind of shoes you sneak around in.

FLABIN

I ain't never heard no shoe called a sneaker.

DERKLE

Well, that's what...

CLEMSON

Wait, lemme guess. That's what Gigi used to call 'em.

MISS KELI

I can see some of his left foot. That's definitely the tip of a boot.

ABNEY

Maybe he stepped in a wad of gum. Or a glob o' chaw.

DERKLE

Wouldn't he just scrape it off on a rock?

MISS KELI

That's not Pete's style.

CLEMSON

Yeah, Pete's not the kind of man to go round scraping his foot on stuff.

ABNEY

Maybe he has a sneaker on his other foot. Maybe he's taken to wearing a sneaker on one foot and a boot on the other.

Everybody gives Abney a look, like Laurel looking at Hardy, or Johnny Carson looking at Ed McMahon.

ABNEY

Sweet Jesus, how long does it take to tie a shoelace?

REVEREND PREACHER
(Admonishing)

Ab-nee...?

ABNEY

I wasn't taking about the town, Reverend,
I was referring to Jesus of Bethlehem.

REVEREND PREACHER

You mean Nazareth?

ABNEY

Wherever he was from.

JACKSON

(To Miss Keli)

So, what is it with Reverend Preacher? Is he a
Reverend...or a Preacher?

MISS KELI

He's both. He's a Reverend AND a Preacher.

CLEMSON

No, actually, he's a Reverend. His NAME is Preacher.

ABNEY

Actually, he's not a Reverend, he's a Preacher. His
name is Reverend.

REVEREND PREACHER

Gentlemen, I'm standing right here.

CLEMSON

Pete is standing up!

They lean forward and look to the south.

ABNEY

He's got something in his hand. He's holding it close
to his vest.

MISS KELI

Hey, Abney, we can SEE what's going on.
No point in describing every little move.

SEVERAL AT ONCE

It's a kitten!

CLEMSON

Pete found a kitten!

MISS KELI

Awww. Isn't that just like Pete?

REVEREND PREACHER

Look at the little tyke.

CLEMSON

It's a tabby.

ABNEY

(Gesturing toward the left, or north)

Hey, maybe we should look this way awhile.

DERKLE

Yeah, it's bad for the neck to hold it in the same position for a long period of time.

ABNEY

I mean to see what Sabbath is doin'.

Everybody looks to the left.

ABNEY

He's still walking south. I don't think Pete has seen him yet. He's too busy looking at the kitten.

(Pauses)

Wait, Pete just turned his head slightly northward.
He's standing up.

MISS KELI

Abney, would you can it with the running commentary?

ABNEY

OK. Sorry.

REVEREND PREACHER

My word, look at that!

CLEMSON

Golly, can you believe that?

MISS KELI

Wow! What's happening now is really something!

JACKSON

This is unbelievable!

DERKLE

Oh, and look at THAT!

REVEREND PREACHER

Gee willikers!

(Pause)

WHOLE CROWD AT WINDOW
(In unison)

Ooohhhh!!!

(Pause)

CLEMSON

OK, now THAT's not so remarkable.

JACKSON

Yeah, that's pretty mundane.

FLABIN

Hey, what am I s'posed to do, sit over here for the next 43 minutes listening' to that? Abney, start up with the commentary again. I'd kinda like to hear th' game.

ABNEY

Sure, Uncle Flabin.

Abney sits on a barrel that's close to the window.

(Note: Italics will indicate Abney's commentary, which he gives in the staccato style of a 40s sports announcer.)

ABNEY

Sabbath continues to walk south, slowly, toward Pete.

(Pause)

He stops!

FLABIN

What's Pete doin'?

ABNEY

Pete's standin' there with the kitten in his hands.

He glares back at Sabbath.

MISS KELI

I'm afraid Pete's not long for this world.

JACKSON

Yeah, looks like that poor boy's fixin' to die.

CLEMSON

And not just a normal death. A MEGA-death.

FLABIN

Why? Pete's as fast a gun as Sabbath. Faster, in my
book.

MISS KELI

(Leaning way forward looking out the window)

Not with a kitten in his hands.

ABNEY

Oh yeah, that kitten'll slow 'im down.

Clemson leans back, taking a look at Keli

CLEMSON

Miss Keli, forgive me if I'm speaking out of turn, and
I don't mean to change the subject, but that's a
rightly-fine...

MISS KELI

(Still gazing out window)

Shut it, Clemson

JACKSON

Sabbath just said something!

CLEMSON

What?

JACKSON

Dunno. I can't make it out. He's too far away. I can
just see his lips moving.

MISS KELI

Hey, Flabin, can't you read lips? Didn't you used to be deaf?

FLABIN

Yeah, for about a year, after that bad batch 'o rutabaga mash back in '48.

MISS KELI

Well, get over here and tell us what they're saying.

FLABIN

I told you, I'm too drunk to look out the window.

CLEMSON

Well try, dammit.

Jackson and Clemson grab Flabin under the arms and walk/drag him from the bar to the window, then lean him forward, pointing north.

FLABIN

OK. Uh... Um... Something about a...mackerel?

(Pause)

"I. Like. Mackerel."

They plop him down in a chair at the table.

MISS KELI

That's ridiculous, Flabin. You know Black Sabbath is not out there telling Pete he likes mackerel.

DERKLE
(To Clemson)

I like mackerel.

CLEMSON

Yeah, me too.

FLABIN
Points toward his miniature still at the bar)

Can I have my still?

REVEREND PREACHER

Excuse me, Miss Keli, but I used to be a professional lip reader in the army.

MISS KELI

Excellent! Everybody, we've got us a lip reader. Let the Reverend up to the window!

ABNEY

You mean The Preacher.

REVEREND PREACHER

Well, that was a number of years ago. I'm afraid my eyesight is not as good as it used to be.

FLABIN

(Gestures toward his still)

She don't need to stay unattended.

REVEREND PREACHER

(Peering hard out the window, to the north, squinting):
I can't...QUITE...make it out.

JACKSON

Hey, Miss Keli, Derkle here can see real good. He has 20/20 vision in his left eye. He can take out a swallow from 1000 feet. At any velocity.

DERKLE

Why thank you, Jackson. Yep, that I can do. But I cain't read lips.

REVEREND PREACHER

I could teach him.

CLEMSON

We don't have time for no lip reading lessons.

MISS KELI

Well, I guess that's the only shot we've got.

FLABIN

(Points toward his still)

There might be a fire safety issue over thar.

Reverend Preacher leans forward, holding his hand above his eyes, squinting.

REVEREND PREACHER

I can al-MOST see it. If only he were just a LITTLE bit closer.

MISS KELI

Derkle, come here and learn to read lips right quick.

DERKLE

OK, but let me take these binoculars off first,
they're chafing my neck.

Derkle puts his huge binoculars on the window ledge

REVEREND PREACHER

OK, Derkle, now lip-reading is not rock science. You
just start humming. Then you watch how the person's
lips move, and you move yours the same way.

CLEMSON

That's all there is to it?

REVEREND PREACHER

I'm afraid I just gave away a huge military secret.

MISS KELI

Derkle, do that. What the Preacher said.

DERKLE

I'll give it a try.

REVEREND PREACHER

OK, Derkle, start humming.

Derkle starts humming *She'll Be Comin' Round the Mountain When She Comes*. Flabin starts clapping along.

REVEREND PREACHER

No, not like that, Derkle. You just hum one continuous note. Like this: Mmmmmm...

DERKLE

Oh, OK. Mmmmmmmmm...

They both hum together, and start inadvertently start harmonizing as Derkle's pitch varies.

FLABIN

Y'all know *Turkey in the Straw*?

REVEREND PREACHER

OK, now look at Prickly Pete. Train your 20/20 vision right on his lips. Watch how's he movin' 'em. Now move yours just like that, like a puppet. Pretend you're his reflection.

Derkle

(In a hokey, humming drone)

"I...like...mackerel...too...it's...really...tasty."

Jackson hits Derkle with his hat.

MISS KELI

Com'on, Derkle, this is no time for joculariry.

DERKLE

Ok, Ok.

Derkle, trying to read Pete's lips, speaks rotely and deliberately, like someone struggling to read. (But not in a robotic drone as his line about the mackerel.)

DERKLE

Pete's sayin: "Yep. Sabbath. You're. Right. We. Do.
Have. A. Score. To. Settle."

Everybody seems pleasantly surprised at his success, nodding at each other with somewhat surprised looks.

MISS KELI

That's good, Derkle! Now, what's Sabbath sayin'?

Derkle leans in and peers hard to the north.

DERKLE

(Reading Sabbath's lips)

"Yes. We. Do. And. I. Think. Now. Is. As. Good. A.
Tine. As. Any."

CLEMSON

"As good a tine as any?"

DERKLE

Yeah, like the tine of a fork, I guess.

REVEREND PREACHER

Now why on earth would he say that?

ABNEY

Yeah, why the hell's he talking about a fork?

FLABIN

To eat the mackerel with, maybe?

JACKSON

Hey, Pete just said something!

DERKLE

Damn, I was looking at Sabbath.

ABNEY

Well look at Pete.

DERKLE

OK.

Derkle looks hard to the right.

CLEMSON

Sabbath just said something!

ABNEY

What'd he say?

DERKLE

I dunno, I was looking at Pete.

Deckle turns back toward Sabbath.

MISS KELI

Wait, no, Derkle, it's Pete's turn to talk next, so
keep looking at Pete.

Derkle does not turn.

CLEMSON

He's still looking at Sabbath!

MISS KELI

Derkle, stop looking at Sabbath!

DERKLE

I cain't. He's a very striking man, what with the silver spurs and all. And that little cigar. And all the black.

It gets quiet as everyone gives him a funny look, leaning back from him a little. Derkle looks around in confusion.

Wait... I'm not...you know...funny or nuthin'.

After a brief pause, Jackson suddenly blurts out.

JACKSON

Hey, I neither am I!

FLABIN

(Holding up one finger)

Not that it would be inappropriate if one were.

ABNEY

Pete's still talkin'.

MISS KELI

Somebody point Derkle in the right direction.

Clemson grabs Derkle by the shoulders and turns him south. Derkle cups his hand above his eyes, leans forward and peers.

DERKLE

"Yeah, Sabbath, I guess it is."

JACKSON

He guesses what is what?

CLEMSON

He prob'ly means he guesses it's as good a time as any to settle the score.

JACKSON

Are they still on about forks?

Clemson turns Deckle toward Sabbath.

MISS KELI

What's Sabbath gonna say?

REVEREND PREACHER

There's an opportunity for a great line here.

They wait.

REVEREND PREACHER

The suspense is palpable.

DERKLE

OK, I'm getting something. Sabbath just said
"This town's not big enough for the both of us."

REVEREND PREACHER

(Sighs)

A little hackneyed, don't you think?

MISS KELI

Quick, swivel Derkle toward Pete!

DERKLE

"Whaddya mean it's not big enough?"

Clemson starts to turn Derkle back toward Sabbath.

MISS KELI

Wait, Pete's still talking.

Clemson leaves him turned toward Pete.

ABNEY

(Commentating)

Pete waves his arm to the left.

Now to the right.

He points at stuff.

MISS KELI

Yes we can see that.

FLABIN

I cain't. I'm drunk, remember.

Note: As Derkle continues to read lips, he becomes less rote, and gradually starts speaking more naturally, more in character with how the two men would speak.

JACKSON

What's Pete saying?

DERKLE

"Actually, Sabbath, this town is plenty big. Look around. Look how wide this street is. And there's plenty of rooms at the Howdy Doo. Plenty of empty tables in the saloon."

JACKSON

Dang, Derkle's getting pretty good at this.

REVEREND PREACHER

Sabbath's lips are moving!

Clemson pivots him around.

MISS KELI

What's he saying?

DERKLE

Well, y'all don't get mad, but it looked like he really did say something about mackerel.

FLABIN

SEE?

Quick, pivot Derkle Pete-ward!

DERKLE

"Listen, Sabbath, it's not like we're obese or anything. Each of us doesn't take up more than about a three foot radius. The two of us together wouldn't occupy a circle with more than a six foot radius.

REVEREND PREACHER
(To himself)

I think he means diameter.

DERKLE
(Continuing to speak for Pete)

"So, technically, Sabbath, there's more than enough space here in Sweet Jesus. For you AND me, and a bunch of other people."

Clemson pivots Derkle toward Sabbath.

DERKLE
(As Sabbath)

"I never thought about it that way."

(Pivots back to Pete)

"But I do agree, despite its square footage—this town will not accommodate our two contrasting personalities, seein' how we're rivals and all."

(Pivots to Sabbath)

"Well, hell, that's what I meant. I was speaking metaphorically. But be that as it may, I'm still itching' to kill ya."

MISS KELI
(Turns away)

I can't look at this.

REVEREND PREACHER

This is not going to end well.

JACKSON

If Pete shoots Sabbath, it will.

REVEREND PREACHER

Yeah, but the kitten.

JACKSON

Oh yeah, the kitten.

MISS KELI

I got work to do.

ABNEY

What work?

MISS KELI
(Waking away)

Bar needs tendin'.

ABNEY

You ain't got no customers. We're all over here.

Clemson realizes an opportunity and raises his finger to announce that he'll keep her company, taking a step forward.

JACKSON

I'll be your customer, ma'am.

He walks with Miss Keli.

CLEMSON

Dammit, Jackson.

Jackson and Keli reach the bar.

Clemson
(Still holding his finger up)

I will too! I'll be your customer!

Clemson starts toward the bar.

MISS KELI

Clemson, you need to stay over there and keep
Derkle pointed in the right direction.

Clemson stops about half way to the bar and looks back
at Derkle.

DERKLE

Hell, he knows which way to look.

Clemson scoots quickly toward the bar, volleying for a
position in front of where Keli always stands, but
Jackson has already positioned himself right in front
of her.

FLABIN

What's going' on with th' game, Abney?

ABNEY

They ain't sayin' a dang thang.

REVEREND PREACHER

They surely do spend a lot of time standing there
gazing at each other, not saying anything.

CLEMSON

Well, that's good, actually. That gives us time to say
stuff.

JACKSON

Say, Miss Keli, you got any Dickel?

MISS KELI

Any who?

JACKSON

Dickel. It's a new sour mash out of Tennessee.

(Pause)

It's rightly-fine.

Clemson

Hey! That's my incestural property!

FLABIN

Hey, if y'all cain't bring my still to me,
how 'bout takin' me to her?

REVEREND PREACHER

Somebody get Flabin back to that confounded
contraption before it blows us all to kingdom come.

Jackson steps over to Flabin, hoists him up and walks
him back to the bar. Then Jackson turns around to find
that Clemson has scooted into Jackson's spot in front
of Miss Keli. So Jackson has to stand where Clemson had
been standing.

ABNEY

Pete's lips are movin'!!

REVEREND PREACHER

What's he sayin'?

ABNEY

Derkle's lookin' the wrong way!

REVEREND PREACHER

He can't stop lookin' at Sabbath.

FLABIN

I think he's sweet on that boy.

DERKLE

No, it's them sparkly spurs.
They're HYP-mo-tizin' me.

Abney
Swivel 'im, Reverend!

Reverend Preacher hesitantly puts his hands on Derkle's shoulders.

REVEREND PREACHER

This is not my forte. I've never been adept at pivoting people.

Abney gets off his barrel and tries to help Reverend Preacher. They nudge on Derkle's shoulders a little, but Derkle, mesmerized with Sabbath, whisks them away.

CLEMSON
(Irritated)

Aw hell.

Clemson walks to the window, grabs Deckle by the belt and the scruff of the neck and points him south, like some kind of a lip-reading instrument. Jackson moves back in front of Miss Keli.

CLEMSON

OK, Derkle, get to readin' 'em lips.

Note: As Derkle continues to translate, Sabbath and Pete's inflections evolve. Sabbath's starts speaking in a bad-guy Clint Eastwood manner, while Pete's takes more of a good-guy John Wayne-esque tone.

DERKLE

(Speaking for Pete)

"So what are you gonna do, Sabbath, gun me down right here in the street with this kitten in my hand? How's that gonna make you look?"

ABNEY

(Still parked on his barrel, in his commentator voice)

Sabbath says nuthin. He just glares at Pete with squinty eyes. As if peering' out at the world through tiny catlike slits.

JACKSON

Abney's doing color now.

FLABIN

I like it!

ABNEY

They stand in silence.

REVEREND PREACHER

Sabbath's gonna draw, I know it.

(Pause)

Here it comes.

Clemson

(To Keli and Jackson at the bar)

Y'all are missin' it. Better get back over here.

MISS KELI

(Dryly)

We can hear it.

ABNEY

*They continue to glare, mano e mano.
Two statues, good and evil, frozen in a stare.*

FLABIN

Preach it, Abney!

There is a moment of silence.

REVEREND PREACHER

The anticipation is edible.

CLEMSON

You know, Reverend Preacher, you oughta write one o' your plays about this. Seeing' as how you use words real good 'n all.

REVEREND PREACHER

You're right, Clemson. I should jot a few notes.

Reverend preacher takes his composition book from his vest and starts jotting notes.

REVEREND PREACHER

(To himself, as he writes)

Let's see...we've got Sabbath out there wielding a pearl-handled Smith & Wesson and Pete wielding a kitten.

ABNEY

Actually, it's MOTHER of pearl, I think.

CLEMSON
(Peering out)

And that ain't no Smith & Wesson.

(Squints)

It's just a Wesson.

REVEREND PREACHER

We've got Miss Keli, who is obviously still not over
Pete, flirting with Jackson to ease her pain.

MISS KELI

May I pour you another, Jackson?

JACKSON

Call me Jack. And may I have a twist of lime?

REVEREND PREACHER

We've got Clemson pivoting Derkle back-and-forth like
some human lip-reading device because he can't stop
looking at Sabbath.

DERKLE
(Peering out the window)

Dang, them spurs is puttin' my eyes out.

REVEREND PREACHER

We've got a color man calling the game.

ABNEY

*Sabbath's fingers twitch, just inches
from his pearl-handled Wesson.*

I mean, MOTHER of pearl.

REVEREND PREACHER

We've got Flabin's tabletop distillery over there
that could blow any minute.

FLABIN

Alexa!

Reverend preacher looks up.

I don't even have to compose
this thing. It's writing itself!
Vous ne peux pas composer cette merde!

CLEMSON

The Preacher's talkin' Portuguese again.

MISS KELI

What's he sayin'?

CLEMSON
(Shrugs)

I-uh-know

FLABIN
(Looks at audience)

You cain't make this shit up!

ABNEY

Pete parts his lips!

He breathes in.

He breaths out.

(Pause)

Now his lips are moving!

Clemson pivots Derkle toward Pete.

DERKLE
(Speaking for Pete)

"Everybody's watching you, Sabbath. They're watching from the hotel. They're watching from the apothecary. They're craning their necks at the saloon window."

Everybody shirks back from the window, turning away, bringing hands up to face, ducking heads, scratching necks, etc., not wanting to be seen.

Abney remained seated on the announcer's barrel. He had leaned back and ducked down, but now he's cautiously peeping out again.

ABNEY

Pete's still talking! He's sayin' a bunch of stuff!

MISS KELI

Clemson, swivel Derkle!

Clemson points him north, toward Sabbath.

REVEREND PREACHER

No, the other way! Toward Pete!

MISS KELI

Sorry, my bad.

DERKLE

(As Pete)

"Word'll get around, Sabbath. This is not gonna do your brand any good. Even your boys'd turn on you if

they heard you gunned down a man with a kitten in his hands."

Clemson lets go of Derkle. Everyone stands normally, no peering, no pivoting.

REVEREND PREACHER
(Somber and matter-of-factly)

Pete's right, you know.

We hear hushed utterances of agreement among the people.

EVERYONE

He is. / Yep, shore is. / Um-hmmm / Right as rain.

MISS KELI
(Matter-of-factly)

Sabbath is crossing a line.

CLEMSON

Even for cowards like us.

ABNEY

You don't mess with a kitten.

JACKSON

Not THAT kitten.

FLABIN
(Hiccups)

Netflix!

JACKSON

Here's a kinda whacky idea. Just throwin' this out there. What say we stand up and be men?

DERKLE
(Standing up proudly, chest out):

Dang straight!

FLABIN
(Slams down his glass)

Count me in!
'Cept for the standing up part.

JACKSON
(Turns to Abney)

So...Abney?

ABNEY

(Scratches neck and looks away)

Eh, I dunno. I've got a wife and kids.

JACKSON

Clemson?

CLEMSON

I got a mule.

ABNEY

And what about his boys? The Black Sabbath Gang?
I mean the Black (cough cough)... Sabbath Gang?

FLABIN

THAT motley crew? What are THEY gonna do?

CLEMSON

Well, they ARE slayers.

ABNEY

Yeah, they got guns.

CLEMSON

And roses!

JACKSON

C'mon, fellas. Who's in and who's out?

Nobody speaks up.

Suddenly we hear the crisp metallic sound of a rifle cocking. It's Miss Keli. She steps out from behind the bar holding up a Colt single-action rifle.

ABNEY

Miss Keli!!

JACKSON

Are you "men" gonna let a woman outman you?

CLEMSON

Why Miss Keli, I must say, you look rightly-fine with that gun in your hands. Rightly-fine.

During the distraction of Keli cocking the rifle, Abney has quietly exited the **stage**.

DERKLE

Look, Miss Keli is ready to stand up and FIGHT!

KELI

No way! I was just handing this to Jackson.

Jackson steps back over toward the window, his hands slightly up, indicating he doesn't want the rifle.

JACKSON

I said let's stand up. I didn't say
let's shoot anybody.

Miss Keli walks over toward Derkle and tries to hand him the rifle. Derkle takes a step back and raises his hands.

DERKLE

Why us?

MISS KELI

Y'all are cowboys.

DERKLE

That we are. But we don't sling no guns.
We just hustle cattle.

'CLEMSON

"Hustle"? Sounds like you're pimpin' 'em out.

DERKLE

I mean rustle.

EVERYBODY

WRANGLE!!

CLEMSON

Look!! Across the street!!

They all rush to the window again, except for Keli and Jackson. Keli has stepped back behind the bar and put the rifle away.

CLEMSON

Well! THIS changes EVERYTHING!

DERKLE

I can't believe what's happening!

REVEREND PREACHER

That's quite remarkable!

JACKSON

I didn't see THAT coming!

FLABIN

Hey! Where's my commentator?

Abney steps back on stage, zipping his fly.

ABNEY

I was in the bathroom.

FLABIN

Well git over there and start a-commentatin'!
I'm missin' my game!

Abney assumes his position on his barrel. He flexes arms and shoulders, cracks his knuckles, loosening up. Then he starts back with the staccato 40s sports announcer's tone.

ABNEY

People from the hotel step out into the light of day.

Florine and Ethyl stand in the doorway of the apothecary.

There's Bert and Clem coming' out of the the yogurt shop.

CLEMSON

Hey, I'M Clem.

ABNEY

The other Clem.

Out onto the sidewalk steps old Sammy Joe from the blacksmith place.

The black-smithery.

Whatever you call it.

(Glances back at saloon crowd, in regular voice)

The place where they put the shoes on the horses.

Miss Keli and Jackson scoot back over to the window to see.

ABNEY

Other people are stepping out from other places.

Up the street.

Down the street.

There's a dog.

A hedgehog.

A pig makes an appearance.

REVEREND PREACHER

What a turnout. Pete's right—Sabbath is in the
spotlight now.

CLEMSON

(Peers out window, gestures all around.)

Yep. There's a whole audience out there.

JACKSON

They musta been having the same conversation we're
having.

REVEREND PREACHER

And come to the same conclusion.

MISS KELI

Yes. Sabbath has Crossed. A. Line.

REVEREND PREACHER

Indeed. He. Has.

JACKSON

Shouldn't we go out there?

MISS KELI

Jackson's right. We should let ourselves be seen.

REVEREND PREACHER

Absolutely. Our fellow townspeople are taking a stand. And so should we.

CLEMSON

He's right. Let's be men!

ABNEY

SABBATH IS WALKING THIS WAY!!!!!!

Everybody dives away from the window and hits the floor, crouching down in a big lump (except for Abney on his stool and Flabin at the table).

Abney bangs on the wall.

ABNEY

Oh my God!! He's banging on the door!!

Abney pauses, then bangs again.

ABNEY

GO AWAY SABBATH!!!

Abney bangs a couple more times. All remain huddled, hands over heads.

MISS KELI
(In despair)

Oh my God. My sweet nieces.

CLEMSON

My mule, my mule.

JACKSON

Wait a minute.

Jackson's head comes up.

JACKSON

You don't knock on a saloon door. It swings open.

Others start to look up.

ABNEY

I was just messing' with y'all.

CLEMSON

Abney, you bag of manure.

ABNEY

Otherwise known as a sack o' shit.

Reverend Preacher stands up and straightens his mussed vest.

REVEREND PREACHER

Well isn't this a fine how do you do?
I think Abney just taught us something about
ourselves.

Miss Keli stands and straightens her clothing and hair.
She looks somber and composed. Others are still on the
floor, looking up.

JACKSON

I guess we just found out what we're made of.

FLABIN

Yeah, chicken-shit.

CLEMSON

We suck.

MISS KELI
(low, calm and resolved)

Enough.

ABNEY

Enough what?

MISS KELI

Enough.

ABNEY

I think she means as in "I've had..."

REVEREND PREACHER

I know what Keli means. It's precisely what you said, Abney. Yes, she has had indeed had enough. As we all should have.

The huddled people stand up.

Flabin speaks up, making an announcement to the whole room.

FLABIN

You know, Sabbath ain't scared 'o no kitten.

Everybody looks toward Flabin.

FLABIN

He ain't scairt 'o Pete.

(Pause)

He's scairt of ME.

CLEMSON

You, Uncle Flabin?

FLABIN

Yeah, me. And you, Clemson. And Abney over there. He's scairt 'o Miss Keli. And these cowboys here. And them people across the street. And down the street. And caty-cornered across the street, up that way.

(Points)

And over yonder.

(Waves finger around.)

As it dawns on people what Flabin is saying, there are nods, and sounds of agreement.

FLABIN

Maybe he ain't scairt of any ONE o' them people. But ALL of 'em together? Now THAT'S somethin' to be scairt of. Even his own boys.

ABNEY

Yep, them no-count boys o' his follow him like a god.

CLEMSON

Sabbath said he could gun down a man in the streets of Dodge City and not loose a single follower.

JACKSON

But when he starts gunnin' down kittens...

REVEREND PREACHER

Flabin is spot-on. WE, the people, are exactly *whom* Sabbath is afraid of. And should be.

CLEMSON

"Hume"? Who is Hume?

ABNEY

I think he means "who."

REVEREND PREACHER

No, it's the objective case. Listen: What Flabin is saying is, the majority can remain silent and afraid

for only so long. The masses will roll over and over time and again to the powers that be...until finally a despot comes along so vile, so despicable, that common people—people like us—find the strength and the wherewithal to stand up in unison and say...

EVERYONE

(Muttering low, heads nodding)

Enough.

A solemn sense of empowerment pervades as they all stand tall and proud.

DERKLE

So does this mean we're goin' outside?

REVEREND PREACHER

Oh HELL no!

JACKSON

(Pointing out the window)

Look!

CLEMSON

What's Pete DOIN'?

REVEREND PREACHER

My word!

ABNEY

This is crazy!

FLABIN

AB'ny!!

ABNEY

Oh yeah, sorry Uncle Flabin.

Pete holds up the kitten.

He points it toward Sabbath.

Pete takes a step forward.

And another.

And another.

And another.

FLABIN

Oh Sweet Jesus, just suffice it to say he's taking
steps.

REVEREND PREACHER

Look at Sabbath!

MISS KELI

He's ready to draw.

JACKSON

Look at that squint.

CLEMSON

Look at that little cigar in his teeth.

DERKLE

Look at those *spurs!*

FLABIN

I still say Pete's faster with a cat than Sabbath is
with a gun.

ABNEY

Sabbath's fingers twitch.

Pete holds up his kitten

He aims it toward Sabbath.

Sabbath's hand is in motion!

He brings it up.

Toward his lips.

*He takes that little cigar
out from between his teeth.*

He tosses it on the ground.

He turns around.

CLEMSON

He's walking away!!

ABNEY

God DAMN!

REVEREND PREACHER

Ab-nee...

ABNEY

I was referring to our creator, Preacher. Not
the town.

CLEMSON

Wait!

ABNEY

Sabbath turns around.

CLEMSON

It ain't over yet.

ABNEY

He glares at Pete.

FLABIN

Is Pete still walkin'?

ABNEY

No, he's just standing there with his kitten drawn.

CLEMSON

Sabbath speaks!

Derkle leans north and squints hard at Sabbath.

Suddenly Derkle reels backward, his hand over his face.

DERLE

I'm hit, I'm hit!

MISS KELI

What??

DERKLE

A sun ray glinted off Sabbath's left spur and hit me in
the eye.

REVEREND PREACHER

Oh no!

DERKLE

I think it damaged my retina.

MISS KELI

Oh my God, we need Derkle's retina now more than ever!

DERKLE

(Recovering)

That's OK, it was my bad eye.

I still got my good 'un.

Derkle leans north.

MISS KELI

Focus, Derkle.

DERKLE

OK, I got it, I got it.

Derkle speaks totally in character now.

DERKLE

(As Sabbath)

"Listen, let me make one thing perfectly clear... 'Pete.'
I'm not walking away from this fight. You got that? I
just remembered I don't think I turned off the stove."

Clemson reaches to pivot Deckle, but Derkle needs no
swiveling now. He quickly turns toward Pete on his own
accord.

DERKLE (As Pete)

"Well, Sabbath, this is the Old West, you know. It's a
wood-burning stove. The wood'll burn out before it
catches anything on fire."

CLEMSON

For Pete's sake, Pete, don't talk him out of it.
Let 'im walk away.

SEVERAL
(Agreeing)

I know, right? / Yeah...

DERKLE
(Pivots. Speaks for Sabbath.)

"Well, I've got some beans and pork simmerin'. They'll
cook to a mush."

(Pivots. As Pete.)

"Oh. Well, in that case, I totally understand."

(Pivots. As Sabbath, in a Clint Eastwood tone.)

"I HATE mushy beans."

(Pivots.)

"I don't blame you there, Sabbath. I'm the same way."

(Pivots.)

"But I do like mackerel."

FLABIN
(Slaps table)

I TOLD ya!

ABNEY:

Sabbath turns around.

He walks north.

Pete turns around.

He walks south.

Pete pets his kitten.

(Pause)

Sabbath stops!

He looks over his shoulder.

He squints with beady eyes.

Spurs glistening in the sun.

Pete continues south.

He places the kitten in his holster.

CLEMSON

Look, Pete didn't even have no gun!

MISS KELI

Pete stopped slinging a gun long ago.

JACKSON

Well he slings a kitten now.

CLEMSON

Awww, look, the little guy likes it in there.

MISS KELI

It's a perfect fit.

ABNEY

Sabbath squints south.

Now east, toward the hotel.

Now west, toward...

All quickly lean back, away the window.

ABNEY

Now north again.

(Pause)

Black Sabbath...

is walking away!

We hear cheers erupt from the townsfolk outside.

ABNEY

The townsfolk cheer.

CLEMSON

Prickly Pete has liberated Sweet Jesus!

MISS KELI

No. A kitten did.

Everyone in the saloon is jubilant, high-fiving each other, hugging, etc. They're stepping away from the window, back toward the table and bar.

ABNEY

The people in the saloon, feeling jubilant, disburse from the window. High fives ensue.

FLABIN

OK, you can turn it off now, Ab'ny.

Flabin reaches out and makes a gesture as if switching off a radio.

Clemson and Keli look at each other a moment as Clemson tentatively holds his arms away from his side, suggesting a hug. They embrace.

DERKLE

(Slapping Jackson on the back):

Well, come on, Jackson, let's get goin'.
We got a good bit 'o road ahead.

ABNEY

You boys gonna swing over by the ridge and go up the
side of the river?

DERKLE

No, we're goin' straight to Hell.

JACKSON

Wait, Derkle, the card game.
We can leave out first light.

DERKLE

Oh yeah.

JACKSON

(Having a seat at the table)

What say we get a friendly game started, fellas?
Miss Keli, pour a round of drinks, for the house.
On us.

DERKLE

We're cowboys.

Clemson, Abney, Reverend Preacher, Derkle and Jackson gather around the table and have a seat. Flabin remains on his bar stool, tending his still. Miss Keli is in her usual spot behind the bar.

JACKSON

Now boys – our newfound friends – remember,
we do not want this game to end well.

Clemson starts dealing cards.

ABNEY

Say what did Pete mean, "this is the old west?" this is
just "the west."

REVEREND PREACHER

Well, I guess he meant it's been around a long time.
Since, like, the Paleozoic era.

ABNEY

Oh, I didn't realize he was talkin' ge-ology 'n all.

REVEREND PREACHER

Well culturally speaking, this is the NEW West. At least to us. To people in the future, it will be the "Old West."

ABNEY

I wonder what they'll be like, them future people.

REVEREND PREACHER

We can scarcely imagine. I could only refer you to a Mr. Jules Verne.

FLABIN

Amazon Prime!

ABNEY

OK, deal me in.

CLEMSON

Three card draw. Jack high.

Reverend Preacher is writing in his notebook.

ABNEY

You writin' on that play, Preacher?

REVEREND PREACHER

There's nothing to write.
All I need do is log the facts.

CLEMSON

Hey, you outa call it "The End of Black...
Clemson pokes Abney. Then pokes again, harder.

ABNEY

...Sabbath!"

CLEMSON

(Holds up two fingers)

How bout if TWO people say it?

REVEREND PREACHER

No, Im changing Sabbath's name.
I don't want any trouble.

CLEMSON

I cain't imagine his name bein' anything but...

(Gestures with hand)

REVEREND PREACHER

Well I have something in mind.

(Puts down his pen)

Picture that slinky, beady-eyed gunslinger,
all decked out in black. Quickest draw in the
tri-county area. Lightning-fast.

Reverend Preacher looks up, visualizing. He raises his
hand, indicating the first name.

REVEREND PREACHER

Taylor.

The people look at each other and nod.

ABNEY

Taylor works.

CLEMSON

He looks like a Taylor.

Reverend Preacher move his hand over, indicating last
name.

REVEREND PREACHER

Swift.

CLEMSON

I'm liking' it.

ABNEY

"Taylor Swift—fastest gun in the west."

CLEMSON

Or at least between God'um and Hell.

DERKLE

So who we gonna get to play us?

CLEMSON

I could play YOU, Abney.

ABNEY

(Gestures)

Seriously? You cain't play me.

CLEMSON

(With the same gesture)

Seriously? You cain't play me

DERKLE

I could play you, Clem.

"Howdy Miss Keli. You lookin' mighty fine."

JACKSON

It's "rightly, Derkle, not mighty."

FLABIN

Duckle, you had ONE LINE. And you blew it.

CLEMSON

Well *I* could play you, Derkle.

(In a mocking tone)

"I cain't stop lookin' at Sabbath!"

DERKLE

At his SPURS!

JACKSON

So who's gonna play Sabbath and Pete?

ABNEY

Heck, Derkle could play BOTH of 'em!

CLEMSON

He done did!

REVEREND PREACHER

And you did a splendid job, Derkle.
Bravo! You too, Abney. You boys take a bow.

Derkle and Abney stand up and take a bow. Applause
breaks out.

FLABIN

I feel like I seen the whole game, but all I
actually seen was y'all looking' out the window.

REVEREND PREACHER

We need some big names. That's what pulls people in.

CLEMSON
(Pondering)

Let's see, for Sabbath...

JACKSON

Hey, how 'bout Johnny Death?

ABNEY

Dang, he'd kill it.

DERKLE

What about Pete?

CLEMSON

I got it. Russell Crow.

ABNEY

Who?

CLEMSON

Russell Crow. He was in that play...what was it?
About the thing? With the people?

REVEREND PREACHER

Oh you mean WRANGLE Crow?

CLEMSON

Yeah, that's what I meant. Russell / Wrangle.
I always get those two mixed up.

DERKLE

(Jumps up and points)

A-HA!!!

JACKSON

So who's gonna play YOU, Reverend?

REVEREND PREACHER

Me? Hmmm... You know, I saw a play back East, it had this actor, what was his name? Chair? Bench? No...Booth. He was pretty good.

ABNEY

Well, let's give 'im a shot.

Keli has poured everyone a drink.

CLEMSON

Why thank you, Miss Keli.

ABNEY

And thank YOU, Jackson and Derkle.

REVEREND PREACHER

Hear hear.

Everyone gestures toward Jackson and Derkle with their glasses.

Jackson swirls his glass around like a brandy snifter.

JACKSON

Hey, this is Dickel!

MISS KELI

I never said I didn't have any.

CLEMSON

Preacher, just promise us one thing, Reverend. You won't go using words like "Hume."

REVEREND PREACHER

It's a promise. After all, one's writing needs to reflect the cultural and educational pedigree of one's characters.

ABNEY, CLEMSON, DERKLE

Huh?

Suddenly Derkle turns toward Flabin over at the bar.

DERKLE

Oh wait. PONY-tail. I was thinkin' PIG-tails.
Yeah, Ain't Cialis had a PONY tail.

FLABIN

Hefty gal?

DERKLE

Bout yea wide.

FLABIN

Goiter?

Pause. Derkle stands up.

DERKLE

Uncle Flabin!!

Derkle runs over to Flabin, who is sitting on his stool, leans over and hugs him. Flabin takes a drink over Derkle's shoulder and winks at the audience.

JACKSON

(Who is sitting at the card game)

Miss Keli, come set and have a drink with us.

ABNEY

She don't never drink on the job.

CLEMSON

She's always on the job.

JACKSON

Come on Keli, raise a glass with us.
After what happened here today, you deserve it.

MISS KELI

That I do, boys. That I do.

FLABIN

(As Keli pours herself a drink)

Hey, you know what we coulda done with them
binoculars?

(Pause)

Crack beer nuts!

CLEMSON, ABNEY

(Slapping the table)

Dang!

People begin to raise their glasses, preparing to
toast.

CLEMSON

So what we drinkin' to?

ABNEY

Prickly Pete?

REVEREND PREACHER

To a new day in Sweet Jesus?

DERKLE

(Holds his glass high):

To the kitten!

EVERYBODY

(Toasting heartily)

To the kitten!!

They all drink, bottoms up (except Reverend Preacher, who sips his like a gentleman). Then they go back to their card game.

Note: The following dialog is peppered with low poker banter: Hit me / Fold / etc.

CLEMSON

Say, Reverend Preacher, do you think them people in the future'll have a Black Sabbath of their own?

REVEREND PREACHER

(Sighs)

Probably. I think it's inevitable. Sooner or later, some tyrant will come along and seize control of Sweet Jesus. Maybe God'm and Hell, too—the whole tri-county area. Or all of Wyoming. Who knows, maybe even the whole NATION.

CLEMSON

Dang!

REVEREND PREACHER

But tyrants always push it too far and end up deposed or impaled or impeached. Why? Because eventually, the people stand up and do what we did.

FLABIN

What, crouch on the floor?

REVEREND PREACHER

OK, well, what the people across the street did.

It's just the ebb and flow of history, boys.

The ebb. And. Flow. Of. History.

Poker banter: Hit me / Whaddya mean Jack high? / Yeah that don't make no sense.

CLEMSON

(slightly holding up his glass)

Fellas...Miss Keli...I'd say it's a rightly-fine night here in Sweet Jesus Wyoming.

MISS KELI
(Giving Derkle a wink)

That it is, Clemson.

ALL
(Holding up glasses)

Rightly-fine, rightly-fine.

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