

THE LICORICE ROOT  
BY  
Scott Kremer  
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LOCATION: Street corner

TIME: Once upon a time, Friday at 2:00 P.M.

SIN: Greed

CAST:

DR. KLONDIKE: male purveyor of the Klondike  
Elixir

CELESTE: female customer

DENNY: male Celeste's brother

MRS. PARKINS: female customer

CONSTABLE BUNION: male police officer

(DR. KLONDIKE on street corner hawking the Klondike Elixir)

KLONDIKE

Step right up, step right up. Don't be shy. Don't be shy. I have here for you today the most magical of potions, an elixir of emotions, an ocean of good fortune and health that await you here inside this small bottle. One day only. One day only. Don't miss your chance. Don't miss the dance. Don't let this opportunity pass you by.

PARKINS

(enters not looking where she is going, almost bumps into KLONDIKE) Oh, sorry. Excuse me.

KLONDIKE

No worries. No worries. All is fine. All is fine. In fact, ma'am, if you might? Might I have a moment of your time?

PARKINS

Sorry, I'm in a hurry.

KLONDIKE

Won't take but a minute. Just a minute. I guarantee that it will be worth your while. Just a moment. A passing moment which might alter your fortune a mile. For you see, I am Dr. Klondike, you see. And I have here such an elixir, the likes of which that never have been.

PARKINS

I'm not really interested in anything you have here. Excuse me.

KLONDIKE

Madam, please. Let me show you. I have spent years, years! Perfecting this potion. It will keep you up when you are down, keep you calm when you are in harm, will keep you in constant state of good cheer, and it's all right here, in this small bottle.

PARKINS

Please, let me pass.

KLONDIKE

My Lady, please. As a doctor, I could not in good conscience allow you to pass by without at least offering a sample of my elixir. A most wonderful tonic. For you appear to be most harried. Most hurried and harried, and at the speed at which you pass, I am genuinely concerned for your state. May I ask your name?

PARKINS

Mrs. Parkins. Just make it quick.

KLONDIKE

Of course, of course. Mrs. Parkins, I have here before you magic in a jar. I perfected this elixir over many years and travels. From the delicate pedals of the Peony from the Orient to the robust and tangy Turkish Sumac, this is a drink of wonders. It will cure you. Whatever your ailment. Sore bones, broken heart, displeasure of the mind. The Klondike Elixir will fix it. . .Just try, try a taste, and you will see, and if you like it, today it is going at a special price, just fourteen forty. . .I was able to obtain oxtail in bulk and thus pass the savings on to you.

PARKINS

(smells elixir)

Fourteen forty? Are you mad? This is nothing more than boiled licorice root.

KLONDIKE

No, Ma'am. You are mistaken. What you hold is far more than just boiled licorice root. Why there are salts and tangles in there that most men have never even imagined.

PARKINS

(smells elixir again) No. No. I know boiled licorice root when I smell it, and that is all this is. Boiled licorice root. That's it. Now, what did you say, salts and tangles, whatever that is. Nope. boiled licorice root, and at fourteen forty, I'd say that you, doctor, are nothing but a fraud.

KLONDIKE

Madam, I will have you know-

PARKINS

A fraud. A charlatan. A man of distrust. You sir, are a con man, and I am getting the Constable.

KLONDIKE

My Lady, please. If you think that fourteen forty is too much, we can perhaps come to a more agreeable price.

PARKINS

No. I'm getting the constable. Don't you move! (PARKINS exits)

KLONDIKE

(calling after PARKINS)  
Please. Don't do that. (to himself)  
Well, I guess that ends this for the day. (KLONDIKE starts to leave)

CELESTE

(enters) Doctor, oh Doctor, I'm so glad that I found you!

KLONDIKE

We're closed now, dear. Sorry, I've got to go.

CELESTE

But Doctor Klondike, don't you remember me. I'm Celeste. Miss Jasmine's niece.

KLONDIKE

Oh yes. Yes. Miss Jasmine's niece. I remember. How is Miss Jasmine? Does she speak of me? For I often think of her.

CELESTE

She is not well, doctor. Not well at all. If you recall, I was here yesterday and bought a bottle of your elixir for her.

KLONDIKE

Yes, I remember. She was having a disquieting of the heart.

CELESTE

Yes, and you said the the elixir would cure her. But as soon as she took a sip, she took a turn for the worse.

KLONDIKE

No. That's impossible.

CELESTE

Yes. Yes, it is quite possible. As soon as she took a taste of the potion, she turned very pale, she became weak, and she complained of such pain.

KLONDIKE

No. No. That couldn't be. There is nothing in the elixir that could cause such a reaction.

CELESTE

Doctor, please. You must help. She is very ill and she needs you.

KLONDIKE

Well, yes, of course, take me to her.

PARKINS

(PARKINS enters with BUNION)  
There he is Constable.

BUNION

(to PARKINS) Thank you, Mrs. Parkins.  
You may go. (PARKINS exits)

CELESTE

Doctor, we must go.

BUNION

(to KLONDIKE) So I am told that you are offering some type of tonic for fourteen forty.

KLONDIKE

Yes, Constable, ah?

BUNION

Bunion. Constable Bunion.

KLONDIKE

Well, Constable, I was just leaving. I have a very sick patient to whom I must attend.

BUNION

All in good time. All in good time.

KLONDIKE

No, Constable. You must let me go. A life hangs in the balance.

CELESTE

Please, sir. Let the doctor go. My Aunt Jasmine needs him.

BUNION

Right. (to CELESTE) And just who are you then?

CELESTE

I'm Celeste. Miss Jasmine's niece.

BUNION

Uh huh, and what is your relationship to this man (points to KLONDIKE)

CELESTE

I have no relationship with this man. I just bought an elixir from him yesterday for my Aunt Jasmine.

BUNION

Did you pay fourteen forty?

CELESTE

No. Sixteen fifty. But no matter. You must let us leave now.

KLONDIKE

We really must go.

BUNION

All right. All right. Let me think.

DENNY

(enters) Celeste!

CELESTE

Denny, what is the matter?

DENNY

Oh, Celeste. . .Miss Jasmine. . .She, ah, has passed.

CELESTE

Passed?

DENNY

Yes.

CELESTE

(CELESTE begins to cry. DENNY holds her) No! No! No!

KLONDIKE

Oh dear God.

DENNY

(points at KLONDIKE) And it was his potion that did it!

CELESTE

No! It can't be. She can't be gone.

KLONDIKE

It couldn't have been the elixir.

DENNY

Murderer!

BUNION

Klondike, I think that we have a problem, here. Don't we?

KLONDIKE

It couldn't have been the elixir. It was nothing more than boiled licorice root. I mean there are reports of very rare fatal sensitivities to licorice root, but there is always an immediate declaration of the taste of plum, and then a truly horrible demise. Miss Jasmine didn't complain about the taste of plum did she?

CELESTE

No. She did not.

DENNY

That is true. She didn't.

KLONDIKE

Well then. It couldn't have been my potion.

BUNION

Well, we'll have to see about that doctor. But let's get back to the elixir being just boiled licorice root. I take it that you have been selling licorice root soaked in hot water for upwards of fourteen forty?

KLONDIKE

Yes. I'm a purveyor. Not a murder.

BUNION

How long have you been selling this. . .elixir here?

KLONDIKE

Just a couple of days.

DENNY

I've seen him.

BUNION

How much?

KLONDIKE

I don't know. I've sold many bottles.

BUNION

Not "how many bottles." How much money have you made?

KLONDIKE

(KLONDIKE takes out a large roll of cash) A lot.

BUNION

Give it here.

KLONDIKE

(hands money to BUNION)

BUNION

Now, listen Doctor. You are done here. No more sales, of any kind, and you're leaving all of this. . .elixir. . .with me. I'm gonna check it out. I'm going to speak with the examiner, and if he even hints that this was the result of a licorice sensitively or anything else related to this swill, I am going to find you, and I'm going to string you up. . .Do you understand me?

KLONDIKE

Yes. Yes. I understand.

BUNION

Good. Then you better go.

KLONDIKE

(to CELESTE) I am so sorry. (KLONDIKE exits)

PARKINS

(enters) So is he gone?

CELESTE

Yep. Bought it hook, line and sinker.

PARKINS

Nice work, Celeste.

DENNY

Yeah, great call.

CELESTE

Well, you know, I saw him out here for days selling this garbage, and we all know how he's such a sucker for Miss Jasmine.

PARKINS

Oh, how the heart can cloud a man's judgment.

BUNION

He never suspected a thing. This isn't even a real Constable's badge.

PARKINS

How much did we get?

BUNION

Not sure. Let's go see Miss Jasmine and count it up.

DENNY

Yes. She waiting for us at the guest house.

CELESTE

(picks up bottle of the elixir) Should we all do a shot first?

PARKINS

Why not.

CELESTE

Here's to Doctor Klondike. Sucker!  
(PARKINS, BUNION, DENNY AND CELESTE drink some of the elixir)

DENNY

Not bad.

BUNION

Eh. . .It's just licorice root.

PARKINS

I've had worse

CELESTE

Does anyone else taste plum?

End.