Cracker

A full-length play

By Reese Thompson

Contact:
Reese Thompson
120 Boerum Pl. #1C
Brooklyn, NY 11201
thom.reese@gmail.com
ONE.

REV. JEDIDIAH JESSOP (30s-40s), a guitar slung over his shoulder, enters under a spot. He’s dressed in corduroy slacks, a dark turtle neck, a paisley or floral vest. He’s got a Portland/NPR/John Denver kinda vibe.

He starts playing a pleasant, folksy melody. After a beat or two he looks up at us and smiles. When he speaks it’s in a very earnest manner. What follows is the spoken intro to a song.

JESSOP

(to us)

You ever turn on the TV after a long day and it seems no matter where you look what station you turn to it’s nothing but war and bloody carnage? Innocent folks, like you and me, dying horrifically? Ever stop and wonder to yourself: what’s it like seeing through that other man’s eyes? Walking in that attractive lady’s shoes? Ever wonder why it’s so darn hard for folks to get along? (pause for effect)

I do. Everyday.

Another pause. He plays a little louder now, switching it up, elaborating on the previous melody.
And y’know, it’s a lot like you and me
when we go through difficult times.
When the world says to us: you’re not smart enough
or handsome enough. Maybe you didn’t get
that promotion you wanted. Maybe someone
at the office is being weird with you
and you want to ask if it’s because of something you did
but you want to avoid confrontation.
Sometimes those are the hardest things in life to go through.
I know. I go through them.
I even cry from time to time.
It hurts.
But we all go through tough times in life.
When we think there’s no one on our side,
no one listening.
None of us has got a monopoly on human suffering.
You might even say that’s what this whole evening’s about:
Other people’s suffering.

(a beat, switches up the melody again)

Now I know some of you will wanna tell me: ‘But Jessop,
empathy’s great and all if you’re some kinda fag!’
But is it enough to change the world? Is it enough
to keep our kids from falling under the influence of Hollywood liberals?
Y’see, I believe it takes more than a few gun toting loners
and sexually frustrated internet trolls
to spread the word of the disenfranchised white man.
It takes *hearts. And minds.*
Now, I can’t speak for the entire white nationalist movement.
All I can say is... we’re no different from you.
We’re teachers and mechanics, CEOs and small business owners, policemen, crossing guards, male nurses. And just like you we want a voice to say to the world: ‘Yes, we’re straight and we’re white and we love guns but we’re people too.’

(short pause)

Just like you.

(another short pause)

That’s why I want to start this evening with a song. There’s a message of love in this song. A message of hope. It’s about a man I know. A lot of folks used tell him he wasn’t good enough either. Maybe you’ve heard of him. His name was Jesus. And he was a white man too.

Lights shift.

TWO.

A hole blasted through the back wall.

CAL (13) is sitting on a pile of bricks, reading a letter when WINNY (14) enters.

Startled, Cal hides the letter quickly.

They’re both dressed like pioneer children.

CAL
Oh. It’s you. I thought for a second you were Prophet.

WINNY
Why? Slacking off again?
CAL

(“wtf?”)

No!

WINNY

Look. Before you say another word, I want you to know... I’m sorry if you feel shitty.

CAL

Why would I feel shitty?

WINNY

Well you’re acting kinda shitty.

CAL

![?]

WINNY

Look. It’s ok. I know.

About your mom?

CAL

Which mom? Oh right. Her.

Winny sits beside him and offers him an orange tic tac, which he accepts.

CAL

It’s all right. She knew what was coming. Besides, you know what Prophet says: ‘A woman past childbearing age is like a space heater on a hot day: pointless.”

WINNY

You wouldn’t be trying to hide from your feelings now, would you?

CAL

I don’t know. Would I?
WINNY
You’re acting shitty again.

CAL
Sorry.

Pause. She watches him, suspicious.

WINNY
(sighs)
Ohhh. I’m sure gonna miss Sister-Wife Agnes. Her smile. The way she’d scowl and chase us around the yard with a rake.

CAL
(oblivious)
Hm.

Beat.

WINNY
(casual)
Don’t you think it’s curious how the compound wall got blown up like that? And then Agnes at the same time?!

CAL
I don’t see what’s so curious.

Beat. Winny raises an eyebrow, skeptically.

WINNY
So Prophet has you fixing it, huh?

CAL
What’s it to you?
WINNY

Just making conversation--

Feedback from a loudspeaker. We hear Jessop's voice.

Cal and Winny listen and react.

JESSOP

Hello everyone. This is your Prophet speaking. Now I know some of you have expressed concerns over this “famine” drama. Yes, I admit it hasn’t been at the top of my list of priorities but what can I say? I’ve had a lot on my plate lately. I’m happy to announce that I’ve been back in the recording studio working on a new demo. I dunno if it’s too soon to say but I’m thinking this one’s gonna be a real game changer!

(back to business)

Now in an effort to address the whole “hunger” situation, I’ve decided to hold a tournament. Two randomly selected teens from different districts will battle it out in a game of survival to the death! If that sounds at all familiar, I assure you it’s completely coincidental. In any event, we start promptly at 7 in the morning, followed by an trophy ceremony and the usual mock trial and witch burning. So for anyone who has yet to pick up their raffle tickets, now’s the time.

A continental breakfast will be provided in the outdoor picnic area, weather permitting. So plan to arrive early! Thank you and praise the Lord.

The loudspeaker squeals and clicks off.

CAL

Continental breakfast?
WINNY

Uck. Carbs.

(a bit gossipy)

So you hear about Prophet and Sister Birgit?

CAL

Don’t remind me.

WINNY

It’s about time he agreed to marry her. I hear she’s been trying to get him to settle down for years. Though I guess he’s technically “settled down” with half the girls in the compound already.

It still sucks that Sister-Wife Agnes had to get thrown to the cobra pit though. Even if she deserved it, it’s still such an unseemly way to go.

Cal looks at her, then bursts out laughing.

WINNY (CONT’D)

What’s so funny?

CAL

Don’t tell me you actually believe there’s a cobra pit?!

He continues laughing.

WINNY

You mean there isn’t?

CAL

Sister Winny. You shouldn’t believe everything you hear. I mean, c’mon! A cobra pit?

WINNY

How would I know? I’m only a woman!
CAL
We haven't had a cobra pit since before the famine. It just hasn't been practical, y'know?
We do have a bear pit, but it's more of a seasonal thing.

WINNY
Well then... what happened to her if she wasn't thrown to the cobras?

CAL looks around to make sure no one's listening.

CAL
I'll tell you. But you gotta promise not to let anyone know!

WINNY
You mean... like a secret?
Brother Caleb. You know how the Prophet feels about secrets.

CAL
Fine then. I won't tell you.

WINNY
Oh just tell me already!

CAL
She left! Through the breach in the wall!

WINNY
(gasp!)
What?!

CAL
Yep. She got some dynamite from the arsenal and blew right through the wall. Then she went and got her shit and just walked out.

WINNY
Out? You mean... out there?!
CAL

Sure.

WINNY

So she’s an apostate now?

CAL

[shrugs, ‘I guess’]

WINNY

But that’s utter madness!

CAL

Is it?

WINNY

Surely even you can see that. Oh that poor woman. If it were me, I think I’d prefer the cobras.

CAL

Actually she’s doing well. She got an apartment with a woman named Gina, she just earned her real estate broker’s license.

WINNY

Wait. How do you--?

(gasps in realization)

Brother Caleb! You know we’re not supposed to have contact with apostates!

CAL

[Oh crap--]

WINNY

You’re up to something, aren’t you?

CAL

Of course not. What makes you say that?
WINNY
You got a letter! I saw you reading it!

CAL
I think you’re imagining things--

WINNY
You might as well tell me. I mean...
(with satisfaction)
I already know it was you that blew up the wall--

CAL
What! Why would I do something like that?

WINNY
To help Sister-Mom Agnes become an apostate. Duh.

CAL
But I didn’t!

WINNY
Yes you did. You helped Agnes turn her back on the Lord. Now she’s a daughter of damnation and guess who’s gonna burn in hell for it.

CAL
It’s not my fault! I tried telling her she should just go out the front gate, but she wanted to “make a statement”! That’s why we went with the dynamite!

WINNY
Expect me to believe that?

CAL
It’s true! Besides, she would’ve blown herself up if I didn’t help! You know how God feels about women who handle explosives!
WINNY

Ha! I knew it!

CAL

(“foiled again!”)

Damn!

WINNY

(a condescending pat on the knee)

Listen. You’ve done the right thing.