

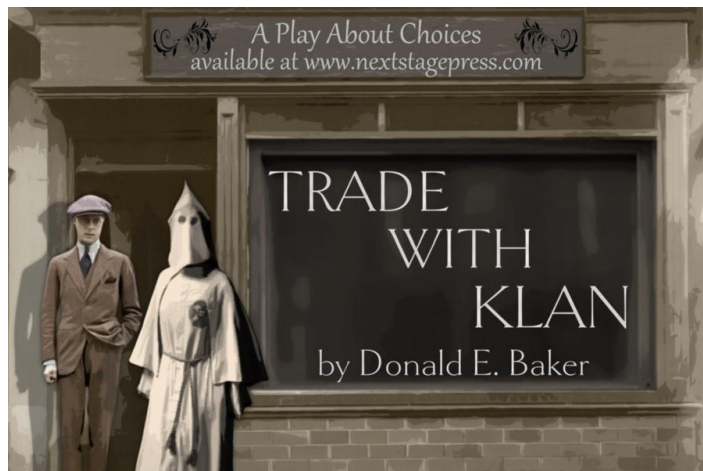
Act I of

## TRADE WITH KLAN

A Play about Choices

by Donald E. Baker

(Alternate title: BACK HOME AGAIN)



*What do you do when people you love choose hate?*

The World Premiere of *Trade With Klan* was presented by Southwest Theatre Productions at the Santa Cruz Theater in Austin, Texas, for eleven performances, January 17-February 2, 2020.

*“Trade With Klan is worthy of large audiences and should be seen all over this country.”*  
*Broadway World Austin*

*“Trade With Klan sits in your soul the way the best of art does.”*  
*Austin Chronicle*

Copies of the full script and licensing information  
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*Evil is unspectacular and always human, and shares our bed and eats at our own table.*

—W. H. Auden

*Nobody thinks that they're evil or bad. They think that they're doing the right thing.*

—Andrew McCarthy

## SYNOPSIS

Resist or collaborate? Ordinary people must make life-altering choices as the Ku Klux Klan pits neighbor against neighbor in a small Indiana town in the 1920's. The religious prejudice and xenophobia of a century ago still echo in contemporary American society.

## CHARACTERS (3M, 4W)

MILLIE BARNETT Age 45, Café owner, resists joining the Women of the Klan

*"What you learn if you live long enough and you're lucky, is ... [t]he most important thing is trying not to disappoint yourself."*

HELEN BENBO Age 47, Millie Barnett's sister, ardent Klanswoman

*"It's thrilling to think even an ordinary Indiana housewife like me can be part of something so big, so important!"*

NORA BRENNAN Age 24, Waitress, Catholic

*"To them simple friendship between a man and a woman is impossible. ... I'm in their crosshairs now."*

FRANCIE ROSS Age 24, Waitress, Protestant, engaged to Elroy Lenhart

*"The Women of the Klan ... [g]ives me an excuse to get out and socialize with the other women and keep up with everybody."*

REV. GIDEON HEYWARD Age 60+, preacher, Klan leader

*"All right-thinking men of God support the Klan's efforts to defend our country from the Catholics."*

ELROY LENHART Age 27, merchant, pragmatic Klan member

*"I need this store so that's just what you gotta do. You join stuff."*

REV. DANIEL LENHART Age 24, Elroy's brother, preacher just out of seminary

*"I just can't picture Jesus in a Klan robe. Of course there was a time I couldn't imagine my mother in one either."*

## SETTING

Forrest, Indiana, a small county-seat town surrounded by corn fields—ethnically white, predominantly Evangelical, and fertile ground for the Ku Klux Klan. Most of the play takes place in a cozy unpretentious little café, although other locations are implied.

## TIME

Summer and fall 1925, the height of KKK influence in Indiana.

## SCENES

The main set is a cozy, small-town café.

Other locations are implied minimally.

Scene changes are covered by pre-recorded radio announcements.

Scene 1: Millie's Café, Tuesday morning, July 7, 1925

Scene 2: Lenhart's Hardware Store, the same morning (perhaps a stack of boxes)

Scene 3: Millie's Café, that afternoon

Scene 4: Artesian Well, next day afternoon (perhaps a bench)

Scene 5: Millie's Café, Monday afternoon, July 13, 1925

Scene 6: First Methodist Church, Forrest, Indiana, Saturday, July 18, 1925 (perhaps a cross)

[Optional Intermission]

Scene 7: Millie's Café, Tuesday morning, October 27, 1925

Scene 8: Millie's Café, Wednesday morning, October 28, 1925

Scene 9: A Street Corner, Thursday morning, October 29, 1925 (perhaps implied by lighting)

Scene 10: Millie's Café, Friday, October 30, 1925, after closing time

Scene 11: Artesian Well, Saturday, October 31, 1925 (perhaps a bench)

Scene 12: First Christian Church, Sunday, November 1, 1925 (perhaps a cross)

Scene 13: Two living rooms, that evening (perhaps two telephone tables)

Scene 14: Millie's Café, Wednesday evening, November 4, 1925

ACT I

SCENE 1

*IN DARKNESS*

PRE-RECORDED RADIO ANNOUNCER

Good morning, neighbors. You're listening to WFOR, the radio voice of Forrest, Indiana. In statewide news, controversy continues over the number of attendees at the mammoth Ku Klux Klan rally in Kokomo on July 4. The *Indianapolis Times* estimated the crowd at around 10,000. However, the official Klan newspaper, *The Fiery Cross*, put the number at closer to 200,000 men, women, and children. Either way, it was the largest assembly of Klansmen this country has ever seen.

*AT RISE:* Lights come up on Millie's Café on a hot, humid Tuesday morning, July 7, 1925. Two visible tables set with coffee cups and silverware. Chairs. Small counter with cash register or till. Two doorways, one from the street and the other to the kitchen. The place is warm and welcoming, reflecting the personality of its owner, 45-year-old MILLIE BARNETT, who is taking down leftover July 4<sup>th</sup> decorations and putting them into a storage box. Her older sister HELEN BENBO enters. She carries a purse and a copy of the *Forrest Weekly Journal*. Despite the heat, she is dressed as a lady should be, including a hat and gloves.

HELEN

Millie! What are you up to? You ought to be opening up.

MILLIE

Morning Sis. I'm just putting this Fourth of July stuff away before customers come in.

HELEN

I don't see why you can't just leave it up. We should be celebrating America all year through, not just one day.

MILLIE

Next you'll want me and the girls saying the Pledge of Allegiance every morning when we open up. Where's Hank?

HELEN

I let him sleep in. He was out late patrolling that lover's lane out west of town.

*As the conversation continues, HELEN moves to the table closest to the door and sits where she can see who goes in and out. She removes her gloves and starts fanning herself with her newspaper. As the scene develops, she won't be able to resist listening to (and inserting herself into) other people's conversations. Meanwhile, MILLIE finishes with the decorations and moves behind her counter. As she talks she pulls out a mirror, looks herself over carefully, primps, and applies lipstick.*

MILLIE

I can't believe you let him stay up half the night knocking on steamed up car windows.

HELEN

It's the Klan's duty to protect young women from lecherous men stealing their virginity in the back of Model T's.

MILLIE

I swear you done nothing but throw out quotes from the Grand Dragon's speech ever since you got back from Kokomo.

HELEN

It was such a wonderful experience being there with all those thousands and thousands of other Klanspeople. And whenever I hear that man speak it rekindles my commitment to the cause. If you came with me just once I know you'd fall under his spell just like I did.

MILLIE

That's what I'm afraid of.

HELEN

It looks kind of strange to people. I probably recruited half the members into the Women of the Klan but I can't get my own sister to join up.

*NORA enters from the kitchen.*

NORA

Good morning Mrs. Benbo. Can I get you anything?

HELEN (coldly)

No thank you.

NORA

Let me know if you change your mind.

*NORA exits back to the kitchen.*

HELEN

What's she doing here?

MILLIE

I had to find somebody. Francie's getting married and Carrie left to take care of her sick aunt in Cincinnati.

HELEN

That aunt got sick just in time. Carrie was starting to show. But why would you bring in a Catholic girl?

MILLIE

Nora needed work and I needed help.

HELEN

A lot of people won't want to risk a Catholic spitting in their food.

MILLIE

For crying out loud! That's a bunch of hooey. And who I hire or don't hire is no concern of yours. I'll thank you to keep your nose out of my business.

HELEN

A single woman with her own business is just plain unnatural. If you'd gotten yourself a husband you could be cooking for your own family instead of the whole town.

MILLIE

At least here I'm getting paid for it.

HELEN

What's so fascinating in that mirror? And when'd you start wearing lipstick?

MILLIE

Elroy says he's bringing Daniel by this morning.

HELEN

Heard he moved into the parsonage yesterday. But ain't he a little young for you?

MILLIE (putting the mirror away)

A woman ought to look her best for her preacher even if she *has* known him since he was in diapers.

HELEN

I know the young girls are starting to wear lipstick out in public but on a woman your age it smacks of desperation.

MILLIE

What do you mean a woman my age?

HELEN

It's just where men are concerned you're getting too long in the tooth to be as finicky as you always been.

*Rummages in her purse and pulls out a piece of paper.*

But in case you *are* interested, I come up with a list of gentlemen I think may be willing to take on an aging spinster.

MILLIE

A what?!

HELEN

I boiled it down to three—two widowers and one who *says* he's a confirmed bachelor. I'm sure at least one of them could be convinced to go into housekeeping with you.

MILLIE

And take over the management of *my* café.

HELEN

So you could stay home where any good Christian woman belongs.

MILLIE

Well like it or not this good Christian woman has a business to run. I'll send Francie out to take your order. Her spit's Protestant. And put that list away. Save it for some other "aging spinster."

*MILLIE exits with the box of decorations to the kitchen. After a moment, FRANCIE comes out with her order pad and coffee pot. She fills the cup at HELEN's place without being asked.*

FRANCIE

Good morning Mrs. Benbo. You want the usual?

HELEN

Just toast this morning Francie. I'm trying to watch my figure.

FRANCIE

Coming right up.

*FRANCIE exits to the kitchen as MILLIE returns to the dining room. GIDEON HEYWARD enters from the street, carrying his Bible in one hand and his suit jacket over his arm. With his other hand he is wiping his brow with a handkerchief. Sixty years old, he is a Methodist minister.*

MILLIE (moving to her counter)

Morning Rev. Heyward. Hot enough for you?

HEYWARD

Morning Millie. It's like Nebuchadnezzar's fiery furnace out there. I know this is the day the Lord hath made, but it'd be a lot easier to rejoice and be glad in it if He'd turn down the thermostat. Good morning Helen. How are you?

*HEYWARD takes a seat at the table next to HELEN's.*

HELEN

Fair to middling, Reverend. You heard 'bout George Ainsley?

HEYWARD

I stopped by the clinic on my way here. It does not look good.

HELEN

I know you're close to him but I can't help but think it'll be a blessing to have it over with. He ain't been the same since the stroke.

HEYWARD

Whatever happens, he's in God's hands now.

HELEN

Amen. Think the family'll want a Klan funeral?

HEYWARD

Of course. There hasn't been any better Klansman than George.



HELEN (gesturing with her newspaper)  
Did you see the *Forrest Weekly*? They stuck the Kokomo rally way back on page seven.

HEYWARD  
I plan to speak with the editor about how his subscribers expect fairer treatment of the Klan. I'm taking a couple of the boys with me, two of his major advertisers.

HELEN  
Good. I think you been more than patient.

*NORA enters with coffee pot and fills HEYWARD's cup without asking.*

NORA  
Good morning Rev. Heyward. What can I get for you?

HEYWARD  
My usual.

*NORA is too new to know what that is, and Heyward is not going to enlighten her. MILLIE comes to her rescue.*

MILLIE  
Two eggs sunny side up, American fries, white toast.

HEYWARD  
And it's so hot out I think I'll take a large orange juice as well.

NORA  
Coming right up.

*NORA offers to top off HELEN's cup, but HELEN puts her hand over it in refusal. NORA exits to the kitchen.*

HELEN (to HEYWARD)  
Before you put that coffee to your lips make sure there's nothing floating in it.

HEYWARD  
I doubt she'd risk losing her job trying to pull something in here.

*HEYWARD sips his coffee and opens his Bible. FRANCIE enters from the kitchen with HELEN's toast and tops off her coffee.*

FRANCIE

Sure I can't get you anything else?

HELEN

No dear this' ll be just fine. You staying to closing? I got a pre-wedding present I'd like to give you.

FRANCIE

You didn't need to get me anything.

HELEN

Don't worry. It's just a little something I whipped up myself. I'll come back 'bout three o'clock.

FRANCIE

See you then.

*FRANCIE exits to the kitchen just before ELROY enters from the street, followed by DANIEL. They stop to greet MILLIE at the counter.*

ELROY

Morning Millie. You remember my brother Dan.

MILLIE

Of course. But he's not the skinny kid went off to college four years ago. Welcome home Dan. I'm sorry, I mean Reverend Lenhart.

DANIEL

I hope I'll always be just Dan to the folks who knew me growing up. How've you been, Millie?

MILLIE

Same as always. Nothing much changes around here except we all get a little older.

DANIEL

Not you! You look exactly the same.

ELROY

Francie around?

MILLIE

The blushing bride's back in the kitchen. Nora Brennan's back there too. I'd rather you not go rocking the boat.

DANIEL

Nora's here?

ELROY

I understand. I'll just be here a minute and then scam.

*On their way to HEYWARD's table, ELROY and DANIEL greet HELEN.*

HELEN

Good morning gentlemen. Rev. Lenhart, you getting settled in?

DANIEL

Only had a few boxes. I'm pretty well unpacked. And please, call me "Dan" like you used to.

HELEN

I couldn't possibly. You're a full-fledged preacher now. I intend to give you the respect your calling deserves. Can't wait to hear your inaugural sermon. If you're even half the preacher your grandfather was—

DANIEL

We'll find out Sunday. I look forward to seeing you then.

*ELROY and DANIEL move to HEYWARD's table.*

ELROY

Morning Rev. Heyward.

HEYWARD

Good morning Elroy. And good morning to Forrest's newest clergyman. Welcome home Rev. Lenhart.

DANIEL

I can't say I'll ever get used to men like you calling me that. Good to see you again Rev. Heyward.

HEYWARD

Go ahead and sit down. I just got my order in.

ELROY

I can't. Got to get ready to open up the store.

HEYWARD

Rev. Lenhart?

DANIEL

I wouldn't want to interrupt your Bible study.

HEYWARD (firmly; it's an order)

Take a seat.

*DANIEL obeys.*

HEYWARD (cont., to ELROY)

Speaking of the store, how's business?

ELROY

Picking up. More people seem to be coming in.

HEYWARD

I told you they would once you put that sign in the window.

DANIEL (to Elroy)

Sign?

ELROY

And you were right. Well worth the initiation fee.

HEYWARD

You also got rid of some objectionable employees.

ELROY (somewhat embarrassed)

Yeah ... well ...

*FRANCIE enters from the kitchen.*

FRANCIE

Elroy Lenhart! Why didn't you tell me you were planning to bring your brother in here?

ELROY

I wanted to surprise you.

DANIEL (standing and hugging her)

Hi Francie. How's my soon-to-be sister-in-law?

FRANCIE

Right as rain now the best man has finally arrived.

ELROY

You want to take in a movie tonight?

FRANCIE

I'll have to see what Mama's got planned.

ELROY

I'll call you later then. Now I do have to get over to the store.

*FRANCIE presents her cheek for a good-bye kiss, which ELROY self-consciously provides.*

ELROY

So long everybody. Don't forget I got a special sale on all this week.

*ELROY exits to a chorus of so longs, see you later, etc.*

FRANCIE

I'll send Nora out to get your order Rev. Lenhart.

DANIEL (sitting)

Dan please. After all we're almost family.

*FRANCIE exits, smiling, to the kitchen.*

HEYWARD (to DANIEL)

That was a bit forward of her asking to be kissed right out here in public.

HELEN

Once she's out from under her mama's thumb Elroy'll have his hands full keeping her reined in.

DANIEL

Maybe she'll loosen him up a little.

HEYWARD

I should hope not. As head of the house it'll be his responsibility to enforce discipline and it'll be her duty to submit. *[tapping his Bible]* It's all spelled out right here. Too bad you couldn't meet Douglas MacGregor, the Presbyterian minister. He had to supervise some long-needed roof repairs at the manse or else he'd be here too.

DANIEL

It's nice to know the local clergy are so mutually supportive.

HEYWARD

Except the Catholic priest of course. Naturally we don't have anything to do with *him*. But the rest of us—Methodist, Presbyterian, Campbellite—we cooperate when we can.

DANIEL

We Campbellites call ourselves the Christian Church now.

HEYWARD (grinning)

Well now, where does that leave the rest of us? I hope you know I admired your late grandfather very much. He was an excellent preacher and a great patriot.

DANIEL

He left me some big shoes to fill, that's for sure. I miss him a lot.

*NORA enters with coffee pot.*

NORA

Danny Lenhart! I heard you were back in town.

*NORA leans down, puts her arm around DANIEL'S shoulder and gives it a squeeze. HEYWARD notices.*

DANIEL

Good to see you too Nora.

NORA

Coffee?

DANIEL

Could I have tea instead?

HEYWARD

Tea is a woman's drink. Go ahead Miss Brennan.

*NORA shrugs at DANIEL and pours his coffee.*

NORA

Can I get you anything else?

DANIEL

Cream and sugar? Lots of both.

NORA

Sure thing.

*NORA gives DANIEL a smile and exits to the kitchen.*

HELEN

Speaking of Rev. MacGregor, Hank says the Klan visitation at the Presbyterian Church was the big topic of conversation at the barber shop yesterday.

HEYWARD

No doubt.

DANIEL

Klan visitation?

HEYWARD

That's when the local Klansmen visit a church during Sunday service.

HELEN

They march in unannounced all robed and masked, give the preacher an envelope, turn around and walk out. Never utter a word. It's thrilling to see. I heard the envelope had a hundred dollars in it! I also heard the congregation argued 'bout whether they should keep it.

HEYWARD

They'll keep it.

HELEN

I figured they would, Rev. MacGregor being a member and all.

*HEYWARD gives her an admonishing look.*

DANIEL

He's a member of the Klan? How would you know that? I thought membership was a secret?

*No response. HEYWARD and HELEN just stare at him.*

DANIEL (cont.)

Oh.

HEYWARD

All right-thinking men of God support the Klan's efforts to defend our country from the Catholics. Shiploads of Irish and Italian and Polish immigrants pour in here every day. They aim to overthrow our government and make every one of us bow down to their foreign Pope.

DANIEL

Really?

HELEN

Everybody knows Catholic priests stockpile guns in their confessionals. When the time comes they'll put snipers up in their belfries.

HEYWARD

Of course now we've elected a Klan governor and a Klan majority in the state legislature Indiana should be safe enough. But you never know.

HELEN

A lot of people are saying the Catholics are secretly building the Pope a palace in Washington D.C. Once it's done he'll come over here himself to set up a whole new Vatican right next to the White House.

*NORA enters from the kitchen with a sugar bowl and creamer and puts them down in front of DANIEL.*

NORA

Here you go Danny. If that isn't enough I can always bring more.

*NORA exits to kitchen.*

HEYWARD

What's this "Danny" business? That's the second time she called you that.

DANIEL (spooning lots of sugar into his cup)

The two of us've been friends since ninth grade when the Catholic kids came over to the public high school.

HEYWARD

Even so it sounds overly familiar. Surely the two of you never dated.

DANIEL

My mother would've had a conniption fit.



HEYWARD

If you marry a Catholic you have to raise your children Catholic. Those girls love to trap Protestant boys into helping them make new little Catholic babies.

MILLIE

Since you mentioned the Pope you ought to tell Dan 'bout North Manchester.

HEYWARD

I don't believe that's necessary.

MILLIE

*Coming over near the preachers' table*

Oh it's too good! Couple months ago they had a big Klan rally over there. The speakers were really tearing into the Catholics and riling up the crowd and somehow the rumor got started the Pope was over here, traveling around in disguise, scoping out sites for Vatican outposts. In fact he was on the very next train stopping in North Manchester! Well that angry mob stormed over to the depot just in time for the train to pull in. Sure enough an older gentleman with a suitcase got off. People started yelling and knocking this poor fella about. At some point they jerked the suitcase out of his hand and it broke open. What do think come flying out?

DANIEL

No idea.

MILLIE

Undergarments! A bunch of *women's* undergarments. Turned out the guy was a traveling salesman with a suitcase full of ladies' corsets! Those shining examples of Protestant manhood mistook a corset salesman for the Pope! North Manchester'll never live that down!

*MILLIE returns to the counter laughing to herself.*

HELEN

None of that happened and you know it. You ought to be ashamed of yourself spreading lies like that. [*standing*] I'd better be getting on home. Hank'll be up by now wondering where I went off to.

HEYWARD

Tell him he performed well on patrol last night.

HELEN

Thank you I will. (*to DANIEL*) Take to heart what Rev. Heyward has to say 'bout the Klan. He knows what he's talking 'bout. After all, he *is* the Exalted Cyclops. (*to HEYWARD*) Oh I know it's supposed to be a secret but everybody in town knows it.

MILLIE

Wonder how they found out.

HELEN

What?

MILLIE

See you later Sis.

HELEN

Have a blessed day everyone.

*HELEN exits. The PREACHERS return to their conversation.*

DANIEL

Exalted Cyclops?

HEYWARD

My title as head of our local Klan. You should know it's not just the Catholics we're concerned about. We're also determined to keep the Jews and the Coloreds in their place. By whatever means necessary.

DANIEL

I don't remember a lot of Jews and Negroes running around out here in the middle of the cornfields.

HEYWARD

You're right about the Jews. I think the closest one is in South Bend. Even that's too close. We do have one colored couple. The wife does cleaning and laundry for all the preachers' families. Nettie Johnson's her name. She'll be coming by to clean your parsonage once a week.

DANIEL

Nettie? She used to do ironing for Mother when I was a child. It'll be good to see her again.

HEYWARD

One thing I will say about her she's very reliable. And she'll be very careful with any fragile what-nots you may have sitting around.

DANIEL

Bachelors like me don't have fragile what-nots.

HEYWARD

Of course while she's cleaning you don't want to be alone in the house with her. You really ought to get a wife soon as you can. It helps to prevent any unfortunate misunderstandings.

DANIEL

I'll keep that in mind.

HEYWARD

If you need anything fixed around the place Nettie's husband can repair anything.

DANIEL

Sherm Johnson. Of course.

HEYWARD

Very respectful. Works a whole lot cheaper than any *white* handyman would.

*NORA enters with the coffee pot. She only has eyes for DANIEL:*

NORA

Refill?

DANIEL (a little flustered)

No thanks. I've had about all I can handle.

*NORA and DANIEL gaze at each other a little too long.*

HEYWARD (pointing to his cup)

Ahem.

*NORA tops off his cup.*

HEYWARD (cont.)

Could you be a good girl and go find out what's keeping my breakfast?

NORA

Of course.

*NORA gives Daniel another look and exits.*

DANIEL

She is you know.

HEYWARD

What?

DANIEL

A good girl.

HEYWARD

Maybe. You'd best not get too chummy with her. Our people expect their preachers to set the highest example of morality and self-discipline. We are the conscience of the community. That's one reason they'll expect you to join the Klan as soon as you get settled.

DANIEL

I'm not sure about joining the Klan, but the community has nothing to worry about as far as I'm concerned. I always let my conscience be my guide.

HEYWARD

See that you do. But if you don't join the Klan, it might be a little awkward.

DANIEL

How so?

HEYWARD

I assumed you knew. We hold our monthly business meeting in a church fellowship hall. *Your* fellowship hall.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

*IN DARKNESS*

RADIO ANNOUNCER

In celebration of his impending nuptials, Elroy Lenhart down at Lenhart Hardware is offering a ten percent discount on everything in the store. Remember, neighbors, when you're trading at Lenhart's, you're trading with Klan. This is WFOR.

*AT RISE:* Lights come up on the storage room at the hardware store, later the same morning, implied by a stack of boxes, perhaps on a handcart. ELROY stands with a clipboard checking the shipment. DANIEL enters carrying a placard with TWK in large letters.

ELROY

C'mon in little brother. How was breakfast?

DANIEL

So you hide out in the warehouse when you want some time to yourself. Dad used to do that too, remember? Can't tell you how many hours I spent back here after school. Taking inventory, putting price tags on stuff.

ELROY

Unpacking shipments.

DANIEL

But he never let me anywhere near the cash register. I couldn't count change properly and make small talk with the customers at the same time.

ELROY

You mean like, "Good morning, Tom. Yeah, we sure could use some rain. This can of axle grease all you need? That'll be thirty-two cents. Out of a dollar? Give my best to Sally and the kids. How many you got now. Eight? Wow, you've been a busy man. See you next week." What can I say? It's a talent.

DANIEL

This the sign you were talking about? The one that was "well worth the initiation fee"? What's it mean?

ELROY

TWK. "Trade With Klan."

DANIEL

What?!

ELROY

How much you know about the Ku Klux Klan?

DANIEL

Not much I guess, though Rev. Heyward couldn't wait to give me a lesson on it this morning.

ELROY

He's always recruiting.

DANIEL

I thought they were guys down south who wear bed sheets and terrorize colored people. Now I find out they're all around us.

ELROY

You spend last four years with your nose in a book? You never looked at a newspaper or listened to the radio?

DANIEL

I tried to keep my mind on higher things. Besides I was busy.

ELROY

So busy you hardly ever came home, except for Grandpa's funeral. Just a couple days here and there, then back to your ivory tower. No wonder things seem different to you.

DANIEL

Not everything. But I sure don't remember people talking openly about the Klan, let alone being members. What happened?

ELROY

About the time you left a new Grand Dragon came into the state. Real sparkplug. Almost overnight Indiana had 250,000 Klansmen. His share of the membership money bought him a big mansion in Indianapolis and there was plenty left over to influence our local and state elections.

DANIEL

I assume by influence you mean buy.

ELROY

If you add in the Women of the Klan, the Grand Dragon can deliver close to half a million votes. If he's buying politicians they're begging to be bought.

DANIEL

Including the governor according to Rev. Heyward.

ELROY

Gov. Jackson can't so much as go to the bathroom without the Grand Dragon's permission. Same with a whole bunch of legislators and mayors and judges and prosecutors.

DANIEL

And people think that's a good thing.

ELROY

An awful lot of them.

DANIEL

Is that what *you* think? Is that what this stupid sign's about?

ELROY

It ain't a big deal. That sign's just about getting customers in the door. If you don't have one in your window you might as well turn off the lights and pull down the shades.

DANIEL

If someone can run you out of business, that *is* a pretty big deal.

ELROY

It's not so bad. I already knew most of the guys from being in the Masonic Lodge, the Kiwanis Club, and the volunteer fire department—and from church of course.

DANIEL

Lord.

ELROY

Look, I need this store so that's just what you gotta do. You join stuff and go to all the high school basketball games and all the church suppers. You want people to see you out in the community and say to themselves, "Oh there's Elroy Lenhart. That reminds me I need to stop by the hardware store tomorrow and get me some nails." See?

DANIEL

The volunteer fire department. Do you put on your Klan hood and light a cross on fire then put on your fireman's hat and go put it out?

ELROY

Very funny. So far the only cross lighting I've been to was the night I got naturalized.

DANIEL

Naturalized?

ELROY

Initiated. They say you're being naturalized as a new citizen of the Invisible Empire.

DANIEL

Like an immigrant. Don't they see the irony?

ELROY

Apparently not. I didn't get it myself till you just said it.

DANIEL

What's it involve? I'm likely to get an invitation to go through it, too.

ELROY

There's a big elaborate secret ritual of course. They put a bunch of questions to you to make sure you believe in the Prime Purposes of the Ku Klux Klan:

*By rote as he ticks them off on his fingers.*

To develop character, protect the chastity of womanhood, defend the Protestant religion, uphold white supremacy, and exemplify a pure patriotism towards our glorious country. I mean who could object to any of that? If your answers are acceptable they take your membership dues sell you a robe and you're in. Oh and they warn you if you ever betray the organization direful things will befall you.

DANIEL

What things?

ELROY

They never said and I never asked.

DANIEL

Did you get the same warning from the volunteer fire department? "If you betray us we'll burn your house down?"



ELROY

Of course not. And be careful about being so facetious about it. The members don't take kindly if they think somebody's poking fun at them.

DANIEL

I'm sorry but it's all so weird. When Rev. Heyward called himself an Exalted Cyclops I almost laughed out loud.

ELROY

Good thing you didn't. You got no idea how powerful he's become in this town, and where the Klan's concerned he has *no* sense of humor. And I can't believe I forgot the last prime purpose, "to practice clannishness." "In your social and business dealings you are to show preference towards fellow Klansmen to the exclusion of all others." That's where the sign comes in.

DANIEL

I'm sure you think you're doing what you have to do to keep the store afloat. But if Dad had known about this... I can't imagine Dad in a Klan robe.

ELROY

Maybe not, but you're sure about to see our Mother in one.

DANIEL

Wait. What?

ELROY

She was a charter member of the Women of the Klan. She'll be wearing her robe at the wedding just like I will and Francie will and everybody else except you and Millie. The two of you will be the only ones out of uniform so to speak.

DANIEL

What kind of wedding is this?

ELROY

What do you think? A Klan wedding.

DANIEL

You should've mentioned that a whole lot sooner.

ELROY

Francie and her mama had their hearts set on it and Heyward convinced me I'd get a lot of credit with the other guys if I went along. I had to jump through hoops to get him to agree to let you be there, you not being a member yet and all. I think he only okayed it 'cause he wants you to see the Klan in a positive light. Once he let you in he pretty much had to let Francie invite Millie. But that's it. No other civilians allowed.

DANIEL

But a Klan wedding? I don't know if—

ELROY

C'mon Danny. You're my brother. I want you there. I'm not saying you owe me anything but ... Remember after the Spanish flu took Dad—and almost took you—it was me had to figure out how to keep Mother out of the poorhouse. And then after you finally recovered and went off to seminary it was me had to make sure your tuition and room and board got paid.

DANIEL

You always did try to take care of me. The bullies back in grade school pretty much left me alone because they knew they'd have to deal with you.

ELROY

That's what big brothers are for. *I* might give you a hard time once in a while but nobody else better try it.

DANIEL

If I never thanked you properly for all you did for Mother and me I'm sorry. All right. If it means that much to you I'll do my best to support you in this. I need to be going. Where's Michael Brennan? I'd like to see him.

ELROY (embarrassed)

I had to let him go. I wouldn't've got the sign otherwise.

DANIEL

Michael Brennan worked in this store since the day it opened. What else is he gonna do?

ELROY

I hated to do it but it had to be done. It was either Brennan and no customers, or customers and no Brennan. Simple as that.

DANIEL

I'm glad I didn't know before. I couldn't've looked Nora in the eye this morning. Is that why there's some kid working the front counter?

ELROY

That's Francie's brother.

DANIEL

I didn't even recognize him. He's filled out in every direction.

ELROY

Dumb as a load of bricks but he's good with the customers.

DANIEL

So you fired Michael Brennan, a man who worked his heart out for this family the last twenty years because he's Catholic. And you hired your future brother-in-law just because he's Protestant?

ELROY

Look. I'm hanging on by my fingernails here. Going along so I can get along. The sooner you make up your mind to do the same thing the better off you'll be.

DANIEL

What hole have I fallen into? I'm glad Grandpa isn't around to see the Klan meeting in his church.

ELROY

Who do you think invited them in?

END OF SCENE

### SCENE 3

*IN DARKNESS:*

#### RADIO ANNOUNCER

The Forrest chapter of the Ku Klux Klan, assisted by the Women of the Klan, remind you this Sunday afternoon is their picnic at the town park. This popular annual event is eagerly anticipated every year because the ladies always put out a scrumptious spread. Remember, you do not have to be a member of the Klan, the Women of the Klan, the Tri-K Club for girls, or the Junior Klan. All our Protestant friends are welcome.

*AT RISE:* Lights come up on Millie's Café, that afternoon. HELEN and FRANCIÉ sit at one of the tables. HELEN has a grocery sack.

#### FRANCIÉ

I can't stay but a minute. I forgot I'm supposed to go with Mama down to the church. Prayer circle's meeting to ask God for a miracle for Mr. Ainsley.

#### HELEN

I'm afraid it'll take more'n a miracle for him to pull through this time. How are the wedding preparations going? You getting excited?

#### FRANCIÉ

Yes ma'am. *[softer]* And a little nervous. You know, 'bout...

#### HELEN

Every bride gets the jitters. It helps if you remember a woman's virginity is the most precious gift she can give her husband on her wedding night. Just lay back and it'll all be over in less time'n it takes you to say the Lord's Prayer. Don't say it out loud though. It might throw Elroy off his stride and make him have to start all over.

#### FRANCIÉ

I'm real glad you and Mr. Benbo are coming to the wedding. I'd understand if you didn't. I know it'll bring back memories.

#### HELEN

Mr. Benbo won't be there. He says a man only needs to attend one wedding in his life, but I wouldn't miss it for the world. The first Klan wedding in the county! I'm told a lot of the other girls are jealous you got there before they did. Can't wait to see you coming down the aisle in your white robe. And when Rev. Heyward says "you may kiss the bride," Elroy'll lift up your mask like a bridal veil.

FRANCIE

I know. It'll be wonderful.

HELEN

You can't get any more romantic than that! I'll be bawling my eyes out for sure. I always cry at weddings. But this one's bound to hit me harder'n most. I always thought it'd be Hank Junior you'd be marrying. But then we got all tangled up in that stupid war.

FRANCIE

Any progress getting his body back?

HELEN

We're hoping the Grand Dragon can influence President Coolidge to cut through the red tape. I just hate the idea of my boy buried on French soil with Catholics tending his grave. I want him home.

*HELEN produces a handkerchief and dabs her eyes.*

FRANCIE

I'm sure any American mother would feel the same way.

HELEN

Anyway, you can be sure I'll be there to see you properly married and I'll be dressed appropriately too. Speaking of which ...

*HELEN reaches into the sack and pulls out her project. When she holds it up, the audience and FRANCIE see that it is a miniature Klan outfit, to fit a four- or five-year-old.*

HELEN (cont.)

What do you think? I was hoping maybe you could use it for the little ring bearer.

*FRANCIE takes the outfit and examines it.*

FRANCIE

I think it's just precious that's what I think. The ring bearer's going to be my cousin Susan's little boy Charlie. Wait a minute! Did my mother know 'bout this? I kept telling her we needed to do something 'bout an outfit for Charlie and she kept putting me off.

HELEN

I swore her to secrecy.

FRANCIE

He'll be so proud to have his own little getup, looking like his big brother in the Junior Klan. Charlie can't wait till he's old enough to be a member too.

HELEN

I just love 'em to death at that age. They soak up everything you try to teach them.

FRANCIE

I better be getting on home. Mama'll be chomping at the bit to get to that prayer meeting.

HELEN

How do you feel 'bout having to work with that Brennan girl?

FRANCIE

It's awkward for sure, me 'bout to marry Elroy after he fired her father from the hardware store.

HELEN

No, I mean how do you feel 'bout working with a Catholic?

FRANCIE

Oh. That ain't been a problem. I've known Nora my whole life.

HELEN

She tried to convert you yet? They all try it sooner or later.

FRANCIE

No, nothing like that's happened.

HELEN

You best be on your guard. They can be pretty sneaky. A little innocent conversation and before you know it you're taking instruction from the priest and carrying prayer beads in your purse.

FRANCIE

I never thought 'bout that. I'll be careful.

*HELEN yawns*

HELEN

Beg your pardon. Guess I still ain't recovered from the Fourth of July.

FRANCIE

Heard you went to Kokomo for the Grand Dragon's speech. How was it? Elroy takes the *Indianapolis Times*—just to see what the big-city hardware stores are advertising he says. He told me they claimed there were 10,000 people there.

HELEN

That's the anti-Klan press for you. Had to be double that at least. All of us crammed into a city park. Whole families. White robes as far as the eye could see. I tell you I thought I was going to faint from excitement.

FRANCIE

You were all wearing your robes and hoods? You must've been sweating an ocean. It's a wonder you didn't faint from heat stroke.

HELEN

My mother always said "ladies don't sweat, they glow." I'll admit I was glowing to beat the band under that robe. But I didn't mind it a bit standing there with all those cheering Klanspeople. Listening to the Grand Dragon tell us he knew how to get this country back on track but he needed every one of us to help him accomplish it. It's thrilling to think even an ordinary Indiana housewife like me can be part of something so big, so important!

I thought this must be exactly what Hank Junior felt like when he marched down Broadway with those thousands of other young men heading out to defend our freedom. Now here I was taking up right where my son left off. I could play my little part right back here at home.

*She reaches for her handkerchief again.*

FRANCIE

I can't stay a minute longer. Thank you so much for the little outfit. I love it.

*They stand and move toward the door.*

HELEN

Glad I could make a small contribution to the joyous occasion. And don't worry 'bout the wedding, it'll be perfect. As for the wedding night you just have to grin and bear it.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 4

*IN DARKNESS:*

RADIO ANNOUNCER

This is WFOR. The record heat which has plagued Indiana for over a month continues unabated. Prof. Herman Clodfelter of the agriculture faculty at Purdue University says corn in Indiana was not knee high by the Fourth of July. He warns that if conditions do not improve the harvest for 1925 will fall far short of the record yields enjoyed in 1924.

*AT RISE:* Lights come up on the Artesian Well, Forrest Community Park, next day afternoon, implied by a bench facing the audience. DANIEL sits on the bench with a water dipper in his hand. NORA enters and sits down next to him. They're awkward at first.

DANIEL

Hi.

NORA

Hello.

DANIEL

Um. ... *[offers her the dipper]* Would you like a sip?

NORA (recoiling)

Are you actually drinking that disgusting artesian well water?! It smells like rotten eggs.

DANIEL

When we were kids Dad used to take Elroy and me out for evening walks while Mother did the supper dishes. One night we came by here and Elroy double-dog dared me to take a drink of the water. Well you can't refuse a double-dog dare so I held my nose and took a taste. It was even worse than I thought it was going to be. But the approval in my father's eyes was worth it. "You just learned a big adult lesson, Danny," he said. "Sometimes you have to do things you don't want to do in order to earn people's respect." Horrible as it is that sulphur smell always takes me back to when my family was still complete. *[Beat.]* I'm sorry. I didn't think.

NORA

It's o.k. Maybe I never knew my mother, but just because it's only been daddy and me doesn't mean our family wasn't complete. You don't miss what you never had. Wasn't sure you'd be here.



DANIEL

*Hanging the dipper on the end of the bench.*

Of course I'm here. *I* was the one who invited *you*.

NORA

Maybe you'd chicken out. Your parishioners won't like the idea of you engaged in intimate conversation with a "predatory Catholic jezebel."

DANIEL

We don't have parishes. We have congregations. And if I choose to talk to an old friend it's nobody else's business.

NORA

Around here everything is *everybody's* business. And apparently you don't remember party lines. When you're on the phone you have to assume other people are listening in. By now the whole town knows exactly where you and I are this very minute.

DANIEL

What of it? They know we knew each other growing up. It's natural we'd want to catch up.

NORA

Nowadays people would rather forget Catholic and Protestant kids knew each other at all. Even if they did go to the same high school people swear each group kept to themselves.

DANIEL

That's ridiculous. We sat next to each other in class for gosh sakes. Without you as my chemistry partner I'd've blown up the school. I know I wouldn't've passed first year Latin. How many nights did I come over to your house so you could drum all those declensions into my head?

NORA

Enough that my father was starting to get suspicious.

DANIEL

Can I confess something?

NORA

I thought your side didn't believe in confession.

DANIEL

Your dad was right to be suspicious. I had a crush on you for sure. When you got cast as Juliet in the school play I was more than a little jealous of Romeo. I'm ashamed to remember the names some of my friends called you folks behind your backs.

NORA

Oh I heard people mutter “mackerel snapper” and “cat licker” plenty of times. It’s worse now. Things people used to whisper, these days they say them right out loud. They just hide behind their masks and think nobody knows who they are.

DANIEL

And so we come to the reason I wanted to talk to you. I didn’t know till yesterday Elroy fired your father. I thought I needed to apologize somehow. Dad would never’ve done that to him.

NORA

Don’t be so sure. People are under a lot of pressure. My father wasn’t the first Catholic in town to lose his job.

DANIEL

How’s he doing?

NORA

It was rough at first but he just got taken on out at Zellers’s sawmill. They’re Catholics. People take it for granted they’d hire other Catholics. Just like they assume Klan people’ll hire other Klan people.

DANIEL

At least you’re alright down at Millie’s.

NORA

Who knows how long that’ll last. Every day I work there we seem to sell less meals. *[standing]* I’d better get home. We’ve given the local gossips enough to hash over already.

DANIEL (standing)

Can we talk again some time? If I can’t phone you maybe I can send up smoke signals or something. Even a preacher needs a sympathetic ear now and again.

NORA

Not advisable. I can’t be your confessor.

DANIEL

My side doesn’t believe in confession, remember?

NORA

You’ll see me at Millie’s.

DANIEL

I assume you won't be at the wedding.

NORA

I don't have the right outfit.

DANIEL

You'd look good in anything. Well, maybe anything but that. I still can't get used to the idea of people wearing Klan outfits in church.

NORA

You will. Everybody in town's had to get used to seeing Klan robes on every occasion. Now go on home to your rectory—

DANIEL

Parsonage—

NORA

Where you belong.

DANIEL

See you at breakfast.

NORA

You better ask Francie to wait on you.

*DANIEL watches, smiling, as NORA walks away. She looks back and catches him.*

NORA (cont.)

Danny. You need to go home.

*NORA exits. DANIEL turns to exit in the other direction, the smile still on his face.*

END OF SCENE

SCENE 5

*IN DARKNESS:*

RADIO ANNOUNCER

Yesterday morning First Christian Church of Forrest experienced a visitation by twelve members of the Forrest Chapter, KKK. It is said they left an envelope containing \$100 as a welcoming gift in honor of First Christian's new preacher, Rev. Daniel Lenhart. Rev. Lenhart is the grandson of Rev. Milton V. Smithers, who was pastor at First Christian for thirty-three years before his untimely death last year. This is the fourth Klan visitation at a local church this year, and the second this month. You're listening to WFOR.

*AT RISE:* Lights come up on Millie's Café, Monday afternoon, July 13, 1925. It's the end of the workday and the only customer is HEYWARD, who sits drinking his coffee and reading *The Fiery Cross*, the official Klan newspaper. MILLIE is counting the day's receipts. During the dialogue she fills out a deposit slip and puts it and the cash into an envelope.

MILLIE

We close in fifteen minutes Reverend. Anything else I can get you?

HEYWARD

No Millie. I'll just finish my coffee and newspaper and get out of your way. Where is everybody? Seems kind of slow today.

MILLIE

This past week hardly anybody's come in the last hour. If that keeps up I might as well think 'bout closing at two instead of three.

HEYWARD

I'm sorry you've lost customers. Of course there *are* a couple easy things you could do to get them back.

MILLIE

Not *easy* things I don't think.

*DANIEL enters.*

MILLIE

Afternoon Dan. I'm 'bout to close. Can I get you anything?

DANIEL

Nothing for me thanks. Rev. Heyward do you have a minute?

HEYWARD

Sure. Come on sit down.

*DANIEL sits.*

MILLIE

If you gentlemen are going to be here a few minutes I'll run down to the bank with this little bit of deposit. The girls are in the back. They'll lock up.

*MILLIE exits to the street.*

DANIEL

I need some advice.

HEYWARD

I'm not surprised. If you're like most new preachers you looked out on that congregation yesterday and suddenly came down with a bad case of fear and trembling.

DANIEL

It all came home to me. How much I don't know about what I'm supposed to be doing up there in that pulpit.

HEYWARD

No doubt your professors never told you a lot a stuff you need to know. Practical stuff. For example. If your seminary was anything like mine the only two things they taught you about women were Eve being responsible for Adam's fall and the Apostle Paul's rule in First Corinthians 14.

DANIEL

"Let your women keep silence in the churches."

HEYWARD

Thought so. Let old Rev. Heyward tell you how it really is. I suspect you don't have a lot of experience being around women.

DANIEL

Only my mother.

HEYWARD

If I were a betting man I'd say she was never shy about giving your father advice about how to run his store. Or telling your grandfather what she thought was going on in the church.

DANIEL

You'd win that bet hands down.

HEYWARD

Women may be silent in the church but they've got a lot to say every place else. Whatever you do stay on their good sides. Not even God can save you if the women turn against you.

DANIEL

You're right. Nobody said anything about that at seminary.

HEYWARD

That's what's wrong with Divinity School. Too much divinity, not enough reality.

DANIEL

You sound like my brother talking about running his business.

HEYWARD

God's business is no different. Your brother needs customers buying his products, you need people in the pews putting in their offerings every time you pass the plate.

DANIEL

You mean I have to be careful what I preach so I don't risk cutting off the cash flow?

HEYWARD

You'll be constantly walking a tightrope, a tightrope between what they need to hear and what they don't want to hear. There's a time to speak—

DANIEL

And a time to keep silent. I get it. I guess I have you to thank for the hundred dollars from the Klan visitation. I wish you'd given me some warning.

HEYWARD

It's called "shock and awe." There's no shock if you're forewarned.

DANIEL

A dozen silent masked men barging in in the middle of the service was shocking for sure.

*Taking an envelope out of his pocket.*

I suppose I should be honored I got as much as Rev. MacGregor. But here's the hundred dollars back. Count it, it's all there. I just—I can't accept it.

HEYWARD

How much does First Christian Church take in on any given Sunday?

DANIEL

I don't know. I haven't had a chance to go through the books in detail yet.

HEYWARD

Then let me enlighten you. Your average collection is fifty-four dollars and thirty-one cents.

DANIEL

How do you know that?

HEYWARD

And what has to get paid for out of that handsome sum of money? Before you can save a single soul you have to keep the lights on, the piano tuned, water in the oversized bathtub you use for baptisms. You have communion every Sunday so you buy grape juice by the case. You really mean to tell me you couldn't use an extra hundred dollars? Or are you like some of MacGregor's Presbyterians, squeamish about taking money from the Klan?

DANIEL

Maybe you think you're doing the right things. I haven't figured all that out yet. But I question your methods.

HEYWARD

Our cause is righteous. We use whatever weapons we must to defend our country and the true faith of our fathers.

DANIEL

Your guys had an active weekend I'll say that for them. I heard there was a cross burning in front of Sherm and Nettie Johnson's house Saturday night. What'd Nettie ever do to deserve being frightened half to death? She's such a nice lady.

HEYWARD

She's not a lady. She's a colored woman. Some of the boys think we've been talking too much about the Catholics and not enough about the Coloreds.

DANIEL

That's it? The Johnson's can't be much of a threat.

HEYWARD

The occasional cross lighting'll demonstrate that any more of their kind are not welcome in our town.

DANIEL

What about the Catholics? I heard you burn crosses in *their* neighborhood too. Sure. All my life I've been told Catholics aren't really Christians because—

HEYWARD (overriding)

Because they worship the dead Christ instead of the risen one. They hang Him up on big crosses in their churches and small ones around their necks.

DANIEL

I don't see how that justifies the cross burnings. Or makes it o.k. to deprive Catholic men of their livelihoods.

HEYWARD

I told you before. The Catholics are plotting treason. We have to keep reminding them we're stronger than they are.

DANIEL

So you really believe that? It's hard for me to imagine Michael and Nora Brennan engaged in an armed uprising.

HEYWARD

But you see that's part of their plan. They lay low among the general population acting all meek and mild and friendly-like, until that Satanic Anti-Christ sitting over there in Rome gives them the signal to rise up and enslave us all.

DANIEL

Where do you get information like that?

HEYWARD

The Klan newspaper prints articles about it every week. That's the only place you can find out the real news about what's going on. Here take my copy.

*He pushes his paper over toward DANIEL.*

Besides getting a free subscription when you become a member, we waive the membership fee for ministers of the gospel. It's the Klan's way of supporting our clergy. Of course in return we expect them to lead their flocks into our fold. Although your flock is already in the fold. They're just waiting for you.



DANIEL

Another thing they never taught us in Divinity School is how to deal with the Ku Klux Klan.

HEYWARD

We aren't somebody to be "dealt with." We're not your enemies.

DANIEL (standing)

No. Apparently you're my friends and relatives. You've certainly given me a lot to think about.

HEYWARD (standing)

A young man's first pastorate can be an overwhelming experience. You'll get the hang of it. Preaching's in your blood. So's the Klan. The best thing you can do is swallow whatever qualms you have and join up soon as you get your invitation.

DANIEL

Already got it. Found it tucked into my Bible this morning. No idea how it got there.

HEYWARD

The Klan, like God, works in mysterious ways.

DANIEL

Something else I've been wondering about. That secret palace Mrs. Benbo said the Catholics are building for the pope in Washington, D.C.

HEYWARD

What about it?

DANIEL

How is it a secret if everyone knows they're building it right next to the White House?

HEYWARD

It just goes to prove how fiendishly clever they are.

*FRANCIE and NORA have entered from the kitchen.*

FRANCIE

We don't mean to rush you but it is after three o'clock.

HEYWARD

I think we're done with our discussion. For now.

DANIEL

Sorry to hold you up girls. Have a good evening Nora. Uh, you too Francie.

*DANIEL exits, leaving the newspaper and the envelope with the hundred dollars in it. HEYWARD picks them up and follows DANIEL out.*

FRANCIE

Thought they'd never leave. Have you noticed the Rev. Daniel Lenhard gets sheep's eyes every time he looks in your direction?

NORA

Don't be ridiculous. Even if that were true you know there's no future in it.

FRANCIE

Yeah. I know. You 'bout ready?

NORA

Just a second. I wanted to give you this when nobody else was around.

*NORA produces a necklace with blue beads.*

FRANCIE

Are those prayer beads?

NORA

A rosary? Of course not. Why would I be giving you a rosary?

FRANCIE

Well, Mrs. Benbo told me—

NORA

I'm sure she did. It's just an ordinary necklace. Daddy bought it for my mother before they were married. He always said the blue beads matched her eyes.

FRANCIE

But it must be mean the world to you. Why would you give it to me?

NORA

I'm only letting you borrow it. I thought if you wore it during the wedding you'll have something old, something borrowed, and something blue all in one accessory.

FRANCIE (*stricken*)

That's so sweet of you. But I—I just can't. Mama would blow her stack. I hope you understand.

NORA (*disappointed*)

Oh—I do. Of course I do. It was a silly notion anyhow. I guess I imagined I could kind of be there in spirit since I can't be there in person.

FRANCIE

You know I would've invited you if I could have.

NORA

Don't worry 'bout it. My priest wouldn't approve of me attending a Protestant ceremony anyhow.

*Francie begins to exit.*

Francie?

*Francie looks back at Nora.*

NORA

Despite all that's going on in the world you've been a good friend to me since I started working here. I just hope Elroy turns out to be the kind of man you deserve and you have a great life together.

*They embrace, FRANCIE with a little reluctance.*

END OF SCENE

## SCENE 6

*IN DARKNESS:*

### RADIO ANNOUNCER

This is WFOR, Forrest, Indiana. In society news, the whole town is buzzing about the Klan-themed wedding that will unite Francie Ross and Elroy Lenhart in holy matrimony. As a gift from the bride's parents, the popular young couple are planning a brief honeymoon trip to Indiana's world-renowned health spa, French Lick Springs. Over coffee this morning at Millie's Café, this reporter asked Elroy if he plans to sample French Lick's famous Pluto Water, which they market under the slogan, "If nature won't, Pluto Water will." "If I want to drink bad-tasting water," he answered, "I don't have to leave home to do it. Just between you and me, I suspect French Lick won't be as exciting as it sounds."

*AT RISE:* A recorded piano plays "Blest Be the Tie that Binds" as lights come up implying First Methodist Church, Forrest, Indiana, Saturday, July 18, 1925. Perhaps there's a large cross flanked by the American and Christian flags. HEYWARD stands facing the audience. He is dressed in his Exalted Cyclops robe and has his service book in hand. MILLIE, DANIEL, and HELEN (in her Women of the Klan robe) are in attendance. ELROY, then FRANCIE, enter in their Klan robes and stand facing HEYWARD. DANIEL becomes increasingly uneasy as the ritual progresses.

### HEYWARD

Before Elroy and Francie take their vows, they want me to thank you all for coming today to share in their happiness. They are especially honored to see George Ainsley, one of the pillars of this church and the Invisible Empire, back among us. They give thanks to God, as we all do, for his miraculous recovery from his recent health crisis. Truly, with God, all things are possible.

### ENTIRE CAST

Amen!

HEYWARD (looking at Daniel and Millie)

And we also wish to welcome the outsiders whom we have graciously permitted to be among us. We hope witnessing this celebration of home and family will encourage them to join us, to come out of the alien darkness into the bright light of Klan truths.

Now, Elroy Virgil Lenhart, do you take Frances Lydia Ross to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do you part?

ELROY

I do.

HEYWARD

Forsaking all others, do you promise to be faithful unto her and to honor her as the heart of your household, as the mother of your future children, and as the pure vessel through whom the white race shall be perpetuated?

ELROY

I do.

HEYWARD

Do you promise to protect and defend her from whatever evil temptations may assail her?

ELROY

I do.

HEYWARD

And if she should transgress and require chastisement, do you promise to administer discipline in the spirit of love and never in anger?

ELROY

I do.

HEYWARD

Frances Lydia Ross, do you take Elroy Vergil Lenhart to be your lawfully wedded husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do you part?

FRANCIE

I do.

HEYWARD

Forsaking all others, do you promise to be faithful unto him, to honor and obey him as the head of your household and as the father of your future children? Do you promise to inculcate in his progeny a true devotion to the Protestant Christian religion, loyalty to the United States of America, and recognition of the superiority of the White race?

FRANCIE

I do.

HEYWARD

And if you should transgress and require chastisement, do you promise to submit to his discipline in the spirit of love and humility?

FRANCIE

I do.

HEYWARD

Elroy and Francis, on this day God is binding you together in a most sacred undertaking: to raise up a new generation of Christian warriors and prepare them to defend their families, their faith, and their flag from all enemies foreign. And domestic. Do you accept this, God's divine purpose for your lives, and do you promise to fulfill it to the best of your abilities?

ELROY and FRANCIE

We do!

HEYWARD

Then by the power vested in me by the Invisible Empire of the Ku Klux Klan, I dedicate both of you to the holy service of the new Klan family you are hereby creating. And by the power vested in me by the State of Indiana, I now pronounce you man and wife. Elroy, you may kiss your bride.

*ELROY lifts FRANCIE's mask and they kiss. They turn and face the audience as the recorded piano plays the last eight bars or so of "Onward, Christian Soldiers." MILLIE and HELEN cry into their handkerchiefs. An obviously troubled DANIEL bows his head in prayer.*

END OF ACT I

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