

GIDEON

By

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EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - PRESENT DAY

Wide blue sky. No clouds.

A *Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly* splinters the crisp air with a flickering white and black. It zigzags up and over the reds, oranges and purples of Autumn.

From a distance the mountains look like vibrant piles of fallen leaves. An occasional house dots the landscape.

The butterfly lands on a sign by the road -- "DORAVILLE 60 MILES".

Moments later a RED CADILLAC cruises by, rips the insect off the sign.

INT. SWANSON CADILLAC (MOVING)

Upbeat music blares from the radio. A cross hangs from the rearview mirror.

A big RED BOW *stuck* on the dash. Balled up cigarette packs litter the dash as well.

LEON SWANSON, (60's), a BLACK PREACHER, behind the wheel. Grey stubble shadows his face matching his hair.

His white preacher collar, and half open carton of cigarettes lies on the passenger seat. His hand on the steering wheel barely clings to a burned down cigarette. The ash extra long.

Swanson starts to take a drag, notices the long ash. Wasted cig. He crushes it in the slide out ash tray pregnant with butts.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE - DAY

The Cadillac drives past a sign --

"Glendale Falls. You Can Call Us Home."

A quaint, late 1800's town. Untouched by time. The Cadillac winds its way through deserted streets.

INT. SWANSON CADILLAC (MOVING)

The car shuts off.

BUZZ!

Swanson glances at the dash. Gas gauge reads -- "E". He cuts off the radio.

EXT. GLENDALE GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

Swanson's Cadillac barely rolls in. He jumps out, pushes the car up to the gas pump.

Swanson wanders up to the door of the station, pulls on it.

Locked.

A slightly faded sign taped on the door, neatly handwritten with a marker, reads --

"Open After Service"

He checks his watch -- "8: 50 am"

Swanson heads back to the pump. Tries to pump gas. No go. Frustrated he puts the pump back.

He looks around, notices a little church across the street. He checks himself in the car door mirror.

EXT./INT. GLENDALE FALLS COUNTRY CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Swanson stands outside the door, listens for a moment. Nothing. He cracks the door open, peeks in.

A full house quietly sits in the pews. No one at the pulpit.

DORVIL (O.S.)
Praise the Lord!

Swanson jumps.

SWANSON
The hell?

Everyone turns around.

DORVIL, (70's), a jovial character with thin framed oval glasses straining to stay on his large round face has come up from behind Swanson.

He holds the door wide open for Swanson

.

DORVIL
Been waitin' on ya'.

Dorvil tugs at Swanson's shirtsleeve, tries to pull him in. Swanson resists.

SWANSON
Must be some mistake.

DORVIL
Ahhh, go on. Your flock awaits.

Swanson looks over the small congregation. It's a mix of blacks and whites. They stand and smile in anticipation.

Swanson pulls Dorvil back, shoves the door closed.

SWANSON
I just want gas.

DORVIL
Station don't open 'til after the service.

SWANSON
I saw, but...

DORVIL
Been closed for a few months.

SWANSON
I don't...

DORVIL
See. Thing of it is our preacher died. But 'fore he went home the very last thing he told us was not to worry God would send us another preacher. So every Sunday we've been meeting waiting on the Lord to send him. Glory be! You're finally here.

Dorvil whispers.

DORVIL
Good thing, too. They're about ready to dig *him* back up.

Dorvil starts to open the door again. Swanson pushes it closed.

SWANSON
I can't be your preacher.

DORVIL
You have a church?

SWANSON
No, but...

DORVIL
You a preacher?

SWANSON
Yes, but...

DORVIL
 There you go. We need a preacher.
 You need a church.

Dorvil checks his watch, points to it, smiles big.

DORVIL
 Right on time.

SWANSON
 But...gas.

DORVIL
 Oh. Last thing our preacher said
 was, don't open the station 'til
 the new preacher preaches.

SWANSON
 Thought the last thing he said was,
 God would send you a preacher.

DORVIL
 Uh huh. That was the *other* last
 thing.

Swanson doesn't buy it. Turns to walk away.

DORVIL
 Pushed in didn't ya'?

Swanson stops, turns, eyes him warily.

DORVIL
 The other *other* last thing he said
 was, new one's s'posed to run out
 of gas.'

Dorvil offers a goofy grin, along with Swanson's preacher
 collar.

Swanson snatches it exasperated.

SWANSON
 Sure your preacher's dead?

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - DAY

Dorvil flings the door open. The congregation stands up.
 They smile again with great anticipation.

Swanson stares in dumbly, shakes his head, and sighs.

Dorvil smiles and claps him on the back.

CHURCH PULPIT - MOMENTS LATER

Swanson's shoulders slump. He looks over the enthused faces. His collar's on the pulpit.

SWANSON
I don't know what God wants. I
just want gas.

Their smiles turn to bewilderment.

Swanson stands silent, awkward. Clears his throat.

SWANSON
This town reminds me of the one I
grew up in. 'Cept it had people in
it.

Dead silence.

SWANSON
Doraville. It's where I was headed
'fore my gas gave out. Left there
young and full of fire. Now I'm
old and full of ashes.

Swanson forces a chuckle. Everyone just stares.

Dorvil laughs, tries to ease the tension. Hard stares greet him from the congregation. He stops. Scolded puppy.

Swanson looks down and fiddles with his preacher collar.

SWANSON
Had a million reasons to go back to
Doraville over the years. Never
did. Now goin' back for just one.

He pauses, scans the crowd. Clears his throat again.

SWANSON
Seems y'all are waitin' for your
preacher, but I ain't him.

MAN IN CONGREGATION
Well while we're waitin' for a real
preacher tell us a story or
somethin'.

PERSON #2 IN CONGREGATION
Yeah. We got a couple hours to
kill.

SWANSON
That's what you call what you're
doin' here? Killin' time?

SWANSON
Should'a locked the church and kept
the station open.

The congregation doesn't respond. Swanson looks over at Dorvil. Dorvil puts his head down.

Swanson continues fiddling with his collar.

SWANSON
I'm probably not the right guy to
give you all a wake up call. Heck,
seems I've been sleep walkin' for
years but...This is God's house.
If you're just killin' time here,
what the heck you gonna do for
eternity?

The congregation fidgets uncomfortably.

SWANSON
Alright. Well. I got a story.
Ain't about me much as it is about
some others. But I know it good as
I know my own life. I figure it's
worth at least a tank of gas.

MAN IN CONGREGATION
Guess we'll be the judge of that.

Swanson shoots a "What did you get me into?" look at Dorvil. Dorvil shrugs helplessly. Then under his breath...

SWANSON
Nice day for a hanging.

Swanson clears his throat.

SWANSON
Guess I ain't gotta choice.

The congregation begins to sit up eager to hear the story.

SWANSON
The year was Nineteen and Thirty
Nine.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BACKWASH MOTEL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK 1939)

A small Motel in the country on a mountain.

SWANSON (V.O.)

A little twelve room overnight
'bout twenty or so miles just the
other side of Doraville. That night
it had rained like the sky was
angry at the earth.

A lot full of cars.

A red neon -- "VACANCY" -- beckons under the -- "BackWash" --
sign.

Rain pummels the ground. Lightning splits the dark sky.
Thunder growls at the earth.

EXT. BACKWASH MOTEL - DAY

The rainy night dissolves to a misty morning. As it
lightens, cars disappear from the muddy lot as travelers get
on their way.

SWANSON (V.O.)

By morning it cleared like all was
forgiven.

ED (O.S.)

Jenny! Jenny!

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - MORNING

Muddy footprints paint the floor. The sounds of someone
rummaging through things can be heard.

INT. OFFICE CLOSET

ED HANSON, (50's) red faced, gruff looking. Wears a cigar stub
off his lip like an accessory. A stained white tank top
compliments his ensemble.

He owns the motel with his wife, MARTHA HANSON, (50's).

ED

Jenny!

(grumbling)

Swear sometimes that woman.

Ed goes into a coughing fit, stumbles out of the closet. He
takes out a handkerchief, hacks into it. There's a bit of
blood in his spit.

MOTEL OFFICE

Ed kicks stuff back into the closet, tries to shut the door.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Why you calling, Jenny?

Ed quickly stuffs the hanky back in his pocket.

Martha, comes in. She's the smile motel customers are greeted with.

ED
The mop. Gotta clean seven. Mud everywhere. Knew them folks were pigs with all them kids.

MARTHA
Jenny don't come in til seven-thirty on Fridays. Those pigs with kids, were in two. Left spotless. Sweet woman even offered to wash the towels and sheets. Probably left the mop in eight where you was fixin' the sink. Get it fixed?

Ed throws on a hat, opens the front door. A little bell attached to the top of the door frame RINGS when the door hits it.

ED
Jenny gets here keep eight sopped 'til I get back. Other rooms probably muddy too.

Ed trudges out through a stale puff of smoke.

ED
Thing I hate more'n rain. Mud.

Martha closes the door behind him, fans away the smoke with a hand towel. She scurries around, picks up the mess he left. Takes an armload into the closet.

INT. OFFICE CLOSET

Martha reorganizes. She coughs, waves away the cigar smoke.

RING.

MARTHA
Be right out.

JENNY (O.S.)
Just me, Martha. Sorry I'm late.

Martha exits the closet, fans herself with the hand towel.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE

MARTHA

Bet them roads was a mess.

JENNY DORA, white, (35), a bucket full of misery behind her eyes. She has a fading prettiness like a daisy left a few days too long in a vase.

Her hair pinned up away from her pale, tired face. Her shoulders slump as if she carries an invisible burden.

Too young to be so old.

JENNY

Sorry I'm late. I know Ed told me.

MARTHA

Told him you don't get here til seven-thirty on Fridays. Complained about somethin' else. Long as he's...Land sakes, wasn't even thinking. Cup o'coffee?

Martha scrambles for the coffee pot.

JENNY

No thank you. 'Spect I'll get started.

Jenny notices the muddy floor.

JENNY

I'll get here first.

MARTHA

I'll get here. Eight's still leakin'. Need to keep it sopped. I'll help with the rest.

Jenny turns to go.

MARTHA

Jenny.

Jenny listens, doesn't turn around.

MARTHA

Times it seems the rain'll never stop. Always be muddy. Then the sun reaches in and Momma used to say 'mud clung to your shoes comes dust that falls away with every step'.

JENNY

Yes'm.

Jenny steps out.

EXT. ROOM 11 - LATER

Jenny lumbers through the door of Room 11 with her bucket and mop.

INT. ROOM 11 - MOMENTS LATER

Jenny mops. She hears a faint baby CRY. Jenny stops to listen. She leans the mop against the wall. Goes out.

EXT. ROOM 12 - CONTINUOUS

Jenny puts her ear to the door. Listens. A baby CRIES again. She knocks softly. Nobody answers.

JENNY
Hello?

Knocks again.

JENNY
Hello.

Jenny looks around. No cars on the lot. She fingers her wad of keys, finds the one for Twelve, opens the door gingerly.

JENNY
S'cuse me? Housekeepin'.

Jenny peeks in. Light from the door stretches across a clean floor.

The beds? Not slept in. Jenny slips in and closes the door.

INT. ROOM 12 - CONTINUOUS

Dark except for light filtering past the curtains. The room quiet.

Jenny goes to the bathroom door, gently pushes it open. A soft glow through the shower curtain comes from the bathroom window.

Jenny pauses. SILENCE.

BATHROOM

Jenny goes to the tub. Hesitates. Pulls back the shower curtain, looks down. A little bundle wrapped in a blanket.

A BABY, about 8 months, looks up at her with bright eyes. The baby has a GIDEON BIBLE lying on top of it.

A happy SQUEAL reminds Jenny to breathe. She reaches for it.

ED (O.S.)
Jenny!

Ed's voice hits Jenny like a bolt of lightning. She closes the shower curtain, dashes out.

EXT. MOTEL - CONTINUOUS

Ed stands on the wooden walkway cradling a bunch of tools and pipe fittings. He ducks into Room 8 tossing everything onto the floor.

ED (O.S.)
Jenny!

Jenny rushes down the walkway, nervously fixes her hair. Ed comes back up the walkway.

ED
More towels in eight. Leakin'
leak.

Jenny stands frozen. Ed jumps into his pickup. Chews on his cigar.

ED
Move girl, 'fore the whole place
floats down the mountain.

Ed spins off growling.

ED
Walking dead. Why Martha keeps...

A splattering of mud chases Jenny into the towel closet. She pulls out all the towels she can grab.

Martha comes out of the office, meets Jenny outside Room 8.

EXT. ROOM 8

MARTHA
What's all the yellin'?

JENNY
Ed needs these towels in eight but
I, I, I'm in the...

MARTHA
Slow down child. What?

JENNY
Twelve. In the middle of.

MARTHA
Here. Give 'em to me. Finish what
you're doin'.

Jenny practically throws the towels at Martha, scurries back to 12.

MARTHA
Pots and pans.

Martha hurries into Room 8.

INT. ROOM 12 BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The baby CRIES. Jenny rips open the curtain, scoops up the baby. The Gideon Bible falls into the tub.

INT. ROOM 12

Jenny locks the door, walks around the room comforting the child. Jenny peeks out the window.

The baby falls asleep. She lays it on the bed, caresses its face. She holds its hand.

JENNY
Where'd you come from? Where's
your momma?

Jenny glances around the room. No reason for this child to be here.

Jenny goes into the bathroom, comes back out with a brand new Gideon Bible. She opens it. Scribbled hastily inside the cover reads -- "It's a gift".

JENNY
It's a gift? A gift?

MARTHA (O.S.)
Jenny!

Jenny shuts the book, runs to the door. She opens it. Sticks her head out.

EXT. ROOM 12 - CONTINUOUS

JENNY
Yes, Martha!

MARTHA
 Sorry. Need to get these towels
 wrung out. We're running out.

JENNY
 Be right there, Martha.

MARTHA
 Oh. We didn't let twelve
 yesterday.

Jenny stammers.

JENNY
 I...I was just checking.

Jenny shuts the door. After a dumbstruck moment Martha darts
 back into 8.

INT. ROOM 12 BATHROOM

Jenny lays GIDEON back in the tub. He is asleep. She
 caresses his peaceful face, smiles.

She unwraps the blanket, then wraps it back up. She lays the
 Bible next to him, notices the name on the cover. Runs her
 finger over the BRIGHT GOLD letters.

JENNY
 Gideon.

Turns back to the peaceful infant.

JENNY
 Hello, Gideon. You're a gift. My
 gift.

She shuts the curtain, carefully closes the bathroom door and
 rushes out.

INT. MOTEL OFFICE - LATER

Martha cleans. Ed comes in.

ED
 Leak ain't leakin'.

MARTHA
 That's why you're my Mister Fix-it.

ED
 Took everything but chewing gum.
 Where's Jenny?

MARTHA
Making the rounds.

Ed plops down in a chair. Lights his cigar.

ED
Why you keep that woman. Slug
moves faster.

Ed leans back, drops his feet on the desk.

ED
Gloomy as a rainy day.

MARTHA
Job's all she's got. Doraville
treats her like she's the plague.
She wouldn't have no life, 'cept
for us. Why she won't sell that
place of hers and move in here.

Ed loses his balance, falls backwards. He catches himself.

ED
With us? I want to get rid of her.
You want her to move in.

MARTHA
Edward Hanson! Keep your voice
down. She's my friend.

ED
Friend? She don't say two words to
you 'cept, 'yes ma'am', 'no ma'am',
and 'uh-huh'. If that.

MARTHA
Friends don't have to talk to be
friends.

ED
That's not what you say about us.

MARTHA
We ain't friends. We're married.

Jenny bursts in. The bell on the door RINGS wildly.

JENNY
(frenzied)
Mud's cleaned up. Towels washed,
dried, put back. Everything's
restocked. Shampoo, soap, wash
cloths. Beds got fresh linen.
Curtains are drawn. Nothing else,
like to collect my pay. Get home
'fore the next storm hits.

Martha and Ed sit in shocked silence. Ed's cigar falls out of his mouth into his lap. It burns him. He jumps up.

ED
Hell fire.

Martha dashes to the cash drawer, counts out Jenny's pay. Jenny grabs it and races out the door.

MARTHA
Everything alright dear?

Only the doorbell answers. Martha glares at Ed.

ED
What?

Martha sprints out after Jenny. Ed settles back into his chair.

ED
My luck. Her best day's probably
her last.

He puts the ash end of the cigar in his mouth, hacks it out.

EXT. MOTEL PARKING LOT - SAME

Jenny backs her car out. Martha runs over, frazzled.

MARTHA
Jenny! Jenny! You upset?

Jenny stops briefly to put the car in gear.

Martha comes up to the passenger window. Jenny lets the car roll slowly forward. Martha follows.

MARTHA
Don't let Ed, what, Ed said, upset
you. He's just...

JENNY
Just wanted to get home 'fore it
rains, that's all. See you,
Monday.

MARTHA
Oh, well, good. See you, Monday.
Whenever you get here's fine with
me. Sure you're alright?

JENNY
Sun does knock the dust off.

Jenny drives off. Martha waves after her with a dazed smile.

INT./EXT. JENNY'S CAR - SAME (MOVING)

Jenny gives a sigh of relief with a quick glance in the rear view mirror. Martha and the Back Wash disappear from sight.

Jenny pulls back a blanket on the floor. Gideon fast asleep in a laundry basket.

Jenny drives along a country road. She sings.

JENNY (O.S.)
...red and yellow, black and
white...

Gideon awake, watches Jenny.

JENNY
...they are precious in his sight.
Jesus loves the little children of
the world.

Gideon kicks and squeals.

Jenny passes a sign --

"Welcome To Doraville. Est. Population - 400"

JENNY (O.S.)
Oh my gosh. Need to get you some
baby stuff. But can't nobody know
about you. I'll just leave you in
here.

Jenny pulls into the town grocery store parking lot.

EXT. DORAVILLE GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

Jenny gets out and hurries past some KIDS who point at her and make fun.

INT. GROCERY STORE - CONTINUOUS

As Jenny bustles through the store, people stop and stare, as if she's a ghost. They whisper as she passes.

WOMAN SHOPPER
That's the Dora girl.

MAN SHOPPER
Heard she went plumb crazy.

WOMAN SHOPPER #2
What's she doing buying baby milk?

SHOPPER #3
Must not be in her right mind.

MAN SHOPPER #2
Shouldn't be in here any ways.

Jenny gets up to the checkout counter. The CLERK just stares.

JENNY
Gonna ring me? Or is it free?

CLERK
Huh? Oh.

The Clerk looks over to the MANAGER as he steps down from his booth. The Manager sizes Jenny up, nods his head reluctantly.

The Clerk rings her up while everyone looks on.

Jenny bags the groceries avoiding everyone's eyes. She pays the Clerk, grabs the bags and darts out leaving everyone staring at themselves.

A man walks up red faced to the manager.

ANGRY SHOPPER
Her money's no good here.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - LATER

Jenny drives up the mountain on a rocky dirt road.

EXT. DORA MANOR - CONTINUOUS

Jenny drives through a long, winding, tree lined driveway. She pulls through an immense wrought iron gate with the words

"DORA MANOR"

Announced in twisted iron script overhead.

A GOAT, SCRAPPY, dodges out of the way. The bell on his neck JANGLES.

JENNY (O.S.)
Don't worry. Nobody bothers us here.

The driveway opens up to a large grassy area leading to an old two story MANSION.

The mansion, a faint shadow of what it used to be, sits at the top of the mountain overlooking Doraville.

Window shutters hang crooked. Paint chipped, peeling. The yard neglected and overgrown.

At one side of the yard a small CEMETERY languishes.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Inside the house, dark, tomb like. Most of the furnishings covered by sheets. The only things not covered, just what Jenny uses.

In the living room dust covered family pictures stand together like lonely strangers on a sheet covered piano.

SITTING ROOM - LATER

Jenny sits in an overstuffed, old leather chair giving Gideon a bottle. Shadows dance from the light of a single candle. Jenny hums softly, peacefully, the song --

"Only Believe"

Gideon watches her.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

A morning mist lingers on the mountain. The sun not up yet. The sky lightens as dawn stretches across the mountainside. Scrappy bleats, his bell JANGLES.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - SITTING ROOM - SAME

Jenny saunters in with Gideon wrapped in an old quilt.

JENNY

Didn't want to sleep last night.
Afraid I'd wake up and you'd be
just a dream.

She puts Gideon down in a chair. Gideon gurgles happily.

JENNY

Got some cleaning to do.

Jenny opens the curtains. Light floods in. The family pictures look like they're smiling.

She yanks a sheet off a couch, dust flies everywhere. Jenny sneezes. Gideon sneezes.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The sheets hang on a clothes line.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - SAME

The house, clean. No more sheets anywhere.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

A morning fog gives way to a breeze as the sun begins to peek over the mountain. A distant rooster CROWS. Then another. Then another.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - MORNING

Sunday. A SONG --

"In the Upper Room"

Drifts up the mountain. Gospel music from a Black Holiness Church below.

EXT. JENNY'S FRONT PORCH - SAME

Jenny comes out of the house, Gideon in her arms. She stops for a moment taking in the morning air.

The goat comes up and nibbles on Gideon's quilt.

JENNY

Scrappy!

Jenny knees Scrappy out of the way. Scrappy BLEATS at her.

JENNY

Shoo! This ain't food.

The music draws her down the steps, into the yard. She freezes. Looks around nervously.

All alone, she relaxes. Carries Gideon over to a little area that looks like a makeshift meeting place. It is at one edge of her property.

EXT. MEETING PLACE - CONTINUOUS

A few turned over wooden chairs, bench, bench swing, face an old wooden platform. The platform overlooks the downside of the mountain.

On a clear day the whole valley can be seen.

A Pulpit sits on the platform. A wooden railing lines the back of it. From the wooden rail the little Holiness Church can be seen next to a big lake at the bottom of the mountain.

Just past the platform a fence borders the edge where the property drops off.

Jenny sits on the bench swing with Gideon.

The song drifting up from the church is uplifting, peaceful, and soulful.

Jenny closes her eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "1912"

The house looks beautiful, majestic.

The wide varieties of spectacular flowers and plants draws birds, butterflies, bees, to explore the wonderful colors and scents.

The weather bright and sunny.

The same SONG --

"In the Upper Room"

Can be heard. Different SINGER.

YOUNG JENNY,(7), bursts out the front door and down the steps.

YOUNG JENNY
Pap Pap. Music. Music from the
colored church.

Young Jenny in a lovely white dress and blue ribbons tied around pig tails. A matching blue sash graces her waist. White lace socks and black patent leather shoes complete her Sunday church outfit.

She runs out across the lawn and turns back to the house. She smiles brightly, beckoning for her Pap Pap to follow her.

A giant Zebra Swallowtail zips past her. She leaps to catch it but it flutters away.

She continues over to the mountain's edge to get closer to the music. At this time no meeting place or fence exists.

Standing on her tiptoes, Young Jenny can barely make out the steeple on the little white church building below. She edges out a little more. The ground gives way beneath her feet and she starts to lose her balance.

A HAND grabs her arm. Pulls her back.

EDGAR DORA SR. (O.S.)
Careful child.

EDGAR DORA SR., (70's), Jenny's Grandfather. Tall and lanky. He has deep blue penetrating eyes, white hair, and fair skin.

Edgar Sr., picks Jenny up to help her see.

YOUNG JENNY
Ain't it beautiful, Pap Pap?

The music fills the mountainside. It is at once uplifting and melancholy.

Edgar Sr. holds Jenny to his chest. He closes his eyes momentarily, drinking in the music with all his senses.

YOUNG JENNY
I don't care if everyone hates us.
I like it.

Edgar opens his eyes. A sense of despair flashes across his face. But looking into Jenny's defiant eyes, he recovers quickly.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Jen Jen, I'm glad you like it.
Makes it all worth while.

YOUNG JENNY
Let's have church here.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Here?

Jenny gets down from her grandfather's arms.

YOUNG JENNY
They don't want us in town. We can
close our eyes. Let it carry us
into the sky.

Jenny closes her eyes and throws her arms up. She lets the beautiful music carry her away.

BACK TO:

EXT. MEETING PLACE - 1939 - MORNING

Jenny, eyes closed. A big voice comes booming up the mountainside.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
The old testament talks about a
woman who wanted a child so bad she
cried year by year.

Jenny's eyes snap open, out of her memories.

EXT. BLACK HOLINESS CHURCH - SAME

The church, a simple wooden, white building with a steeple that houses a brass bell. Stained glass windows line both sides. Above the double doors in large black letters --

"HOLINESS CHURCH OF CHRIST ON DORA MANOR"

The church sits on the far edge of a wide open grassy field. A line of trees and bushes separate the church from the lake. A handful of cars and a few horse-pulled wagons are in the grassy area.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
I said she cried year by year.

INT. HOLINESS CHURCH - SAME

Typical of most small country churches built in the early 1900's. Two rows of wooden pews separated by a runway leading to a pulpit and choir area.

The stained glass windows create a soft light throughout.

On the left side of the double doors a large PICTURE of Edgar Dora Sr. It is CHARRED black on one corner. Attached to the bottom of the picture, a small brass plaque --

"Dedicated to Edgar Dora Sr., 1911"

On the right side of the door a picture of JESUS walking on the water in the midst of a storm.

SCATTERED VOICES
Alright. Preach it. Year by year.

The small church a little over half full.

REVEREND ALBERT, (60's), at the pulpit, hankie in hand, preaching up a sweat.

REVEREND ALBERT

I said there was a woman, Hannah,
who wanted a child so bad, she
cried year by year.

Again scattered voices encourage the preacher.

REVEREND ALBERT

'Til one year Hannah got tired of
just weeping and got down to
prayin'. Don't think you heard me.
It's okay to weep. It's okay to
cry out. It's even okay to moan and
groan. But that ain't gonna get no
answer.

EXT. MEETING PLACE - SAME

Jenny stands at the railing holding Gideon, listening. The
sound of the congregation shouting and clapping carries up
the mountain.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)

Beloved, it wasn't until she
finally prayed that the Bible says,
"the Lord remembered her." I don't
know about you, but I sure want the
Lord to remember me.

INT. HOLINESS CHURCH - SAME

WOMAN IN CONGREGATION

Well, well.

REVEREND ALBERT

What did the Lord do?

EXT. MEETING PLACE - SAME

Jenny hasn't moved.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)

Remembered her.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)

Praise God. They have ears and
they do hear.

The congregation chuckles, shouts encouragement.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)

Beloved. Hannah was barren. She
was mocked. Ridiculed. Cast out.

More scattered shouts. Some in the congregation are yelling out "YEAH" every time he makes a point.

INT. HOLINESS CHURCH - SAME

REVEREND ALBERT
 Now I want to ask you a question.
 What does Hannah do with her
 precious answer to prayer? This
 child she wept year by year for?

EXT. MEETING PLACE - SAME

Jenny stares down at the church captivated.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
 What did Hannah do?

Jenny waits for the answer.

INT. HOLINESS CHURCH - SAME

REVEREND ALBERT
 Well if you want to know. You
 gonna have to open up God's Word
 for ye'self. First Samuel. Cause
 Jesus said don't just be hearers of
 the Word. Be doers of the Word.
 And stop waiting for the preacher
 to be doin' all your reading. Do I
 get an amen?

CONGREGATION
 Amen!

REVEREND ALBERT
 C'mon Sister Alma take us out of
 here.

SISTER ALMA plays the piano, sings --
 "It's Me, It's Me, Standing In The Need Of Prayer".
 Everyone springs up and joins in the rousing song.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jenny flips through the Bible.

JENNY
 First Samuel. First Samuel.

She finds it, quickly scans the pages.

JENNY

Verse twenty-seven. 'For this child I prayed; And the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord.

Jenny puts the Bible down, picks up Gideon. She holds him up to God.

JENNY

God. I'm gonna read Gideon your Word day and night. As long as he lives, Gideon'll be lent to you.

Jenny pulls Gideon back, snuggles him to her bosom, raises him again quickly.

JENNY

Amen.

She snuggles him back again.

SWANSON (O.S.)

Well, I guess we can end the service and I can gas up.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT DAY

An ELDERLY MAN, (90's), gets up in front.

ELDERLY MAN

Now wait a minute preacher.

SWANSON

Swanson.

ELDERLY MAN

Swan song.

People in the congregation snicker, laugh.

SWANSON

Swanson.

ELDERLY MAN

I heard you. Call you Swan Song cause you act like you givin' your own eulogy. Now I just turned ninety-five years old.

ANOTHER MAN (O.S.)

Again?

People laugh. The elderly man ignores it.

ELDERLY MAN

If they's one thing I learnt. The Spirit don't do nothing part ways. So neither are you. Now when you first got up there, I couldn't believe what God done drugged in. Then you commenced to tellin' this story and I see'd God working somethin' out. Now you keep bumpin' them gums, let the Holy Spirit do what He do.

Shouts of agreement come from all over the church.

Swanson looks over at Dorvil hoping to get some help. Dorvil just smiles, nods for him to keep going.

SWANSON

(under his breath)
What am I doing here?

Swanson takes a deep breath, begins again.

SWANSON

Let's see. Now Jenny had to keep working, and that was the tricky part for her.

EXT. BACKWASH MOTEL - DAY (FLASHBACK 1939)

SWANSON (V.O.)

Cause she didn't want nobody knowin' 'bout Gideon.

INT. ROOM 8 - SAME

Jenny cleans. Gideon lies in the bathtub.

EXT. MOTEL - SAME

Jenny comes out of ROOM 8, opens ROOM 9.

She hurries back to ROOM 8.

Sticking her head out the door, she makes sure the coast is clear, then scurries into ROOM 9 with Gideon.

She rushes back into ROOM 8, then runs back to ROOM 9, with all of her cleaning supplies.

INT. ROOM 9 BATHROOM - SAME

Jenny sits on the edge of the tub.

JENNY
Don't know 'bout you. I'm plain
tuckered.

Gideon lies in a laundry basket in the tub. He gurgles out a smile.

JENNY
I know you're doing your part to
stay quiet. Martha's my friend.
But Ed? If he...

MEOW. A CAT appears at the bathroom window.

JENNY
Goodness. Scared me. Shew away
from there. 'Fore you break the
screen.

The cat MEOW's one last time, runs off.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Jenny! Jenny!

EXT./INT. ROOM 9 - SAME

Jenny comes out.

JENNY
Here Martha. Just startin' nine.

Martha comes over.

MARTHA
Oh my. Through to nine?

JENNY
I didn't cut corners.

MARTHA
Jenny Dora. One thing I know 'bout
you, cuttin' corners ain't in your
nature. Now even Ed won't...

A short muffled CRYING noise cuts off Martha's words.

MARTHA
What was that?

JENNY
You were saying something 'bout Ed.

MARTHA
No. I mean that noise?

JENNY
Noise?

MARTHA
You didn't hear that sound? Like a
crying noise, or ...

The muffled crying noise sounds again.

MARTHA
There. Like, like a baby crying.

JENNY
Baby?

Martha goes past Jenny into the room. Jenny stands
paralyzed, frozen at the door.

Martha goes towards the closed bathroom door. Jenny manages
to squeak out her name.

JENNY
Martha.

Martha turns towards Jenny as she opens the door. Jenny sees
the cat back in the window.

JENNY
Cat!

Jenny sprints past Martha to chase it away. The cat MEOW's.

INT. BATHROOM

JENNY
Shoo!

The cat darts off. Jenny looks down, Gideon is fast asleep.

EXT. ROOM 9 - SAME

Jenny ushers Martha out.

MARTHA
Funny how they sound just like
babies.

JENNY
Funny.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Believe me. Hiding Gideon was a
tiring game of cat and mouse.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT DAY

SWANSON
How Jenny could keep him hid, not
just from Ed and Martha, but from
all of Doraville, too?

Swanson pauses, perhaps reflecting on such an impossible
task. Or perhaps looking inward for an answer he doesn't
have.

The congregation waits. Swanson refocuses, looks over the
people.

SWANSON
Well, what is impossible with man
is possible with God. One thing I
know, *nobody* knew about him. By
the time Gideon was about three...

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: *"Three Years Later - 1942"*

Jenny sits in one of the porch chairs, watches Gideon walk
through the garden.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Jenny started noticing something...
special.

Gideon touches the plants as he passes them.

GIDEON
I bless 'mato's. I bless 'cumbers.
I bless.
(glances up)
Momma? What these?

JENNY
Cabbage.

Gideon pinches his nose.

GIDEON
I bless baggage.

A bell JINGLES. Gideon sees Scrappy. He runs over to him.

GIDEON
I bless.

The goat dodges Gideon. The bell RINGS. Gideon spins to grab him.

GIDEON

I bless.

Scrappy dodges him again. The bell RINGS again. Gideon reaches out again.

GIDEON

I bless.

The goat dodges Gideon, runs off, bell ringing all the way. Gideon drops to the ground, lets out a loud WAIL.

Jenny hurries to him.

JENNY

What's wrong?

Gideon looks up, red faced, tears in his eyes.

GIDEON

Scrappy won't me bless.

Jenny gathers him into her arms. Gideon sobs.

JENNY

Maybe Scrappy don't want to be blessed.

GIDEON

Why?

JENNY

Don't know. Some things just don't want to.

Jenny pats his tears with her apron.

JENNY

You can bless me.

Gideon brightens. He puts his hand on Jenny's forehead.

GIDEON

I bless you momma.

Jenny puts her hand on Gideon's forehead.

JENNY

I bless you too, Gideon.

They give each other a kiss, and big hug.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT DAY

The door creaks open, an older WHITE MAN, (70's), comes in. Some turn to look.

Dressed in a nice jacket and tie, he carries a Bible. The man stands, listens.

SWANSON

Not too long after that, Gideon blessed old Scrappy, whether he wanted it or not.

The white man slips into the back pew.

EXT. JENNY'S BACKYARD BARN - DAY (FLASHBACK 1942)

Gideon follows Jenny into the barn.

JENNY

You grab the...

Jenny stops.

INT. JENNY'S BACKYARD BARN - CONTINUOUS

Jenny and Gideon, just inside the barn. On the ground, in front of them, tongue out, eyes opened, lies Scrappy.

Stiff as a knocked over rocking horse. Flies surround his carcass.

Jenny pulls Gideon's head to her to hide his face. She covers her nose and mouth with the towel that hangs around her neck. Gideon peeps out of Jenny's apron.

JENNY

Oh, Scrappy.

GIDEON

Scrappy bell not ringin' momma.

JENNY

No, Gideon. Scrappy's bell won't ring no more.

A tear, Jenny wipes her eyes. She spins, leaves the barn.

JENNY

Bes' get a sack. C'mon, Gideon.

Gideon doesn't move, stares at Scrappy. He begins to hum --

"Only Believe"

Gideon approaches the dead goat, kneels down, pets it gently. He presses his hands on its torso.

EXT. JENNY'S BACKYARD BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Jenny scurries up to the barn, a potato sack on her arm, a shovel in hand. Just as she gets to the entrance, a bell JANGLES.

Scrappy races out past her, Gideon in hot pursuit.

Jenny drops the shovel and sack, stunned.

Gideon and Scrappy dance around in playful circles. Scrappy's bell, RINGING, non-stop.

GIDEON
I blessed Scrappy momma!

SWANSON (V.O.)
That was the moment Jenny knew.
Gideon was special.

MAN IN CONGREGATION (V.O.)
Wait a minute preacher.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT DAY

MAN IN CONGREGATION
(standing up)
You tryin' to tell us that boy
raised that goat from the dead?

Others in the congregation grumble.

SWANSON
No. I am telling you that.

Swanson pauses. He stares down at his preacher collar. Something behind his eyes tells us long buried memories are rising to the surface.

SWANSON
Look. I'll admit I'm not God's
most faithful preacher. I got a
lota' God struggles.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "7 Years Later - 1949"

SWANSON (V.O.)
But one thing I don't struggle
with...What I'm tellin' ya'll.

A Zebra Swallowtail glides through the air down into the garden where Jenny and GIDEON, (10), are working. It lands briefly on a bright yellow sunflower, then flutters off.

The garden, filled with tomato plants, lettuce, corn, and cucumbers. Several rows of brilliant SUNFLOWERS stand guard.

Jenny weeds from between the plants. Scrappy nibbles on weeds as well. Gideon turns the soil, stops, watches Jenny for a moment.

GIDEON
Momma. Can a kid be baptized?

JENNY
Course, Gideon.

GIDEON
Can I?

JENNY
I think ten's a good age to be baptized.

Gideon takes off into the house. Jenny tries to stand up, weakens, kneels back down.

JENNY
Don't take me away from Gideon like you took my family from me.

Gideon runs out of the house, arms full of Jenny's family pictures. He lays them down before her.

JENNY
What's all this?

GIDEON
Cloud of witnesses.

He holds each one up to her.

GIDEON
Pap pap's a witness. Grandma
Dora's a witness. Grandpa Junior.
Uncle Adam can be a witness.

Jenny manages a smile, helps Gideon gather up the pictures.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - LATER

The sun dips down behind the mountain.

A soft light silhouettes Jenny and Gideon standing in the river. Jenny dips Gideon under the water. When he comes up, he wipes his eyes, gives Jenny a big smile and a hug.

GIDEON
I can start now momma.

JENNY
Start what, Gideon?

GIDEON
What Jesus wants.

Jenny hugs Gideon tighter, not knowing what to say. Gideon smiles, nods at the pictures.

The faces in the pictures on the river bank appear to smile back.

EXT. BACKWASH MOTEL - DAY

A drizzly day. The lot, almost full.

INT. ROOM 7 - SAME

Jenny cleans the main room, singing -- "Only Believe".

INT. ROOM 7 BATHROOM - SAME

Gideon mops the floor. He quietly hums along with Jenny.

A loud SCREAM shatters the moment.

MARTHA (O.S.)
Jenny! Jenny!

Jenny closes the bathroom door. Gideon jumps into the tub, pulls the curtain closed, lies down.

INT. ROOM 7 - SAME

Martha runs in, frantic.

MARTHA
Working in three. Been getting worse lately. Always hidin' it...Oh, Jenny...

JENNY
Martha, what?

INT. ROOM 3 - LATER

Jenny pulls a sheet over Ed's *dead body*.

He lays across the bed on his side, as if he fell there and coughed himself to death.

Blood is on the bed.

A tray is on the floor. Food and broken dishes, scattered.

Martha, in a corner, cries in the arms of a YOUNG LADY MOTEL GUEST.

A few other GUESTS are in the room looking on.

MARTHA

I was bringing him lunch. He don't like doctors.

SHERIFF RILEY, (40's), appears at the door. Removes his hat, shakes off the rain drops, comes into the room.

SHERIFF RILEY

Hello, Martha. Alright, if you're not family, please clear the room.

The guests slowly file out. Jenny starts to leave. Martha grabs her by the wrist, pulls her back. The Sheriff looks at her.

MARTHA

Family.

Sheriff Riley goes to the bed, looks under the sheet.

SHERIFF RILEY

Ed. I'm sorry, Martha. Didn't know...

MARTHA

Always tried to...

Her voice trails off.

SHERIFF RILEY

Okay. Let me, and Stevie, handle this when he gets here. Maybe you should lie down.

Martha begins to sob.

MARTHA

No. Can't be.

Martha starts to collapse. Jenny and the Sheriff hold her up.

MARTHA

Ed. My, Ed.

The Sheriff nods for Jenny to take her out. They leave.

Sheriff Riley lifts the sheet again.

EXT. ROOM 3 BATHROOM WINDOW - SAME

Gideon peeks through the bathroom window, watches the Sheriff through the open bathroom door. The rain caresses Gideon's head.

The Sheriff's back is to him, checking for a pulse.

No pulse.

The Sheriff puts Ed's arm back down, pulls the sheet back, goes out.

EXT. BACKWASH MOTEL - SAME

DEPUTY STEVE, (20's), pulls up, get's out of his squad car.

He goes towards the Sheriff, taking a statement from a HOTEL GUEST.

The Sheriff notices the Deputy coming up.

SHERIFF RILEY
Room three, Stevie. It's Ed.

DEPUTY STEVE
Not, Ed.

EXT. ROOM 3 - CONTINUOUS

Deputy Steve tries the door.

DEPUTY STEVE
Locked. Must've locked when you closed it.

SHERIFF RILEY
Didn't close it.

Sheriff Riley comes over, tries the door.

SHERIFF RILEY
I know, I didn't close it.

He knocks at the door.

SHERIFF RILEY
Martha. You in there? Martha?

The handle turns, the door opens.

Sheriff Riley's face turns white as a ghost. He steps back, almost falling over Deputy Steve.

ED (O.S.)
Where's Martha?

Ed walks out, towel in hand, wiping the blood from his neck.

SHERIFF RILEY
You're...dead.

ED
Dead? I ain't dead. Do I look
dead? Martha!

EXT. ROOM 3 - SAME

Ed pushes past, leaving them standing stone still. Martha runs out of the office. Jenny follows her out, stops in her tracks when she sees Ed.

MARTHA
Ed? Ed. My, Ed! My, Ed! You're
alive! You're alive.

Martha crumbles in Ed's arms.

ED
Martha. I know I was headed to
hell. It was dark. Darker than
dark. All I could hear was
screaming.

Guests rush out of their rooms, gather around Ed and Martha.

The Sheriff takes off his hat, goes into ROOM 3.

INT. ROOM 3 - SAME

The Sheriff looks around. The blood stained sheet is on the floor. He sits down on the bed, rubs his head.

ED (O.S.)
So scared, Martha. Never believed
that stuff.

EXT. ROOM 3 - SAME

The Sheriff comes out of the room. Stops to listen.

ED
 Then I could see my body in the
 room. And like a little angel was
 calling me back.

Hearing Ed mention a little angel, Jenny sneaks past the
 Sheriff into ROOM 3.

INT. ROOM 3 - SAME

Jenny glances quickly around. She looks in the closet.
 Nothing.

ED (O.S.)
 I opened my eyes. The room was
 empty.

INT. ROOM 3 BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jenny checks the tub, behind the shower curtain. She checks
 the window. The screen is on.

EXT. ROOM 3 - SAME

ED
 My face was all wet, like, like I
 been baptized. Heard the Sheriff,
 knocking, and calling Martha. That
 beautiful name. Martha. Martha.

Ed and Martha hug as if they'll never let go.

SHERIFF RILEY
 Ed. I...uh...

ED
 Good to see you, Sheriff.

Not letting go of Martha, Ed shakes the Sheriff's hand.
 Deputy Steve comes up.

DEPUTY STEVE
 Sheriff. We just got a call.
 Couple kids in Doraville throwing
 rocks down on cars.

SHERIFF RILEY
 Let me guess. Josey.

DEPUTY STEVE
 Mayor wants us to pick him up.

SHERIFF RILEY

Ed, get to a doctor and have him check you out. Martha here deserves better than that.

ED

Sheriff, from now on, what Martha wants, Martha gets.

Sheriff and Deputy leave.

ED

We're having a celebration.

Everyone cheers. Jenny comes out.

ED

Jenny. Come here girl.

Ed goes over to Jenny, gives her a big hug. Jenny doesn't know how to react.

ED

I am so sorry for everything mean I ever said to you. Gonna make it up. There's a new man in this body. Never felt so alive.

Rain begins to fall harder.

ED

Martha.

Ed offers his hand to Martha.

ED

May I have this dance?

MARTHA

But the mud.

ED

I love mud.

Martha giggles like a school girl. Ed leads her out into the rain. They dance, cheek to cheek.

They kiss, like young lovers.

The other guests follow them out into the rain, dancing, hugging, enjoying the miracle.

EXT. BACKWASH JENNY'S CAR - SAME

Gideon peeps through the steamy, rain pelted window from the back seat. He smiles.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Scrappy the goat was one thing...

EXT. DORAVILLE FIVE AND DIME STORE - DAY

Four KIDS ride up on bikes.

SWANSON (V.O.)
But Ed? Jenny wasn't quite sure
what to make of it. Afraid
Doraville might find out about her
precious boy, she hid it in her
heart. Pushed it out of her
thoughts. But God's thoughts are
not our thoughts.

One kid leans his bicycle against a lamppost. Two lean them
against the brick wall of the building.

SWANSON (V.O.)
And His ways...Well, let's just
say, you can uncross paths, double
back and erase your footprints.
Even run to the next mountain.

The last kid, throws his bike down in the middle of the
sidewalk.

SWANSON (V.O.)
One thing I know, anyway you go,
God's always a step ahead and right
behind.

A couple of PEDESTRIANS walk off the sidewalk into the street
to avoid tripping over it.

LEFTOVER
Your bike, Josey.

LEFTOVER, (14), short, overweight. Always eating. In fact,
he's stuffing a sandwich in his mouth right now.

JOSEY
Telling me what to do, Leftover?

JEHOSEPHAT DAVIS JR., (16), (JOSEY), the Mayor's older son.
Tallest kid in the group. Something dark dances behind his
eyes.

Josey goes over, pokes Leftover's chest. Josey stands about
a head taller than him.

LEFTOVER
(mouth full)
Didn't want nobody trippin' over
it.

JOSEY
Like this?

Josey puts his leg behind Leftover, pushes him down. The rest of his sandwich goes flying. The other kids look on quietly, uncomfortable.

Josey laughs. He turns to the other kids. They quickly join in with uneasy laughter.

Leftover stays down, rubs his tailbone.

JOSEY
Tell me what to do.

SHERIFF RILEY (O.S.)
Jehosephat Davis Jr.

Sheriff Riley, and Deputy Steve pull up behind them in their squad car. They get out.

SHERIFF RILEY
We have an appointment with your dad, Jehosephat.

JOSEY
Name's Josey.

SHERIFF RILEY
Whose bike's this in the middle of the sidewalk?

JOSEY
Mine. Told Leftover to move it. Someone might get hurt.

SHERIFF RILEY
You're a saint, Jehosephat.

Deputy Steve picks up Josey's bike, puts it in the trunk of the car.

The Sheriff takes Josey by the shoulders, escorts him into the back seat, closes the door. He goes over to Leftover, helps him up.

SHERIFF RILEY
Alright son?

Leftover glances at Josey. Josey gives him a cold glare. Leftover nods his head "yes".

SHERIFF RILEY
You guys wouldn't know about some kids throwing rocks off Highway Eight?

They shake their heads "no".

SHERIFF RILEY
That's okay, got a few good
witnesses.

Sheriff and Deputy get in their cars.

DEPUTY STEVE
Don't go far. I'm sure we'll be
wanting to ask you and your parents
some questions.

They drive off. The boys watch them disappear, grab their
bikes.

Leftover snatches the rest of his sandwich off the ground,
blows on it, then stuffs it in his mouth.

LEFTOVER
(mouthful)
My ma's gonna kill me.

WEASEL
That's ni..ni...nice...compared to
m...my pa.

WEASEL,(12), two large buck teeth, talks with a stutter,
wears glasses.

LEFTOVER
Who's ma..ma..mypa?

PETEY
Leave him alone, Leftover.

PETEY,(12), Josey's younger brother. Handicapped. One leg
shorter than the other. Wears a shoe with an extra large
sole to balance him out.

WEASEL
Snake bite, Pe..Petey. If they
know Josey th...th...then...

PETEY
Then dad'll give it to Josey.
Josey'll give it to me. Wish
pops'd just treat me regular.

WEASEL
You crazy? My dad treats me
regular I ca...ca...can't sit down
for days.

LEFTOVER
(imitating weasel)
I ca..ca...I ca..ca....

PETEY
 (to Leftover)
 Hey Leftover, all that food in your
 mouth, how you got room for so much
 stupid?

LEFTOVER
 Callin' me a pig, Pegleg?

Petey and Leftover face each other. Finally, Leftover
 relents.

LEFTOVER
 Ain't goin' to jail for 'saltin' no
 cripple.

Leftover takes off on his bike.

PETEY
 Come over to my house, Weasel.
 Your dad won't kill you as bad.

WEASEL
 Kill me worse. Knowin' I
 was...Kno..knowing I was
 hid...hide..

PETEY
 Hiding?

WEASEL
 Ye..yeah.

Weasel jumps on his bike, and peddles off. Petey looks after
 him.

Jenny's car passes by.

For a brief moment Petey catches sight of Gideon looking out
 the back window.

Their eyes lock.

Petey blinks, looks again. Nothing but an empty window.

As the car disappears around the corner, Petey notices a
 little black boy across the street, YOUNG SWANSON,(12),
 staring at him.

The black boy has a black PATCH over one eye.

Petey acknowledges the boy with a slight wave. Young Swanson
 lifts his hand to wave back.

A taller, skinny black girl, SKEETER,(14), comes out of an
 alley next to an ice cream parlor. She passes a sign that
 reads --

"Coloreds Round Back"

Skeeter has two vanilla cones. She comes up, puts her arm around Young Swanson's shoulders, pulls his wave down, turns him away to walk down the side walk.

As they go, she hands Young Swanson a cone, gives her scoop a lick.

She turns to Petey. With a sassy expression and vanilla ice cream dabbed on her nose and mouth, Skeeter sticks her tongue out.

Petey lets his wave drop.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - LATER

The MAYOR, JEHOSEPHAT DAVIS Sr., (40's), the Sheriff, and the Deputy, surround a seated Josey, grilling him like a fresh fish.

MAYOR DAVIS
Don't lie to me.

Josey stares ahead, silent.

SHERIFF RILEY
Josey. People saw you and your friends throwing rocks.

Josey doesn't budge.

MAYOR DAVIS
Jehosephat Davis Jr., I swear.

LULU, (60's), the Mayor's SECRETARY, looks in.

LULU
Mayor?

MAYOR DAVIS
What?

LULU
Parents of Weasel. I mean Samuel Norico and Charlie Lefter called saying their kids turnin' themselves in about the rock throwing incident.

All eyes go to Josey.

JOSEY
Met 'em at the dime.

LULU

Also, your wife's here with Petey.

MRS. EUNICE DAVIS, (late 30's), comes into the room, smacks the back of Josey's head.

EUNICE

Don't lie to your father. When we get you home...What's gotten in to you, throwing rocks at cars? I swear there will be some retribution.

Eunice glances at the Sheriff and Deputy. Grits a smile.

EUNICE

What happened to fishing for fun?

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

JOSEY (O.S.)

Squealers.

EXT. DORA MANOR RIVERSIDE - SAME

Josey fishes along the river.

Petey, Weasel are up in a tree.

LEFTOVER

Hey, guys! Guys!

Leftover runs up, bends over, catches his breath.

JOSEY

Where's my other pole?

LEFTOVER

Sshh.

JOSEY

Ssshhh?!

LEFTOVER

A kid. Seen...a kid.

JOSEY

Seen a kid too. A fat one, a weasel, and a pegleg.

LEFTOVER

Snake bite, Josey!

Josey drops his pole, follows Leftover.

As they pass under the other two, Leftover points down the riverbank, gives the other kids the "hush" sign.

Weasel drops down out of the tree. Petey struggles to get down.

PETEY

Wait up.

They don't wait, disappearing around the bend.

EXT. DOWN THE RIVERBANK - SAME

By the time Petey hobbles up, they're hiding behind a bush, looking across the river.

PETEY

What?

They "ssssh" him.

Josey clasps Petey's head and mouth. Petey tries to push away, Josey holds his head still.

Weasel points for Petey to look. Josey lets him go.

Petey peeks through the bushes. Across the river, Gideon sits on the riverbank, fishing.

PETEY

Hey! I think...

Josey covers his mouth, pulling him back.

JOSEY

(whispering)

Shut. Up.

Josey let's go. Petey whispers.

PETEY

That looks like the kid in, Crazy Jenny's car.

Josey steals another look at Gideon, then takes off down the river the way they came. Everyone chases after him. Petey lags.

LEFTOVER

What'cha gonna do? 'Salt 'im?

Josey doesn't answer.

EXT. RIVERBANK TREE - CONTINUOUS

Josey gets to a place where a large tree has fallen across the river. It's wide enough for them to walk across it one by one.

They scurry across, and run towards where Gideon was fishing.

Except for Petey. He gets down, shimmies halfway across.

Finally, he struggles up, wobbles down the tree as best as he can. As he nears the end, he loses his balance, stumbles, falls onto the muddy riverbank, hands and face first.

Petey scrambles up, covered in mud, takes off towards the others.

EXT. OPPOSITE SIDE OF RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

By the time Petey gets there, Gideon is nowhere to be seen. The others, stand around, dumbfounded. Leftover spots Petey hobbling up, covered in mud from head to toe.

LEFTOVER

Geez, Petey. Wish you'd have told me you was goin' muddin.

Weasel pretends to look past Petey, craning his head.

WEASEL

Where's Pe..Pe...Petey? I don't see him.

Petey punches Weasel in the chest, getting mud on him.

WEASEL

Hey! Th..th..that's my good p..p..play shirt.

LEFTOVER

P..p..play shirt?! What's a p..p..play shirt?

Weasel rubs his hand on Petey, reaches out to wipe it on Leftover. Leftover jerks back, runs away towards the water. Weasel gives chase.

Leftover, dodging Weasel, spots the pole he was using. It is wedged in a small bush on the riverbank, with the line in the water.

LEFTOVER

Josey, your pole!

Leftover grabs it. Weasel starts to touch him.

LEFTOVER
Snake bite!

Leftover eyes him seriously. Weasel holds his muddy hand inches from Leftover's chest. The line suddenly pulls tight.

LEFTOVER
Got somethin'!

Leftover starts reeling in. Weasel's wide eyes follow the taut line out into the river.

Josey comes up, snatches the pole. Starts reeling.

JOSEY
I got somethin'.

It fights him.

JOSEY
Holy Moley, this is a *big* fish.

They encourage him, as he reels it in. Finally, after a terrific struggle, he drags it up on the bank.

They go to it.

LEFTOVER
Whoa. Now that's a catch.

WEASEL
Ne...ne...ne....ver...

JOSEY
Never mind dummy.

PETHEY
You caught a whole school.

Laying on the river bank, a stringer of ten big fish, flop around, tied to Josey's hook. Josey strains a little to pick them up.

JOSEY
Make a monkey out of me.
(to Petey)
Clean up, ain't gettin' it for you
this time.

Josey spits on Petey's club shoe.

JOSEY
Spit shine clean.

LEFTOVER

Hey, Josey, if he made a monkey
outta you, he'da left a bunch of
bananas.

Leftover laughs. Josey glares at him. He stops laughing.
Josey pushes through them, stomps away.

LEFTOVER

(calling out)

Josey. Gonna eat all those fish?

Josey disappears around the bend.

WEASEL

Hey, Le..Lefty.

Weasel pats Leftover's back with his muddy hand.

WEASEL

You're my be...bestest friend.

Leftover looks at his mud streaked back. Weasel takes off.

LEFTOVER

D..D..Dead Weasel!

Leftover bolts after Weasel. Petey laughs. Through his
tears.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Jenny and Gideon eat a candlelight dinner. *Fish.*

Gideon stops eating. Looks at Jenny, studies her. Jenny
doesn't notice at first. Finally she glances at Gideon,
looks back at her plate, double takes back at Gideon.

GIDEON

Momma. How's come we ain't got no
friends?

Jenny stops, mid chew.

GIDEON

We hear so many nice people from
the churches down there.

Jenny swallows.

JENNY

I know sweetheart.

Gideon watches anger flicker across her face. Her words
spiced with bitterness.

JENNY

But you don't know people 'round here. They're cruel and hateful. And I ain't about to let them hurt you...Us.

GIDEON

Can't I have a friend momma?

Jenny gazes at Gideon's innocent face. His heart open for anyone to see. Her expression softens. Her eyes begin to well up.

After a long moment, she takes a drink, wipes her mouth, clears her throat.

JENNY

When I was a kid, people used to be our friends.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

SUPER: "1909"

Two black men, REVEREND THADDEUS COLEMAN, (60's), and ELDER RUFUS HELMSLEY, (40's), ride up to Jenny's house in horse and buggy.

Little Jenny, (5), and Adam, (11), play in the yard. They stop, watch the men pull past.

JENNY (V.O.)

Then one day the black folk came to see Pap Pap.

INT. EDGAR DORA SR.'S DEN - CONTINUOUS

Edgar Sr., and EDGAR DORA JR. (34), stand with Thaddeus and Rufus.

A black housekeeper, HATTIE, (60's), offers lemonade to everyone. They take it, thank her. She goes out. Jenny and Adam peek through the window.

REVEREND THADDEUS

Business at hand might be little awkward to lay on the table.

EDGAR DORA SR.

Feel free, Reverend Thaddeus.

REVEREND THADDEUS
 Long and short. White folks in
 this town got a beautiful church
 your daddy built to worship in.
 Beautiful. We coloreds, ain't got
 no place to call God's house.

RUFUS HELMSLEY
 Ain't got a set place of worship.

REVEREND THADDEUS
 Makes it hard to congregate.

RUFUS HELMSLEY
 Every shepherd needs a sheepfold.

EDGAR DORA JR.
 Why not build you a church?

REVEREND THADDEUS
 Well that's easy to say. But we
 ain't got a whole lotta' money.

RUFUS HELMSLEY
 Nor land to put one.

EDGAR DORA JR.
 Daddy. You just been talking about
 that acreage on the lake at the
 bottom of the mountain. What to do
 with it.

EDGAR DORA SR.
 Big enough to put a church on.

EDGAR DORA JR.
 Borders town so it's close.

REVEREND THADDEUS
 Well we wasn't trying to...

EDGAR DORA SR.
 Reverend. I know my Bible, too.
 Spirit's like the wind. Don't know
 where it's coming from. Don't know
 where it's going. Just supposed to
 listen to it blowing and follow it.

Edgar Sr., gets up, goes to the window. Jenny and Adam duck.

Long silence.

He watches Jenny and Adam run away. Looks over at the
 GRAVESTONES of his family. He notices the wind rustling the
 leaves on the trees.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Just heard the wind blow.

He turns to them.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Gentlemen, my wife passed from the
cough. Then my daughter-in-law
passed in child birth to Jenny.

REVEREND THADDEUS
We heard about your losses. Sure
are sorry.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Oh, I pulled God's ear over it.

Edgar pauses, remembering a battle still fresh.

EDGAR DORA SR.
But...never stopped loving Him.

REVEREND THADDEUS
Yes, sir.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Reverend, Elder. You will have
your church and you will have it on
the lake down there.

HATTIE (O.S.)
Hallelujah!

They turn towards the door. Hattie comes out, holding a
handkerchief over her mouth, smiling sheepishly.

EDGAR DORA SR.
Having church already, Hattie?

HATTIE
Sorry sir. 'I was glad when they
said let us go into the house of
the Lord.' They's gonna be a
colored church in Doraville.

INT. DORAVILLE TOWN MEETING HALL - DAY

ANGRY WHITE MAN
Ain't gonna be no colored church in
Doraville!

Packed Town Hall. The CROWD, angry, boisterous.

MAYOR GENTRY, (60's), bangs the gavel to restore order.

Edgar Dora Sr., stands at the podium.

Little Jenny, Adam, and a bunch of kids, peer through the windows.

The Mayor BANGS the gavel again.

Edgar Sr., glances at Edgar Dora Jr., standing off to the side. Edgar Jr., shakes his head, shrugs his shoulders.

Finally, everyone quiets down.

EDGAR DORA SR.

Everyone here knows me. Lot'a you knew my daddy. Before anything else in this town, even before our own house, he built our church. That's how important it was for my daddy to have a place to worship. Town has grown since then. And we got colored folk now. They don't have a place to worship.

MAN #3 IN CROWD

How's that our problem?

EDGAR DORA SR.

The other day when that colored Reverend and his Elder came to me, they wasn't askin' me for my land, or for me to build them a church.

ANGRY WHITE MAN

Then why you doin' it?

Several shouts of "yeah".

BEAT.

EDGAR DORA SR.

I don't know how you folks talk to God. Everyone does it in their own way I guess. But when I hear God tell me something, I gotta obey. So. Should I listen to ya'll, or God?

ANGRY WHITE MAN

You should listen to the one's who live here!

More angry shouts of, "Yeah", follow!

EDGAR DORA SR.

Well if you're sayin' God don't live here, maybe we should just give those colored folks the church my daddy built. Then maybe, God'll move in.

Edgar Sr., walks off the stage, heads out the door. Edgar Jr., hurries in behind him.

That triggers more yelling, screaming, and fist pumping, accompanied by the BANGING of the Mayor's gavel.

BACK TO:

EXT. DORAVILLE FIVE AND DIME - DAY

SUPER: "1949"

A large eagle hovers high in the sky.

ALFRED TUNNEY (O.S.)
Kite eagle. Amazing how they just spread their great wings and no matter how hard the wind's blowing, stay in the same place. Like they're on a string.

ALFRED TUNNEY, (40's), dressed in a suit, like a traveling salesman. He pauses on the sidewalk, opens a Baby Ruth candy bar. He has a DEFORMED left hand.

Alfred chuckles.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Guess that's why they call 'em kite eagles.

Josey, Petey, Weasel, and Leftover, hang outside the store.

Leftover gorges on a candy bar, Weasel has a soda.

The kids gawk at his hand.

Alfred takes a bite, notices the kids staring. They turn away quickly.

Awkward silence.

Alfred takes another bite, holds the candy with his good hand. Slips his deformed hand into his suit pocket.

ALFRED TUNNEY
God gives different things to different things.
(BEAT)
Excuse me fellows, but I ain't used to these parts. Looking for a Miss Jenny Dora.

The kids glance at one another, but don't say anything.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Lives in 'Dora Manor'?

JOSEY
Don't know about livin'. But if
you know how to turn your head and
look up. That's it.

Alfred turns his head, looks up at the mountain, overlooking
the town.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Sorry. Am I supposed to be seeing
something?

They snicker.

LEFTOVER
Yeah. You're seeing something
mister. Look again.

Alfred looks at the mountain again.

LEFTOVER
That's Dora Manor.

ALFRED TUNNEY
The mountain?

JOSEY
Naw. The kite eagle.

They snicker again.

JOSEY
Course the mountain. Whole thing's
Dora Manor. Jenny's the crazy lady
what lives up there by herself.

LEFTOVER
She's a loon. Whole family died.
Went nuts.

JOSEY
She killed 'em so she could have
the whole mountain to herself.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Killed them?

WEASEL
She didn't kill 'em. They died
from the co...cough.

JOSEY
Says you.

WEASEL

Says m..m..my ma.

LEFTOVER

I'd be careful if I was you. Can go up there, but might not come back.

Alfred walks off the sidewalk.

ALFRED TUNNEY

Nonsense.

LEFTOVER

Your funeral.

JOSEY

What'cha goin' up there for any ways? Don't nobody ever goes up there.

Alfred gets in his car, drives off.

LEFTOVER

(to Weasel)

Says m..m..m..my ma.

Weasel shakes his soda bottle and squirts Leftover in the face. Then runs off.

LEFTOVER

Hey!

Josey and Petey laugh as Leftover stands with the candy bar in hand, dripping wet. He licks the candy bar. Shrugs and takes a big bite.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - LATER

Jenny and Alfred sit, edge of their seats. More business, less social.

JENNY

Land tax?

ALFRED TUNNEY

Well, ma'am. The state taxes everybody on their land. Thing of it is, this is partly our fault. See, sometimes we have so much paperwork that some things fall through the cracks.

Jenny shakes her head.

ALFRED TUNNEY

We had some digging to do to even find the records. It went from one officer to the other, to another, 'til, well, almost thirty years now. But here I am.

JENNY

What does that mean?

ALFRED TUNNEY

Means you owe the state twenty-six years of taxes.

JENNY

I just clean a motel. What'll happen if I can't pay?

ALFRED TUNNEY

The government can take your homestead and sell it for the money. But that's the last resort.

Jenny goes over to the balcony railing.

JENNY

My family's buried here. What'll become of the church?

ALFRED TUNNEY

Church?

JENNY

My grandpa helped the coloreds build a church on our property.

Gideon runs from around the house.

GIDEON

Look at the size of this!

Jenny springs to cut off Gideon from Alfred.

JENNY

That's fine dear. Why don't you take...

Too late.

Gideon skips up the stairs with a TOMATO the size of a cantaloup. He stops when he sees Alfred.

Alfred gets up. Jenny doesn't move.

ALFRED TUNNEY

My word. That a tomato? How'd it grow so big?

GIDEON
Goat fertilizer.

Alfred chuckles, not quite sure he believes it. Gideon holds it up to him.

Alfred starts to take hold of it with both hands. Gideon notices the deformed hand.

GIDEON
Why's your hand like that?

Alfred pulls his hand back. Jenny steps in, turns Gideon towards the front door.

JENNY
Gideon.

ALFRED TUNNEY
I was born like this son.

Gideon spins back.

GIDEON
Never asked God to heal it?

JENNY
Gideon.

Jenny takes Gideon by the hand and leads him to the door. She turns back to Alfred.

JENNY
S'cuse us.

They disappear inside. Alfred stands alone on the porch, a bit flummoxed.

He overhears them whisper.

JENNY (O.S.)
Now is not the time for miracles,
Gideon.

Alfred looks down at his hand.

GIDEON (O.S.)
Momma, times for miracles is when
they's a need.

INT./EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE

Jenny stands with her back to the screen door facing Gideon in the foyer.

JENNY
What about my need?

Jenny takes a hanky out of her dress, puts it to her mouth. For a moment they drink each other in.

Alfred listens to the silence. Then a hoarse whisper.

JENNY (O.S.)
Losing you is all I need.

Gideon rushes to Jenny, wraps his arms around her. Jenny doesn't move.

GIDEON
Momma. Trust God.

A long moment.

Jenny looks down at Gideon. He stares up into her face. Behind his eyes, comfort with determination.

A knowing. A *Mission* Gideon knows is his.

With one hand Jenny combs back the hair from his eyes. With the other, she dabs her nose with the hanky.

Anguish crawls across her countenance.

SWANSON (V.O.)
Ten years.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - DAY (PRESENT)

SWANSON
Ten long years of keeping that cat in the bag. They had been the best years of Jenny's life, and at the same time, the hardest.

Swanson stops. Then, as if preaching to himself, perhaps a realization.

SWANSON
That'll happen when you try and hold on to something you don't own.

Swanson stares out over the congregation. He glances over at Dorvil. Someone clears their throat. Snaps Swanson back.

SWANSON
But something inside Jenny always knew, whether she wanted or not...

INT./EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK 1949)

Jenny continues staring down at Gideon.

SWANSON (V.O.)
 ...from that first day when she
 lent Gideon to the Lord, Gideon had
 a calling.

Fighting fear, finally, Jenny nods.

EXT. JENNY'S PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Gideon bursts out the door. Alfred jerks away, pretends to be looking over the yard.

Gideon walks right up to him and holds up the big red tomato. Alfred doesn't look at it.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 I see that son. You're quite the
 farmer.

Jenny comes out wringing her hands, not sure she made the right choice.

Alfred pockets his hand, unsure what to make of this.

GIDEON
 Mister. Please take the tomato.

Tunney chuckles. Glances at Jenny.

JENNY
 He has a...

Jenny stops herself. Fear creeps back in. She pushes it away.

JENNY
 He has a gift.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 A gift?

Alfred says it more sardonically than like a question.

Gideon keeps the tomato lifted towards Alfred. Alfred looks back and forth between them. He cackles.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Jokes on the tax man.

They don't join him. Alfred stops laughing. He gets serious, almost indignant.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Son, God's a busy man. I'm a busy
 man.

GIDEON
 God gives different things to
 different things.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Who...?

Alfred's eyes suddenly dart across the yard.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Them kids tell you that?

JENNY
 What kids?

ALFRED TUNNEY
 In town.

JENNY
 We don't go in town.

Alfred looks down at Gideon.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Who told you to say...?

Alfred's voice trails as Gideon starts to hum -- "Only
 Believe".

Alfred lets out a nervous chuckle. Gideon captures Alfred's
 eyes. Alfred relaxes.

GIDEON
 Mister, in the name of Jesus,
 stretch out your hand.

Alfred stares down at the tomato, then back over at Jenny.
 Jenny nods for him to take it.

After a moment, Alfred reaches with his good hand. Stops.
 Swallows hard. Afraid he's about to be taken.

Alfred clenches his jaw. Against all that's in him, he pulls
 his deformed hand out of his pocket, and dares to reach out
 with it.

As he slowly moves his hand closer, it begins to transform.

Wonder widens Jenny's eyes. Delight dances in Gideon's.

By the time Alfred takes hold of the huge red tomato, his
 hand becomes...*NORMAL*.

He grips the tomato tightly at first, not wanting to let it go. Looks at his hand back and forth, inspecting it. His eyes go saucer like.

A smile crashes across his face like a wave across a jagged reef. It finally hits him. His hand is healed!

ALFRED TUNNEY

HA!

Crazy happiness grips his legs. He shindigs across the porch with the tomato. Tosses it up in the air. Catches it with his new hand.

Gideon giggles as Alfred dances, herky jerky, like a new born foal trying to walk. The sudden, unwrapped happiness of the moment catches Jenny off guard.

Jenny laughs.

Startled by the unfamiliar feeling, she laughs again. It frees a pent up joy that hasn't seen the light in years.

It bursts forth like a fountain. Pours out of Jenny's belly in a cleansing wave of laughter and tears.

The miracle becomes two fold.

Alfred breaks into a song.

ALFRED TUNNEY

I've got two hands. I've got two hands.

Gideon rushes to Jenny, hugs her.

GIDEON

You're laughin' momma.

She wraps her arms around him like a bow hugging a present.

Between them, laughter, happiness, and joy spill out over the porch, borne by Alfred's crooning.

ALFRED TUNNEY

I've got two hands. I've got two hands. Ha. Ha. Ha. One like the other. I've got two hands!

He hangs on to the last note at the top of his lungs, tomato overhead, triumphantly. Jenny and Gideon applaud like it's a Broadway Play.

Alfred turns to them, takes a bow. He pauses, catches his breath. Rushes over to Gideon, kneels down.

ALFRED TUNNEY

How?

GIDEON

You took the tomato.

ALFRED TUNNEY

I took the tomato.

Jenny dabs her tears, still soaking up the moment. She chuckles.

Alfred stands up, gawks at his hand with the tomato. He loses himself.

He comes to.

ALFRED TUNNEY

I'm sorry. I'm just so. Wait. A church. On your property?

JENNY

Next to the lake.

ALFRED TUNNEY

On your property?

JENNY

Yes.

Alfred starts down the steps.

ALFRED TUNNEY

How long'd you say?

JENNY

'Bout forty years.

Alfred practically skips his way merrily to his car.

ALFRED TUNNEY

Mister Alfred Tunney's on the case. That church...The term *exemption* comes to mind. This's the best day of my life!

Alfred jumps into his car, speeds off, leaves Jenny and Gideon plastered with smiles.

Scrappy walks by, his bell JANGLES.

SWANSON (V.O.)

That tax man takes off waving that giant tomato out the window and a cloud of dust behind.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE RIVER - DAY

SWANSON (V.O.)

But it was going to take more than
a passing miracle to bring joy back
to Doraville.

Young Swanson and Skeeter fish along a river.

A rock hits Young Swanson in the back. His pole flies out of
his hands into the river. He drops to his knees. Tries to
catch his breath.

PETEY (O.S.)

Mama says we can't throw rocks.

Skeeter whirls around.

Josey, Petey, Weasel, and Leftover come up.

Josey has another rock in his hand. He tosses it up like a
baseball. Catches it.

JOSEY

Says we can't throw rocks at cars.
Not coloreds.

Skeeter glares at Josey. Balls her fist, then looks down at
Young Swanson. Pain contorts his face. She bends down to
him.

Glares back at Josey.

SKEETER

What'd you do that for?

JOSEY

Ya'll trespassin' on this mountain.

Leftover munches a Baby Ruth bar.

LEFTOVER

Yeah. Trespassin'.

Skeeter helps Young Swanson up. He winces. She shuffles him
behind her.

SKEETER

We ain't trespassin'. We fishin'.

She stabs the pole at Josey. He slaps it. Slings the rock
at her. She ducks. Josey snatches the cane pole, throws it
in the river.

JOSEY

Now you trespassin'.

PETEY

Josey. We got to get to our retrobuttin'.

JOSEY

Way I see it, clearin' trespassers off the mountain's part of my retrobuttin'. Can't have 'em muddin' up the river.

YOUNG SWANSON

C'mon Skeeter, let's go.

LEFTOVER

Skeeter?

JOSEY

You're momma named you after a mosquiter cause when you came out you was small and black.

They laugh.

YOUNG SWANSON

C'mon.

Young Swanson turns to walk away.

JOSEY

Ain't done with you one eye.

Josey lunges at him, snatches the patch off his face, tosses it in the river.

Young Swanson's eye is all white. No pupil, nor iris.

JOSEY

Snake bite. Only thing white on him's his eye. Now you can't come up here no more boy, but if you're eyeball wants to, it can. Cause it's *all* white.

Josey pushes Young Swanson down, starts laughing.

LEFTOVER

Ha! It's all white! That's a good one Josey.

Skeeter runs over, pushes Josey down.

SKEETER

And you're *all* cracker!

Josey charges back up, the other kids circle them.

LEFTOVER

You gonna let that colored girl
push you like that?

PETEY

Leave 'em alone, Josey.

Petey gets in between. Josey pushes Petey out of the way.
Petey falls back in a heap.

Josey turns on Petey, grabs him up by the collar.

JOSEY

Don't ever side with no one over
me. Lop sided cripple.

Josey pushes him back down. He spins back towards Skeeter.
Charges after her.

JOSEY

I'm gonna mash you mosquiter.

Skeeter snatches up a hefty branch, swings it at Josey's
head. Josey ducks, stumbles backwards into Leftover,
knocking the Baby Ruth bar out of his hand into the river.

Weasel tumbles over a sprawled out Petey.

Young Swanson stands back behind Skeeter.

LEFTOVER

My baby!

Leftover pushes Josey back towards Skeeter. Skeeter swings at
Josey again. Josey barely dodges out of the way.

Leftover dives down the river bank, reaches for his bar. Too
late. It floats down the river.

LEFTOVER

Come back. My baby.

Leftover scrambles up, chases after it.

Josey and Skeeter glare at each other. Skeeter holds the
branch, ready to swing.

Petey and Weasel help each other up, and take off.

PETEY

Can't be late.

Josey eyes the branch, turns, leaves.

JOSEY

Go on mosquiter. Buzz away with
your one eyed jack.

Skeeter stays her ground, branch at the ready. Young Swanson stays behind her.

JOSEY
 (calling back)
 And don't let us catch you up here
 no more.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - MEETING PLACE - MORNING

Jenny lies across the wooden swing, a blanket covers her. Her head on Gideon's lap. He strokes her hair.

SWANSON (V.O.)
 Sometimes, when one thing comes,
 something else goes. Jenny's joy
 remained, but her health took a
 turn for the worst that year. She
 was stronger some days than others.
 But on this one particular Sunday,
 all she could do was lie there on
 that swing.

The lively song -- "Honey in the Rock" -- comes up from the Black Holiness Church below.

GIDEON
 Momma?

Jenny doesn't stir. Gideon slips out, covers her shoulders with the blanket.

EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE DORA MANOR - LATER

Gideon makes his way down the mountain. The Holiness Church sings another song --

"Peace in the Valley"

Gideon sits under a tree to listen.

Coming across the mountain, from the opposite direction, the music from the White Baptist Church. They sing --

"Wideness in God's Mercy"

The songs from both churches are completely different. But somehow, they blend together beautifully.

MONTAGE: CHURCHES SINGING

-- The CHOIR of the Holiness Church

-- The CHOIR of the White Baptist Church

- The two songs become one.
- The two churches sound like one choir.
- Gideon closes his eyes as the songs continue. Black and white, their voices become a peaceful, melodious, spirit lifting choir.
- The songs end on a soaring note.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT./INT. HOLINESS CHURCH LAKE SIDE - SAME

Gideon opens his eyes, finds himself on the other side of the lake, next to some bushes. About fifty feet from the Black Holiness Church.

He looks back behind, towards his house. It looks so far away. Somehow, he has been TRANSLATED down the mountain, across the lake.

He hears Reverend Alberts big booming voice like never before.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
 Brothers and Sisters. That choir
 knows they put one on the devil
 that time. Like two choirs singing
 that song. Glory.

Reverend Albert at his sweating best.

REVEREND ALBERT
 The Bible says angels leave the
 presence of God to come down and
 listen to the praise and worship
 from His people. Now I know a host
 of angels must be surrounding us
 after such Spirit filled music.

Scattered "Amens", applause fill the church.

Gideon, at one of the church's stained glass windows, holds himself up to see inside. His face pressed against the glass.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
 And when an angel of the Lord comes
 in, a demon better take his tail
 out. Otherwise, there's gonna be
 some spiritual warfare up in there.

The congregation claps, shouts.

Through the stained glass, a little black boy's distorted face appears. Gideon falls back, startled. Before he can collect himself, the black boy stands over him.

It's Young Leon Swanson.

YOUNG SWANSON
You an angel?

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
I'm talking about a heavenly
heavyweight championship
fight.

Gideon offers up his hand.

GIDEON
Gideon.

REVEREND ALBERT (O.S.)
And the crazy thing is, no
matter how many times the
devil gets beat...

Young Swanson pulls him up.

INT. CHURCH

REVEREND ALBERT
He always comes back for another
butt whipping.

EXT. CHURCH

YOUNG SWANSON
Leon Swanson.

CONGREGATION (O.S.)
Amen! Well, well. Preach
it!

GIDEON
Why's your eye all white?

Young Swanson covers his eye, embarrassed.

GIDEON
No one ever prayed for you?

YOUNG SWANSON
Uh, huh. Prayed I don't hurt
myself bumpin' into things.

Gideon chuckles.

GIDEON
That's a good prayer. We can pray
somethin' else.

YOUNG SWANSON
Like what?

GIDEON
We can tell your eye to see.

YOUNG SWANSON

Can?

Young Swanson keeps his hand over his eye.

GIDEON

Jesus healed a lot of blind people.

YOUNG SWANSON

I know.

Gideon hums a couple bars of "Only Believe."

Swanson looks at him with his good eye. Young Swanson relaxes, lets his hand drop. Swanson closes his eyes.

Gideon places his hand over Swanson's bad eye.

GIDEON

In the name of Jesus, Leon Swanson,
I command your blind eye to see.

Gideon takes his hand away. Young Swanson hesitates, then opens his eyes. The eye now has an iris and pupil.

Perfect.

At first, the light makes him squint. He blinks a few times. Looks at Gideon's face.

Gideon beams.

Young Swanson looks up, down, and all around. He blinks again. Puts his hand over his good eye. Looks at Gideon. Smiles a smile that reaches ear to ear.

YOUNG SWANSON

I can see Gideon. I can see. My
eye's not blind no more. I can
see. Jesus did it.

Young Swanson holds his hands up towards the sky, then brings them down, hugs Gideon.

YOUNG SWANSON

You must be an angel from heaven.

GIDEON

Live on that mountain up there.

Young Swanson releases him.

YOUNG SWANSON

Gotta show my mamma.

Young Swanson runs back into the church.

EXT. HOLINESS CHURCH PORCH - LATER

Young Swanson runs back out. The whole church pours out behind him.

Gideon has vanished.

YOUNG SWANSON
He was here. Gideon? Gideon?!

Young Swanson's mother, GRETTA, (30's), an extra large woman, stands on the steps.

GRETTA SWANSON
Who's Gideon?

YOUNG SWANSON
An angel. From the top of that mountain. Momma I can see. I can see.

Skeeter pushes through.

SKEETER
Leon you can see sho nuf?
(whispering)

SKEETER
Now we can whup us up some crackers.

Skeeter gets pushed aside.

GRETTA SWANSON
You can see baby. My baby can see.
Thank you, Jesus. It's a miracle.
A miracle.

Everyone closes in on them, excited. Gretta picks up Young Swanson, holds him up for all to see. They gather around to touch him.

Reverend Albert stands back a little. He turns, looks up at the mountain, towards Jenny's house.

EXT./INT. JENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A full moon whitewashes the top of the mountain, creating a dark army of stark shadows.

Gideon makes his way back through the massive iron gate. A car sits next to Jenny's car.

The house looms black. Gideon skips up the steps, onto the porch.

GIDEON

Momma?

He opens the screen door, walks in.

The foyer, dark. Gideon stands, listens for a moment. He calls out softly.

GIDEON

Momma?

Gideon comes out, pauses. Quiet as death.

He runs down the porch steps and into the yard.

Gideon wanders into a waltz of tiny pulsating lights. The delicate dance of fireflies all around him. He stops momentarily to enjoy their splendor.

Then moves thru them, past the gravestones, over to the worship place.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - MEETING PLACE - CONTINUOUS

Gideon stops abruptly.

A large, shadowy figure stands over Jenny. After a moment, a smaller, dark figure peers out from around the larger figure.

YOUNG SWANSON

It's the angel.

GIDEON

Leon?

The large figure turns.

REVEREND ALBERT

Hello son. I'm Reverend Albert.

Behind Reverend Albert, an even larger figure, stands. Gretta Swanson. She comes around the swing toward Gideon.

GRETTA SWANSON

Child I'm so sorry to tell you.
Your momma done passed.

They move aside.

Gideon stares down at Jenny's lifeless body. The blanket still covers her. He blinks back tears, moves slowly past Gretta, Young Swanson, and Reverend Albert...

REVEREND ALBERT

She's gone son. Dead.

...to Jenny.

GIDEON

Reverend Albert. All my life from the top of this mountain I heard you preach God's word. You're not speaking His Word right now. Jesus called you Reverend to speak His Word. His Word is Spirit. Life.

SWANSON (V.O.)

A mustard seed of faith can move a mountain.

Tears drip down Gideon's face. He takes hold of the Reverend's hands, places them on Jenny's chest.

SWANSON (V.O.)

But a mustard seed of unbelief can keep that mountain from moving.

Reverend Albert pulls back.

Gideon puts Alberts hands back on Jenny, holding them there. He begins to hum -- "Only Believe".

Young Swanson and Gretta look on, captivated.

Albert begins to tremble. He goes down to his knees.

SWANSON (V.O.)

But Lord, when you mix faith with belief, anything is possible.

GIDEON

Have faith in God Reverend. Only believe. Jenny Dora. In the name of Jesus. Come back.

BEAT.

Nothing happens. Gretta, Young Swanson, don't move.

All at once the dance of fireflies surround them giving the moment a heavenly feeling.

Reverend Albert, stands up, he sways, but keeps his hands on Jenny. Gideon releases Alberts hands, backs away.

REVEREND ALBERT

Electricity. My arms.

The fireflies disappear. Suddenly, *Jenny stirs*.

YOUNG SWANSON

She moved!

Reverend Albert pulls back his hands, studies them.

Gretta moves past him for a closer look. Jenny's head rocks back and forth.

JENNY

Pap pap.

Jenny raises her arms, as if hugging someone.

JENNY

Don't.

Jenny blinks, opens her eyes.

Gretta Swanson faints, collapses to the ground.

YOUNG SWANSON

Momma.

Gideon rushes over to Jenny, grabs her hand.

Reverend Albert, stays on his knees, overcome with emotion.

REVEREND ALBERT

Forgive me Lord. Forgive my
unbelief.

JENNY

Gideon. The light. The light was
so bright. And the love. Gideon
the love I felt. God. Now I know.
I can't hide you anymore, Gideon.

Jenny wraps her arms around Gideon, pulls him in. Tears
stream from both their faces.

JENNY

You weren't just my gift.

Gretta Swanson, awakens, groans.

GRETTA SWANSON

Have mercy, I seen the dead live.

Young Swanson kneels by his mother, tries to help her up.
She doesn't budge.

YOUNG SWANSON

Told you momma. Gideon's an angel.

Gideon goes over to her, extends his hand.

GIDEON

Gideon, ma'am.

GRETTA SWANSON

Oh Jesus.

She faints back, again.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE FRONT PORCH - LATER

Reverend Albert, Gretta, and Jenny, come out of Jenny's house. Gideon and Young Swanson, sound asleep, together in a chair on the porch.

REVEREND ALBERT

Been a night.

GRETTA SWANSON

Been more than a night. I got to testify.

JENNY

Reverend, Mrs. Swanson.

GRETTA SWANSON

Call me, Gretta.

JENNY

Gretta. Ya'll please come back.

GRETTA SWANSON

Surely will. That, Gideon, is a miracle. Walking miracle.

REVEREND ALBERT

Miss Jenny? Think I could bring some folks up here? Not too many. Two or three. Lord knows they need a...a touch.

GIDEON (O.S.)

Bring them folks.

They turn. Gideon stands behind them. Young Swanson still asleep.

Gideon smiles.

INT. DORAVILLE BARBERSHOP - DAY

The BARBER, (70's), cuts Leftover's hair.

Several men, all white, sit around reading the Doraville Times.

A HEADLINE reads --

"Coloreds Claim Miracle"

A PICTURE of Gretta Swanson holding Young Swanson who holds out his eye patch, accompanies the article.

LEE
Them coloreds do anything for
attention.

LEE, (40's).

MASON
Can't argue with a kid being blind,
now he can see.

MASON, (60's).

Leftover listens to the argument.

GROVER
Hell, that don't mean beaver spit.
Had a patch over his eye. Could
have been good all the time.

GROVER, (20's)

CASPER
Coloreds lie all the time.

CASPER, (20's).

GROVER
So do you.

Everyone chuckles.

CASPER
But mines are little white lies.

Casper laughs at his own joke.

LEE
Anybody ever see under that patch?

Nobody answers. Leftover stays quiet.

BARBER
The talk is an angel up on the
mountain healed him.

Silence. Then a burst of LAUGHTER.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Gideon, reads his Bible, sits under a great tree in a small clearing. He spots a squirrel nearby, picks up an acorn, entices it to come up to him.

The squirrel crawls up in Gideon's lap. Gideon gives him the acorn, pets it as it eats.

A branch SNAPS. The squirrel darts away.

Leftover steps out from behind some bushes, grips a broken tree branch. He stands on the other side of the clearing.

LEFTOVER
Hey kid. We heard about that one
eyed colored boy. Hey, Petey.

Gideon rises. Petey limps out.

LEFTOVER
Talkin' about an angel up here
healed him.

GIDEON
Hi, Petey. I'm, Gideon.

Petey looks at Gideon. He can't look away.

LEFTOVER
I don't see no angel. Just a
little trickster.

GIDEON
Take off your shoe, Petey. Walk to
me.

Gideon begins humming -- "Only Believe".

LEFTOVER
Petey ain't taking off his shoe
tricky trickster.

Eyes fixed on Gideon, Petey bends down, unties his club shoe, kicks it off. Petey stands awkwardly.

LEFTOVER
Heck you doing? He's making a fool
of you.

Petey hesitates, takes a step. Immediately his short leg begins to grow out.

PETEY
My leg's tingling.

He limps forward another step.

PETEY
Feels hot.

Another step. Then another. He kicks off his other shoe, walks right up to Gideon.

Both legs even.

Petey grabs Gideon by the hands, leaps around giddily in a circle. They laugh.

Leftover's jaw drops open.

LEFTOVER

No way.

PETEY

(to Leftover)

Look at me.

Petey dashes back over to Leftover. He hops around and around him. Pure bliss.

PETEY

Look. I'm fast.

Petey takes off, darts in and out of the trees. Squirrels scatter.

PETEY

Whoo hoo! I'm running. I'm running.

LEFTOVER

You're running, Petey! You're running!

Petey dashes away up the mountain. His voice trails.

PETEY (O.S.)

Whoo hoo! I can run!

Leftover looks over at Gideon.

GIDEON

Wanna know how to make all the angels in heaven happy?

Leftover drops the stick, nods.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Mayor Davis chews on the phone.

MAYOR DAVIS

Jean, I want flowers planted two feet outside the porch railing. Not next to it. Painters stomp all over the dang plants.

He hears a commotion outside his window. The rumble of excited voices. The Mayor goes towards the window, the phone cord yokes him back.

The commotion gets louder.

MAYOR DAVIS
Hang on Jean.

He puts the phone down on his desk, starts back to the window. His secretary comes in.

LULU
Mayor.

MAYOR DAVIS
What?

Petey cartwheels into the room, past the secretary, barefooted, pants legs rolled up. Leftover right behind.

A mass of excited TOWN FOLKS follow behind him.

Petey lands in front of his dad, arms up, a triumphant smile.

MAYOR DAVIS
That was...that was great son. But this ain't no time for circus tricks.

The crowd snickers.

The Mayor notices the sudden spill of people into his office. Joy bouncing off their faces.

Petey breaks into a jig.

PETEY
Notice anything?

MAYOR DAVIS
Your shoes? Where's your shoes? Those are expensive.

PETEY
Dad.

Petey stops, points to his feet.

WOMAN IN THE CROWD
Just like the mayor not to see what's right in front of him.

Laughter.

MAYOR DAVIS
Petey?

Petey raises his arms, smiles again.

MAYOR DAVIS
Petey?! Petey!

He gathers Petey into his arms. The crowd applauds.

The Mayor sweeps a place clear on his desk with one arm, sits Petey down.

MAYOR DAVIS
(examining Petey's legs)
But how? How'd this happen?

The crowd squeezes in to hear.

PETEY
There was this boy, Gideon, on Dora
Manor.

EUNICE (O.S.)
Petey?

Eunice bursts through the crowd. Petey leaps off the desk, runs to her. They hug.

PETEY
Look ma.

Petey does a jig around her. Eunice grabs him. They dance.

EUNICE
My baby. He's dancing. We're
dancing.

Eunice hums a happy song as they dance. The crowd looks on thrilled.

INT. MAYOR'S SECRETARY'S OFFICE

More and more people crowd in as word has gotten out.

Josey Davis breaks through with Weasel right behind. Josey pushes into his dad's office. Weasel gets squeezed back.

INT. MAYOR'S OFFICE

JOSEY
Let me in.

Josey shoves through, stops. Catches Petey dance with Eunice.

JOSEY
Ain't I family no more?

Eunice and Petey pause. The Mayor goes to Josey.

MAYOR DAVIS

Josey. It was a surprise to me too. Look. It's a miracle. Your brother's leg is normal. You should be happy.

Josey glares at them, shoves out. Pastor Hattersbea squeezes in.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA

Where's the walking miracle?

The crowd parts.

PASTOR BEN HATTERSBEA, (50's), the preacher from the town's white Baptist church, comes in.

EUNICE

My baby's healed. God's healed my baby Pastor.

The Pastor bends down, checks out Petey's legs.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA

Great White Throne.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - MEETING PLACE - DAY

Gideon and Young Swanson relax in the swing.

YOUNG SWANSON

What do you do when people hate you?

GIDEON

Only people I know is momma, you and your momma.

YOUNG SWANSON

'Spect you ain't never been hated.

GIDEON

No. But Jesus said love your enemies.

YOUNG SWANSON

Even them whities in town? That ain't fair.

GIDEON

C'mon. Got somethin' special to show you.

Young Swanson follows Gideon into the woods.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - SAME

Gretta, stands on the porch, calls after them.

GRETTA SWANSON
Ya'll be back before dark!

Jenny brings out some lemonade, hands a glass to Gretta.

GRETTA SWANSON
They's a lot of talk about, Gideon,
Miss Jenny. Not just amongst the
black folk.

Jenny puts a record on the record player she has on the porch. She cranks it up --

"Amazing Grace"

A soulful, trumpet instrumental, accompanied by an organ.

Gretta looks out over the yard.

GRETTA SWANSON
This town spits out honey, and
licks up briars.

Jenny sits, lemonade in hand, closes her eyes.

GRETTA SWANSON
I ain't never heard of a church
being built three times. First one
with hammers and saws.

JENNY
Didn't even get it finished before
it was burnt to the ground.

GRETTA SWANSON
The second one built with guns and
pitchforks.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: HOLINESS CHURCH BEING BUILT (FLASHBACK)

A Winter's Day.

SUPER: "1912"

"Amazing Grace" continues weaving its soulful tapestry.

-- A dozen black men, women, and older kids with guns, pitchforks, and sawed off tree limbs for clubs, surround the workers as they build the church for the second time.

JENNY (V.O.)

I remember. Dedication Day we
celebrated that second one like the
devil hisself being laid to rest.

-- Edgar Dora Sr., Reverend Thaddeus, cut a large red ribbon
from across the front doors. Two men pull a sheet down to
reveal -- "Holiness Church Of Christ On Dora Manor"

A large crowd of black towns folk, with Elder Rufus, Hattie,
YOUNG GRETTA SWANSON(9), and the Dora family, applaud and
cheer.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)

Yes'm. Til' we went from dancin'
in heaven to escapin' from hell.

-- A few white people with sacks over their heads, sneak up
to the windows. They light cloths stuck in bottles of
gasoline.

Inside the church while the congregation is having a
boisterous sing a long, fiery bottles crash through the
windows.

Panic, screams, chaos, ensues. People scatter away from the
fires, push each other to the nearest escapes.

Adam Dora gets trapped in a corner, the fire closes in on
him.

Some men, including Edgar Dora Jr., take off their coats and
try to beat the fires out when suddenly the roof collapses.

Condensation on Edgar Dora Sr.'s picture makes him appear to
be weeping as the heat from the fire laps at a corner of the
frame.

EXT. FAMILY CEMETERY - DAY

Falling snow and a powdery white landscape. Stiff barren
trees reach into the cold grey sky as if crying out "Why?" to
their MAKER.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)

That day was so cold my bones was
burning.

Edgar Dora Sr., Little Jenny, encompassed by an overflow
crowd of black town's people crush around the two new
gravestones of Edgar Dora Jr. and Adam Dora like they were
giving off heat.

BACK TO:

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - FAMILY CEMETERY - 1949 - DAY

Adam and Edgar Jr.s' Gravestones, weathered with a vine creeping over them.

The Engraving on Adam's stone reads --

"Here lies Adam. Our Beloved Son And Brother. With Tears We Send Him To You Lord. 1898 - 1912"

Edgar Jr.s reads --

"Edgar Dora Jr. A Father's Heart. A Heroes Death. 1875 - 1912"

The record -- "Amazing Grace" -- ends.

GRETТА SWANSON (V.O.)
That third one there was built with
heavy hearts and angry souls.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - SAME

Gretta standing on the porch, sips her lemonade.

Jenny still in her chair, eyes closed. A single tear runs down her face. The buried pain of loved ones lost.

GRETТА SWANSON
Never dreamed it'd still be
standing.

Jenny gets up. Turns so Gretta can't see. She dabs her face dry. Then busily goes to the record player, lifts the record off and slips it back into its sleeve.

All the time keeping her back to Gretta.

JENNY
Pap Pap used to say, Jr. and Adam,
and all those other folks who lost
their lives surround it now like
the angels at the Garden of Eden,
with flaming swords turning this
way and that.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE RAIL ROAD TRACKS - DAY

Josey walks along the tracks.

GRETТА SWANSON (V.O.)
I believe it...Your Pap Pap
deserved better. Your family
deserved better.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)
 Since then though, ain't just the
 white folk doin' the hatin'.

A rock hits Josey in the back.

SKEETER (O.S.)
 Hey, whitey. You trespassin'!

Josey turns, sees Skeeter with a couple of BLACK BOYS
 standing about twenty feet behind him.

JOSEY
 My daddy's the Mayor.

BLACK BOY #1
 Mayor's gonna have a mashed up
 cracker.

BLACK BOY #2, throws another rock. It whizzes by Josey's
 head. Josey ducks, turns, runs. They give chase.

Skeeter throws another rock, hitting Josey square in the
 back. Josey winces, cuts off the tracks towards the woods.
 The black kids come up where Josey left off.

SKEETER
 You owe me fishin' poles!

BLACK BOY #2
 Stupid cracker!

They each throw a rock. Josey disappears into the trees.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Gideon leads Young Swanson through the woods.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)
 Ain't no steady peace.

Gideon and Young Swanson come up to a wide, flowing river.
 The water runs fairly rapidly. No place to cross.

GIDEON
 What's harder? Loving your enemies
 or walking cross this water?

Swanson thinks a moment.

YOUNG SWANSON
 Both.

Gideon chuckles, then stares at Swanson waiting for an
 answer.

YOUNG SWANSON

Okay. Loving your enemy is hard.
Walking cross this water is
impossible.

Gideon smiles, and steps out onto the water.

He turns, reaches his hand out to Young Swanson.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)

We supposed to be Christian folk.
Not black Christian folk, and white
Christian folk.

Young Swanson's mouth drops open. He hesitates, takes a deep breath, grasps Gideon's hand tightly, and steps out onto the water. He holds onto Gideon's arm.

Young Swanson looks down, sees he's standing on the water. His eyes grow wide. He looks back up at Gideon, a big toothy grin swims across his face.

Gideon and Young Swanson turn toward the opposite bank, clasp each other's shoulders...*friends for life*.

They march across the river.

The late afternoon sun's rays play through the trees and dance off the water like a golden bridge in front of them.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Gretta and Jenny carry laundry baskets down the porch.

GRETTA SWANSON

Peoples say blacks and whites ain't
s'posed to be together.

EXT. DORA MANOR RIVER - SAME

A large Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly zigs zags towards Gideon and Young Swanson.

Half way across the river, they pause to watch it.

The Black and White insect circles them a couple of times. It lights on Young Swanson's head. Swanson looks up at it, unsure.

Gideon smiles.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)

But God sure made Hisself some
purty black and white things in
this world.

A rainbow TROUT, leaps out of the water, splashes Gideon. Young Swanson laughs. The butterfly flutters off.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)
I know Jesus said we can do the
things he done and greater. But
how, when we can't even get along?

Gideon kicks water at Young Swanson. Swanson splashes him back. They splash each other.

Young Swanson dashes across the top of the river to the other side. Gideon gives chase.

GRETTA SWANSON (V.O.)
Truth is, skin ain't nothin' but
clay coverin' who we really are.

Gideon tackles Swanson on the river bank as they end up a wet heap, covered in MUD. Hard to tell one from the other.

GIDEON
You just did the impossible Leon.

Realization hits Young Swanson.

YOUNG SWANSON
How about walking on your enemies?

Their LAUGHTER carries on the wind.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - DUSK

Jenny and Gretta take down the last of some sheets. The sun drops behind the mountain, shadows grow long, begin to fade.

GRETTA SWANSON
One thing. People done heard.
Black and white. They coming to
see the angel up here on the
mountain. They comin' to see
Gideon.

Jenny stops.

JENNY
And a little child shall lead them.

Gideon and Young Swanson race past from around the house, up the porch. Young Swanson touches the front door first. They are soaked.

EXT. FRONT PORCH

Young Swanson throws his hands in the air, dances around.

YOUNG SWANSON
I win. I win. I got first.

Gretta and Jenny come up, carrying baskets of linen, overflowing.

GRETTA SWANSON
Good Book says, 'He who is first is last.'

Swanson pauses.

YOUNG SWANSON
Huh?

Gretta, Jenny and Gideon look at Young Swanson's bewildered face. They laugh.

EXT. DORAVILLE WATER TOWER - DAY

Josey, Leftover, Weasel, and Petey, hang out on the metal platform that circles the huge water tank.

Josey leans on the railing as he smokes a cigarette.

Leftover has a sling shot, shoots bottles down below. He has a pocket full of rocks for ammunition.

LEFTOVER
Watch this.

Leftover aims, fires, misses the bottle.

LEFTOVER
Bulls eye.

JOSEY
You blind and stupid? You missed by a mile.

Leftover pulls out another rock, reloads.

LEFTOVER
Wasn't aiming for the bottle. Goin' for that fly on that rock next to the bottle. He ain't flyin' no more.

Leftover takes aim at the bottle again. Weasel sneaks up and slaps Leftover in the back of the head just as he releases the rock. He misfires badly.

LEFTOVER
Hey!

Leftover spins on Weasel. Weasel dodges just out of his grasp, cuts past Petey to get away.

WEASEL

Fo...fo....for someone who just met
Je...Jesus, you sure are a big liar.

Weasel and Petey laugh.

LEFTOVER

Fo...fo...fo...

Smack!

Josey whacks Leftover to the side of the head with an openhanded slap.

LEFTOVER

Ow! What'd I do?

JOSEY

Not only are you the fattest person
in Doraville, you're the dumbest.

Josey pushes Leftover out of the way and trudges past Petey and Weasel. Weasel cowers back behind Petey. Josey stops a little away from them, takes a puff of his cigarette.

WEASEL

Petey. Think Gideon ca..can...you
know, heal my bu..bucks?

LEFTOVER

Healed Petey's leg.

Leftover fires another rock down and misses the bottle again.

LEFTOVER

Can heal your bucks.

Leftover turns and smiles at them.

Petey and Weasel stand in shock, and look at Leftover like he just became a total stranger.

JOSEY

Healing your bucks ain't gonna heal
your stu..stu..stutter.

Josey flicks his cigarette away.

WEASEL

How do..do..do you know?

Josey moseys towards them, and grabs Weasel by the throat, and pulls him to him. He exhales a large cloud of smoke into his face.

JOSEY
Listen stutter boy.

Josey pumps his fist in Weasel's face.

JOSEY
Mention that kid one more time,
I'ma fix your beavers.

Josey shoves him down and hovers over him.

JOSEY
You can't fix stu..stupid.

Josey feigns a backhanded slap. Weasel cowers and covers up.

PETHEY
Take it easy, Josey.

Josey whirls towards Petey.

JOSEY
What'cha gonna do about it?

He shoves Petey back.

JOSEY
Think cause you got two good legs
now, you can whup me?

Josey headlocks Petey.

JOSEY
Gettin' sick of you, too. Momma's
little angel. Never do nothing
wrong.

Josey spins Petey in a circle.

LEFTOVER
Cut it out Josey you're choking him
to death.

JOSEY
He's my brother. Choke him to
death if I want to. Shoot.

Josey wrestles Petey over to the railing.

JOSEY
I'll just throw 'em over. See if
the little angel can fly.

Josey slings Petey over the railing. Petey dangles helplessly.

LEFTOVER
You gone crazy?

WEASEL
Josey st..st..st...

JOSEY
Stop it. It ain't that hard to say
stupid buck tooth weasel.

Leftover loads a rock in the slingshot, holds it at Josey's temple.

LEFTOVER
Bring him back Josey, or I swear.

Josey glowers. Leftover stays cocked.

LEFTOVER
Bring him back.

No one moves. Weasel's eyes dart from one to the other.

Josey glares at Leftover. His voice gets low, menacing.

JOSEY
What do you think on when you ain't
got nothing to think about?

Leftover doesn't answer. Josey looks back at Petey.

JOSEY
Be so easy, too.

A wicked smile cuts across Josey's face. He lifts Petey ever so slightly. High enough to whisper in his ear.

JOSEY
Remember that dumb mutt you had
when you was four?

Petey keeps his eyes squeezed tight. His face red, his breath strangled.

JOSEY
Well. Wasn't no wagon that got
him.

Petey's eyes snap open. He gasps for air as he raises himself up. Josey drags Petey back over. Dumps him on the ramp.

Petey crumples on the catwalk, struggles to get his breath.

Weasel rushes over to him. Leftover stays aimed at Josey.

Josey slowly turns towards Leftover, offers his forehead to the slingshot. Josey glares at him, daring him.

Josey feigns a punch. Leftover jerks back.

JOSEY
Thought so. Tough guy.

Josey goes to Petey. He fakes a punch at Weasel. Weasel throws his arms up to protect himself. Josey pats Petey on the head.

JOSEY
You okay, Petey? Just having some fun.

Petey pushes Josey away.

LEFTOVER
Yeah, some fun. Ha ha. Could've slipped, he'd be dead. Real funny Josey.

Josey lunges at Leftover. Puts him in a headlock.

JOSEY
Shut up.

Josey punches him in the back of the head.

JOSEY
Throw you over Jesus boy. See if you can fly.

Josey shoves Leftover against the rail. Leftover collapses to the platform. Josey looms over him.

Leftover meekly puts the slingshot up and pulls back the rock. Josey snatches it.

JOSEY
Get that out of my face.

Josey shoots the rock at Leftover's feet. Leftover curls up in a protective ball.

JOSEY
Look like a fat baby porcupine.

Josey throws the slingshot to the ground, goes back to Petey and Weasel.

JOSEY
I'll show y'all what I think of that angel on the mountain.

Josey turns and goes. Gives Leftover a swift kick as he marches past him. Leftover groans.

JOSEY
 Hey, Petey. I was just kidding
 now.

Josey gets to the ladder.

JOSEY
 No need to be a baby and run tell
 your mommy.

Josey puts his feet on the outside of the ladder, grabs one
 rung after another, slides down until he touches the ground.

He picks up Leftover's slingshot, puts a rock in it, fires it
 up past them. They hit the deck for cover.

JOSEY
 Just going for that fly.

Josey walks off. They stay sprawled on the catwalk.

LEFTOVER
 Why's your brother so mean?

PETEY
 He ain't mean. He was just born
 that way.

WEASEL
 Talking crazy.

LEFTOVER
 Thought he was gonna kill you.

Leftover wipes his eyes and nose with his shirt.

PETEY
 He didn't. Hey, Weasel.

Petey gets up, brushes himself off.

PETEY
 Let's go find Gideon.

EXT. DORAVILLE FIVE AND DIME - DAY

Josey walks up, spins the slingshot on his finger. He spots
 a car parked on the street with the front passenger side
 window rolled down.

Josey pockets the sling, goes over to the car.

He glances around. No one watches. He reaches thru the
 window, rummages through whatever's there.

VERA (O.S.)
 (weakly)
 Daddy.

Josey jerks back, smacks the back of his head against the car.

A little girl, VERA TUNNEY, (12), dressed in a nightgown and overcoat, lies motionless across the backseat.

Josey backs away into Alfred Tunney.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Rabies. Doctors give her up.

Alfred strides around to the driver's side door.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 Word's out. Gideon's on that mountain boy. Spirit of God's powerful on him.

He bangs the top of his car a few times.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 (yelling)
 Doraville wake up.

He leans on his car horn several times, steps out into the intersection. A car screeches to a halt, blasts the horn.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 God's fire's on the mountain.

Passers-by stop. People come out of their shops.

Pastor Hattersbea comes out of the barber shop, half shaven.

Traffic stops. Horns blow, drivers yell, wave him away.

DRIVER #1
 Get out of there.

Alfred yells all the more.

ALFRED TUNNEY
 There's fire on the mountain.
 Don't miss your miracle. God is on the mountain. Don't miss Him.

Another driver honks, yells.

DRIVER #2
 Lunatic.

Alfred races into his car, screeches off, blasts his horn.

Stunned, people look back and forth at one another. Horns HONK.

Pastor Hattersbea dashes to his car, takes off after Alfred.

A car rips a U-turn in the middle of the intersection, peels off after Hattersbea, almost causes an accident.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

Deputy Steve, parked along the highway, backed up to a stream. Cane pole wedged in his bumper, line in the water.

The Deputy leans against his trunk, eating a donut, reading the 'Doraville Times'.

The headline on the front page reads, in bold letters --

'ANGEL ON THE MOUNTAIN?'

The PICTURE has Petey Davis on the Mayor's desk with Leftover, Eunice, and the Mayor leaning in, smiling.

The smaller headline reads --

'Miracle Captures Town's Imagination'

Deputy Steve reads the funnies. Chuckles.

Alfred Tunney rips around the corner.

Deputy Steve puts the paper down, turns to look. Nothing. He goes back to the funnies. Chuckles again.

A few seconds later Pastor Hattersbea SCREECHES around the corner, chases after Tunney.

Deputy Steve spins just in time to see the Pastor's car kick up a cloud of dirt. Donut in his mouth, he mumbles.

DEPUTY STEVE
Pastor Hattersbea?

Seconds later, another car screams around the corner up the mountain.

The Deputy scrambles to get the cane pole out of his bumper. He breaks it off, tosses it down, rushes to get into his car.

He throws the paper to the side, bites off the donut. It drops in his lap. He spastically starts his car, straightens his hat, puts on his light, takes off after them.

Several moments later, a few more cars tear around the corner.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME

Alfred Tunney's car races up the mountain.

INT. TUNNEY'S CAR (MOVING)

Vera convulses, has a seizure. Alfred glances at her in the rearview mirror.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Stay with daddy, Vera. Stay with
daddy.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Alfred's car disappears up the mountain.

Petey, Leftover, and Weasel come out of the woods. They start up the road.

Loud SQUEAL. They scatter.

Pastor Hattersbea's car slides sideways to a stop. A cloud of dirt covers them. Pastor jumps out. The cloud dissipates.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA
What y'all doing up here out of
nowhere?

PETEY
Lookin' for Gideon.

LEFTOVER
So Weasel can get his stutter
fixed.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA
Weasel get his stutter...?

Weasel looks at the Pastor, puts his head down, embarrassed. After a quick moment, Pastor Hattersbea smacks the top of his car.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA
Get in.

They pile in. Leftover takes shotgun. Hattersbea takes off.

INT. HATTERSBEA'S CAR (MOVING)

The boys snicker, finally bust out in laughter.

PASTOR HATTERSBEA
The devil's gotten into you boys?

They try to stop, but only laugh harder.

LEFTOVER
Sheesh Pastor, is it a sin to shave
your whole face on the same day?

Hattersbea glances at his face in the rearview mirror.

PETEEY
Didn't wanna turn the other cheek
Pastor?

PASTOR HATTERSBEA
Ohhh, Pete's sake.

He grabs the barber's towel, wipes off the shaving cream.

Laughter.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Hattersbea's car continues up the road.

Another car comes up. The Deputy pulls behind that car, red light on top turning.

The car stops in the middle of the road. Deputy Steve stops, gets out, walks up to the driver.

DEPUTY STEVE
Mind telling me...Hallory? The
heck you doin' racing up here like
you stole something?

HALLORY, (30's), white male.

HALLORY
Don't know, but, something's
happening at the Dora place Stevie.
Crazy guys yelling, screaming,
middle of town. Miracles goin' on
Stevie. Don't want to miss mine.

The Deputy sticks his head in the window and takes a whiff of Hallory's breath.

DEPUTY STEVE
Hittin' the corn again Hallory?

Brakes SHRIEK behind them, scare the daylights out of Deputy Steve. He hits his head as his hat falls into Hallory's lap.

The Deputy stumbles back. Several cars slide to a halt, stir up a great cloud of dust. He staggers back to see. Hallory tosses the hat out the window and spins off.

The Deputy goes to the first car that hugs his cruiser.

DEPUTY STEVE
Alright. Get out.

Out of the dust cloud, the door opens slowly, NELLIE SINGER, (80's), white lady, gets out.

DEPUTY STEVE
Nellie?

NELLIE SINGER
You crazy stoppin' in the middle of the road little Stevie? Could'a been killed. I'm gonna call your momma.

Deputy Steve stares dumbfounded.

SCREECH. A chain reaction of brakes can be heard all the way down the mountainside.

The VOICE of Sheriff Riley blurts out over Steve's radio.

SHERIFF RILEY (O.S.)
Deputy. Think we got a situation.

The Deputy looks back at his cruiser, holding his head.

DEPUTY STEVE
You think?

SHERIFF RILEY (O.S.)
Need you up at Jenny Dora's house.

EXT. JENNY'S FRONT YARD - LATER

Reverend Albert's car, along with a few others, parked in the grassy area.

INT. JENNY'S HOUSE LIVING ROOM - SAME

An empty wheel chair sits in the middle of the room.

A SHOUT from the back of the house.

LIZZY BUSTER (O.S.)
I can walk.

EXT. JENNY'S BACK YARD - CONTINUOUS

LIZZY BUSTER, (45), black woman, pinches Gideon's cheeks.

Reverend Albert, Gretta Swanson, Young Leon Swanson, Jenny, Gideon, Skeeter, and FOUR others from the Holiness Church, smile, look on.

LIZZY BUSTER
(to Gideon)
I could sop you up with a biscuit.

Lizzy takes off around the house, everyone chases after her.

EXT. JENNY'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

As they come around, Alfred Tunney rushes out of his car.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Miss Jenny Dora, Gideon.

He holds up his hand, glances at everyone. Anguish washes his face. He looks back to his car.

Gideon heads to it.

Alfred breaks down.

ALFRED TUNNEY
My, Vera. Racoon bit her. But,
it's too late.

He sobs.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Too late.

Pastor Hattersbea's car pulls up. He and the kids jump out.

INT./EXT. TUNNEY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Gideon opens the back door. Hums -- "Only Believe". The mask of death contorts Vera's face.

One of the women closest by, LILLY THOMPSON, (30's), looks in, sees Vera. She catches her breath.

LILLY THOMPSON
Oh.

Gideon continues to hum. Reaches out for Vera.

Lilly Thompson noses in closer. She faints.

Pastor Hattersbea catches her with Reverend Albert's help. They look at each other for a moment, nod, carry her away.

Jenny, Gretta and several others console a heart broken Alfred.

Gretta looks towards Alfred's car.

GRETTA SWANSON
Mister. God don't know late.

VERA (O.S.)
Daddy?

Alfred wheels.

Vera stands outside the car. Her face glows. She reaches out for Alfred.

Alfred runs to her. Hugs her to his chest, covers her beautiful face with kisses and tears.

ALFRED TUNNEY
Oh Vera, my Vera.

WEASEL (O.S.)
She se..sells seash..shells by the seashore.

EXT. JENNY'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Everyone gathers in a circle.

WEASEL (O.S.)
Sh..she sells seashells b..by the seashore...She sells seashells by the seashore.

Gideon stands in front of Weasel. Petey, Leftover, and Young Swanson surround him. Everyone else surrounds them.

WEASEL
Ha! I said it. She sells seashells by the seashore. She sells seashells by the seashore.

Weasel speaks perfectly. He smiles a big buck tooth smile.

WEASEL
I'm not stuttering. Hey, Leftover. I'm not stuttering no more.

LEFTOVER
So. You're still goofy.

SQUEAL!

Dust from a braking car blows across them. Out of the dust, a voice calls.

HALLORY (O.S.)
Where's Gideon? Where's the angel?

The dust clears. Hallory stands in front of his car, leans on a cane.

GRETTA SWANSON
Miss Jenny. It's startin'.

Scrappy BLEATS. His bell jangles as he wanders by.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY

A line of cars makes its way up the mountain. Some people hike, others on horseback, some in buggies.

SWANSON (V.O.)
A miracle in a small town is like a single voice hollering out into a great canyon. The echo can be heard all over.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - DUSK

People come up in droves.

SWANSON (V.O.)
From miles around people came to be blessed. To be healed. Some came for curiosity. For the first time in Doraville, blacks and whites gathered together.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT NIGHT

SWANSON
Can't really say why. Maybe it was the excitement of the moment. Maybe all those miracles pushed hatred aside that night. Or maybe, Gods' love was so tangible, people didn't notice the color of a mans' skin. Just saw each other through God's eyes. Brothers and sisters. I can tell you, there was fire on the mountain that night.

EXT. DORA MANOR MOUNTAIN - 1949 - NIGHT

From a distance the top of the mountain appears to be on fire.

The SOUND of a PIANO plays. TAMBOURINES jingle and thump. Songs of worship carry out and down the mountain.

Cars no longer move forward. People get out, make their way on foot.

A fiery line of torches and flashlights winds its way up to the top.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - SAME

Several large bonfires light the whole mountain top property.

Sister Alma plays Jenny's piano, now on the porch.

Black quartets sing. White quartets sing. They even join together to sing.

A mass of people gather around the worship place. Like a tent revival, without a tent.

Gideon stands on the platform, lays hands on everyone who comes up. People are healed and set free from whatever ails them.

Deputy Steve, Pastor Hattersbea, Reverend Albert, Alfred Tunney, and the Mayor's wife, Eunice, assist people to Gideon.

Arm in arm, the people worship. They laugh, cry, jump up and down, raise their hands to the clear night sky.

Jenny and Gretta, sit in chairs on the platform behind Gideon. They take in the whole breathtaking scene, along with Young Swanson, Petey, Leftover, Weasel, Skeeter, and Vera.

Sheriff Riley, Mayor Davis, and Lulu, stand on Jenny's front porch amazed by it all.

SWANSON (V.O.)
But, into every garden, a snake
must crawl.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - CONTINUOUS

From the shadows of the forest Josey sneaks up to a tree near the platform.

He climbs it, slithers along a large branch that reaches towards Gideon. He digs the slingshot out of his pocket, puts a rock in it.

He pulls back to fire it, aims at Gideon's head.

Nellie Singer pulls Gideon down towards her, gives him a big hug and kiss on the cheek. She sings in his ear.

NELLIE SINGER
Oh, how I love Jesus.

Josey relaxes a moment.

GIDEON
So do I.

Gideon smiles, shakes her hand, stands back up.

Josey aims again. Gideon looks right at him. Josey lowers the slingshot.

Gideon begins to hum -- "Only Believe" -- to himself. He gives Josey a nod, looks back at Jenny and mouths:

"I love you, momma." as he touches his heart.

Jenny shoots him a bewildered look.

Josey re-aims, lets the rock fly.

For a few moments...time...slows to a snail's crawl. The rock slices the air and finds it's target.

Gideon crumples.

A shocked silence chokes the atmosphere. No one moves. Jenny's horrified voice explodes like a cannon.

JENNY
Gideon!

She rushes to take Gideon into her arms. The others on the platform spring up, gather around her.

Jenny checks Gideon. Gideon lies limp in her arms.

Confusion ensues, panic grips the people. They begin to push each other, scatter out of the way in different directions.

Jenny tries to revive Gideon but he doesn't respond.

The celebration of worship and praise, becomes chaotic, riotous. People cry, scream, fall over one another.

Weasel spots the rock on the platform and scoops it up. He looks around at the raucous crowd.

Josey lays across the branch as he enjoys his handiwork. His face glows evilly in the shadows of the fire light.

Weasel glances up in the tree.

WEASEL

Look! Josey!

The Deputy looks up to where Weasel points. The Sheriff fights his way through the crowd, gets under Josey.

SHERIFF RILEY

Josey. Come down from there.

Others rush over and yell for him to come down. The Mayor and a few others continue to calm the crowd.

Eunice Davis makes her way under Josey.

EUNICE

Jehosephat Davis! Come down from there this instant.

One MAN climbs the tree, crawls his way towards him. Josey kicks the man's hands as he tries to grab him.

SHERIFF RILEY

Son, come down from there.

The crowd begins to gather back around the tree and the platform. They focus on Josey.

Jenny buries her face in Gideon. Squeezes him to herself.

As Josey fights off the man on the branch, he slips, falls to the ground.

The crowd closes in on him violently.

BANG!

The Sheriff FIRES his gun into the air.

Jenny's head jerks up. Her face red, her eyes teary and puffy.

Gideon lies dead in her arms.

The crowd freezes, backs off. The Sheriff and Deputy Steve move to protect him.

Josey, on the ground, clothes tattered, lip bloodied, has been battered by the crowd.

PERSON #1 IN CROWD

He killed Gideon!

The crowd cries in agreement.

SHERIFF RILEY
Anyone see him do it?

No one responds. The Sheriff helps Josey up.

JOSEY
Didn't do nothing.

Josey dusts himself off, wipes his bloody mouth. The slingshot falls out of his pocket. The Deputy spots it, picks it up.

DEPUTY STEVE
Sheriff.

Deputy Steve shows it to the Sheriff.

PERSON #2 IN CROWD
Slingshot. Josey's got a
slingshot.

The crowd closes in again.

JENNY (O.S.)
No more!

The crowd stops. Their attention turns to Jenny. She cradles Gideon. Tears stream down her face.

Gideon lies lifeless.

The others on the platform cry, too. A long dead silence. All eyes on Jenny and Gideon.

JENNY
No more hate. Hate killed my
family when grandpa did something
out of love. Hate made me a ghost
in this town.

BEAT.

People look away, down...guilty.

JENNY
Stop answering hate with hate.
That don't change nothin'. Hate
killed Gideon.

The crowd stirs up again as some cry out "Get, Josey!"

JENNY
Have ya'll forgotten why you're
here?

PERSON #3 IN CROWD
To see Gideon!

JENNY
To touch God. Getta' touch from
God. Gideon's not God. Gideon was
a gift. I didn't think this town
deserved him. But, he's what this
town needed. What I needed.

Jenny caresses Gideon's face. She pulls him to her bosom.

JENNY
He just wanted ya'll to know God
like he did. To really know how
much God loves you.

The Sheriff handcuffs Josey. The crowd remains still.

The Sheriff, the Deputy, the Mayor, and Eunice escort Josey
to the Sheriff's car. They put him in the back.

Jenny begins to sing Gideon's favorite hymn --

"Only believe"

After a moment, Gretta Swanson joins in. Then Reverend
Albert.

The crowd presses forward as they begin to sing along. Their
voices lift into the night sky. The crowd takes on a
different spirit.

One of peaceful worship.

The rotating RED LIGHT of the squad car comes on. Young
Swanson looks over at Josey. Their eyes lock.

Josey smiles smugly. The Sheriff drives him away.

Petey, sees this, goes over to Young Swanson, puts his arm
around his shoulders. They tearfully look at each other.

The song ends.

The crowd stands silent, watches Jenny caress Gideon's hair.

YOUNG SWANSON
Wait.

Young Swanson pauses, gathers his courage.

YOUNG SWANSON
What's Gideon been showing us?

No one answers.

YOUNG SWANSON
Petey. Why're you here?

PETEY
Cause Jesus healed me.

YOUNG SWANSON
Charlie?

LEFTOVER
Weasel got his stutter
fixed...Jesus saved me?

GRETTA SWANSON
Gideon showed me God can do
anything.

REVEREND ALBERT
God's Word is true.

YOUNG SWANSON
We just sang it. Only believe.
Nothin's impossible. My eye was
blind.

LIZZY BUSTER
I was paralyzed.

The crowd murmurs in agreement. Others cry out their
miracles.

ALFRED TUNNEY
My daughter Vera is alive.

YOUNG SWANSON
Miss Jenny, you were dead. I saw
it. Gideon called you back.

Silence.

YOUNG SWANSON
We can call Gideon back.

Young Swanson lays his hand on Gideon's forehead, closes his
eyes.

YOUNG SWANSON
In the name of Jesus, Gideon, we
call you back.

Young Swanson keeps his eyes closed.

Some in the crowd close their eyes, bow their heads. Others
just look on.

For a long moment, nothing happens. Young Swanson opens his
eyes, then closes them tighter.

His voice gets firmer.

YOUNG SWANSON
In the name of Jesus, Gideon, come
back.

Nothing.

Tears roll down people's faces.

YOUNG SWANSON
Gideon. In the name of Jesus.

Swanson shakes Gideon's head a little. Jenny puts her hand
on Young Swanson's.

JENNY
Leon.

YOUNG SWANSON
Come back.

GRETTA SWANSON
Leon.

Gretta puts her arm around Young Swanson. He shakes her off.

YOUNG SWANSON
But...I believe.

Everyone stays quiet.

YOUNG SWANSON
Gideon.

Young Swanson buries his head in Gretta's arms.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH PULPIT - PRESENT

SWANSON
Up 'til today I couldn't figure why
Gideon didn't come back. I
believed.

WOMAN IN CONGREGATION
Sometimes, our believing and God's
plan don't match up.

Swanson looks at the woman.

SWANSON
Funny. That's a truth I couldn't
see, until now.

EXT. JENNY'S YARD - GRAVE SIGHT - DAY (FLASHBACK 1949)

The SONG --

"Walk With Me"

Sung by a black man with a deep penetrating voice blankets the mountain top.

A Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly glides thru the air, lands on Gideon's gravestone. An overflow crowd, black and white, gather around Gideon's GRAVE site.

REVEREND ALBERT

This is not a day for mourning.
 This is a day for reflection. A
 day to remember the life of a young
 boy. His memory, rather, his
 legacy. Look around. A week ago,
 you'd have never seen black folk
 and white folk in this town coming
 together for anything. Today, we
 come together for one thing. Love.
 I don't mean our love for Gideon.
 Most of us didn't know him. But
 somehow, in just a flash of time,
 through the life of this boy, we
 felt, we experienced, God's love.
 And it'd be our greatest tragedy to
 waste that touch. This week I had
 to get down on my knees and tell
 God I was sorry. I've been a blind
 shepherd leading his sheep. Let
 the color of a man's skin dictate
 whether I was going to love him or
 not. Now I ask you all, forgive
 me. If we're gonna honor Gideon's
 legacy, we're gonna have to make a
 choice. My choice is to love my
 neighbor as the Lord loves me. If
 you choose to do this with me,
 Gideon will outlive us all.

Reverend Albert goes to Pastor Hattersbea, extends his hand. They look into each other's eyes before Hattersbea grabs his hand and pulls Albert in for a hug.

Petey goes to Skeeter. They stare at each other. Petey smiles, puts up his hand with a wave like the first time they saw each other. Skeeter hesitates, smiles, puts her hand up. They clasp, and Petey turns to the crowd, raises Skeeter's hand like they just won something.

People begin to turn to one another, they hug, shake hands, some in tears, some in laughter.

A few just watch. A few leave.

The Swallowtail flies off.

SWANSON (V.O.)

Not everyone in town chose to do what Reverend Albert asked. But I can tell you this. More did than didn't. What the enemy meant for bad, God turned to good. Gideon's death wasn't the end of the revival in Doraville. It was just the beginning.

EXT. JENNY'S HOUSE - DAY

Jenny sits on the porch with Gretta.

SWANSON (V.O.)

And in one way, it was the start of my walk with God.

GRETTA SWANSON

Sure you're gonna be alright, Miss Jenny?

JENNY

Had a dream last night. Children everywhere you look running around Dora Manor.

Young Swanson, Petey, Weasel, Leftover, and Skeeter, come out of the woods.

GRETTA SWANSON

I like that dream.

The kids come up to the porch.

LEFTOVER

Can't walk on water.

Leftover plops down, takes off his shoes, pours the water out of them.

Scrappy comes up begins to nibble on his shoe. Leftover pushes it away.

LEFTOVER

Goat, you'll eat anything.

PETEY

Look who's talking.

The kids laugh as they set their wet shoes on the steps to dry in the sun. They sit down, tired and wet.

GRETTA SWANSON
I know some kids who look like they
can eat a bear and drink a stream.

Gretta gets up. The kids perk up.

GRETTA SWANSON
Who wants to help Miss Gretta
squeeze the lemons?

They jump up, follow her in. Young Swanson trails.

JENNY
Leon.

Young Swanson stops at the door. Jenny nods for him to come
over. Leon does. She offers Leon the Gideon Bible.

JENNY
Gideon would've wanted you to have
this.

Swanson shakes his head "No".

JENNY
Please.

He takes it.

His face clouds up.

YOUNG SWANSON
Hate him. He killed my best friend.

JENNY
When I realized the people in this
town hatin' me didn't really know
me, I forgave 'em. But I also had
to ask God to forgive me.

YOUNG SWANSON
For what?

JENNY
Cause what I didn't know. I was
holdin' something against them.
And that lifted a heavy load off
me. One I carried around most my
life.

Leon opens the cover of the Bible.

JENNY
Bitterness and unforgiveness.
Those are hates' best friends.

Leon shakes his head.

YOUNG SWANSON
It's hard. And it hurts.

JENNY
I know.

Leon stares at the open Bible. He reads.

YOUNG SWANSON
It's a gift.

JENNY
Gideon planted a gift in here.

Jenny puts her hand on Young Swanson's heart.

JENNY
Water it with God's Word.

Young Swanson wipes his eyes, nods his head, closes the book.

JENNY
Don't carry that anger Leon. It'll
keep you from livin'.

INT. PRISON YARD - DAY

SUPER: "1964"

JOSEY DAVIS Jr., (30), in prison garb, and Swanson, (26), in
Preacher's clothes.

They clasp the Gideon Bible between them. Swanson lets go.

SWANSON
I forgive you Josey.

Josey lets the Bible drop on the ground.

JOSEY
Don't need your forgiveness.

SWANSON
I need to give it to you.

Swanson turns, starts to walk away.

SWANSON
Bible's not a gift.

CONGREGANT #1 (V.O.)
Story's still hard to believe.

INT. GLENDALE CHURCH - PRESENT NIGHT

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
You can believe it.

The congregation turns to see the elderly white man who came in late. He stands up, walks up the aisle to Swanson, Bible in hand.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
Reverend Leon Swanson.

The man gets to the front, turns to the congregation.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
I ran out of gas pulling into the station. Saw your church. Got this feeling I was supposed to be here. Like a divine appointment.

No one says anything.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
Story's true. Every word.

He raises the book out towards the congregation.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
This...is the Bible. The Gideon Bible.

He turns to Swanson.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
I'm now returning it to you.

The old man holds it out. Swanson hesitates, then reaches out and takes hold of it.

For a moment, they both have it. Now a well worn book, tattered, GOLD letters barely visible.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
Threw this book away a thousand times.

The man releases the book. Swanson takes it.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
Leon. Please forgive me for the pain I caused you. I know it don't make up. I'm so sorry.

Swanson drinks in the old mans' remorse. Years of hurt begin to wash away. Swanson nods, drops his head.

The man turns back to the congregation.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
 We serve a God who forgave before
 we knew we needed it. Loved us
 before we knew Him.

The congregation begins to stir.

CONGREGANT #3
 Well. Well.

The old man glances at Swanson. Swanson, still too overcome
 to look up.

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
 You see. For us, our miracle is
 getting what we believe for. For
 God, His miracle is getting us to
 believe.

More shouts of "Amen, Alright, Wells, and Preach it!"

ELDERLY WHITE MAN
 My name's Jehosephat Davis Jr., and
 I, *killed*, Gideon.

The air goes out of the congregation.

Swanson looks up at OLDER JOSEY. Peace clothes his face. A
 long, dead silence fills the church.

OLDER JOSEY
 Now, I don't know all the ways God
 reaches his children. But there is
 a darkness. A 'gross darkness',
 the Bible calls it. And there is
 only one light that can dispel it.

CONGREGANT #5
 Jesus.

OLDER JOSEY
 But the Bible also says, 'deep,
 calls to deep'.

Shouts of, "Hallelujah and Amen"!

OLDER JOSEY
 And like Jonah in the belly of that
 whale, I was deep.

The congregation stirs again. A smattering of applause
 breaks out.

OLDER JOSEY
 I was an unbeliever.

More "Yes's, and Preach its!"

OLDER JOSEY
Now I'm a Pastor. A go tell it on
the mountain man.

CONGREGANT #6
Tell it. Tell it.

OLDER JOSEY
Fully washed, sanctified, and
ordained.

The congregation claps and hollers.

OLDER JOSEY
I have been saved to the uttermost!

CONGREGANT #7
Come on!

OLDER JOSEY
And I believe I'm here for a
purpose.

The congregation stands up, cheers.

Dorvil jumps out of his seat, a grin plastered across his
face.

Swanson looks over at him and smiles.

EXT. GLENDALE FALLS GAS STATION - DAY

Swanson, freshly shaved, clean dress shirt, and slacks. He
puts the gas pump back, heads towards the station.

Dorvil sits in front of the station, a white baseball cap on
his head, in a service station uniform. His name sewn on an
oval patch on his shirt.

Dorvil works on a portable sign with large black plastic
letters.

Swanson approaches him, wallet open, pulls out cash. Dorvil,
engrossed, looks for letters in a card board box. He doesn't
look up.

DORVIL
Money's no good here Preacher.

SWANSON
Preachin' that bad?

DORVIL
A deal's a deal.

SWANSON
I'd say I got more than I bargained
for.

DORVIL
Sometimes you can shake a peach
tree and don't get one peach.
Other times, just walkin' by you
get a bushel.

Dorvil stops. Eyes Swanson.

DORVIL
But you know that.

SWANSON
'Spect I do.

Swanson puts his wallet away, checks out the sign.

"HELP US WELCOME THE NEW PREACHER JEHOSEFAT DA..."

SWANSON
I believe he spells it with a
"P", "H".

DORVIL
Plum out'ta "H's".

EXT. GLENDALE FALLS COUNTRY CHURCH - SAME

Older Josey, casually dressed, opens the front door of the church, comes out with a broom and starts to sweep the porch.

EXT. GLENDALE FALLS GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Swanson sees the -- "Open After Service" -- sign still up, peels it off the window. Notices Older Josey across the street.

SWANSON
Guess ya'll can put your shovels
back.

Dorvil looks up, bewildered. Swanson nods across to Older Josey, who continues to sweep.

Dorvil glances over, gets it, chuckles.

SWANSON
Mind if I keep this?

Shows him the sign.

SWANSON

Memento.

Dorvil nods, finds a "V" and "I" in the box, slides them on to the sign. Checks them, adjusts them. Continues to rummage.

DORVIL

Say, Preacher. What was that one thing you goin' back for?

Swanson glances into the box, pulls out an "S".

SWANSON

Birthday party for a special lady.

He hands the letter to Dorvil. Dorvil slides it on the sign, gets up, stands back with Swanson. He admires his work.

Swanson points to the word, "Preacher".

SWANSON

Change that to 'Pastor', got yourself an "H".

Dorvil stops, stares boggled, then brightens when he gets it.

DORVIL

See, knew there was a reason God let you run out here.

Dorvil attacks the sign with renewed enthusiasm. He slides the letters out to start all over.

Swanson claps Dorvil on the back.

SWANSON

Must be it.

Dorvil stops, offers his hand, a smile. They shake.

DORVIL

Preacher. Don't wait for a birthday to come back.

Swanson wanders back to his car. Dorvil calls out.

DORVIL

Preacher. One last thing.

Swanson turns.

SWANSON

One *last* thing?

DORVIL
 God has a sense of humor too you
 know?

Swanson opens his door, waits to hear what Dorvil says next.

DORVIL
 When you get around that bend, look
 to your right.

Dorvil grins. Swanson waves, gets in.

EXT./INT. SWANSON'S CADILLAC - CONTINUOUS

Swanson pulls away from the pump to get on the road.

A car flies by.

He looks over to the church. Older Josey continues to sweep.
 Swanson honks. Older Josey looks up, smiles, waves.

Swanson smiles, waves, pulls out.

The car has been scrubbed. No balled up cigarette packs or
 carton of cigarettes. The ashtray, pushed in. Swanson's
 suit and preacher collar hang pressed and cleaned, neatly in
 the back.

Only the red bow *graces* the dash.

Swanson slips the "Open After Service" sign under the Gideon
 Bible sitting on the passenger seat.

He goes around the bend, looks to the right.

A 24 HOUR service station.

Swanson looks upward, shakes his head.

SWANSON
 (chuckles)
 You got me.

Swanson flips on the radio. "Every Man's A Beggar", plays.

DISSOLVE TO:

MONTAGE: SWANSON GOES HOME

-- Swanson's bright red car disappears down the road.

-- Swanson drives past a sign --

"Welcome to Doraville. Home of Gideon's Orphanage."

-- Swanson pulls up the road that leads to Dora manor. Cars parked down the roadway. He pulls over, gets out.

-- "Every Man's A Beggar" continues to play.

-- Swanson takes the Bible, and the Big Red Bow.

-- A majestic black and white Zebra Swallowtail zips past Swanson, towards the large wrought iron gate.

-- Beyond, the yard festively decorated with balloons and party streamers. VOICES and LAUGHTER from guests in every direction.

-- The butterfly darts up and over the gate, disappearing past the vibrant fall foliage, into the bright blue sky.

-- Swanson reaches the gate.

-- Scrappy cuts past Swanson. A little girl in pig tails and blue ribbons in her hair gives chase. Swanson turns to look. He smiles.

-- Above Swanson, a large, colorful sign hangs --

"HAPPY BIRTHDAY JENNY"

FADE TO BLACK

THE END