

# LAST CHANCE INN, CALAMITY GULCH

By Whitney Ryan Garrity

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### **STORY OF THE PLAY**

Ma and Pa Culpepper are in danger of losing their livelihood - the Last Chance Inn - to Horace Prickley, a representative from the loan offices of Gimme, Gimme & Gimme. In need of a son or son-in-law, the Culpeppers scheme to adopt and marry off pretty (but clumsy) orphan-turned-waitress, Patience Sweetwater. The intended groom is newly appointed Sheriff Virgil St. Vigil, who makes the rounds with his deputy and trusty sidekick, Princess Prettyfoot. Prickley learns of the Culpeppers' plot and enlists the aid of the beautiful Sahara Hartburn to "distract" the sheriff from Patience.

This whimsical, fast-paced melodrama offers sight gags, puns and an array of comedic supporting characters, including: the sharp-tongued Ivory Keys at the piano; Happy, the elbow-bending bartender; the Culpeppers' frumpy daughter, Chastity; the woeful Widder Black; and three tipsy Temperance Ladies. As much fun for the actors as for the audience!

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(4 M, 10 W)*

**IVORY KEYES** - The resident piano player.  
**HAPPY BENDER** - The elbow-bending bartender.  
**MA CULPEPPER** - The proprietor. Over-worked, a bit perplexed, and mighty vexed.  
**PA CULPEPPER** - The thorn in Ma's side. Under-worked and under Ma's thumb.  
**HORACE PRICKLEY** - The villain. A greedy representative of the local loan company - the Offices of Gimme, Gimme & Gimme.  
**CHASTITY CULPEPPER** - The frumpy, tomboyish daughter.  
**PATIENCE SWEETWATER** - A pretty, somewhat clumsy, yet nevertheless endearing orphan.  
**WIDDER BLACK** - A mournful regular patron.  
**ELOISE, MAYBELLE & FLORA** - A trio of Temperance Ladies.  
**VIRGIL ST. VIGIL** - The newly appointed sheriff. As good as he is handsome.  
**PRINCESS PRETTYFOOT** - An Indian maiden acting as Virgil's deputy and trusty sidekick.  
**SAHARA HARTBURN** - A ravishingly beautiful - and rather vain - entertainer.

**TIME:** Calamity Gulch, USA. The turn of the century.

## **SETTING**

A bar is set USC with several stools placed around it. Tables and chairs are set CSL, CSR and DSC. A sign proclaiming the inn's name hangs at a precarious angle over the bar. A door USL leads out into the street; a door USR leads in from the rest of the inn.

## **PROPS**

IVORY: Bag of popcorn, centerpiece for piano.  
HAPPY: 4-5 bottles, glasses.  
CHASTITY: Wedding veil, bouquet of flowers, wedding ring.  
PATIENCE: Bulky pair of men's trousers, fancy dress, silver serving tray, basket of silverware, apron.  
WIDDER BLACK: Huge black shoulder bag filled with photographs, vases and little knickknacks.  
TEMPERANCE LADIES: Four picket signs.  
SAHARA: Several dresses and articles of clothing, elaborate hand mirror, large suitcase.  
VIRGIL: Bouquet of flowers, flimsy piece of cloth, 2 badges.  
MA: Dinner bell, pen.  
PRINCESS PRETTYFOOT: Heavy frying skillet.  
HORACE: Contract, pocket watch.  
SET PROPS: Vases.

## PROLOGUE

*(The CURTAIN is closed. The ANNOUNCER stands in a LIGHT in front of the curtain, and addresses the audience.)*

ANNOUNCER: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to our production of *LAST CHANCE INN, CALAMITY GULCH*. May I present, for your listening pleasure, the nimble fingers of our own Ivory Keyes at the piano...*(The ANNOUNCER makes a sweeping gesture toward a piano, located either on or adjacent to the stage. The LIGHT illuminates an empty piano seat.)* Ivory...? *(Looking out into the audience, annoyed.)* Where are you?!

*(IVORY KEYES emerges from the audience, chatting with the members and munching on popcorn.)*

IVORY: *(A mouth full of popcorn.)* I'm comin', I'm comin'!  
*(Swallows.)* What do you want?!

ANNOUNCER: It's time to start the program with a little music!

IVORY: Don't I even get to finish my popcorn?! *(The ANNOUNCER gives HER a threatening look.)* Okay, okay!  
*(SHE hands her popcorn to a member of the audience.)* Here! And don't finish it...I'll be back! *(IVORY makes her way to the piano and sits.)* Now I'm ready!

ANNOUNCER: Ladies and Gentlemen...Ivory Keyes!

*(The ANNOUNCER exits through the CURTAIN and the LIGHT fades out. IVORY plays a melody suitable to set the tone for an evening of melodrama. At the conclusion of Ivory's selection, the CURTAIN opens and LIGHTS come up on the Last Chance Inn. Ivory stands to accept her applause.)*

IVORY: Oh thank you, thank you! You're too kind! Welcome to the Last Chance Inn...located right here in beautiful downtown Calamity Gulch!

IVORY: *(Cont'd.)* No, no...we're not open for business just yet...it's too early! I'm just here practicin'...not that I need to! And Happy, the bartender, is...*(Looks around.)* well he's around here somewhere...taking inventory. Happy? Happy?

*(HAPPY appears from behind the bar. His movements, speech and appearance indicate he has been sampling the supplies.)*

HAPPY: Doggonit, woman! Now you've gone and made me lose count! Let's see...*(Looking behind the bar.)*...sarsaparilla...we got one, two, three, three and a half...*(HE takes up a bottle of "sarsaparilla" and swallows the half in one gulp.)* Three is a nice, even number! Let me see...what else do we have too much of...?

IVORY: *(To the audience.)* You see what I have to work with! *(Sits at the piano.)*

MA: *(Offstage.)* Pa...Pa? Get yourself down here! You ain't sleepin' the day away again today!

HAPPY: Oh, good! The "love birds" are up!

*(HAPPY takes a swig from another bottle as MA CULPEPPER enters.)*

MA: That'll do, Happy! Finish up the inventory...while there's still enough to count!

HAPPY: Yes, ma'am! *(Hiccups. HAPPY disappears behind the bar.)*

MA: What could be keepin' that man of mine?! I swear, he moves slower than molasses in January! *(PA CULPEPPER enters with a slow, lazy shuffle. He is unseen by MA, who whirls around and shouts in his face.)* PA!!

PA: What're you shoutin' for, old woman?! I'm standin' right here!

MA: Well, it's about time! There's plenty of work to be done around here before we open up for the day!

*Last Chance Inn, Calamity Gulch*

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PA: What's the hurry? I need a little time to get started in the morning!

MA: You ain't exactly a tiger at night, old man!

PA: Now, don't start that with me this morning! I ain't in the mood!

MA: No...you never are!

PA: I said, don't start! I'm too tired!

MA: Too tired? Landsakes, from what? All the work you didn't do yesterday...? Or thinkin' about all the work you ain't gonna do today?!

PA: I do plenty of work 'round here!

MA: Ha! Name one thing!

PA: Well...I'm too tired to think right now!

MA: Well, there's too much work to be done around here to waste time arguing with the likes of you! You just keep an eye on Happy and see to it that he doesn't drink away all of our merchandise! *(SHE exits. PA starts to sit at one of the tables.)* AND DON'T FALL ASLEEP AT ONE OF THE TABLES!!

PA: *(Getting up quickly.)* Dagnabit! Woman's got more eyes than a tater! *(To HAPPY.)* How's the inventory goin', Happy?

HAPPY: *(From behind the bar)* Almost gone...*(Jumping into view.)* I mean, done! *(Hiccups.)*

PA: Oh, I shoulda stayed in bed! This is gonna be one of them mornings! A naggin' wife and a bartender drunk on sarsaparilla...what next?!

*(HORACE PRICKLEY enters grandly sporting a villain's black cape and carrying a cane. HAPPY grimaces and ducks out of view.)*

HORACE: Greetings and salutations, Mr. Culpepper!

PA: *(To the audience.)* I had to ask! *(Turning to HORACE.)* What do you want, Prickley?!

HORACE: I have come to discuss an important business matter with you. *(Sizing up PA.)* Perhaps, you should call your lovely wife.

PA: What about the one I got?

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