

CRACKERMAN

by
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Revised 2022

Cast (in order of appearance)

Fred - Uncle/Klansman (60+)
Noreen - African American Grandmother/Nurse (60+)
Sondra - Noreen's Granddaughter/Architecture Student (25+)
Daniel - Fred's Nephew/ High School Teacher (30+)
Charlie - Ghost of young Klansman/Fred's Gang Leader (20+)

ACT I

Scene 1

Selma Alabama. Present time. Light rises on Fred, who is sitting propped up in a rehab hospital bed, buzzing for a nurse.

FRED

Who's in charge goddamit! Where is everybody?! For Chrissakes will someone-

(Enter Noreen in nurse's uniform.)

NOREEN

I'm coming Mr. Parsons. Hold your horses.

FRED

It's not horses I'm holdin'! Where's the Goddamn bedpan!

NOREEN

Here you go Mr. Parsons.

FRED

It's about time!

(beat)

Man!..This has gotta be the longest friggin' piss I ever took... Jesus! who's running this place, the three stooges?!

NOREEN

We're short staffed sir.

FRED

Who are you?!

NOREEN

I was transferred here.

FRED

Well that Goddamn figures.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...I can't say I'm a Christian woman, because I'm not...But there are patients here, some very sick...And they need quiet, not loud vulgar language.

FRED

So who died and made you king?

NOREEN

My name is Noreen...I'm one of the floor nurses and while I'm here you need to respect my wishes.

(Fred grimaces.)

NOREEN

That means, pushing the call buzzer only once. Do you understand?

FRED

I need a pain pill.

NOREEN

Do you understand Mr. Parsons?

FRED

All right I get it!

NOREEN

Here is your pill.

(He quickly grabs water
and pill and gulps it down.)

FRED

Pull down the shades.

*Noreen walks to windows pulling
down shades.*

FRED

You're kind of uppity, aren't you—

NOREEN

Remember what I said.

FRED

What's your name?

NOREEN

Noreen.

FRED

I'll remember that...Get me another blanket.

NOREEN

What color do you want?

FRED

What?

NOREEN

We have green, blue, and pink.

FRED

Christ I don't care...Anything...Not pink.

NOREEN

Why not?

FRED

Are you messin' with me? Cuz if your messin' with me.

NOREEN

I'm just curious.

FRED

(loudly)

Pink is for sissy's and Commies.

NOREEN

Isn't red Communist?

FRED

Pink is halfway there.

NOREEN

Oh I see...What about blue...Does blue remind you of anything?

FRED

Blue?...Yeah, blue's good.

NOREEN

I'll be back in a few minutes.

FRED

And get me some more water!

(Noreen leaves.)

Phone rings. Fred answers.

FRED

Yeah. Hi Daniel...I'm all right...Yeah...There are good days and bad ones. Last night was a bad one...Yeah... Yeah...Tell me now...Why not!...I want to get out of here. The food is shitty, the room smells, they never come when you need them - and I got this negro woman...I know! I know! You're not gonna change me. I am who I am...Yeah...Okay...I'll see ya soon...And bring me some Milky Way bars.

(puts phone away)

African American! African American! Jesus Christ!

Noreen enters carrying a pink blanket and water pitcher. She puts the pitcher on the side table.

FRED

I told you no pink.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...That's all we have for the moment. Do you want it or not?

FRED

I don't know - maybe...If you put it halfway on me and get some newspaper's to cover the color.

(Noreen stifles laugh.)

FRED

What?!

NOREEN

Nothing.

(Fred grimaces in pain.)

NOREEN

What's the matter?

FRED

Nothing!

Noreen drapes the blanket over him.

FRED

Remember the newspapers...And adjust my pillow.

NOREEN

How's that?

FRED

Good!...My water!

NOREEN

(points to water)

It's over there - along with your manners...And you need to keep your voice down.

FRED

Keep my voice down. Do this! Swallow that! Roll over! Now a pink blanket and you.

NOREEN

Oh shush up! You're makin' trouble for me - that's what you're doin'. I've got enough problems an you're givin' me a dishful - I'm sedatin' you.

FRED

No - no. I'll be quiet - I promise...It's just that I'm so damn sick of it all.

(She pours a glass of water
and gives it to him.)

NOREEN

Here, drink this - you'll feel better.

(speaks rapidly)

Now I've gotta go...But before I do, I want you to think about three words. These words are so strange and alien to you, that if I hear them, it's like I've gone and died and old Saint Peter has brought me through those pearly gates into a glorious heaven...Do you know what those words are?

FRED

No.

NOREEN

Please and thank you Mr. Parsons...Please and thank you.

FRED

Do you know who I am?

NOREEN

I know what you are.

FRED

Who am I?

NOREEN

I heard stories.

FRED

Tell me one.

NOREEN

Mr. Parsons...I'm not here to spread gossip or tell stories.

FRED

You don't want to guess?

NOREEN

Quiz shows are not in my job description.

FRED

I was an Imperial Wizard of the Klan.

NOREEN

I can see why you wanted a blue blanket, being royalty and all.

FRED

That's it! You're screwin' with me - I'm complaining.

NOREEN

Sir...I don't have time to screw around. The work is too exhausting.

FRED

You're still messin' with me...You have this high and mighty attitude-

NOREEN

Those are the drugs kickin' in...Is there anything else you need Mr. Parsons?

FRED

Listen...I don't like bein' called "Sir" or "Mr. Parsons". Fred is my name.

NOREEN

If you don't mind, I prefer sir.

(As Noreen exits)

FRED

You call me Fred! Fred's my name!

*Appearing from the shadows is Charlie,
the ghost of a twenty-two year old
Klansman.*

(Charlie is standing next to
Fred's bed wearing a white tee
shirt and blue jeans, and is
holding a half pint of whisky.)

CHARLIE

How's it hangin' buddy boy...Looks like you could use a drink.

(Charlie takes a drink.)

FRED

What do you want?

CHARLIE

Now is that a way to treat a friend?

FRED

You're not my friend Charlie.

CHARLIE

Hey...When you're in the Klan - you're friends for life.

FRED

Easy for you to say - you died young.

CHARLIE

I can't help that Freddy.

FRED

What do you want?

CHARLIE

(rapidly)

I'm here to keep you straight man...Look at you in bed takin' orders from that nig-

FRED

Shut up!..I don't talk like that no more.

CHARLIE

But ya think that way...Cuz that's who you are - you're still one of us Freddy.

FRED

Keep your mouth shut.

CHARLIE

That's why I'm here - it's all about keepin' your mouth shut... We have secrets you and me. And Klan business stays with the Klan.

FRED

No one liked you Charlie. Frank and Stevie hated you.

CHARLIE

But you followed me...Didn't ya.

FRED

We were afraid to go against you-

CHARLIE

Freddy...Little pussy boys is what you were - I shaped you into men.

FRED

Mickey was my best friend - you almost beat him to death.

CHARLIE

The Klan had work to do, your Mickey got in the way.

FRED

Was it the Klan's work or yours?

CHARLIE

What's the difference.

FRED

Why am I even talkin' to you.

CHARLIE

Remember what I said – mouth shut.

(Charlie disappears into the shadows)

(Exit Fred)

Music Cue 1: A Muddy Waters song begins to play (and ends).

Scene 2

Light rises in the dining room. Noreen enters carrying a grocery bag containing cheese and a bottle of wine. She quickly puts the bag on the floor and collapses in her chair visibly exhausted.

Noreen slowly reaches into the bag, pulls out the wine, placing it on the table. She pours herself a drink, and sips slowly, listening to the song, dwelling on her difficult life.

Suddenly there is a knock on the door.

NOREEN

Hold on...Who is it?

SONDRA

It's your granddaughter.

NOREEN

You know where the key is.

(Sondra enters and sits near Noreen)

NOREEN

You get prettier every time I see you.

SONDRA

You always say that.

NOREEN

It's the truth sweetheart.

SONDRA

Who's singing?

NOREEN

That's Muddy Waters...He grew up in the Delta pickin' cotton...Became the greatest blues singer there ever was.

SONDRA

Sounds real powerful.

NOREEN

You're right about that child...They say to sing the blues, ya have to live it, and old Muddy, he sure lived it.

(beat)

Would you like some wine and cheese?

SONDRA

I'll have some wine.

NOREEN

Sweetheart...Could you take the shopping bag, put it on the counter.

SONDRA

Sure.

*(Sondra touches Noreen's shoulder
and looks into Noreen's eyes.)*

SONDRA

You look tired.

NOREEN

I am. I'm dog tired.

SONDRA

I wish you could leave that damn job.