

# Cowboy Breakfast

*by*  
*Rick Alden*

*Typical casting:*        *Man (60s+)*  
*Word count:*            *1062*  
*Approx. run time:*      *10 minutes*

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GEORGE                    Just caught a glimpse of myself in mirror in the hall. God - the things we do behind closed doors. Sometimes I still wonder what you saw in me. 1952 you bought this. 1952. Just kids then, and it was a joke of course, don't tend to by our Stetsons seriously, do we, the Brits, but here it is. Bit more sellotape and staples than it started with, but then wouldn't we all if we had the chance?

                                  Couldn't get enough of it; the Wild West. You don't get a lot of frontiersmen around here, not in the terraces, but you didn't mind. You didn't mind either when I started bringing more things home. Tested the water a bit first I did; a neckerchief that went straight in the drawer, an ammo belt that I said was for tools but it wasn't long before I came back from a car boot with a couple of five foot totem poles for the garden. You were fine about it, of course you were; you just asked that I string a line between them for the washing.

                                  Haven't fixed the doors yet, the saloon doors on the kitchen, sorry darling, squeaking away the moment I have a window open. Sometimes I think it's you, I do, and I like that. Still sit at the table too. Remember, I do, as I eat my porridge and think about tomorrow.

                                  Because tomorrow's Saturday. *Cowboy breakfast* day. Beans, toast, sausages and our boy, John - named of course after The Duke. Would've been Marion if he'd been a girl. Done cowboy breakfasts for him every

Saturday since he first went on to solids. You'd happily watch on from over the top of your boiled egg as he lapped it up in a little hat of his own. Shame he hasn't been able to make the last couple, got his own family now, his own breakfasts to make. So I've got to be honest, I'm more excited than ever for this one. Maybe he'll even bring the grandkids tomorrow. All the generations. We could do it in the garden, get the camp stove out, make the street smell of the limitless frontier.

Up to the shower then and I'm sitting in it when I hear the beep of the text. Great these seated showers. The boy bought it. Haven't decorated it yet, haven't Westernised it. Thinking of putting some bull horns somewhere, but John says I'm asking for trouble. I love a text I do and I haven't even fully rinsed out the shampoo when I clamber out and hurry over to it. Oh. Alright. OK. He can't come. John. My boy. No. No, he's got his own family now. His own breakfasts to make.

But it's alright. Really it is. I'm busy, I am. So busy. Back to the lounge in a hurry. Where's that hat got to? It's crazy around here. These last few weeks, things have gotten worse and worse. You've been locked out of sight for your own safety and a fellow by the name of Texas Tom Bass has moved himself in. Terrorised folk. Scared to leave our homes we are. Eyes boring into the back of our heads like the barrel of a Winchester Repeater. Hung over us like a cloud has Texas Tom. But you know all about that.

We've spoke of it enough and we're over that now, we had that shoot-out in the hallway, away from you womenfolk and I've got him under lock and key.

OK. Here we are. Better just move this porridge out of the way. Can't have that, can't have beans disturbing an execution. No epitaph that, is it?

Porridge. A good night's sleep will do me and it'll be done in the morning.

Before breakfast. Texas Tom will sleep too. He knows he's at his end. All his fight has gone now, I can feel it.

Morning comes and I wake immediately aware of my duties. I get the note from my bedside cabinet, it's been there a few weeks now and I put it by the door. These sorts of things aren't for everyone. Not even sure John could – you're here though, aren't you? I can feel those beautiful, dancing eyes warming my neck like the High Noon sun. Had to make something of myself I did, knowing you were always looking on, and ridding the world of Texas Tom, well you'll like that. It's why you bought the hat. God I hope I hung the noose better than those saloon doors.

Careful of the chairs, I am, as I climb up, don't want to damage them. John'll have these. As soon as I'm up there, I can feel Texas start to struggle.

Shaking. Just uncontrollable shaking. It's alright though, I tell him. I'm not angry with him anymore. I'm not angry with anyone. The days of terror are over so behind that, when the rage and the anger and the life have gone, we're all just the same. All just skin, bone and memory. OK. Alright. Slowly

we walk to the edge of the table, it's OK Tom, just far enough to see the door, that's all. No. He's - John will be sitting down for his own breakfast now. It's the right way of things. I hope he's never felt it isn't. Let's step a bit further, OK Tom, we're close now, you can almost see Anne, see my beautiful wife, smiling she is, look, so close now when –

My phone beeps. A text.

I love a text.

I nearly trip down the gantry as I climb down and can barely read the screen on my phone it's shaking about so much. It's John. Our boy. Change of plan, he says. He'll be over in half an hour if I can hold off for breakfast. Can he bring the kids?

Yeah. Bring the kids? Yeah. Of course. We'll all have a cowboy breakfast. Haven't looked outside yet, is it – yes. It's sunny too. I'll get that campfire burning again. OK. Right. Right then. Better get the beans on and nip out for some bread. I take the hat off and turn it around in my shaking hand. You understand, don't you? 1952. Just a joke, you said, remember? It's a delay, that's all. I'll see you soon darling. I'll see you soon.

END