

"KITTEN ON THE KEYS"

Written by:  
Jim Boston

1312 N. 48th Ave., #324  
Omaha, NE 68132  
402 556-3340  
Huskercyclone@netzero.net  
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FADE IN:

EXT. ATCHISON, TOPEKA, AND SANTA FE RAILROAD TRACKS - DAY

SUPER: KANSAS FRONTIER, 7-5-1876

A train steams its way westward across the rolling South Central Kansas landscape.

INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER SECTION - DAY

THIS SECTION IS FULL...A TRAVELER IN EVERY SEAT.

While some folks doze off, others AD LIB their way through the trip.

A few others read newspapers...papers with headlines that celebrate America's centennial as an independent country.

In the second-class section, CATHARINE MARIA CASTELLUCCIO "KITTEN" KIRKSEY (25, caring, thoughtful, a bit independent) and husband EZEKIEL (26, quiet; sickly) admire the scenery.

Across the aisle from them, URIAH CLARKE (55) and wife ELIZA (53) lean over to start a conversation with the young couple.

URIAH

Where you two headin'?

KITTEN

San Francisco.

Ezekiel nods as Eliza and Uriah look excited for Kitten.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

I was born and raised there.

The older couple's elation becomes confusion.

ELIZA

Jumpin' Jehoshaphat! Why'd you leave?

KITTEN

I attended Oberlin College. In Ohio. I studied music.

(hugs Ezekiel)

And I met my husband there.

EZEKIEL

I studied music, too.

Uriah's nod is slow.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)  
 But I'm not as good a musician as  
 Kitten.

KITTEN  
 At least you're a better husband  
 than I am.

ELIZA  
 Huh?

EZEKIEL  
 (arms around Kitten)  
 And, honey, you're a better wife  
 than I am.

The Kirkseys break their embrace and eyeball the Clarkes.

KITTEN  
 Ezekiel and I are going to San  
 Francisco to join with another  
 couple to start a music school  
 there.

EZEKIEL  
 It was this or start a photography  
 school in San Francisco by myself.

Ezekiel coughs.

EZEKIEL (CONT'D)  
 My wife had the--

Another (harsher) cough overtakes Ezekiel...

URIAH  
 Better plan.

KITTEN  
 (nodding)  
 My parents sent me to Oberlin  
 because they found out it was the--

...and another...

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 --best music school in these United  
 States.

...and still another.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 Ezekiel...Zeke...

The color leaves Ezekiel's face...a face Kitten studies hard.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

What's wrong? What can I get you?

Ezekiel attempts a cough...but he can't breathe.

Kitten wraps her arms around her husband.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Write it  
down...something...anything...

ELIZA

Ma'am, maybe if you took your arms  
offa him...

Kitten takes her arms off Ezekiel...only to find he's limp.

KITTEN

Mr. and Mrs. Clarke...are either  
one of you a doctor?

Uriah and Eliza shake their heads "no."

URIAH

Sorry, ma'am. We're just pig  
farmers.

ELIZA

This is our first time on a train.

Kitten rises from her seat and addresses Eliza and Uriah.

KITTEN

I'm gonna find the conductor and  
see if he knows of a doctor on this  
train.

(starts for the aisle)

I'll be right back.

URIAH

We'll see about your husband.

Eliza nods at Kitten.

Ezekiel's wife strolls the aisle; she looks  
left...right...left...right.

MAIN TITLES APPEAR OVER ACTION.

One more look to the left...and Kitten bumps into THE  
CONDUCTOR (a man in his 50s).

CONDUCTOR  
Ma'am...can I help you?

KITTEN  
I hope so. My husband's feeling  
sick...and I was wondering...

CONDUCTOR  
It's all right.

KITTEN  
Is there a doctor aboard?

The conductor stares into space for a few seconds.

CONDUCTOR  
Sorry, ma'am.

KITTEN  
Not even a veterinarian?

CONDUCTOR  
There's a doctor in Dodge  
City...the next town.

Kitten's face forms a scowl.

CONDUCTOR (CONT'D)  
If you don't mind waiting another  
twenty-five miles.

A shrugging Kitten returns to her seat.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, DODGE CITY, KS - DAY

Actually, it's a boxcar!

INT. TRAIN STATION, DODGE CITY, KS - DAY

Kitten lugs Ezekiel's and her baggage inside the boxcar...an  
act that arouses THE CLERK (a man in his 30s).

TRAIN STATION CLERK  
Uh...what can I do for you, ma'am?

KITTEN  
I need to send a telegram.

The clerk's mouth flies open.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Actually...I need to send three.

## TRAIN STATION CLERK

But...but...

## KITTEN

One to my parents in San Francisco,  
one to a Mr. and Mrs. Wells in San  
Francisco, and one to a Mr. and  
Mrs. Kirksey in Ashtabula, Ohio.

And the clerk passes out!

## EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

Bags and all, Kitten strolls along Dodge City's main  
drag...in the greatest of care.

She watches as THREE OR FOUR PAIRS OF COWBOYS (some on  
horseback, some on foot) shoot each other.

A bullet misses Kitten's and Ezekiel's suitcases.

Kitten tries her best to sidestep livestock's contributions  
to Front Street as FOUR MORE COWPOKES fire at each other.

The native Californian breathes relief when she reaches:

## EXT. DODGE HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

This wooden building boasts two front entrances...one whose  
sign above it reads "DODGE HOUSE," the other whose sign says  
"BILLIARD HALL."

Kitten enters through the "DODGE HOUSE" door.

## INT. DODGE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

An exhausted Kitten drops Ezekiel's and her luggage at the  
front desk while co-owner GEORGE B. COX (39; Georgia twang)  
and wife ANNIE H. BENNETT (23) watch from the other side.

## GEORGE B.

Welcome to the Dodge House, ma'am.  
Ah'm George, one of the two owners  
here...and this is mah wife, Annie.

Kitten barely shakes hands with George B. and Annie H.

## GEORGE B. (CONT'D)

How may we he'p you?

## KITTEN

Wow!

ANNIE H.  
 (nodding at Kitten)  
 First time in Dodge.

KITTEN  
 Yes...it is...I could really use a  
 room.

GEORGE B.  
 How long you gonna be stayin'?

KITTEN  
 That's a good, good question.

Confusion fills the faces of Annie H. and George B.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 You see...my husband, Ezekiel  
 Kirksey, died on the train a few  
 hours ago.

ANNIE H.  
 Ma'am, did he eat something that  
 didn't agree with him?

KITTEN  
 No. He had a cast-iron stomach.

George B. shakes his head "yes."

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 It's just that Ezekiel didn't have  
 cast-iron lungs.

GEORGE B.  
 Ah see...whoopin' cough done got  
 him.

KITTEN  
 Absolutely right. You see, he and I  
 were going to San Francisco to  
 start a music school with another  
 couple. Henry and Callie Wells.

ANNIE H.  
 Did the building burn down?

KITTEN  
 No, it didn't...but I had to wire  
 the Wellses and the Kirkseys and my  
 parents to tell them I couldn't  
 continue on to San Francisco.

Annie H.'s mouth flies open.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

So I'm staying here in Dodge City  
to strike out on my own.

George B. grabs a guest book. He opens it to the first clean page and gestures Kitten into signing.

ANNIE H.

(eyeballing Kitten)

But couldn't you have gone on to  
San Fran--

Annie H. looks at Kitten's signature, then back at Kitten.

ANNIE H. (CONT'D)

--San Francisco, Mrs. Kirksey?

KITTEN

Actually...the contract called for  
couples, not singles. The people  
wanting to start that music school  
believe in family.

Kitten pulls out a wad of cash. George B. accepts the loot.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

And besides...who wants to sit next  
to a decomposed, rotten, dead body  
for a couple of days on a train?

Annie H. and George B. look at each other before they give  
Kitten a nod of understanding.

EXT. BOOT HILL CEMETERY - DAY

A PREACHER (a man in his 50s) AD LIBS a eulogy...but O.S.  
GUNSHOTS clash with his message about Ezekiel Kirksey.

Kitten, her dad GIUSEPPE CASTELLUCCIO (50, domineering;  
native Italian), and her mom SOPHIA MILANO CASTELLUCCIO (48,  
responsible) stand on one side of Ezekiel's casket.

On the other side: The preacher as well as JEDEDIAH and  
REBECCA KIRKSEY (both 50s), Ezekiel's parents.

Now the funeral's over, and Kitten dabs her moist  
eyes...Rebecca and Jedediah embrace in tears.

The older Kirkseys' embrace ends when the preacher taps  
Jedediah on the shoulder.

JEDEDIAH  
Don't worry...I didn't...forget...

A still-tearful Jedediah hands the preacher a wad of money.

PREACHER  
(accepts the loot)  
Thank you...thank you.

The three women and the three men walk away from the gravesite as ATTENDANTS prepare to lower the casket.

The preacher eyeballs Rebecca.

PREACHER (CONT'D)  
You can best believe Ezekiel was a fine young man.

REBECCA  
Thank you, sir.  
(wipes her eyes)  
Jed and I are very proud of him.

JEDEDIAH  
Powerful proud, Rebecca. We're powerful proud of him.

PREACHER  
If the other cemetery here in Dodge City had more room in it, we wouldn't have had to bury him here in Boot Hill.

Rebecca nods while Jedediah wipes his eyes.

REBECCA  
Well, that's a load off.

Giuseppe looks agitated...Sophia shows a blank expression.

PREACHER  
I'm off to preach at another funeral.

THE GUNSHOTS CONTINUE O.S. as the preacher addresses Kitten, her folks, and Ezekiel's.

PREACHER (CONT'D)  
If there's anything I can do for the five of you, please let me know.

KITTEN

We will, sir. We will.

The five watch the preacher walk toward another section of Boot Hill.

Now the young widow, her parents, and her in-laws stroll their way out of the cemetery.

A livid Giuseppe points to Kitten.

GIUSEPPE

Catharine, Catharine, Catharine!  
Why you marry that...that...weak,  
puny young--

JEDEDIAH

Now just see here, Giuseppe!

GIUSEPPE

No, Jedediah Kirksey! YOU see here!  
My daughter marry such a weak,  
weak, weak--

SOPHIA

Giuseppe...please watch your  
temper.

(puts arm around Giuseppe)  
I still remember how angry you got  
when they told you you didn't have  
enough money to start a winery--

Giuseppe attempts a deep breath.

REBECCA

Our Ezekiel might've had weak  
lungs...but that didn't make him a  
weak person.

KITTEN

(pointing to Giuseppe)  
Papa...Zeke had a strong, strong  
love for me. And I had a strong,  
strong love for him.

GIUSEPPE

Strong, Catharine? You want strong?  
I give you strong! You go back home  
to San Francisco with us!

KITTEN

I'm not going back home to marry  
the class bully!

SOPHIA  
Catharine...he did grow up to  
become a good provider.

KITTEN  
True...but Mama, Papa, you both  
taught me how to be strong...how to  
embrace a challenge.

Sophia and Rebecca nod.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
And that's why I'm gonna stay here  
in Dodge City.

Kitten watches Sophia's, Rebecca's, and Jedediah's mouths fly  
open...and Giuseppe burn inside.

GIUSEPPE  
ARE YOU OUTA YOUR MIND?

REBECCA  
Well, Kitten...this is the most  
lawless town in America...I mean  
the West.

KITTEN  
I'll be all right.

SOPHIA  
You'd better be right, Catharine.

KITTEN  
I'll be all right.  
(smiles at Sophia)  
After all, I'm following in the  
footsteps of a woman who panned for  
gold while carrying me in her womb.

Eight eyes stare at Sophia.

INT. DODGE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

Giuseppe, Jedediah, Kitten, Rebecca, and Sophia continue  
their conversation on the way to the front desk...where F.W.  
BOYD (30s-40s), the hotel's other co-owner, stands.

SOPHIA  
Truth be told, he did look sickly.

GIUSEPPE  
Finally, Sophia, you make sense!

Giuseppe receives a withering look from Sophia.

KITTEN

Sickly-looking people deserve love,  
too. And besides, Ezekiel had a  
great mind.

Rebecca and Jedediah nod.

F.W.

Wait a minute, Mrs. Kirksey.

Kitten and Rebecca stop in their tracks while Sophia,  
Jedediah, and Giuseppe stride toward their rooms.

F.W. (CONT'D)

(pointing at Rebecca)

Not you...the younger Mrs. Kirksey.

Rebecca jogs off toward Jedediah...and Kitten reaches the  
front desk.

F.W. (CONT'D)

(to Kitten)

George tells me you've decided to  
make Dodge City your home.

KITTEN

That's correct, F.W.

F.W.

We've got a welcoming present for  
you.

Kitten's mouth hangs open as F.W. reaches for a package on a  
shelf behind him.

He hands the package to her.

F.W. (CONT'D)

Open it up!

Kitten nods...she and F.W. hear SEVERAL O.S. GUNSHOTS.

She opens the package...and finds...a .45 revolver!

KITTEN

Holy...son of a...

F.W.

You're gonna need it around here.

BANG! BANG! More gunshots ring out along Front Street in front of the Dodge House.

INT. DODGE HOUSE ROOM 15 - DAY

Kitten places the gun (now back in its package) in a closet in this modestly-furnished room.

She goes to a small desk to grab a picture frame that houses a wedding-day photo of her and Ezekiel.

The young widow hugs the picture frame...and flashes an ever-widening, I'm-glad-I-met-him smile.

EXT. LONG BRANCH SALOON - DAY

Here's a plain-looking storefront building with "LONG BRANCH" painted on the front.

The sound of a piano RINGS OUT FROM INSIDE...and lures Kitten into the saloon.

INT. LONG BRANCH BARROOM - DAY

Kitten strolls inside a space whose walls feature plenty of framed paintings.

Saloon regulars NEHEMIAH (30s), EZRA (20s), and MALACHI (40s) drink at the bar while THE BARTENDER stands and pours whiskey behind the bar.

A huge mirror hangs behind the bar.

ANOTHER TEN MEN sit in chairs at the back of the barroom...and four of those men play poker while seated at a table. Yet another plays a pre-1876 upright piano by the bar.

Kitten reaches the far end of the bar and catches a glimpse of the saloon's pianist when the bartender eyeballs her.

BARTENDER

Lady, you can't come in here.

Kitten looks surprised.

KITTEN

I just wanted to listen to the pianist--

Nehemiah strides toward Kitten.

NEHEMIAH

You heard the man! Women ain't  
allowed in here!

BARTENDER

We don't allow women in here!

Malachi and Ezra join Nehemiah to chase Kitten out of the  
Long Branch.

EZRA

We don't care how pretty they are!

A shrugging Kitten walks away from the place.

INT. DODGE HOUSE ROOM 15 - NIGHT

Kitten strolls around the room.

Several laps later, she opens Ezekiel's suitcase and pulls  
out a heavy, bulky medium-sized object wrapped in a towel.

With the utmost of care, the Oberlin graduate puts the object  
on the desk. When she removes the towel around it, she  
reveals...a five-inch-by-five-inch, wet-plate-style camera.

Kitten walks around with the camera for a few laps.

Then she sets the heavy thing back on the desk.

She looks into Ezekiel's suitcase again...and digs out an  
instruction manual (or handwritten notes).

Kitten reads on...and reaches the last page of instructions.

In a flash of inspiration, Kitten goes to the camera while it  
still rests on the desk...and snaps a photo of her room.

She takes a tripod out of the closet and mounts the camera  
onto the tripod.

Giuseppe's and Sophia's daughter snaps another photo of Dodge  
House Room 15.

Kitten breaks out in goodnatured laughter...for the whole  
thing's just a practice run.

EXT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Next door to the Long Branch, this larger building boasts two  
back-to-back signs.

The left sign reads: "G.M. HOOVER." Below that, in arches:  
"WHOLESALE- WINES- LIQUORS." And under all that: "CIGARS."

On the right sign, it's "DRY GOODS AND CLOTHING."

An elated Kitten struts her way into the store...and receives  
stares from PASSERSBY.

And along Front Street, MORE GUNFIGHTERS shoot at each other.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Kitten enters a brimming, fully-stocked store where A FEW  
CUSTOMERS pick out items to buy...when GEORGE M. HOOVER (28,  
Canadian brogue) approaches her from behind the counter.

GEORGE M.

This must be your first time in  
here.

KITTEN

Uh...yes, it is.

GEORGE M.

What can I do for you?

KITTEN

What have you got in photographic  
supplies?

George M. looks staggered.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

My late husband was a  
photographer...when he wasn't an  
instructor alongside me at Oberlin  
College in Ohio.

GEORGE M.

Well...uh...how'd you get out here?

KITTEN

He and I were going to San  
Francisco to join with another  
couple to start a music school  
there...but he died on the train.

Those few buyers reach the counter. George M. eyes them.

GEORGE M.

Be right with you.  
(to Kitten)  
Keep talking. I'm listening.

George M. reaches the counter.

As other customers make transactions with George M., Kitten gabs on.

KITTEN

He died twenty-five miles east of here...and this was the next stop on the train.

While Kitten talks, George M. AD LIBS his gratitude to the remaining buyers.

The other customers leave with their purchases...and leave the space to Kitten and George M.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

I had to get off here at Dodge City...after all, nobody wants to sit next to a rotting, dead body for two days on a train.

GEORGE M.

Okay...you said something about photographic supplies.

George M. whips out a pencil and a piece of paper.

KITTEN

First of all...I need a bottle of photographic collodion. Then three glass plates. And a bottle of silver nitrite.

Now George M. writes Kitten's request down.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Then I need to buy a lightproof holder for the glass plates. And a bottle of photographic developer. And a darkroom tent.

GEORGE M.

Ma'am, I'll have to send in for all that...takes two weeks.

KITTEN

That's fair enough.

George M. finishes scribbling the order.

GEORGE M.

May I get your name?

KITTEN  
My name's Catharine Castelluccio  
Kirksey...but my husband used to  
call me Kitten.

He writes her name on the sheet of paper...then eyeballs her.

GEORGE M.  
Don't you need anything we actually  
carry here in the store?

KITTEN  
(nods with a grin)  
I need a holster and some bullets.

George M. looks ecstatic.

INT. DODGE HOUSE ROOM 15 - DAY

Kitten finishes loading some of the newly-purchased bullets  
into her gun.

She straps her new holster on and stuffs the gun into the  
holster...and strolls to a mirror.

The native Californian likes what she sees.

EXT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Kitten strides inside.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

That photographic equipment is in at last...and a backpack  
houses it all (right down to the darkroom tent).

GEORGE M.  
Everything you've been looking  
for...best of luck with it.

Kitten makes the transaction with George M., who counts the  
money in total satisfaction.

KITTEN  
Thanks so much, Mr. Hoover.

GEORGE M.  
Kitten, the pleasure's all mine.

George M. straps the backpack onto an ecstatic Kitten...

EXT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

...who strolls out of the store in glee.

Down Front Street, TWO MORE GUNFIGHTERS brawl.

A stray bullet from ANOTHER SHOOTER just misses the backpack.

KITTEN

That's it. Next time, I'm bringing  
my gun.

She walks on.

INT. DODGE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

Kitten (backpack and all) stands between the hotel's "DODGE HOUSE" entrance and the front desk as she mounts her camera onto its tripod.

Annie H. arrives at the front desk and, in puzzlement, watches the young widow.

KITTEN

Annie, I've got to put my late  
husband's camera to use.

ANNIE H.

On us? Why?

KITTEN

Why not?

ANNIE H.

I'd...better tell my husband about  
this.

Annie H. walks away from the front desk to find George B.

LATER

Annie H. gathers George B. and F.W. around her behind the front desk...with THE REST OF THE STAFF lining up in back of the threesome.

GEORGE B.

(to Annie H.)

Ah ain't been in no photograph  
since Ah fought in the war.

F.W. turns to George B.

F.W.  
You lucky son of a--

GEORGE B.  
But this is the first time Ah've  
been in a photograph without people  
dyin' around me.

The photographer and her subjects HEAR a gunshot.

KITTEN  
Don't pay any attention to those  
folks outside.

Kitten looks through the camera's viewfinder.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Everybody...look at the camera!

The Dodge House staff poses for the camera under Kitten's  
direction.

CLICK! She snaps the picture.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Thanks a bunch!

Kitten's the only person with a smile in the lobby.

#### MONTAGE SEQUENCE

Now Kitten (backpack and all) combs Dodge City for a place to  
develop her photographic plates.

INT. DODGE HOUSE ROOM 15 - DAY

She looks inside the room's closet...but it doesn't have  
enough space.

EXT. DODGE CITY JAIL - DAY

Kitten stands outside a small two-story building. One of its  
signs says "CITY CLERKS OFFICE;" another, on an adjacent  
side, reads "LAW OFFICE."

She notices a covered wagon...and peeks inside.

No dice.

INT. "DODGE CITY TIMES" OFFICE - DAY

Kitten talks with the paper's young PUBLISHER-EDITOR about a  
place to develop her plates...but is shown the door.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

On the very edge of town, Kitten spots an outhouse...and shakes her head "no."

END MONTAGE

INT. BARN - DAY

The young widow finds a place at last to turn those plates into actual pictures.

The door's closed.

Kitten hides under her darkroom tent to pour collodion onto a photographic plate...as chickens cluck around her.

One chicken nips at Kitten's legs.

KITTEN

Not yet!

While she tilts the plate until collodion coats it in full, Kitten tries to stomp that chicken out of her way.

The Oberlin grad dips the plate into a silver-nitrate solution before she takes a clean cloth and wipes the back of the plate.

EXT. BARN - DAY

MILLARD and ELEANOR CLARKSON (both 50s), who own the house attached to the barn, wait outside the barn door.

Millard reaches for the door.

ELEANOR

Millard, leave her be!

MILLARD

Hush up, Eleanor!

ELEANOR

But we got the only place in town where Widow Kirksey can develop them plates!

Eleanor blocks the barn door.

INT. BARN - DAY

The chickens continue to cluck away...and Kitten inserts the plate into a lightproof holder. She then inserts the holder into the camera.

Next, she removes the slide from the holder.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Eleanor and Millard engage in a cat-and-mouse game: She remains in front of the door...and he continues to fight to get inside the barn.

MILLARD

Look! I gotta get in there!

ELEANOR

Millard, ain't you heard of Mathew Brady...the famous photo...the famous picture taker?

Millard shoves his wife away from the door...Eleanor pins her husband to the side of the barn.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

He got started the same way Widow Kirksey did!

MILLARD

Bull droppings!

ELEANOR

Oh, yeah? Ask Mr. Cox!

Millard plays dumb while still in Eleanor's grip.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

The fella that runs the Dodge House Hotel...or one of 'em!

INT. BARN - DAY

Kitten removes the lens cap from the camera to expose the plate, then replaces the lens cap to end the exposure.

She sticks the slide back into the holder, then removes the holder from the camera.

The young widow yanks the glass plate from the holder before she holds the plate over a tray to pour developer over the glass plate.

And another chicken nips at Kitten.

EXT. BARN - DAY

The Clarksons wrestle themselves to the ground.

A few seconds later, Millard and Eleanor end their match.

ELEANOR  
Listen...we let this young lady  
work on her plates.

Millard slowly nods.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)  
Now why you wanna go into the barn  
when this young lady needs  
darkness?

MILLARD  
Eleanor, I just wanna see if them  
chickens in there are usin' the  
barn for an outhouse!

INT. BARN - DAY

Now Kitten puts the plate into a tray filled with sodium thiosulfate...a fixing agent for the plate.

The next step: She washes the plate in water.

Kitten heats both the plate and a bottle of varnish until both items are blood warm.

After that, she applies varnish to the plate until the varnish coats the plate. (Kitten pours any extra varnish back into the bottle.)

Result: A visible negative image of the Dodge House staff.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Eleanor and Millard help themselves off the ground.

MILLARD  
That's it. I can't stand it no  
more.

ELEANOR  
Okay.

Millard opens the door; he enters the barn...

INT. BARN - DAY

...and Eleanor follows him.

While Millard checks the ground for chicken offerings, Kitten turns to Eleanor.

KITTEN

Mrs. Clarkson, I'd just like to thank you and Mr. Clarkson for letting me come in.

ELEANOR

It's all right. Ain't nothin' to it.

KITTEN

How'd you two like to see a print made?

ELEANOR

Why not, Mrs. Kirksey?

Millard continues to look for chicken droppings.

ELEANOR (CONT'D)

Millard?

MILLARD

Huh?

Eleanor watches Kitten float a piece of paper in a tray full of an albumen-chloride solution.

When Millard finishes his investigation, he joins the two women as the print develops.

MILLARD (CONT'D)

(to Kitten)

Say...how many eggs did you use to make that solution?

The chickens gather around Eleanor, Kitten, and Millard.

EXT. LONG BRANCH SALOON - DAY

Kitten stands across the street from the saloon...and snaps a picture of the place before a bullet lands inches from her.

INT. DODGE HOUSE ROOM 15 - DAY

Giuseppe's and Sophia's daughter opens Ezekiel's suitcase and finds...his best suit.

She holds the suit up by its hanger.

LATER

Kitten now wears Ezekiel's best slacks, a white shirt, a dark vest, and suspenders...and works a tie around her neck.

Everything barely fits her.

She tries on his best suit's jacket...then a top hat.

It's all good.

To top it all off, she slaps a fake mustache between her nose and her upper lip.

With a ton of confidence, Kitten struts out of the room.

EXT. LONG BRANCH SALOON - DAY

Kitten turns heads while she strides into the saloon.

INT. LONG BRANCH BARROOM - DAY

At the bar, Ezra, Malachi, and Nehemiah imbibe away...but this time, they gaze out at a woman disguised as a man.

NINE DIFFERENT MEN than before sit in those chairs at the back of the place...and the same man at the piano as before tickles those keys.

Cigar smoke fills the saloon today as five or six of the men in the back chairs puff away.

Four smokers sit at the back table, where they play poker.

The bartender smiles as he looks at what appears to be a brand-new customer.

BARTENDER

(to Kitten)

Hey, mister! Welcome to the Long  
Branch! You must be new in town!

Kitten stops at the bar...and shakes her head "yes."

BARTENDER (CONT'D)

What'll it be?

Kitten finds an empty stool at the bar. She sits down.

KITTEN  
 (deep, mannish voice)  
 Uh...water.

BARTENDER  
 Uh...okay.

The bartender pours water into a glass and hands Kitten the glass. He watches her sip.

So far...so good. The mustache stays on Kitten's face.

At the back table, BILLY (40s; gray Stetson) slams his cards down while fellow poker players KING (30s; derby hat), SAMUEL (50s; brown Stetson), and HANNIBAL (40s; no hat) watch.

Samuel sports a Texas accent.

BILLY  
 That's it! You've cleaned me out!

SAMUEL  
 Let's face it, King. We cain't beat  
 your straight flush.

King slides his newly-won loot toward his side of the table...Billy jumps out of his chair and walks away.

HANNIBAL  
 Hey, Billy! Come back!

BILLY  
 (along the way)  
 Forget it!

HANNIBAL  
 (stands up)  
 King, I'm gonna look for another  
 player. Wanna come with me?

KING  
 Are you kiddin' me?

Samuel leaves his seat and follows Hannibal to the bar as King guards his own winnings.

At the bar, Kitten finishes her drink. She looks behind her...and notices Hannibal and Samuel, who lean on the bar.

HANNIBAL  
 (to Kitten)  
 We ain't seen you before.

Kitten keeps up her deep, mannish voice.

KITTEN  
You're right. This is my first time  
here.

SAMUEL  
We could use another player.

KITTEN  
Well...uh...

SAMUEL  
Billy done left us, and...

KITTEN  
You've got yourself a deal.

Samuel and Hannibal watch Kitten jump off the bar stool. She follows the two men to the poker table.

LATER

Kitten finds herself the only nonsmoker at the table.

KING  
It's straight poker. Ain't nothin'  
wild.

Kitten watches Hannibal, King, and Samuel turn cards up around the table...then she follows suit.

In this new round, King ends up the first to find a jack...so he deals the cards and eyeballs Kitten.

KING (CONT'D)  
Uh...what's your name?

KITTEN  
Carlton...Carlton Kirkman.

Samuel eyes his five cards...Hannibal looks at his own set of cards...Kitten examines the cards she's received.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
To tell you the truth...this is the  
first time I've ever played poker  
in my life.

A surprised King almost fumbles his cards.

SAMUEL  
Carlton, where you from?

KITTEN  
 San Francisco...but now, I live  
 here in Dodge City.

Samuel and Hannibal join King in Club Flummoxed.

SAMUEL  
 Why in tarnation did you leave San  
 Francisco?

KING  
 Yeah, Carlton. I'd give my right  
 foot to live in San Francisco.

Kitten's mouth drops.

KITTEN  
 It's like this: I left San  
 Francisco to go to college in  
 Oberlin, Ohio.

Hannibal's, King's, and Samuel's faces freeze.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 I went there to study music. I met  
 my wife there...she was a music  
 student, too. Anyway, she and I  
 graduated from Oberlin College and  
 ended up teaching there.

HANNIBAL  
 (to Kitten)  
 No wonder you ain't never played  
 poker before.  
 (shakes his head "no")  
 I need five new cards.

Hannibal turns in his five offending cards and receives a  
 quintet of new ones from dealer King.

KITTEN  
 A month ago, an opportunity for me  
 to return to San Francisco opened  
 up. My wife and I were going to  
 join with another couple to start a  
 music school there.

Samuel eyeballs his cards and grins from ear to ear.

KING  
 (takes a puff)  
 What happened after that, Carlton?

KITTEN

Elizabeth...my wife...and I set out for San Francisco by train the day before the nation's centennial...but she died on the train two days later.

SAMUEL

Rightful sorry.

Hannibal tosses three chips into the pot.

HANNIBAL

I'm throwin' in seventy-five cents.  
(to Kitten)  
Where'd 'Lizabeth die at?

KITTEN

She died twenty-five miles east of here. Dodge City was the nearest town.

Kitten throws three chips into the pot.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

I figured I'd better put in seventy-five cents, too.

(examines her cards)

In the final analysis, nobody wants to sit next to a rotting corpse on a train for two days.

King looks dissatisfied with his hand...so he exchanges it for five other cards.

KING

Carlton...ain't you gonna ask for five new cards?

Kitten shrugs.

LATER

The poker game continues...and Kitten looks more comfortable and more confident than earlier.

KING (CONT'D)

(to Kitten)

We never really introduced ourselves to you.

Kitten shakes her head up and down.

KING (CONT'D)  
I'm King...Samuel's the one in the  
brown hat.

Samuel tips his Stetson to Kitten.

KING (CONT'D)  
And Hannibal ain't got no hat at  
all.

Kitten reaches for her top hat...only to pull her hand back.

SAMUEL  
That's it. I'm calling.

Samuel announces his hand...King names his own  
hand...Hannibal calls.

The three men turn to Kitten...who calls her hand at last.

HANNIBAL  
Carlton...you...done beat us.

Kitten pushes her winnings toward her side of the table.

King pulls a cigar out of his suit pocket and offers the  
stogie to Kitten.

KING  
Have a cigar. You've earned it.

KITTEN  
(shakes her head "no")  
To tell you the truth...I can't  
stand those things. They make me  
sick.

King sticks the cigar back in his suit pocket...the saloon  
pianist's music stops.

Matter of fact, he runs toward the restroom (or outhouse).

Kitten stuffs her earnings into her suit pocket, then gazes  
at the now-vacant piano.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
(to her poker mates)  
Hope he won't mind.

King, Hannibal, and Samuel watch Kitten head for the piano.

She removes the instrument's music rack, sets the rack aside, sits at the piano's stool, and...bangs out a classical number (something like "Minute Waltz").

All other activity at the Long Branch stops...for a while.

NEHEMIAH  
NOT IN HERE, FELLA!

Nehemiah jumps off his seat, runs toward the piano, draws his gun, and...

SAMUEL  
Look out, Carlton!

BANG! Nehemiah shoots at Kitten...but the bullet tears one of the upright's strings apart.

Kitten's music stops.

BANG! Nehemiah tries to plug Kitten again...only to watch her flee the piano (and his next bullet pierce the back wall).

Kitten's top hat falls off on her way underneath the table.

All three bar drinkers stand around the table, where they eyeball Kitten.

EZRA  
Lady, didn't we tell you you ain't  
allowed in here?

MALACHI  
Or any saloon here in Dodge?

Kitten retrieves her hat.

KITTEN  
(in her real voice)  
I'm leaving. Just don't shoot.

She crawls out from underneath the table and sticks her top hat back on.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
(backing away)  
Just don't shoot.

As Kitten backs out of the saloon, she feels her face...and finds that her fake mustache has fallen off her face.

Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah follow Kitten out of the place...and set off cheers from the remaining customers and the bartender.

Samuel, King, and Hannibal look shocked.

INT. DODGE CITY JAIL - DAY

Kitten (still in that suit and top hat) shares a jail cell with VIVIAN BARFKNECHT (47, witty, eccentric; tattooed).

The two women eyeball DORILLA GILBERT (24, crafty, wild; downright cute) and WYATT EARP (28, resolute, tall; the legend), who both wear gun-filled holsters...and who argue.

DORILLA

C'mon! Let me help! Y'all're just as outnumbered as Custer was a month ago at Li'l' Big Horn.

WYATT

Lady, we don't need your help!

DORILLA

But I'm the best shot in town...and I can help tame this here town.

WYATT

Yeah...and Abe Lincoln never set foot inside Ford's Theater.

Kitten chuckles.

DORILLA

Ain'tcha tired of havin' the most lawless town in--

WYATT

Listen, lady: Marshal Deger and my brother James and I are the law around here.

VIVIAN

(eyeing Kitten)

Sure they are.

DORILLA

Well, then, Wyatt, act like it!

Dorilla gestures Wyatt toward the door.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
(opens door)  
You hear that?

GUNSHOTS ring out outside the jail.

WYATT  
Yeah...but I keep telling you that  
this is no job for a lady! And  
you're too pretty to be a  
gunslinger!

Vivian and Kitten hear Wyatt and Dorilla leave the  
building...and the door SLAM SHUT.

VIVIAN  
(pointing at Kitten)  
So they got you 'cause you snuck in  
a saloon.

KITTEN  
I couldn't help it, Vivian. I'm the  
kind who loves to go where there's  
a piano.

Vivian's nod is slow.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
I've played the piano ever since I  
was nine...and I figured that if I  
couldn't be America's answer to  
Clara Schumann, then...

Kitten catches Vivian's lost look.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Tell me how you ended up here in  
jail.

VIVIAN  
If you tell me how you got your  
nickname, then I'll tell you why  
I'm here.

KITTEN  
My late husband Ezekiel gave me  
that nickname.

VIVIAN  
Uh...huh.

KITTEN

We were married for four years before he died of whooping cough...he loved the way he and I snuggled so closely.

VIVIAN

Oh...kay.

KITTEN

Zeke used to tell me I fit close to him like a kitten...so cozy.

A wide smile decorates Vivian's face.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Now...your turn.

VIVIAN

Marshal Deger threw me in here for trying to start my own saloon.

KITTEN

Oh, boy. They're dead serious about not letting women enter saloons here in Dodge City.

VIVIAN

Not only that, Kitten: Marshal Deger told me they've already got sixteen saloons here..."and we don't need a seventeenth!"

Kitten takes her hat off.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

But what got the marshal's goat was when he tasted the whiskey Joybelle served him.

KITTEN

That's funny...I could never acquire a taste for whiskey. Just water and wine.

VIVIAN

Anyway...Marshal Deger told me and Joybelle: "Your whiskey tastes like shoe polish!"

KITTEN

And that was the last straw for him.

Vivian shakes her head "yes," then shakes her head sideways.

VIVIAN  
Boy, I really miss San Francisco.

KITTEN  
You come from there, too?

VIVIAN  
Vibrant, exciting, captivating San Francisco!

KITTEN  
Did you ever get an offer to move back there?

VIVIAN  
I did, I did, I did!

KITTEN  
Was it to start a saloon?

VIVIAN  
Nope...I had a chance to start my own tattoo emporium.

Vivian points to her tattoo, then shakes hands with Kitten.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

TWO COWBOYS fight each other (with their fists) in the middle of the street.

Now in a dress, Kitten strolls by and watches the two fighters...and bumps into Dorilla.

Dorilla points to Kitten, who holds her hand up.

KITTEN  
Sorry about that.

DORILLA  
You were in jail the other day.

Kitten nods.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
And you were wearin' a suit...duded up like a man.

KITTEN  
That was me.

DORILLA  
You're that strange lady who totes  
a strange box along, ain't you?

Kitten and Dorilla stroll on.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
I saw you the other day when you  
pointed that strange box towards  
the Long Branch.

KITTEN  
That's actually a camera.

DORILLA  
Oh.

KITTEN  
It's used to take  
pictures...photographs.

Dorilla shakes her head up and down.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Mathew Brady became famous because  
of his photographs of Civil War  
battles.

DORILLA  
Did you have to talk about the  
Civil War?

KITTEN  
My late husband Ezekiel used to  
love to take photographs. It's his  
camera I'm using...he used to love  
to take daguerreotypes of students  
at Oberlin College.

DORILLA  
Ain't seen too many doggies since  
I've been here in Dodge.

KITTEN  
My name's Catharine Castelluccio  
Kirksey...that's my real name. My  
late husband used to call me  
Kitten.

DORILLA  
I know. I heard Wyatt Earp talk  
about you.

Kitten stops in her tracks. A second later, Dorilla does, too. The two women shake hands.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Dorilla Gilbert.

KITTEN  
So nice to meet you, Miss--

Dorilla and Kitten break their handshake and resume their slow stroll.

DORILLA  
Just call me Dorilla. I ain't all high-toned and fancy. I'm just me.

KITTEN  
That's good enough for me, Dorilla.

EXT. DODGE HOUSE HOTEL - DAY

Kitten enters the place; Dorilla follows her.

INT. DODGE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

Annie H., F.W., and George B. stand behind the counter...only to exhibit openmouthed shock when Dorilla and Kitten walk in.

Kitten registers shock when she sees Ezekiel's and her belongings stuffed behind the counter.

ANNIE H.  
(to Dorilla)  
Are you still looking for the men who killed your husband and brother?

DORILLA  
Did John Wilkes Booth plug Abe Lincoln?

While Annie H. nods, George B. and F.W. stare at each other.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
And besides, since the law around here ain't gonna do it, then I've gotta do it.

GEORGE B.  
Wait a minute, Dorilla. You're talkin' 'bout some mighty fine men that strapped on them badges--

Kitten blows an imaginary bubble.

DORILLA

George, they're as helpless as a  
dog fightin' a whole army of fleas.

F.W.

(to Kitten)

You see why we gave you that  
revolver?

The Oberlin grad eyeballs all those belongings in back of the  
counter...with her gun and its holster on top of the heap.

KITTEN

Uh...huh.

F.W.

We heard you went to the Long  
Branch all dressed up like your  
late husband...you could've used  
that gun that day.

KITTEN

F.W., I'm really a peacemaker. At  
least I try to be.

F.W.

You spent the night in jail...so we  
rented your room to a drover from  
Texas.

Samuel strides into the lobby...and locks his eyes on Kitten.

GEORGE B.

Mrs. Kirksey, we done rented your  
room to him.

SAMUEL

(pointing at Kitten)

Ah want mah money back.

KITTEN

Samuel...I won it fair and  
square...

SAMUEL

You was wearin' a disguise! You was  
dressed up like a man!

KITTEN

That was the only way I could even  
enter a saloon--

SAMUEL  
 And Ah'll betcha that wasn't even  
 your first poker game--

Dorilla jumps in between Kitten and Samuel to keep things  
 from escalating.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Eleanor, Kitten, and Millard watch Dorilla aim her .44 at a  
 row of bottles lined up on a table.

This time, Kitten wears her holster...with her gun in it.

BANG! Dorilla shoots the first bottle on the left to pieces.

DORILLA  
 Millard and Eleanor, I wanna thank  
 you kindly for lettin' me do this  
 here.

ELEANOR  
 Ain't nothin' to it.

Millard nods.

POW! A bullet from Dorilla's gun fells the second bottle on  
 the left.

MILLARD  
 Nice shootin'.

A smiling Dorilla twirls her gun.

DORILLA  
 Hey, Kitten, you found a place for  
 all your stuff...and all Zeke's  
 stuff...yet?

KITTEN  
 I don't want to impose on  
 anybody...and there's another hotel  
 here in town--

DORILLA  
 You ain't gotta keep livin' in a  
 hotel.

Dorilla stuffs her gun into its holster.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
 (drapes arm around Kitten)  
 Why don'tcha stay with me?

Kitten stares in space a few seconds.

She shakes her head "yes."

KITTEN

You know...I wouldn't mind learning how to use a gun, after all I've been through since my husband died.

DORILLA

(grinning)

I'll learn you how to handle a shootin' arn...but you gotta do one thing for me.

KITTEN

What's that, Dorilla?

DORILLA

Well...you gotta learn me how to handle that box you bang.

KITTEN

Which box do you mean?

DORILLA

That big box...the one that don't go "click."

Kitten's mouth flies open.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

The box you've been bangin' ever since you were nine.

Millard and Eleanor cajole Kitten into an answer.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

You went to finishin' school to be a schoolmarm, didn't you?

Kitten flashes a huge smile.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

The calendar reaches August...and Kitten and Dorilla tote the former's and Ezekiel's belongings into a two-story, slightly-larger-than-average house south of the AT&SF tracks.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Vivian watches Dorilla and Kitten move all those belongings into the middle of a heavily-furnished space.

VIVIAN  
Ah, Kitten! We meet again!

KITTEN  
Yes, we do, Vivian!

The two ex-jailbirds shake hands, then hug one another.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
This is a very nice place you've got! When'd you move in?

VIVIAN  
I got it the week after I got out of jail.

Vivian gestures Kitten and Dorilla toward one of two sofas.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
Let's all three sit down.

All three women take seats at that sofa.

DORILLA  
One thing about it, Kitten: Vivian moves real fast.

VIVIAN  
I had to. I'm a businesswoman.

JOYBELLE JENSEN (20, clever, White) and ANNIE MAE BROWN (22, friendly, Black) stroll down the stairs into the parlor...and eyeball the threesome on the sofa.

JOYBELLE  
Annie Mae...there's a new girl in town.

ANNIE MAE  
Let's make her feel welcome.

JOYBELLE  
Let's make sure she's good first.

VIVIAN  
(gesturing)  
Annie Mae...Joybelle...have a seat, you two.

ANNIE MAE  
You bet!

JOYBELLE

Oh...kay.

Annie Mae and Joybelle take to the other sofa.

KITTEN

Which one of you is Joybelle?

Joybelle raises her hand.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Nice to meet you, Joybelle. Vivian told me you used to be a bartender.

JOYBELLE

Yeah...and that didn't last too long. And that's so damn--

ANNIE MAE

(pointing to Kitten)

And I'm Annie Mae. Annie Mae Brown.

Annie Mae jumps up from her seat and offers her hand to Kitten, who rises from her own seat. They both shake hands.

Joybelle's mouth flies open.

KITTEN

My name's Catharine Maria Castelluccio Kirksey...but my nickname's Kitten. And it's nice to meet you.

Kitten and Annie Mae sit back down...only to receive shocked looks from Joybelle.

ANNIE MAE

Joybelle, don't you know you get more flies with honey than with vinegar?

A still-dumbfounded Joybelle points to the two handshakers.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

MARVELLA HAWKINS (18, indifferent, Black) and LOLA SANCHEZ (30, questioning, Brown) stroll arm in arm toward the place.

LOLA

Marvella, this is stupid.

MARVELLA

I know, but--

LOLA

I earn thirty cents every time I have fun with a man. You and Annie Mae get just fifteen cents apiece when you have fun or when she does.

MARVELLA

Least it's better'n not gettin' paid.

LOLA

It ain't fair! Joybelle earns a whole buck!

Marvella knocks on the front door.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Vivian's gotta start equalizin'--

The door opens...and reveals Vivian.

VIVIAN

Marvella and Lola, you're just in time!

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Lola and Marvella saunter inside the parlor as Vivian seats herself at a plush chair.

Marvella eyes Kitten, then turns to Vivian.

MARVELLA

Competition, Vivian?

Dorilla makes wild gestures and Vivian gives Marvella a stunned look.

DORILLA

No, no, no, no, Marvella! It ain't whatcha think it is!

Kitten jumps back up to walk toward Marvella and Lola.

KITTEN

Hi. My name's Kitten...and you must be Marvella.

MARVELLA

Yeah.

LOLA

And I'm Lola.

Kitten extends her hand to the two hookers...but while Lola looks eager, Marvella looks wary.

Still, the threesome shake hands.

Marvella sits next to Annie Mae and Joybelle; Lola goes to Dorilla's and Kitten's sofa.

LOLA (CONT'D)  
Kitten...if you ain't the new girl  
in town, what are you?

KITTEN  
(sitting back down)  
I'm a photographer.

DORILLA  
And that ain't all!

Lola catches Marvella's I-told-you-so look.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

Annie Mae, Dorilla, Joybelle, Kitten, Lola, Marvella, and Vivian team up to lug what had been the Long Branch's upright piano into the brothel. (The piano's lid is closed.)

MARVELLA  
What good's this box we're luggin'  
gonna do us?

VIVIAN  
Same good that the Long Branch  
Saloon having one did.

ANNIE MAE  
Just give it a chance, Marvella.  
You'll see.

Kitten and Dorilla trade grins as Vivian opens the front door...and the other six women shove the piano through.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Vivian walks backwards until she reaches an empty corner.

VIVIAN  
Right here.

She jumps out of the way to help her six colleagues push that piano into said corner.

Six women slump onto the two sofas.

Kitten (the exception) flexes her muscles.

JOYBELLE  
C'mon! Take a rest!

The ex-collegian removes the music rack from the piano and sets the rack out of harm's way.

She finds the instrument's action looks the same as before.

KITTEN  
I remember the bullet hole from  
when I was in the saloon in  
Ezekiel's best suit.

Lola, Marvella, Annie Mae, and Joybelle look confused.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
My late husband.

MARVELLA  
How'd he die, Kitten? He die in a  
gunfight?

KITTEN  
(opens piano lid)  
No...he died from whooping cough.

DORILLA  
(getting up from sofa)  
I'm gonna go find me a comfortable  
seat.

LOLA  
But you were just on one!

Dorilla runs up the stairs.

She comes back with a wooden keg; she sets it in front of the piano as Kitten stands next to the instrument.

DORILLA  
(sits down on keg)  
I'm ready now, schoolmarm. Learn me  
how to play.

Elsewhere in the parlor, Vivian and Annie Mae beam...Marvella's mouth flies open...Joybelle and Lola flee.

INT. VIVIAN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Lola and Joybelle sprint inside. When they stop at the stove, the two women burst into boisterous laughter.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Hands on her hips, a still-seated Dorilla grits her teeth.

KITTEN

Don't pay them any attention,  
Dorilla. Just remember that you're  
taking initiative.

Dorilla looks lost.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

You're taking the bull by the  
horns.

Kitten watches Dorilla break into a smile.

INT. VIVIAN'S KITCHEN - DAY

Marvella enters a room where Joybelle and Lola still laugh.

MARVELLA

I wouldn't be laughin' if I was  
you.

JOYBELLE

Don'tcha get it? Dorilla learnin'  
to play the piano?

LOLA

Rootin', tootin', gun-totin'  
Dorilla?

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Dorilla continues to sit on the keg...but now she rests her  
hands on the piano's keys.

KITTEN

How do you feel, Dorilla? Are you  
comfortable?

DORILLA

Like a rifle in my two hands.

KITTEN

That's the first thing. Posture is  
so very important, because you want  
to sit straight up instead of  
hunched over the keyboard.

The gunslinger shakes her head "yes."

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Now...do you notice how there are sets of two black keys and sets of three black keys?

DORILLA

Yeah.

KITTEN

Find the two black keys in the middle.

Dorilla plays the two black keys in the middle.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Now...try the white key to the left of the two black keys you just hit.

Now Dorilla plays that white key.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

That key you've just played is called "middle C."

DORILLA

Uh...huh.

KITTEN

Once you know where middle C is, you can find your way around the rest of the piano.

Marvella, Lola, and Joybelle leave the kitchen and return to seats in the parlor.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Now, Dorilla, play the white key to the immediate right of middle C.

Dorilla depresses the white key in question.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

You've just hit a D.

DORILLA

Okay.

As Kitten continues to teach Dorilla, Marvella eyes Vivian.

MARVELLA

(whispering)

How long's this gonna take?

VIVIAN  
How long does it take to age wine?

LATER

Vivian, Marvella, Lola, Joybelle, Dorilla, and Annie Mae watch as Kitten wallops out her best classical piece.

Annie Mae, Dorilla, and Vivian look amazed by Kitten's prowess at the piano.

Kitten ends her piece...and brings out the applause.

ANNIE MAE  
Excellent, Kitten! Excellent!

KITTEN  
Thank you!

A beaming Kitten bows. Vivian approaches her.

VIVIAN  
How'd you like to be our pianist?  
By the way...you can be our  
photographer, too.

KITTEN  
Yes...and yes!

Kitten's new coworkers jubilate.

JOYBELLE  
(to Kitten)  
Now that you're the house pianist,  
I've got a request for you.

KITTEN  
Fair enough.

JOYBELLE  
You better learn you a bunch of  
regular tunes.

Kitten shakes her head "yes" while a few employees laugh.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

Out back, Dorilla and Kitten tote their own revolvers...and gaze out at a line of seven bottles on a table.

KITTEN  
I figured out how to load the gun  
the Dodge House staff gave me.

Dorilla nods with a smile.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

I learned that if you see an empty spot in the chamber, just put a bullet in it.

DORILLA

Purty darn easy to load one o' them revolvers.

KITTEN

Now I want to learn how to fire the thing so that I don't shoot my eyes out or shoot myself in the knee.

DORILLA

You done come to the right place...first of all, hold your arms straight out.

Kitten holds her arms straight out, both hands on her gun.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Aim for the bottle in the middle of the table.

Dorilla watches Kitten aim for the middle bottle.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Now...since you got a single-action revolver, like I got, see that li'l' switch on top?

KITTEN

Yes, I do.

DORILLA

That's your hammer.

Kitten shakes her head up and down.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Make sure it's cocked back, 'cause if it ain't, you ain't gonna be able to fire a bullet.

KITTEN

It's cocked back.

DORILLA

Okay...now pull the trigger.

Kitten fires...and misses the center bottle.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Aim just a li'l' bit lower.

The Oberlin alum lowers her aim just a bit.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Cock the hammer again.

Dorilla's student cocks the hammer again, then fires, and...BANG! The middle bottle shatters into pieces.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Very good!

Dorilla observes Kitten's toothy smile.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

Kitten and Dorilla stroll down the street, where they observe TWO MORE GUNFIGHTERS shooting at (and missing) each other.

DORILLA  
Who learned them how to handle a  
shootin' arn?

Kitten shrugs.

KITTEN  
One thing I'm still trying to get  
my head around is: If a single-  
action revolver holds six rounds,  
why can't I load six rounds?

DORILLA  
(nodding)  
It all has to do with safety.

KITTEN  
(wipes her forehead)  
I see...

DORILLA  
You load only five rounds and leave  
the sixth chamber empty 'cause the  
sixth chamber's gotta be in front  
of the hammer and in line with the  
barrel.

A MAN who walks in the opposite direction from Dorilla and Kitten tips his hat to the two women. The twosome respond with nods.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

See, Kitten, you load one chamber, leave the second chamber empty, and then you load the remainin' four chambers.

KITTEN

Then I can close the loading gate.

DORILLA

Right you are!

Kitten and Dorilla stroll on until they reach:

EXT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Before the two widows can reach the front entrance, TWO CHILDREN with a bag of goodies each sprint out of the store.

DORILLA

Then you cock the hammer all the way back...and with your thumb still on the hammer...

Dorilla and Kitten saunter inside the building.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

The two buddies browse.

DORILLA

You gently pull the trigger and ease the hammer to where it's straight up and uncocked.

KITTEN

(shakes her head "yes")  
That way, the gun won't go off accidentally.

DORILLA

That's right!

George M. leaves the counter and heads for Kitten and Dorilla, who encounter a crate filled with...sheet music.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Ain't nothin' in the world more embarrassin' than your gun goin' off by itself when you're with a bunch of gunfighters.

Kitten's eyes light up as she looks through the music...Dorilla looks dumbfounded.

GEORGE M.

Kitten...Dorilla...nice to see you both here again.

KITTEN

Thank you so very much, Mr. Hoover.

GEORGE M.

What can I do for you two young ladies?

DORILLA

Just lookin' for music sheets.

George M. casts a confused look.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

See, while I'm learnin' Kitten how to handle a shootin' arn, she's learnin' me how to play a pianner.

A nodding Kitten smiles...and George M. sinks deeper and deeper in confusion.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Kitten stands next to the parlor's upright piano while Dorilla (on that wooden keg) leans on the keys.

A piece of sheet music rests on the piano's music rack.

KITTEN

Dorilla, now that you know the musical alphabet--

DORILLA

A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and then back to A.

KITTEN

(beaming)

It's time to take the next step.

Dorilla eyes the sheet music in front of her.

She grits her teeth...and sits up straight.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Every piece of sheet music is like a treasure map.

DORILLA  
Buried treasure.

KITTEN  
You could say that.

The gunfighter turns to her piano teacher.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Just as a treasure map tells you  
where the stash is, the symbols on  
a piece of sheet music tell your  
hands what to do.

DORILLA  
Uh...huh.

KITTEN  
Most sheet music features staves in  
groups of two.

DORILLA  
What's a staff?

KITTEN  
Actually..."staves" is plural for  
"staff."

Marvella, Lola, and Joybelle tiptoe down the stairs and watch  
Kitten teach Dorilla.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
The way sheet music is laid out,  
Dorilla, the top staff is a treble  
staff...and the bottom staff is a  
bass staff.

Dorilla's nod is a slow, slow one.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
You play the notes on the treble  
staff with your right hand. They're  
the high notes...the melody.

DORILLA  
And I play the notes on the bass  
staff with my left hand.

Kitten points to a treble clef on the music sheet. Dorilla  
points to the same clef before she nods at Kitten.

KITTEN  
The treble clef symbol curls up  
around the "G" line.

Dorilla's mouth hangs open.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
The "G" line is the fourth line  
from the top on the treble staff.

Dorilla points to the "G" line on the treble staff, then  
points to Kitten.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Hang on...I'll be right back.

Joybelle and Lola titter as Kitten scrounges around the  
parlor for a pencil.

JOYBELLE  
(to Marvella)  
Why ain'tcha laughin'?

MARVELLA  
What's to laugh at?

Kitten finds a pencil...and Joybelle, Lola, and Marvella find  
seats on a sofa.

The Californian-turned-Ohioan-turned-Kansan returns to the  
piano to draw a treble staff on a blank piece of paper.

As Dorilla watches, Kitten draws a whole note on each space  
on the treble staff...then below the respective notes on the  
staff, the latter scribbles "F A C E."

To the right of the four notes, Kitten draws a whole note on  
each line on the same staff...and writes "E G B D F" below  
the corresponding notes on the staff.

KITTEN  
(to Dorilla)  
Now that you know where middle C  
is, play the F to the right of  
middle C.

Kitten points to the low F on her self-drawn treble staff;  
Dorilla plays the corresponding key on the piano.

With Kitten pointing, Dorilla plays the A, the C, and the  
E...then goes to the E to the right of middle C (as well as  
the G, the B, the D, and the second F after middle C).

Lola and Joybelle snicker to each other...but receive dirty looks from Marvella and Dorilla.

LOLA  
I hate to tell you this...but it still looks funny.

DORILLA  
(points to Lola)  
You know how funny you'd look with bullet holes all over your body?

Dorilla and Lola stand up...Kitten moves between them.

KITTEN  
Lola, let me ask you something.

MARVELLA  
Good luck on that, Kitten.

Joybelle points to Marvella.

KITTEN  
Lola, have you ever learned how to play a musical instrument?

Lola grins.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Do you realize how much work it takes to learn a musical instrument?

Lola's grin becomes a smile.

Marvella and Joybelle leave the sofa to join Kitten and Lola while Dorilla resumes her piano lesson.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Let alone be able to play that instrument competently?

JOYBELLE  
(arm around Kitten)  
Can you teach George Armstrong Custer to be a better general?

Kitten wags a finger at Joybelle.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

This small, two-story building rests on Walnut Street, three blocks north of Front Street.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Kitten (in the chair that comes with the teacher's desk) and Dorilla (on a fancy piano stool) sit at a mid-1870s upright at the front of the room.

KITTEN  
Just think of it...no bullet holes!

Dorilla stares at a somewhat-complex piece of sheet music in front of her.

DORILLA  
Yikes!

KITTEN  
As smart as you are, I know you should be able to handle this composition.

Kitten catches Dorilla's "do I have to?" look.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
Just take it one grand staff at a time...or one bar at a time.

DORILLA  
That'll work!

Under Kitten's watch, Dorilla painstakingly plays that somewhat-complex piece of sheet music when MARGARET A. WALKER (40s, a thinker), books in hands, walks into the schoolhouse.

Margaret sits down at a student desk.

LATER

Now Dorilla ends her number...and breathes a sigh of relief.

MARGARET  
Not bad.

Dorilla and Kitten turn around to eyeball Margaret.

KITTEN  
(standing up)  
Miss Walker, I want to thank you for allowing me to teach piano here...if only for a little while.

DORILLA

And I'm just thankful to learn  
pianner in a place what ain't got  
no swingin' doors or anything like  
that.

MARGARET

Uh huh.

Dorilla jumps off the piano stool while Margaret leaves the  
desk and walks toward the piano.

DORILLA

I'm Mrs. Kirksey's pianner student,  
Dorilla Gilbert.

Margaret and Dorilla shake hands.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Don'tcha worry none, Miss Walker.  
Mrs. Kirksey ain't a-comin' after  
your job.

KITTEN

(to Margaret)

When I moved here, I figured there  
was room for only one regular  
teacher here in Dodge City.

Margaret cracks a small smile.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

And on top of that...this is the  
quietest place in town to hold  
piano lessons.

MARGARET

I'm very happy that you find this  
schoolhouse to your liking.

Dorilla and Kitten nod.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

After school ends, you both can  
stay here as long as you like.

KITTEN

Thank you so very much!

MARGARET

Just make sure you give this  
schoolhouse back to me when you're  
done.

Margaret heads out the door; along the way, she waves at Kitten and Dorilla, who wave back.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - NIGHT

The two fistfighting cowboys take their brawl to the street in front of the brothel.

INT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DORILLA'S AND KITTEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

In this modestly-furnished room, Dorilla reclines on her bed while Kitten sits at a desk and writes a letter.

Kitten stops to look up at Dorilla.

KITTEN

Just curious...how'd you get interested in playing the piano?

DORILLA

It came outa all them times my husband and I kept passin' by saloons after he and I arrived in Dodge. Just couldn't resist that lively music.

Dorilla sits up on her bed.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

After all them times passin' by saloons, I got me a hankerin' to play that lively music myself.

KITTEN

I understand.

DORILLA

He could go in, bein' a man...but I couldn't. I tried, but they shooed me out.

KITTEN

Heaven's sake...you, too.

DORILLA

Yeah...but I shoul'da put on one o' my husband's suits, just like you did...on second thought, I wouldn't a-fit in my husband's suits.

Dorilla watches Kitten return to scribbling.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
 Hey, Kitten...you writin' your  
 folks?

KITTEN  
 Absolutely. It's been over a month  
 since I last saw them...or heard  
 from them.

Dorilla nods.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 Ever since Ezekiel was buried here  
 in Dodge City.

DORILLA  
 Makes a heap o' sense.

KITTEN  
 Just wanted to let 'em know I'm  
 getting along.

Kitten and Dorilla trade smile-filled nods.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 And that I'm teaching.

Dorilla claps her hands in goodnatured laughter.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Vivian stands across the cigar counter from George M. He  
 looks at her in surprise.

VIVIAN  
 Uh...I'd like ten robustos.

George M. grabs ten robustos from a box and sets the cigars  
 on the counter.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
 And I'd like to buy ten torpedoes.

GEORGE M.  
 Uh...okay.

Vivian eyeballs George M. as he goes to another cigar box to  
 pull out ten torpedo-shaped stogies.

VIVIAN  
 Now...I want ten perfectos.

George M. places the torpedoes alongside the robustos on the counter, then finds an empty cigar box.

The preacher walks into the store while George M. lifts ten perfectos from yet another box.

GEORGE M.

I must say, Vivian, you certainly know your cigars.

Confusion grips the preacher as he points to Vivian, who watches George M. stuff the thirty cigars into the empty box.

VIVIAN

George, I learned it all from Lola. Her folks were cigar rollers back home in Texas.

PREACHER

Well, I'll be...

VIVIAN

They got killed by a cattle baron 'cause he didn't like the way they rolled a box of cheroots.

GEORGE M.

(to the preacher)

Don't worry. I'll be right with you.

The preacher shakes his head "yes."

GEORGE M. (CONT'D)

Vivian, can I get you anything else?

VIVIAN

You sure can! I need to pick up the mail!

George M. pulls out a full sack of letters addressed to Vivian's place, then sticks the box of thirty cigars into a paper (or canvas or leather) bag.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

By the way...they were gonna place Lola in an orphanage, but she fled all the way here to Kansas.

GEORGE M.

Ma'am, that'll be one dollar...for the box of cigars.

VIVIAN  
Coming right up!

Vivian hands George M. a dollar, then grabs both sacks.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
Thanks a bunch, Mr. Hoover!

George M. and the preacher eyeball Vivian as she leaves the general store. George M. waves back.

GEORGE M.  
Now, sir, what can I get you?

PREACHER  
I'd like a bottle of your best wine.

GEORGE M.  
Will that be for communion?

The preacher stares in space a few seconds, then turns to George M.

PREACHER  
Uh...no.

And George M. does a doubletake.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Annie Mae, Dorilla, Joybelle, Kitten, Lola, and Marvella surround Vivian, who hands out the mail.

VIVIAN  
Sorry, Lola. Sorry, Dorilla.  
Nothing came for you today.

DORILLA  
It ain't nothin' at all.

LOLA  
Yeah, Vivian. Maybe tomorrow.

Marvella, Kitten, Joybelle, and Annie Mae show glee as they open their letters.

JOYBELLE  
Well, I'll be...I got me a letter  
from my old friend from back home  
in Lexington, Kentucky.

KITTEN

That's great, Joybelle!

JOYBELLE

Too bad I can't read all that good.

ANNIE MAE

Joybelle, I'll be glad to help you read it.

Joybelle's mouth flies open.

So does Marvella's.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)

Don't you worry, Marvella. I'll help you read yours, too.

MARVELLA

Deal.

Kitten reads her own letter...and raises her arms in joy.

ANNIE MAE

I had to fight off all kinds of people just to learn how to read in the first place.

Joybelle's shock escalates.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)

You know how they feel when one of us gets hold of a book. They--

VIVIAN

Kitten...what's in your letter?

KITTEN

My mother and father wrote me back.

All eyes turn to Kitten.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

They wrote: "We are coming to visit you!"

Kitten's coworkers congratulate her.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, DODGE CITY, KS - DAY

Giuseppe, Sophia, and Kitten congregate outside the boxcar. The threesome grab luggage.

GIUSEPPE  
 (points to boxcar)  
 Is this it?  
 (points to Kitten)  
 Your train station is a part of an  
 old train?

KITTEN  
 Papa...Dodge City's been growing so  
 quickly that the city leaders had  
 to start out with a boxcar for a  
 train station.

Giuseppe groans.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 This city was incorporated just  
 four years ago.

Sophia fans herself with her free hand...

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 They'll build a real train station  
 in due time.

GIUSEPPE  
 When, Catharine? When they pull a  
 caboose from a train wreck?

...then fans her husband.

GIUSEPPE (CONT'D)  
 Sophia, get that thing away from  
 me.

SOPHIA  
 Suit yourself, Giuseppe.

Kitten and her parents stroll away from the station.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

Sophia, Kitten, and Giuseppe stroll along, luggage in tow.

SOPHIA  
 Catharine, your father and I are so  
 proud of you...making a living as a  
 photographer.

KITTEN  
 And don't forget: I'm teaching,  
 too.

A nodding Sophia beams.

GIUSEPPE  
 (smiling at Kitten)  
 And you still play the piano...you  
 no let all those many years of  
 study go to waste.

BANG! BANG! Gunshots ring out along the street.

SOPHIA  
 What's more, Catharine...you're  
 preserving your late husband's  
 legacy by using his camera...now  
your camera.

Giuseppe's smile becomes a frown.

KITTEN  
 Why, thank you both.

GIUSEPPE  
 But he was such a weak...weak...

Giuseppe receives withering stares from Kitten and Sophia.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Vivian, Sophia, Marvella, Lola, Joybelle, Giuseppe, Dorilla,  
 and Annie Mae sit in chairs or the two sofas while pianist  
 Kitten switches from a classical piece to a folk tune.

Giuseppe grits his teeth...Joybelle breathes relief.

JOYBELLE  
 (to Giuseppe)  
 At least your daughter's usin' a  
 real handy survival skill.

Kitten's dad looks lost.

JOYBELLE (CONT'D)  
 Kitten almost got killed playin'  
 that fancy, high-toned music in a  
 saloon.

Joybelle watches Giuseppe slap his forehead.

LATER

Kitten, her coworkers, and her parents gab while they drink  
 wine/beer/whiskey/sarsaparilla/water.

ANNIE MAE

Sophia...you actually panned for gold out in California while you were in a family way.

SOPHIA

Yes. Yes, I did, Annie Mae.

ANNIE MAE

(takes a sip)

That had to be exciting.

SOPHIA

And...dangerous.

(taking a swig)

And as my husband would say...foolish.

ANNIE MAE

But a lot of great things happened because you found gold alongside him--

A KNOCK on the front door arouses a few hookers and Vivian...who beats the hookers to the door.

She opens the door and finds...Billy.

VIVIAN

Oh, hello! Come on in!

Billy enters the brothel, then removes his Stetson hat.

BILLY

Hey, everybody! Any of you got time for a quick one?

Kitten's mouth drops.

Giuseppe spits out his drink.

Dorilla shakes her head "no."

Lola, Annie Mae, Marvella, and Joybelle stare at Billy...whose look grows meaner when he notices Marvella and Annie Mae.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(points hat at Vivian)

What in Hell are them two dark--

VIVIAN  
 Billy...Annie Mae and Marvella are  
 our two best lovers.

Sophia's face freezes.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
 By far.

JOYBELLE  
 Way far.

While Giuseppe throws his now-empty glass down, Billy dons  
 his hat and storms out of the place.

Giuseppe and Sophia converge on Kitten.

SOPHIA  
 Catharine, you never told us you  
 work in a...a...a...place like  
 this.

KITTEN  
 This is where I work...I'm the  
 house pianist.

GIUSEPPE  
 Cathouse!

KITTEN  
 I'm also the house photographer.

GIUSEPPE  
 Why you do this to us?  
 (pointing at Kitten)  
 WHY?

KITTEN  
 Papa, it's all because the saloons  
 here in Dodge City won't let me in  
 as a customer...let alone as a  
 piano player.

Vivian, Annie Mae, and Dorilla saunter toward Sophia,  
 Giuseppe, and Kitten.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 And Dodge City already has a full-  
 time schoolteacher in Miss Walker.

GIUSEPPE  
 Catharine, Catharine, Catharine!  
 Why you waste my money--

SOPHIA  
Our money.

Kitten shakes her head in the negative.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)  
We raised you to be a teacher!

GIUSEPPE  
We no raise you to be a...a...lady  
of the evening!

Dorilla stares in anger at Giuseppe as Lola, Marvella, and Joybelle join the group.

DORILLA  
Listen, Mr. C., she ain't no lady  
of the evenin'!

GIUSEPPE  
But--

DORILLA  
And don't pin that on me!

SOPHIA  
Fair enough, Dorilla.

Sophia eyeballs her husband for support.

GIUSEPPE  
Fair enough.

Giuseppe's wife points, one by one, to the actual hookers and their boss.

SOPHIA  
Haven't you got anything better to  
do with your lives?

MARVELLA  
Ain't gonna make no difference,  
Mrs. C.

SOPHIA  
You're wrong, Marvella. Dead wrong.

Annie Mae gives Marvella a look of pity.

GIUSEPPE  
(to Kitten)  
We raise you to be a teacher! NOW  
ACT LIKE IT!

JOYBELLE

She already is, Mr. Castelluccio!  
She's teachin' Dorilla to...

Joybelle breaks into laughter so strong and so loud she can't finish her sentence.

ANNIE MAE

Kitten's teaching Dorilla how to play the piano. And I think it's wonderful.

Dorilla and Sophia nod...but Giuseppe burns.

GIUSEPPE

Catharine Maria Castelluccio, you need to teach all the ladies of the evening in here!

Giuseppe grabs Sophia's hand.

GIUSEPPE (CONT'D)

If you no teach 'em all, you go back to San Francisco and live with us!

SOPHIA

You've got until New Year's!

Kitten watches her folks stride toward the front door.

KITTEN

NO!

While Sophia and Giuseppe exit Vivian's Brothel, all remaining eyes turn to Kitten.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

Kitten, Dorilla, Vivian, Joybelle, Annie Mae, Lola, and Marvella huddle in the backyard.

ANNIE MAE

Vivian, if Marvella and I are the best lovers in this brothel, it'd be nice if you paid us like it.

LOLA

(winking at Annie Mae)  
See? You said it!

Vivian stares into space...and Marvella stares at Vivian.

KITTEN  
Speaking of Vivian...

VIVIAN  
I'm right here.

KITTEN  
You wanted to start a tattoo  
emporium.

VIVIAN  
I did, I did, I did!

Kitten's eyes light up.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)  
But that was then.

KITTEN  
Dorilla, we all know what you do  
best.

A huge smile decorates Dorilla's face.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
But what do the rest of you do  
best?

ANNIE MAE  
Besides making love?

Joybelle, Lola, and Vivian laugh.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - DAY

Annie Mae, Joybelle, Lola, Marvella, Dorilla, Kitten, and  
Vivian play poker at a table that a leaf extends.

Vivian and Lola smoke cigars while Joybelle and Marvella  
study their own cards.

MARVELLA  
I'm out.

Marvella throws her cards down...and sets off confusion among  
several other players.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
Hey, I might not read too  
good...but I sure know my cards.

VIVIAN  
All right, then...everybody else,  
it's time to call.

Annie Mae calls...Dorilla follows suit...Joybelle reveals her cards...Kitten takes her turn.

LOLA  
(throws cards down)  
Kitten, you won!

KITTEN  
You don't know that, Lola! Vivian  
hasn't revealed her hand!

Vivian just throws her own cards to the table.

VIVIAN  
(gesturing to Kitten)  
The pot's all yours.

Kitten moves her winnings to her side of the table...Annie Mae turns to Marvella.

ANNIE MAE  
Did you know that a deck of cards  
has fifty-two cards in it because  
the Bible has fifty-two books in  
it?

MARVELLA  
Well, nail me to a cross.

Vivian hands Kitten a cigar.

VIVIAN  
Here...you deserve this.

KITTEN  
(waving Vivian off)  
Thanks, but no thanks. I can't  
stand those things...they make me  
sick.

JOYBELLE  
I'll take it, Vivian!

A shrugging Vivian hands the stogie to Joybelle.

LATER

The parlor-cum-casino becomes a library as Vivian and her employees read books and/or today's "Dodge City Times."

Marvella struggles through the book in her hands.

MARVELLA  
 (looks up from book)  
 Anybody got a minute? I'm havin'  
 trouble with a word.

Joybelle gives Marvella a knowing nod.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
 A big word.

Kitten and Annie Mae rush to Marvella's side.

ANNIE MAE  
 Marvella, what's the word that's  
 got you in a knot?

Marvella points to the word in question.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)  
 Why, that's "abolition."

MARVELLA  
 Ab...o...lit...ion.

ANNIE MAE  
 That's the act of doing away with  
 something.

Kitten and Marvella nod.

KITTEN  
 You know what, Annie Mae? You'd  
 make a good orator.

Annie Mae looks stricken.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 Public speaker.

ANNIE MAE  
 Wait a minute...me? A public  
 speaker?

KITTEN  
 You could be another Frederick  
 Douglass.

Now Annie Mae stares into space.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

My late husband used to have a copy of the publication Mr. Douglass is associated with..."The North Star."

MARVELLA

You tellin' stories, Kitten?

KITTEN

No, it's true. Ezekiel was born in and raised in Ashtabula, Ohio.

ANNIE MAE

A stop on the Underground Railroad!

Dorilla, Joybelle, and Vivian saunter toward Annie Mae, Kitten, and Marvella.

KITTEN

Absolutely right, Annie Mae.

Lola joins the confab; she catches Annie Mae's slow nod.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

If you get hold of one of Mr. Douglass' speeches...how would you feel about memorizing it? And then reciting it in public?

A smile slowly forms on Annie Mae's face.

ANNIE MAE

I think I can.

LOLA

(to Annie Mae)

You better grow a beard first.

(pointing to Dorilla)

And for good measure, you better teach her how to handle a gun.

DORILLA

Bite your tongue, Lola Sanchez!

Lola pretends to chew on her tongue.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

School's in session inside...and Kitten, Vivian, Dorilla, Annie Mae, Joybelle, Lola, and a birdcage-wielding Marvella wait near the front entrance.

A PARROT and A DOVE rest inside the birdcage.

LOLA  
 (eyeballing Marvella)  
 Really now...a birdcage?

MARVELLA  
 Well, why not? You know, Mrs. C.  
 got a point about doin' somethin'  
 better with our lives.

Lola looks at the parrot.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
 Yeah, Lola. I'm gonna teach that  
 poll parrot how to talk.

LOLA  
 This I gotta see.

MARVELLA  
 Well, look: The family that owned  
 me when I was little used to work  
 with animals.

Marvella catches Lola's confused look.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
 The four-legged kind...real  
 animals.

School's out...and Margaret opens the front door. She sees  
 TWENTY (OR SO) STUDENTS pour out of the building.

When the last youngster leaves the schoolhouse, Margaret  
 gestures Kitten and coworkers inside.

Along the way:

JOYBELLE  
 (to Marvella)  
 Whatcha gonna do with that dove you  
 got in there?

MARVELLA  
 I don't know. I'll figure it out.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Margaret removes her books from the teacher's desk when  
 Kitten and her buddies settle into some children's desks.

MARGARET

Greetings, Mrs. Kirksey. I see you and Miss Gil...Dorilla brought some additional students.

KITTEN

I like the way you put that.

DORILLA

And Miss Walker, we really 'preciate you lettin' us use this here schoolhouse.

A nodding Margaret (books and all) heads for the front door.

MARGARET

I must say, Mrs. Kirksey, I appreciate your courage in working with what others would call soiled doves.

Lola, Vivian, and Joybelle cringe while Annie Mae shrugs.

MARVELLA

(standing up)

Miss Walker, you got a few minutes? Wanna show you somethin'.

Margaret stops at the front door as Marvella opens the door and quickly grabs the dove...and hurries the cage shut.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)

(releases dove)

That thing flyin' up there's a soiled dove.

MARGARET

Uh huh.

The schoolhouse occupants watch the dove glide around.

MARVELLA

I'm gonna clean her up and teach her a trick or two.

Annie Mae, Kitten, and Margaret nod.

VIVIAN

People work the same way: You can clean 'em up and teach 'em a trick or two.

ANNIE MAE  
Or as many tricks as possible.

MARGARET  
Good luck to you all.

And Margaret's out the door. She shuts it behind herself.

KITTEN  
Marvella...looks like you, Annie  
Mae, and Dorilla have caught the  
spirit.

LOLA  
Spirit? What spirit?

Marvella chases the dove, finally grabs it, and...

KITTEN  
Four years ago this June, Ezekiel  
and I spent our honeymoon in  
Chicago. We loved it so much we  
went back there that December.

JOYBELLE  
Did you and Zeke see a ghost when  
you was over there, Kitten?

...wrestles it into the birdcage.

KITTEN  
No we didn't, Joybelle.

A disappointed Joybelle snaps her fingers.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
But here's what we did see:  
(goes to teacher's desk)  
We saw Buffalo Bill make his acting  
debut in one of Ned Buntline's  
shows.

Dorilla sits in openmouthed shock.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
(sits at teacher's desk)  
It was a show called "The Scouts of  
the Prairie."

DORILLA  
Buff...alo...Bill?

KITTEN  
That's right, Dorilla. That Buffalo  
Bill.

DORILLA  
He was actin'?

JOYBELLE  
Like that Shakespeare kinda actin'?

KITTEN  
Absolutely right! He and Ned  
Buntline and "Texas Jack"  
Omohundro.

DORILLA  
He went from scoutin' to actin'.

KITTEN  
And I thought we could put together  
a show like that.

Vivian, Lola, and Joybelle eyeball each other in shock.

VIVIAN  
Us?

LOLA  
Wait a minute! We ain't no scouts!

Joybelle's shock becomes understanding.

JOYBELLE  
Actually...we been scoutin' all  
this time.

Lola still looks puzzled...Vivian nods with a smile.

VIVIAN  
Lola, don't you see? While Buffalo  
Bill Cody was scouting for the  
government, you and Annie Mae and  
Marvella and Joybelle have been  
scouting fellas.

LOLA  
Oh...kay.

KITTEN

What I was thinking, everybody...I thought Annie Mae could give a recitation, Marvella could work with her birds, and Dorilla could do her sharpshooting act.

Several heads nod.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

When I was on the train that took me here, I found out Texas Jack has started his own acting troupe...and his wife Giuseppina is a dancer in it.

JOYBELLE

I can dance.

LOLA

With or without a gun pointed at your feet?

While Kitten's and Annie Mae's mouths fly open, Marvella and Joybelle herself laugh.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

In the backyard, Dorilla leans on her rifle while Kitten gazes at the rifle in her own two hands.

DORILLA

You look like you cain't decide between Sam Tilden and Rutherford B. Hayes.

KITTEN

That's a choice you and I aren't allowed to make.

Kitten looks at a new row of seven bottles on the table.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Speaking of choices...Vivian and Lola haven't decided what they want to do in our new traveling show.

DORILLA

Give 'em time, Kitten. They'll come around when they ready.

Dorilla gestures her student into shooting position...but Kitten looks uneasy with the rifle on her shoulder.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Okay...relax while you're holdin'  
that rifle there.

Kitten tries to loosen up.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
Sure it's gonna feel different when  
you're holdin' a rifle when you're  
used to holdin' a revolver.

KITTEN  
So true...but I'll learn.

DORILLA  
Now, Kitten, you wanna fix your  
sight on the target. And you wanna  
keep both peepers open.

KITTEN  
All right.

DORILLA  
Don't fixate on the target too  
long. And when you're ready to  
shoot, take a deep breath  
first...and then exhale 'bout half  
of it.

Dorilla watches Kitten inhale and exhale.

DORILLA (CONT'D)  
And when you're ready to fire,  
grasp the wrist of the stock  
firm...let the trigger rest on the  
end of your finger...and put slow,  
steady pressure on the trigger 'til  
the rifle fires.

KITTEN  
I've got it.

DORILLA  
Okay. Let's see you take out that  
middle bottle.

Kitten follows Dorilla's instructions (deep breath and all),  
aims, and...BANG! The middle bottle shatters into bits.

Dorilla and Kitten raise their rifles in jubilation.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Kitten sits on a sofa, where she watches piano student Dorilla pound out "Moonlight Sonata" or a similar piece.

Both women look delighted.

KITTEN  
Dorilla, you're making real  
progress. I'm very proud of you.

DORILLA  
Why, thank you kindly!

Halfway through Dorilla's solo, the two women hear a KNOCK on the front door.

KITTEN  
Keep playing. I've got the door.

DORILLA  
Okay.

Kitten opens the door...and finds Billy.

KITTEN  
Uh...Billy...come in.

Billy does just that. He shuts the door behind himself.

BILLY  
Hey, them two...Annie Mae and...

He notices Dorilla at the piano...and breaks into laughter.

Billy points toward Dorilla.

KITTEN  
Billy...are you all right?

Billy's laughter grows more hysterical.

Dorilla eyeballs Billy...only to slam her hands on the keys and run upstairs.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
(gesturing to Billy)  
Let's sit down.

Kitten sits down at a sofa; a still-laughing Billy stumbles into a seat next to her.

BILLY  
Funniest thing in the world...ol'  
rootin', tootin', gun-totin'  
Dorilla...makin' all that fancy  
music...

KITTEN  
You know, I taught her how to play  
like that.

Billy throws his hands up as he continues his loud laughter.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
She started taking lessons from me  
over five weeks ago, and...

Dorilla rumbles down the stairs with a revolver in each hand.  
She gestures Kitten into standing up.

Kitten stands by Dorilla's side and receives a revolver.

DORILLA  
(points gun at Billy)  
REACH!

Billy's laughter continues...and ends when Kitten aims her  
revolver at him.

KITTEN  
Billy...I want you to think back to  
whoever taught you how to  
shoot...or how to play poker.

Now Billy's too stunned to react.

He realizes the two widows mean business...so he jumps off  
the sofa and sprints out of the brothel.

Dorilla and Kitten reach to hug each other...but they set  
their guns aside and shake hands.

DORILLA  
Kitten, you ol'...I never knew you  
had it in you.

KITTEN  
Whether he knows it or not, Papa  
showed me the way.

The handshake becomes a hug.

MONTAGE SEQUENCE

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Kitten and Margaret assist Marvella, who's out to teach that parrot to talk.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

Lola dons a Stetson hat, grabs a lasso, and...attempts to do a trick.

It's tough sledding.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Joybelle dances to Kitten's piano accompaniment.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Annie Mae rehearses a speech at the front door as STUDENTS head inside. (Some youngsters look puzzled.)

INT. VIVIAN'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Vivian stands in front of the stove...to practice her guitar.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Dorilla's trick shooting captivates Millard and Eleanor.

INT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DORILLA'S AND KITTEN'S ROOM - NIGHT

Dorilla turns spectator as Kitten endeavors to teach herself the accordion.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

Her coworkers marvel as they eyeball Annie Mae...who sports a man's suit and a fake beard.

George M. looks stunned.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - DAY

And Lola continues to struggle with her lasso trick.

END MONTAGE

INT. DODGE HOUSE LOBBY - DAY

Annie H., F.W., and George B. examine the hotel's ledger when JOHN BAKER "TEXAS JACK" OMOHUNDRO (30, enterprising) and wife GIUSEPPINA MORLACCHI (39, tireless; native Italian) enter.

Both guests set their luggage down.

ANNIE H.  
Texas Jack and Giuseppina...welcome  
to the Dodge House. We're so  
honored that you're visiting Dodge  
City.

Outside the hotel, GUNSHOTS ring out.

GIUSEPPINA  
(turns to Texas Jack)  
Interesting town.

Texas Jack nods at Giuseppina.

GEORGE B.  
Texas Jack...Ah 'member you from  
the war.

TEXAS JACK  
What company were you in? Ah was in  
the Fifth Virginia Cavalry, but we  
merged with the Fifteenth Virginia  
Cavalry.

GEORGE B.  
Ah was in the Fourth Georgia  
Volunteer Infantry.  
(snaps his fingers)  
Sorry...Ah had you mixed up with  
somebody else that was in the war.

F.W. produces a key and hands it to Texas Jack.

F.W.  
Mr. Omohundro and Miss  
Morlacchi...room fifteen is yours.

TEXAS JACK  
Thank you kindly.

GIUSEPPINA  
Grazie tante.

Giuseppina and Texas Jack grab their bags...

F.W.  
May you both enjoy your stay! We  
hope you find Dodge City exciting!

...and head for their room.

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

Texas Jack and Giuseppina look surprised at what they, Eleanor, Hannibal, Margaret, Millard, and A CROWD OF OTHER PEOPLE OF ALL AGES see across from the Dodge House.

What they see: Kitten and Dorilla reenact a gunfight!

DORILLA

You dirty ol' varmint...I'm gonna  
blow your fool head off!

KITTEN

Not if I blow yours off first!

Margaret turns to the Clarksons.

MARGARET

I thought they were good friends.

ELEANOR

They are, Miss Walker. They's just  
play-actin'.

MILLARD

They showed us a preview the other  
day.

Dorilla and Kitten aim at each other...only to reholster their guns.

KITTEN

I can't do this to you.

DORILLA

I cain't do this to you, neither.

KITTEN

But here's what we can do...

The two young widows walk away, arm in arm, and...head for the brothel piano (relocated not far from the "gunfight"). Its hammers stand exposed.

Kitten and Dorilla pound out "Home on the Range."

LATER

Annie Mae (in her Frederick Douglass disguise) takes the stage-of-sorts to give one of his speeches.

ANNIE MAE

(deep, mannish voice)

It is now pretty well established that there are, at the present moment, many colored men in the Confederate Army doing duty not only as cooks, servants, and laborers, but as real soldiers...

Hannibal and Texas Jack look unconvinced...until Margaret offers the two men a correcting look.

LATER

Kitten's got the ivories to herself as she accompanies Joybelle's attempt at a ballet routine.

Result: Giuseppina cringes...the routine and the music end.

Vivian and her guitar jump into the spotlight.

She strums the chords to "Old Dan Tucker." Once she gains confidence, Vivian strolls the so-called stage.

VIVIAN

Sing along if you know this one!

No takers in the audience.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

*Old Dan Tucker was a fine old man./He washed his face with a frying pan,/Combed his hair with a wagon wheel,/Died with a toothache in his heel.*

One by one, audience members walk away.

HANNIBAL

Shoulda brought my gun with me.

Vivian gives up.

Marvella's birdcage rests atop the brothel piano.

MARVELLA

(opening birdcage)

Dove, stay! Poll parrot, move!

She holds out the index finger of one hand to give the parrot a perch, then, with her other hand, hurries the cage shut to keep the dove in it.

The parrot jumps onto said finger.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
Parrot...say "poll!"

Not a single peep from the parrot.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
C'mon! Say "poll!"

Marvella's parrot stays silent.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)  
You wanna end up in a pot of stew?

PARROT  
Poll!

A crowd now a third its original size cheers.

LATER

Stetson-hatted Lola takes over, lasso in hands. She looks at an audience that not only includes her coworkers, but also Margaret, Texas Jack, and Giuseppina.

LOLA  
I have a cousin who used to be a cowboy.

Lola walks around, then stops and swings her lasso around to create an ever-widening circle.

LOLA (CONT'D)  
He was the only one who ever showed me any rope tricks.

She lets go of the lasso...it catches A COWBOY and throws him off his horse!

Lola gasps.

Margaret shrugs, Texas Jack storms off, and Giuseppina shakes her head "no" before she makes her own exodus.

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - NIGHT

Kitten, Vivian, Annie Mae, Dorilla, Joybelle, Lola, and Marvella drag that old piano and the birdcage atop it home.

LOLA  
You realize how close we came to gettin' arrested out there?

JOYBELLE  
Arrested? We coulda got killed! You  
and that damn rope--

LOLA  
ME?? How about you and  
that...that...thing you were tryin'  
to do with your body?

Joybelle turns to Annie Mae.

JOYBELLE  
And you and that damn speech!

ANNIE MAE  
Now wait just a minute!

The seven stop at the front door. Vivian opens it.

KITTEN  
Wyatt almost stopped by to watch us  
perform.

DORILLA  
We're lucky he moved on.

Once Marvella yanks her birdcage from atop the piano, Vivian helps her employees move the instrument inside.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Vivian and Co. lug that upright to its usual spot. Marvella sets the birdcage back on the piano and helps push.

The seven women gravitate to various seats to rest.

Joybelle catches Marvella's gleeful look.

JOYBELLE  
What're you so happy about?

ANNIE MAE  
Joybelle...Marvella had the only  
act that worked.

Vivian nods at Annie Mae, then walks over to Dorilla.

VIVIAN  
I thought you were gonna do your  
sharpshooting act.

DORILLA

Well, Vivian...it's Dodge City. I thought if me and Kitten staged a gunfight, it'd draw a real crowd.

VIVIAN

Kitten, why didn't you bring your squeeze box with you today?

KITTEN

Then I would've had to put Ezekiel's best suit back on...this time, with a fake beard instead of a fake mustache.

A few women chuckle...Vivian just shrugs.

LATER

King sits on a sofa while Kitten plays "Home on the Range..." and turns it from a waltz into a bit of razzmatazz.

KING

I heard y'all tried to put on a show out there across from the Dodge House.

KITTEN

Uh, you're right, King.

KING

Now if you play that there song just like you're doin' right now, folks'll like it better.

Kitten ends "Home on the Range" with a bang.

KITTEN

(pointing at King)  
Point well taken!

King's all smiles.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Is there anything else you'd like to hear?

KING

Well...maybe one of these days, I'd...well, I'd like to hear you say...

(walks over to piano)

I'd like to hear you say "I do."

Kitten shakes her head back and forth.

KITTEN  
 Sorry...that horse already rode out  
 of town.

King's smile morphs into a blank look.

KITTEN (CONT'D)  
 One thing I've learned in the two  
 months I've lived here in Dodge  
 City is that you've gotta know when  
 to hold 'em...and when to fold 'em.

While King returns to his seat on the sofa, Kitten turns  
 another folk song into a saloon-worthy number.

INT. HOOVER'S GENERAL STORE - DAY

George M. stands by Kitten's side while she searches for  
 sheet music...as if her life's on the line.

GEORGE M.  
 Kitten, is everything all right?

KITTEN  
 Soon as I find something...just one  
 little song...everything will be  
 all right.

Giuseppina and Texas Jack stroll into the store. George M.  
 eyeballs the couple.

GEORGE M.  
 Be right with you two.

GIUSEPPINA  
 Thank you.

Texas Jack nods at George M.

GEORGE M.  
 (to Kitten)  
 And if you need any help, just let  
 me know.

KITTEN  
 Will do.

Texas Jack and Giuseppina stride over to Kitten, who  
 continues to peruse sheet music.

TEXAS JACK

Kitten...we saw that little ol'  
show y'all put on across the street  
from the hotel yesterday.

KITTEN

It was the first time we tried  
something like that.

Kitten looks up at Texas Jack as George M. joins the group.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Annie Mae, Dorilla, Joybelle, Lola,  
Marvella, Vivian, and I have quite  
a bit to work on. And I'm the first  
to admit that.

TEXAS JACK

But y'all did put your little feet  
out.

GIUSEPPINA

Jack...you just made...how you  
say...an understatement.

KITTEN

(to Texas Jack)

I still remember my husband and I  
going to Chicago on our honeymoon  
and seeing you and Buffalo Bill and  
Ned Buntline do "The Scouts of the  
Prairie."

Texas Jack's mouth flies open.

GIUSEPPINA

Kitten...Jack and I have our own  
combination.

KITTEN

And I'd love to see it.

TEXAS JACK

How'd y'all like to be in it?

Kitten looks stunned.

So does George M.

TEXAS JACK (CONT'D)

We're not goin' back onstage until  
next April.

KITTEN  
I'll make sure the other women know  
about this!

TEXAS JACK  
You do just that.

GIUSEPPINA  
And Kitten...you and Dorilla no try  
to shoot at each other again.

A wide smile crosses Kitten's face.

KITTEN  
I'll tell her!

George M. turns to Texas Jack and his wife.

GEORGE M.  
Now...what can I do for you both?

Giuseppina and her husband look confused.

EXT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

In a before-school session, Lola tries a lasso trick when  
Kitten arrives, a canvas bag in her hands.

KITTEN  
Lola, I got you something.

Kitten pulls out a new, fifteen-foot Flat Loop lasso.

LOLA  
(drops her own lasso)  
You're kiddin' me.

KITTEN  
Texas Jack and I thought you might  
have better luck with a new rope.

Lola accepts the new lasso from Kitten.

LOLA  
Thanks.  
(fondles new lasso)  
That old rope of mine was startin'  
to feel like...feel like...

KITTEN  
A busted piano string.

Both women nod in laughter.

STUDENTS head for the schoolhouse when Lola passes a Flat Loop around her body.

She passes the loop to in front of her body, then to the side, then...the loop lands in back of Lola's body...only to snare THE YOUNGSTER IN BACK OF LOLA.

LOLA  
Sorry about that.

YOUNGSTER  
Oh, that's okay.

The youngster gives the rest of the lasso back to Lola while classmates laugh.

INT. SCHOOLHOUSE - DAY

Class is over, and Joybelle dances around the front of the room while she plays her harmonica.

Vivian, Annie Mae, Kitten, Dorilla, Marvella, Lola, and even Margaret sit in some of the students' desks in glee.

VIVIAN  
(to Kitten)  
I knew something was missing.

Joybelle ends her self-accompanied dance...and triggers heartfelt applause.

MARGARET  
Very good, Joybelle!

JOYBELLE  
(bowing)  
Thank you kindly!

Kitten jogs to the front of the classroom; Joybelle sashays to an empty seat toward the back.

KITTEN  
Troupe members...and troupe fan...  
(gesturing to Margaret)  
I've got some very good news.

Margaret grins while Kitten's fellow troupers perk up.

Kitten removes a large wad of cash from her jeans pocket and shows the loot to the rest of the gang.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Giuseppina and Texas Jack left us  
this wad of money before they left  
town.

Several mouths fly open.

ANNIE MAE

Wait a minute, Kitten...I thought  
they didn't like us.

MARVELLA

Maybe they payin' us to stop  
performin'.

Marvella receives a correcting glance from Annie Mae.

KITTEN

Marvella...they like us.

Marvella's is a slow, unsure nod.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

They like us enough to want us to  
come to Chicago and see Buffalo  
Bill's show!

Dead silence engulfs the classroom...for a few seconds.

DORILLA

Well...I'll be a...son of a...

KITTEN

They'll be at the Opera House over  
there on December nineteenth!

Cheers erupt!

LOLA

I can't believe it! We're goin' to  
Chicago!

Kitten and coworkers hug each other as jubilation continues.

MARGARET

Can I come?

An embarrassed Margaret covers her mouth.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

May I come?

JOYBELLE  
 If you can get yourself a  
 substitute teacher!

Margaret joins the cheering throng.

EXT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE, CHICAGO, IL - NIGHT

Snow pelts the Windy City on this mid-December night.

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

THE PLACE IS PACKED!

Annie Mae, Dorilla, Joybelle, Kitten, Lola, Margaret, Marvella, and Vivian sit toward the back, where they watch tonight's presentation...

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE STAGE - NIGHT

...WILLIAM F. "BUFFALO BILL" CODY (30) and JOHN W. "CAPTAIN JACK" CRAWFORD (29) in a play called "The Red Right Hand."

In this one, Captain Jack and Buffalo Bill take turns fondling a yellow scalp (among other activities).

INT. CHICAGO OPERA HOUSE LOWER LEVEL - NIGHT

Margaret's and Kitten's mouths hang open.

Annie Mae whispers to Vivian.

ANNIE MAE  
 Texas Jack and Giuseppina were  
 trying to teach us a lesson.

VIVIAN  
 I think I know what that lesson  
 is...

ANNIE MAE  
 You first, Vivian.

VIVIAN  
 We've gotta get us some goatees  
 like the ones Buffalo Bill and  
 Captain Jack are wearing.

Annie Mae tries not to laugh...Kitten and Margaret cast mortified looks.

EXT. TRAIN STATION, DODGE CITY, KS - DAY

Bags and all, Vivian, Marvella, Margaret, Lola, Kitten, Joybelle, Dorilla, and Annie Mae (all bundled up as warmly as their budgets will allow) stroll away from the boxcar.

Margaret shakes her head "no."

DORILLA

You're darn tootin' right, Miss Walker. They shouldn't a-sens...a-sens...it didn't make no sense.

MARGARET

They shouldn't have sensationalized what happened with Yellow Hair last July.

VIVIAN

But, Miss Walker, I see why they had to do it like they did up on that stage...they had to sell the sizzle to sell the steak.

MARGARET

It was a play, yes...but I read where it was also promoted as something educational.

VIVIAN

(to Annie Mae)

Speaking of educational...what did you tell me you learned from our trip to Chicago?

ANNIE MAE

You wanna know what I learned?

LOLA

Tell us, Annie Mae!

ANNIE MAE

You all really wanna know?

MARVELLA

You realize how heavy these bags are?

ANNIE MAE

We've gotta stick with what we're doing...only strive to make it better.

The women now reach:

EXT. FRONT STREET - DAY

Several women AD LIB their agreement with Annie Mae as they stroll on.

KITTEN

Now that that's out of the way, we need to find a place to unleash our new-and-improved traveling show.

LOLA

Kitten, what's wrong with the schoolhouse?

BANG! BANG! Some gunshots ring out.

DORILLA

Schoolhouse is a place for learnin', not rootin' and tootin'.

MARGARET

Good point.

ANNIE MAE

And besides, Dorilla, they wanna see your sharpshooting act...but not in a place where the windows are too close to each other.

KITTEN

If we go to the Long Branch...or any saloon...to put on our show, we'll all get thrown in jail.

JOYBELLE

And it's too cold right now to do it here on Front Street.

LOLA

Yeah, Joybelle. The cold'll kill us if the bullets don't.

ANNIE MAE

Why don't we put on our show at the brothel?

MARVELLA

Whaddya think we been doin' all this time?

EXT. VIVIAN'S BROTHEL - NIGHT

It's the first day of 1877...a cold, cold Monday.

Ezra, Malachi, and Nehemiah (all three armed) shiver on the way to the brothel...which now features a handpainted sign in front: "SOIREE TONIGHT."

MALACHI

This better be good.

NEHEMIAH

If it's better'n the drinks at the Long Branch, I'm all for it.

Right behind the three men: Giuseppe and Sophia.

EZRA

(tries to read sign)  
Soy-ree tonight.

Ezra turns to Nehemiah and Malachi.

EZRA (CONT'D)

What's a soy-ree?

SOPHIA

Actually, that's soiree.

NEHEMIAH

Huh?

SOPHIA

That's French for "evening party."

GIUSEPPE

I no understand why they no call it a show.

Giuseppe rushes to the front door to knock on it.

INT. VIVIAN'S PARLOR - NIGHT

Some chairs combine with the sofas to make several rows of seating...and Eleanor, Giuseppina, Margaret, Millard, and Texas Jack already occupy some of those seats.

Kitten (on piano; its hammers stand exposed) bangs out a "saloonified" folk tune as Giuseppe, Ezra, Sophia, Nehemiah, and Malachi come inside and saunter into empty seats.

Just as the front door closes, it reopens...and Hannibal, King, and LARRY DEGER (31, heavysset), the local marshal, enter the place. (The threesome stand if no seats remain.)

The only other item "onstage" besides that brothel piano is...a door removed from its hinges.

Now Kitten ends her piece with a glissando and a crashing final chord. She waves to the applauding audience.

KITTEN

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to our soiree!

As the clapping continues, Eleanor eyeballs Millard.

ELEANOR

Is there anything she cain't do?

Millard shows an impish grin.

LATER

Harmonica in hand, Joybelle struts down the stairs; when she reaches the parlor, she breaks into a dance and quickly toots out her own accompaniment.

Giuseppina studies Joybelle hard...Nehemiah reaches for his gun...whoever's next to him gestures him out of it.

Joybelle hoofs it back and forth across the makeshift stage...and it's not long before Kitten adds piano support to Joybelle's harmonica work.

Some audience members clap to the beat...and if possible, Joybelle reacts with a type of "can can" dance that turns the rhythmic handclapping into applause.

LATER

Annie Mae's back in her Frederick Douglass costume to give another of his speeches.

ANNIE MAE

(deep, mannish voice)

I ask my friends who are apologizing for not insisting upon this right: Where can the Black man look, in this country, for the assertion of his right, if he may--

Ezra, Malachi, and Nehemiah pull out their guns...but put them away when Annie Mae raises her hands.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)  
 (in her real voice)  
 Wait a minute. Don't shoot.

Annie Mae yanks her fake beard off and tosses it aside.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)  
 See if you like this speech.  
 (walks around)  
 To be...or not to be. That is the  
 question...

Margaret, Giuseppina, and Kitten grow attentive.

ANNIE MAE (CONT'D)  
 Whether 'tis nobler for the mind to  
 suffer the slings and arrows of  
 outrageous fortune...

Larry's mouth flies open.

GIUSEPPE  
 Sophia...why she no do that with a  
 skull in her hands?

Sophia gestures Giuseppe into silence.

LATER

Accordion against her stomach, Kitten strolls back and forth  
 onstage while she pumps out "Santa Lucia" or a similar tune.

Her playing brings a hush to the parlor.

At the end, the applause erupts...Sophia looks on with  
 pride...Giuseppina dabs moist eyes...Giuseppe bawls.

KITTEN  
 Ezekiel...that was for you.

And Giuseppe bawls even harder.

LATER

Lola twirls her lasso as if her life depends on it, jumping  
 in and out of the loop she keeps alive.

Kitten hands Lola the latter's old lasso...and the cowboy's  
 cousin creates two spinning Flat Loops.

Confidence grips Lola as she jumps the right-hand loop with  
 her right foot, then jumps the left-hand loop with her left  
 foot...as if she runs in place.

Hannibal and Texas Jack breathe relief...and applaud.

LATER

Vivian strolls down the stairs while she strums her guitar. When she reaches the parlor, she addresses the audience.

VIVIAN

See if you know this one!

Audience members eyeball each other, then Vivian.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*Cape Cod girls, they have no  
combs./Heave away! Heave away!/They  
comb their hair with codfish  
bones./We are bound for Australia!*

Nobody in the crowd sings along.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

*Heave away, ye bully bully  
boys./Heave away! Heave away!/Heave  
away and don't ye make a noise./We  
are bound for Australia!*

When Vivian paces around the stage-of-sorts, the crowd claps to the beat.

LATER

Marvella's now-cleaned-up dove flies back to her waiting finger-cum-perch.

MARVELLA

Thank you, dove!

(to the audience)

Let's hear it for my dove!

While the crowd cheers, Marvella sets the dove back into the birdcage...and entices her parrot from the enclosure.

The parrot lands on Marvella's finger.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)

(to her parrot)

All right, poll parrot...you ready  
to talk to these folks in here?

PARROT

Talk!

MARVELLA

All right, then...say: "Peter Piper  
picked a..."

Nothing from Marvella's parrot.

MARVELLA (CONT'D)

You don't want your home to be the  
kitchen, do you?

The parlor busts out in laughter.

PARROT

Pe...ter...Pi...per...picked...a...

MARVELLA

What'd he pick?

PARROT

Peck...of...pickled...pep...pers!

MARVELLA

Right!

Now Vivian's parlor erupts in applause.

LATER

Dorilla poses with her rifle when she spots Nehemiah,  
Malachi, and Ezra.

DORILLA

Y'all look familiar.

The three men look confused.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Y'all're the three men that killed  
my brother and my husband!

LARRY

Dorilla...don't do this!

DORILLA

Look, Marshal Deger, I've been a-  
waitin' a whole entire year and a  
half to do this!

Dorilla gestures Ezra and his bar buddies to her side.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Y'all stand right in the middle.

A buzz fills the room as Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah gravitate to the middle of the so-called stage.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

And don'tcha dare draw your guns!

NEHEMIAH

Woman, you're crazy!

Dorilla stands on one end of the "stage," that unhinged door rests on the other end, and...Nehemiah, Malachi, and Ezra (all three now unarmed) continue to stand in between.

DORILLA

Y'know, Nehemiah, Malachi, and Ezra...I could fill y'all with enough lead to stock a pencil factory.

MALACHI

Well, why don'tcha?

DORILLA

'Cause I wanna do this instead.

Kitten comes out of the kitchen with three candy canes. She hands the treats to Dorilla, who sets her rifle aside to give a candy cane to each accused killer.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Thank you kindly, Kitten.

Kitten nods as Dorilla turns to the three men up there.

DORILLA (CONT'D)

Now...put them candy canes in your mouths...by the round end!

Malachi, Ezra, and Nehemiah do as told...Dorilla grabs her rifle, aims, and...

DORILLA (CONT'D)

I'm gonna shoot at that door over there...don't y'all move a muscle.

...BANG! The bullet splits the three candy canes before it lodges inside (or sails through) the door.

The crowd's openmouthed shock evolves into real applause.

Kitten rushes to Dorilla's side.

KITTEN  
Ladies and gentlemen...Dorilla  
Gilbert!

The applause heats up. When it dies:

DORILLA  
Marshal, before we're done tonight,  
make sure you round up these three  
killers.

LARRY  
Uh...okay.

HANNIBAL  
I wanna help you, Marshal.

ELEANOR  
Me, too!

LARRY  
What?

MILLARD  
My wife's one heck of a rassler.

Larry's is a slow nod.

EZRA  
Marshal, lemme eat my candy cane  
first!

Larry nods again...the killers eat their candy canes...Kitten  
gestures to the crowd.

KITTEN  
Before anybody gets  
arrested...let's bring out our  
other performers!

While Larry, Hannibal, Eleanor, and Millard apprehend  
Nehemiah, Malachi, and Ezra, Marvella, Lola, Annie Mae,  
Joybelle, and Vivian join Kitten and Dorilla.

Once the ensuing applause ends, Marvella gazes at Texas Jack  
and Giuseppina.

MARVELLA  
So...whatcha think?

Giuseppina eyes Texas Jack...Kitten looks at her  
parents...Giuseppina eyes Marvella and fellow troupers.

GIUSEPPINA

We no like it.

Annie Mae and Kitten shake their heads "no" while Marvella shrugs...and Dorilla, Joybelle, and Lola look angry.

MARVELLA

Kitten...it was nice knowin' you.

GIUSEPPINA

We love it! We love it! We love it!

TEXAS JACK

Kitten, Dorilla, Vivian, Annie Mae,  
Lola, Marvella, Joybelle...welcome  
to the Texas Jack Combination!

Kitten and her troupers bust out in a wild celebration with Texas Jack and Giuseppina. Sophia and Giuseppe rush over to join in.

SOPHIA

Catharine...you met the challenge  
you set for yourself.  
Congratulations!

GIUSEPPE

So much for you marrying the class  
bully.

SOPHIA

Well, I'm proud of you.

KITTEN

Thank you, Mama!

Sophia and Kitten hug.

KITTEN (CONT'D)

Mama...Papa...I'll tell you what:  
If...when...we play San Francisco,  
I'll make sure you both get front-  
row seats. And the class bully,  
too.

Kitten and parents shake hands.

TEXAS JACK

(to Giuseppe and Sophia)

We'll be back out on the road in  
April...and by then, we'll have one  
heck of a show for you.

SOPHIA  
We look forward to it.

GIUSEPPINA  
Kitten, you also take pictures.

KITTEN  
Yes, I do.

GIUSEPPINA  
We need a new photograph.

Giuseppina watches Kitten's eyes light up.

LATER

Kitten finishes setting up the camera before she gathers Annie Mae, Dorilla, Giuseppina, Joybelle, Lola, Marvella, Texas Jack, and Vivian around the brothel piano.

KITTEN  
We can't have a photograph if  
there's nobody to take it.

Margaret hurries over to the camera.

MARGARET  
My pleasure.

The older teacher looks through the viewfinder.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
Everyone look at the camera.

Margaret's subjects do just that.

CLICK! Margaret snaps the picture...a picture of nine ecstatic troupers.

FREEZE FRAME

FADE OUT.

THE END