

DISCOVERING GRACE

Written by
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When your only friend, has four legs.

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FADE IN:

EXT. VIRGINIA BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAINS - SUNSET

AMERICAN EAGLE flies over its majestic mountains then down through a valley against beautiful hues of the setting sun.

EXT. BLUE RIDGE RANCH HOUSE - DUSK

Eagle lands on a flag pole beside a Rambler with basement at base of a mountain with no neighbors. Home is bedecked with hand-made Halloween ornaments. Lit jack-o'-lanterns line its gravel driveway. 1990 and earlier vehicles are parked on it.

Eagle spreads its wings as a wind blows the American Flag below it to full furl. Setting sun's colors change to red.

INT. SAME HOME'S HALLOWEEN PARTY - SAME

Paneled basement has 1990's country furnishings with more hand-made Halloween decorations.

CHILDREN, 9-12, in hand-made costumes, bob for apples in a metal wash bin to loud *squeals* of joy. YOUNG PARENTS in country attire stand at a punch-bowl watching their Children.

DESTINY "DESTY" FENTON, 12, white-skinned albinism, in a witch's costume, jumps up from the tub with an apple in her mouth and runs to parents BENJAMIN FENTON, African-American, rugged-fit, and EDITA FENTON, Mexican, country-pretty, both in 30s. Edita picks up Destiny to hug. Destiny offers apple to Benjamin who takes a big bite. ALL smile as happy family.

EXT. TWO LANE HIGHWAY - LATER THAT NIGHT

Weather now bleak with wet snow falling as full moon reflects in road's puddles. Their 1990 station wagon enters a muddy construction zone having huge piles of dirt, wooden saw-horses, and yellow Dietz *flashing* lights on metal barrels.

Their car's radio *plays* country music.

INT. FENTON'S STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Benjamin drives. Edita is passenger. Both wear their two-part seat-with-attached-lap belts. Destiny is not seen.

EDITA
Mmmmm, nice party. Too bad your ...

BENJAMIN

Stop!

The windshield wipers suddenly freeze in the Up position.

Benjamin tries playing with its switch. Nothing. He can't see so rolls down window trying to wipe his windshield off with left hand. His seatbelt holds him back so he releases it.

EDITA

Benjamón, por favor.

Benjamin reaches out and breaks off wiper's arm then uses its blade as a squeegee to clear snow off his windshield area.

BENJAMIN

See? Works fine.

Edita releases own belt reaching for Ben's shoulder-release.

EDITA

Least let me attach your seat ...

A GROUNDHOG runs across the highway in front of their car.

EXT. FENTON'S CAR IN CONSTRUCTION ZONE - CONTINUOUS

Their station wagon veers as Groundhog escapes giving its high-pitched *whistle* of alarm. Their car over-corrects, slides, over-corrects again, then goes into three-sixties.

Car *smashes* through saw-horses and barrels to rocket up a large pile of dirt and flip airborne disappearing over the hill. *Sounds* of car rolling over and over till noises stop.

EXT. FENTON'S WRECKED STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Car is upside down, roof crushed, headlights on, with body dented as raindrops *bang* on its metal bottom. The fan belt *clangs* slower as its engine dies. Car radio's music *fades*.

INT. FENTON'S WRECKED STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Destiny is strapped across the back seat with all three lap-belts. She releases chest belt to slide back out of other two falling onto rooftop. She finds and puts back on her thick glasses then crawls under front bench-seat's top roll.

Benjamin lies unconscious on rooftop with a gash across his forehead bleeding. His blood and skin are on steering wheel.

Edita lies on top of him bleeding from her right temple. Her passenger front side-window has large concentric cracks.

Destiny shakes both Parents. No response. She has to crawl through their blood to escape out Benjamin's open window.

INT. PICKUP TRUCK CAB - MOMENTS LATER

A 1990 pick-up approaches on their same road.

DRIVER, 50s, big, bulky, yawns huge, then bolts upright as his headlights illuminate Destiny, soaking wet, standing in the road ahead waving her costumed arms. She *is* a fright.

Driver *stomps* on his brake-pedal. Rear brake-drums lock-up.

EXT. PICKUP TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Truck veers hard just missing Destiny then steers other way but slips on road-mud to now slide sideways out-of-control.

Destiny watches, rain streaming down her glasses, as truck plows sideways into earlier dirt hill. Mud splashes over its hood. Its engine sputters then quits as its horn *blares*.

INT. CRASHED PICKUP CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Driver is slumped over his steering wheel. He *moans* and sits up. *Horn* stops. His wipers smear windshield's mud. He rolls down his side-window to see Destiny running to him. Her costumed-arms flap making her look like she's flying.

Driver reaches in glovebox, grabs a road flare, and exits.

EXT. CRASHED TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Driver pulls the top off his flare, ignites it, then throws it into road behind Destiny. He kneels to wait as Destiny runs to him. Driver then holds her away by her shoulders.

DRIVER

How'd you get way out here, sugar?

Destiny opens her mouth and tries to speak. Nothing.

DRIVER

Kitty took your tongue? Where your folks be at this time a' night?

Destiny tries to answer but can't so grabs Driver's hand and pulls. Driver yanks his hand back then looks at it. His palm is covered with blood.

DRIVER
Jesus, Mary, and Joseph!

Destiny grabs Driver's hand again and pulls while pointing desperate over the dirt hill. Both disappear up over it.

Lightening flares lighting up muddy construction area. Broken wood and dented metal makes it look like a junk graveyard.

EXT. FENTON'S WRECKED STATION WAGON - MOMENTS LATER

Thunder *booms* as Destiny comes over the hill pulling Driver's hand who sees their upside-down wreck and yanks Destiny back.

DRIVER
Wait here.

Driver walks to the wreckage. Destiny tags along. He spins.

DRIVER
I'm a fireman, let me do my job!

Destiny freezes. Driver jogs to station-wagon, falls on both knees, can't open door, so crawls in Benjamin's side-window.

Destiny watches, wet and shivering, then walks to her car.

Driver, shirtsleeves now blood-soaked, backs out side-window shaking his head. He sees Destiny and runs to intercept her.

DRIVER
Got a CB in my truck, come with me.

Destiny tries to go around him. He sidesteps to block her.

DRIVER
We --have to call for help.

Driver picks up Destiny who squirms then acquiesces to throw her arms around Driver's neck. She looks over his shoulder at her mangled car. Her Parents get further away with each step.

INT. JAXEE'S BEDROOM - NOW MIDNIGHT

Plank walls, antique bureau, standing-closet, and hand-made wooden chair. Nightstand has a duck-decoy lamp. Vintage wall-clock *chimes* twelve times. Lightning flashes through window.

JAXINE "JAXEE" FENTON, African-American female, late 60s, is in its double-bed asleep on her back *snoring*, loud.

Thunder *crash* then loud *knocking* at kitchen-carport door.

Jaxee stirs *mumbling* under covers. *Pounding* at kitchen door.

Jaxee throws covers off to sit up on edge of bed in faded red *Long Johns*. She turns on the duck-lamp, stretches, then exits scratching her butt with both hands. She uses country slang.

JAXEE

Sumbody better be dead.

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Two bedrooms have a bathroom hallway that leads to Great Room having a dining table with four chairs, cloth sofa and chair. A huge hand-laid stone fireplace has a large sliding-glass door on its outside wall. Lightening flashes through it.

Jaxee enters shuffle-grumbling rubbing her tummy. She puts on a well-used cowboy hat off a standing coat-rack made from a lacquered tree-branch. More *knocking* and *thunder* together.

JAXEE

Alright, already!

INT. JAXEE'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jaxee enters a small kitchen with curtained window-door that leads to a carport. Her eyes narrow at red rotating lights strobe-flashing through her door's curtain. She opens the door. Lightening silhouettes someone big standing there.

Jaxee switches on overhead light. JOSEPHINE "JOE" ROBINSON, African-American, 50s, tall, fit-for-age, very short afro, stands soaking wet in a Deputy's uniform and raincoat holding her three-point plastic-covered hat in hand.

JAXEE

Jump between the drops, ya' idgit.

Jaxee steps back inside and opens a piece of Halloween hard-candy from a large glass bowl then puts it in her mouth.

JAXEE

Want a cup a' joe, "Joe?"

Joe enters closing the door behind shaking her head.

They stare at each other in silence. Thunder *rumbles*.

JAXEE

Spit it out, Joe.

JOE

There's been a car accident.

Jaxee *chokes* on her candy and spits it into the sink.

JAXEE
What?! Who?

JOE
Your son and his family.

JAXEE
My son?! Where? When?

JOE
We need to go to the hospital.

JAXEE
So they're okay?

Brightest flash of lightening yet throws shadows on all the walls bringing their Halloween decorations "to life."

JOE
We need to leave, now.

JAXEE
Uh, you go. I'll go get, uh --?

JOE
Sorry Jaxee, I know your driving.
Best I take you, both ways.

Jaxee stumbles through Great Room to bedroom. More *thunder*.

INT. JAXEE'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jaxee enters, turns left, right, can't decide, and sits on bed. She looks up at far wall. Lightening illuminates a child-like *Cross* painting. Jaxee opens nightstand drawer, takes out unopened pint of whiskey, stares at it, then puts it back in drawer. She looks at the *Cross* painting as her eyes narrow.

JAXEE
Don't you dare.

Thunder *crash* shakes window. Jaxee picks up duck-lamp and throws it at *Cross* painting smashing it. Room is now dark.

JOE (O.S.)
Jaxee?!

Lightening silhouettes Jaxee now standing with fists shaking one at the *Cross*-painting in rage.

JAXEE
Leave, me, be!

INT. DESTINY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NOW DAWN

Destiny lies in a hospital bed with air-line tubing over her ears, an I.V. in a wrist, and heart monitor *beeping*. Her face was cut by car's breaking glass and now has stitches. The top of her black head is wrapped in white gauze.

Leaning over her is a DOCTOR, East Indian, 40s, wearing a lab coat listening to her heart through his Stethoscope.

Doctor removes his earpieces and turns to NURSE, BBW, 50s, in standard white uniform.

DOCTOR
Kin notified?

NURSE
Only has one, her ...

JAXEE
Mammy.

Both look. Jaxee stands centered in doorway turning cowboy hat around by its brim in her hands. She goes to Destiny.

DOCTOR
She's lucky.

JAXEE
Don't look it. What's she got?

DOCTOR
Leg bruising from seatbelts, glass cuts, whiplash contusion. Reflexes are normal, pupils dilate but remain unresponsive. Almost like, she doesn't want to wake up? --Were Destiny's language skills normal before the accident?

JAXEE
"Language?" Yeah, English? Wait. You sayin' now she c'aint --?

DOCTOR
I've scheduled tests for Aphasia.

JAXEE
English, Doc.

DOCTOR
Need to test her brain functions, specifically the left hemisphere because at this time ...

Joe enters holding her hat. This is job part she hates.

JOE
Jaxee, whenever you're ready.

DOCTOR
Destiny is non-verbal.

JOE
I can come back.

Jaxee turns to Nurse who then nods back

JAXEE
Much obliged if you don't leave her
till I gets back.

Jaxee exits behind Joe.

JAXEE
Thankee for all your doctorin'.

DOCTOR
Actually, I'm her ...

Nurse cuts-off Doctor by squeezing his elbow. He winces, *Ow?*

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE HOSPITAL MORGUE - MOMENTS LATER

Joe and Jaxee walk down the hall. Their boot steps *echo*.

JAXEE
Told him not to marry her! Dang kid
never did mind what I say.

They arrive at the Morgue's double-doors. Jaxee freezes.

JOE
Has to be done by a relative.

JAXEE
I know, it's just I, I c'aint
remember him, not like this.

JOE
It's okay, we can come back.

Jaxee traces a finger around the wall's cold tile grouting.

JAXEE
You're not listening, Joe! If I go
in there, I, I'll die, too.
(slams wall with fist)
C'aint explain it no better!

JOE

Okay Jaxee. Do you know where ...?

Jaxee walks back up the hall. Her boot-steps echo empty.

JAXEE

Don't say her name! Just get her here to do --what's needed.

JOE

Want me to walk with you?

JAXEE

(voice breaks)

Leave me be. --*Leave me be.*

Joe's gaze cracks when she hears Jaxee's *sobbing* echo.

INT. HOSPITAL CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Small prayer room. Table against a wall with standing Cross. Bible is next to it and two chairs angled to face the table.

Jaxee enters and is surprised.

Another person, CAUCASIAN MALE, is sitting in front chair.

JAXEE

'Scuse me.

No response. Jaxee studies the back of the Male's head.

Suddenly Male begins using their hands animated in *American Sign Language* to "yell" at the Cross.

Jaxee steps back, realizes Male is deaf, confesses to him.

JAXEE

I tried to change, lead a good
life, follow The Word. But this --
this just don't make no sense?
(looks straight up)
Why?! Why did he have to die before
we, we coulda', I shoulda' --.

Male stands and swipes a hand at the Cross in anger and turns fast knocking the Bible off and is shocked to see Jaxee. She nods to him. He nods back embarrassed then exits quickly.

Bible fell open on the floor. Cross wobbles then falls onto the open Bible with one edge by a pencil-underlined Verse.

Jaxee picks up Cross and Bible then reads its highlighted verse aloud.

JAXEE
"Behold, children are a heritage
from the Lord."

Jaxee lays closed-Bible on table then studies Cross.

JAXEE
You speak --if only we listen.

Jaxee reverently sets Cross back on table and exits.

EXT. MAIN STREET NEAR DESTINY'S HOSPITAL - THAT MORNING

Jaxee walks aimless on wet sidewalks with head down. Shops are just opening so OWNERS wave country-friendly to her. She walks on not noticing them finally stopping to look up.

A liquor-store sign lights-up above her. Jaxee drops her head in shame and slinks into the store.

INT. DESTINY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER SAME MORNING

Nurse sits in a chair beside Destiny's bed reading a book then looks at her wristwatch and shakes her head.

Jaxee enters carrying two country-clothing store bags and puts them in the closet then rubs her bloodshot eyes.

NURSE
Been awhile. I've been off-duty --?

Nurse stands stretching holding book and checks watch again.

NURSE
"A while."

JAXEE
What's gonna happen to her?

NURSE
"What's gonna happen --?" We
assumed you would take her?

JAXEE
Me?! I don't know nuthin' about
raisin' no little white girl!

NURSE
She's not Caucasian, she's ...?

JAXEE
I knows what she be!

NURSE

God has a plan. Don't always make sense or appreciated at the time, but it's Her plan so you gotta' trust it'll make sense, someday.

JAXEE

Good. Because you're not makin' any sense to-day!

Joe enters holding her hat concerned by the yelling.

Jaxee points to Nurse then at Destiny.

JAXEE

This looney-bin wants me to become a maniac mom again?! At my age!

JOE

Are you saying you want Desty to go into foster care? Jesus, Jaxee.

Joe and Nurse both fold their arms glaring at Jaxee.

JAXEE

Don't be givin' me no come-to-Jesus meetin' look!
(points to closet)
I bought her "goin' away" clothes.
That's as far as I'm willin' ta go.

Joe pulls a chair to Destiny's bed. Its metal feet *squeal*.

JOE

It's the kindness we show others in time of need that test our real metal. Think on it --.

Both of Joe's hands land on Jaxee's shoulders to "sit" her down in the chair.

JOE

Hard.

Nurse points to a wall-plate with a large red push-button labeled, "*HELP*."

NURSE

Press that, when the time comes.

Joe and Nurse go to exit. Jaxee holds up pointer-finger.

JAXEE

Do she know?

Nurse turns *sighing* and shakes her head then exits with Joe.

Jaxee looks down at Destiny.

JAXEE

I am sorry for what happened to ya.
But I'm more sorry, for what just
happened. Didn't do too good a job
first time around as a mom so don't
be expectin' no miracle a' change.

Jaxee leans back in the chair, pulls her cowboy hat's brim
down over her eyes, stretches both legs out, and *raspberries*.

JAXEE

Lord knows I never do.

INT. DESTINY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Room's interior light is off. Hallway-light enters through
crack in the open door.

Jaxee, still in chair, *snore-snorts* herself awake.

JAXEE

Zzzz, What --?!

She stretches, then tilts hat back *smacking* her lips. Her
eyes adjust and she sees Destiny is awake staring at her.

JAXEE

About time, lazy-bones.
(no response)
Know where you're at?
(no response)
You're in a hoss-pit-tall.

Jaxee turns on the wall-lamp above the bed. Destiny squeezes
her eyes closed then a tear runs down one cheek.

JAXEE

Now don't be doin' none a' that.
Don't do no good no how. You
remember Mammy, dontcha? Know it's
been a spell but we's still --?

A second tear runs down Destiny's other cheek. Jaxee yanks a
tissue out of its box to dab ungently at Destiny's tears.

JAXEE

Uh, I needs to tell ya somethin'.
And it's the kind of thing one
don't wants to tell, let alone
hear.

Destiny tries to sit up. Jaxee holds her down with one hand. Destiny looks up with sad kitten-eyes.

JAXEE

Don't seem right, no sir, and sure
don't seem fair. But with God's
grace, you'll, we, we'll come to
peace with it --someday.

More tears run down Destiny's cheek. Jaxee almost loses it.

JAXEE

Even though your daddy and me
fought that last Christmas years
ago I always still cared about him!

Destiny turns to stare out the window. Jaxee walks around bed into her gaze. Destiny looks the other way. Jaxee follows back. Destiny looks at Jaxee with pleading eyes. Jaxee drops bedrail and sits on edge of the bed looks at the door.

JAXEE

Take all the time ya needs.

Destiny tries to speak, can't, and fights to get out of bed.

Jaxee holds Desty down with a hand on her chest while pressing "HELP" button with other hand.

Nurse enters with a prepared sedative-syringe.

NURSE

There, there, little lady. You go
ahead and take a nap now. Things'll
be better when you wake. Always is.

Nurse injects Destiny's I.V. catheter-tube. Destiny quiets, then closes her eyes. Nurse turns hands-on-hips to Jaxee.

JAXEE

What? Said t'weren't no good at it.

Nurse gives Jaxee a sniper's thousand-yard stare.

Jaxee looks up at the ceiling *grumble*-shaking her head.

INT. DESTINY'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Destiny is asleep on I.V. with airline, head still wrapped.

Jaxee is asleep in the chair with hat pulled down *snoring*.

Doctor and Nurse stand in the doorway watching Jaxee who *snores* her loudest yet waking herself up.

JAXEE

ZZZZzz --Don't want to!

Doctor and Nurse *chuckle* as both go to Destiny.

Jaxee gets her bearings, sits up, lifts hat, and sees All.

JAXEE

When she goin' home, Doc?

NURSE

Whose "home?"

JAXEE

Where ya' think, Nurse Ratched?!

DOCTOR

Maybe late this afternoon, after further tests.

JAXEE

Make it sooner than later will ya',
gots to get back to my Gracie.

NURSE

Didn't know you were married?

JAXEE

(double-snorts)
Might as well be.

Destiny stirs awake, sees Jaxee, their eyes meet. Nothing.

Destiny sees Doctor then tears-up jamming her eyelids shut.

Nurse holds Destiny's hand. She and Doctor stare at Jaxee.

Jaxee is deer-in-the-headlights stepping forward then back.

JAXEE

What? What am I supposed ta say?

NURSE

Not supposed to say anything,
idgit. You're supposed to hug her.

Jaxee steps back flat against a wall like she's trapped.

EXT. AERIAL OF JAXEE'S ACCESS ROAD - LATER THAT DAY

Beautiful green Blue Ridge Mountains surround a dirt and gravel one-lane road in the middle of a plain of Switchgrass.

Joe's cruiser rides along road with a cloud of dust churning.

INT. JOE'S PATROL CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Joe wearing aviator sunglasses is driving.

Jax and Destiny are back passengers sitting apart. Destiny's face is bruised with a large Band-Aid on her forehead. She stares out her window wearing pink jeans and Cowgirl shirt.

Road is uneven with lots of potholes. All Three bounce along in silence. Cruiser hits a deep pothole. *Wham*. All wince.

Joe peers over sunglasses into her rear-view mirror.

JOE

When you grading this?

JAXEE

When you payin' for it?

A crocodile-tear rolls down Destiny's cheek.

Jaxee turns away from Destiny. Jaxee's lower lip quivers.

EXT. JAXEE'S RANCH - NOW SUNSET

1950's Ranch single-floor home had a second bedroom added to one end. No grass, just dirt, scrub brush, and a few bushes.

Joe's cruiser pulls up behind a beat-up pick-up truck parked under a green corrugated-plastic carport. A horse-trailer with hitch upon cinderblocks sits beside it.

Jaxee exits cruiser with Destiny's plastic hospital bag and drops it in an empty dented metal trashcan. *Bang*. Joe exits cruiser wanting to ask, *Why*, but Jaxee waves her off.

JAXEE

Bad memories are just that. No
sense bein' reminded of 'em.

Destiny exits rear door in matching pink cowgirl boots.

JOE

Sale on pink?

JAXEE

Always.

Joe extends a hand. Jaxee just looks at it.

JOE

Call me if you need anything.
Anything, anytime.

Jaxee half-hearted shakes and releases then enters kitchen door followed by Destiny shuffling behind with her head down.

Joe turns to gaze at the gorgeous rainbow-colored sunset.

JOE

"She heals the broken-hearted."

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Destiny sits head down, hands-in-lap, at the dining table.

Jaxee is in the kitchen preparing dinner and *whistling*, bad.

JAXEE

Ya' like ta whistle?

(no response)

Just as well.

Jaxee sits down with two plates of spaghetti then slides second plate across the table to Destiny.

Destiny stares at her empty glass then at Jaxee.

JAXEE

Now what?

Jaxee sighs grumpy then and saunters back into kitchen.

JAXEE

Don't drink no milk myself, so for tonight, you get canned cow.

Jaxee grabs an evaporated milk can, jelly glass, punch can-opener, and sets all three in front of Destiny.

JAXEE

"No teats to pull, no hay to pitch, just punch a hole in the sum-bi--."

Jaxee makes a zipper-motion across both lips and sits again. She twirls fork into her spaghetti creating a huge wad and moves it to her open mouth as becomes aware being stared at.

Destiny's fingers are interlocked for prayer staring at Jax. Destiny closes her eyes and drops her head. Jaxee chagrins.

JAXEE

Lord knows you like playing cards close to your vest so we can forget about looking for any Tell.

Jaxee grabs fork again. Destiny still has her eyes closed. Jaxee puts down fork mumble-grumbling and closes her eyes.

JAX

Thankee for this here eye-talyen
food we's about to chow down.

Jaxee opens her eyes and digs-in.

Destiny opens hers and *screams*.

Jaxee is startled dropping her fork to "finger" an ear.

JAX

Least we knows you can break glass.

Destiny points. Jaxee turns to see GRACE, a thousand-pound twelve-year old black and brown mule, standing outside the sliding glass-door with her head bowed.

JAX

And Gracie seconds.

Grace lifts her head outside and *brays*.

Jaxee reaches back and slides open the large glass door.

Grace walks inside and over to Destiny to tower over her.

JAXEE

Grace wants to meet you proper-
like. *Give her a kiss-kiss.*

Grace stretches neck forward to slobber-kiss Destiny's cheek.
Destiny cowers back in her chair wiping cheek off with hand.

Grace nudges Jaxee's shoulder with the top of her head.

JAXEE

Grace sit, sit Grace!

Grace sits on her rear haunches like a dog.

Destiny is open-mouthed shocked.

JAXEE

Grace is the gentlest soul you'll
ever meet. Learn her "ta-do" words
and she'll do what you wants, too.

Jaxee reaches in a pocket and gives Grace some treats.

Destiny eats her spaghetti side-glancing wary at Grace.

INT. JAXEE'S SECOND BEDROOM - LATER SAME NIGHT

Guest Bedroom has curtained-windows on two corner walls.

A four-poster double-bed, bureau, and a free-standing closet. Destiny lies in bed's middle under covers in a man's t-shirt. Jaxee enters carrying a small cardboard box.

JAXEE

Hair brush and such. I don't use
'em. My husband gave them to me.

Jaxee sets her box on the bureau then sees a gold-frame picture of Benjamin as a boy. Jaxee grabs to slide the frame in back waistband as she turns to Destiny patting the box.

JAXEE

I'll leave the bathroom light on
with door cracked in case you have
to, uh, you know --get up. Night.

Jaxee closes door to one inch as she exits.

A bush *scrapes* Destiny's window outside.

Destiny pulls the covers up tight against her chin scared.

INT. OUTSIDE DESTINY'S BEDROOM DOOR - SIMULTANEOUS

Jaxee peeks watching Destiny shiver and looks up at ceiling.

JAXEE

Don't make things simple do ya?

INT. DESTINY'S BEDROOM - IMMEDIATELY

Bush scrapes her window louder. Destiny cowers under covers.

A different *scraping* noise is now heard coming down the hall then door opens and Jaxee drags in one of the dining chairs.

JAXEE

Sometimes I git scared by me-self.

Destiny's head emerges with her blanket now as a hood.

Jaxee sits, stretches out her legs, pulls her hat's brim down, then *sucks* her teeth.

JAXEE

*Ya know little one, every time I
make a plan, the world laughs at
me. How 'bout you?*

INT. DESTINY'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Destiny wakes, stretches, and opens her eyes expecting Jaxee. Grace stands close peering down at her wearing Jaxee's hat. Destiny "yipes" pulling her blanket up to her eyes.

JAXEE (O.S.)
Thought you'd like waking up to a
friendly face for a change!

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Earlier two places are set at the table again but now with two glasses of orange juice.

Toilet in the hall-bathroom *flushes* then Destiny exits down its hallway wearing her pink outfit again.

JAXEE
Wash your hands, cowgirl?

Destiny sits at the table and holds up her hands for exam.

JAXEE
See your folks taught you ...

Destiny *slams* both hands as fists on the table. Juice spills.

Jaxee models her Bib-overalls, sweatshirt, and combat boots.

JAXEE
Like my Farmer Riggin'?
(no response)
Start the day right. Every day in
every way inside and out, I say.

Jaxee exits kitchen with two plates, puts one in front of Destiny, then carries her own to other end of table and sits.

Destiny looks at her plate and sees only grits and tomatoes.

JAXEE
Mmmm-mmmmm, grits and mayters.

Grace enters from hallway wearing Jaxee's hat and sits beside her. Grace bows her head and hat begins to fall off. Jaxee catches then frisbees it to the coat-rack behind. Two points.

Destiny locks fingers and bows head. She and Grace look up one-eyed at Jaxee who mumble-grumbles then bows her head with eyes closed forcing a straight smile.

JAXEE

Lord --thankee.

Jaxee digs-in. Destiny stares. Jaxee explains not looking up.

JAXEE

God don't care if you say it long,
long as you mean it.

Destiny pushes her grits around with her fork not happy.

JAXEE

One secret to life is to accept
what's put in front of ya. But if
it ain't to your exact likin', try
improvin' it some. Add some salt
and cow grease. Mighty fine eatin'.

Destiny cuts the butter-stick in half and drops it on her
grits then shakes too much salt on both.

Grace *snorts* in disapproval. Jaxee nods.

JAXEE

Me and Grace don't take too kindly
to smart azz --uh, alecks.

Jaxee scrapes her own plate clean eating every last morsel.

JAXEE

Don't have many rules here.

Jaxee chugs the rest of her juice then picks up butter-stick
off Destiny's grits and puts it back with its other half and
picks up butter-plate with her own dirty dishes.

JAXEE

But one of 'em is to "clean your
plate." And we don't mean in the
trash. Tomorrow, I'll fry you up
some hen-fruit and sow-belly.

Jaxee places butter-plate in refrigerator, washes her dishes
in the sink, then puts them in a drying rack on the counter.

JAXEE

Grace'll make sure you finish then
bring you to me. This is a working
ranch. I got chores --so do you.

Jaxee ties a bandana around her neck, puts on sunglasses, and
exits out the sliding-door nodding to Grace. Grace nods back.

Destiny makes a scrunchy-face and pushes her plate away.

Destiny tries to stand but Grace pushes the top of her head into Destiny's shoulder knocking Destiny back into her chair. They stare at each other. Grace *brays*, loud. Destiny pulls her plate back to eat angry. Grace nods up and down animated.

INT. DESTINY'S BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Destiny lays in her bed with covers pulled up to her neck.

Jaxee enters carrying a folded man's t-shirt with a coiled piece of rope. She lays both on bureau next to earlier box.

JAXEE

Uuuueee. Bet that's the last time
you fall in a fresh cow-pile.

Jaxee sits in same chair again. Destiny shakes her head.

JAXEE

Sure?

Destiny nods. Jaxee turns off the light and exits with chair closing the door to one inch.

JAXEE

Leaving the night-light on anywho.

Bathroom light clicks-on shining in.

Destiny's eyes droop. Same bush *scratches* her window and both eyes pop open. She hears Jaxee *raspberry* in her own bedroom. Grace *brays* outside. Destiny half-smiles closing her eyes.

INT. DESTINY'S BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

Sound of bacon *frying*. Destiny wakes, stretches, inhales deep, and finishes smiling. Grace sits beside the bed but without Jaxee's hat and *brays*. Destiny's eyes pop open.

JAXEE (O.S.)

Soon as we're done with cluck and
grunt, we'll skedaddle to the
thrift store for your work duds!

Destiny gets out of bed wearing a man's t-shirt with printing on its front "*Life's Best Therapist...*" Destiny pats Grace's head as Grace backs out of the doorway. Destiny turns so the back of her shirt finishes front slogan with "*a Good Mule.*"

Destiny opens earlier box on bureau to retrieve its hairbrush and comb both in sterling silver holders.

Grace nods her head up and down.

INT. THRIFT STORE - LATER THAT MORNING

Small donation store with shelves and racks of used clothing.

MILLY, African-American, 30s, obese, wearing the store's red vest, is hanging up clothes. Bell over front door *dings*.

Destiny enters in the bureau's folded men's t-shirt with the rope tied around her waist making it into a dress. Front of her new shirt reads "*Kickin' Don't Fix Nuthin'...*"

Jaxee enters behind Destiny wearing faded cowboy clothes.

MILLY
Morning, Jaxee. That Destiny?

JAXEE
Morning, Milly. Yep, and she'd sure appreciate your help picking out some sturdy workwear.

Milly takes Destiny's hand and leads her to a clothes-rack.

Back of Destiny's t-shirt finishes with "*Lesson Yer a Mule.*"

Door's merchant-bell *dings* again as Joe in uniform enters.

JOE
Morning Jaxee, saw your truck.

Both watch Milly waddle into the back to get something.

Joe and Jaxee look at each other.

JAXEE
Dairy Freeze, calls too strong.

JOE
Speaking of, she did come to verify so might be at the funeral.

JAXEE
Hope not. Got no use for her back then, got none for her kind now.

JOE
Made a decision?

JAXEE
All I want is for her to --.
(waves hand horizontal)
Move forward.

JOE
And her schoolin'?

JAX

I don't know?! Takin' this one misstep at a time.

JOE

Taking her back to get things?

JAXEE

Have to, ain't lookin' forward to.

INT. DESTINY'S FORMER LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Small Rambler home with living room of 1990's furnishings. All pictures are in a cardboard box on the coffee table.

Door opens. Jaxee enters and flips wall-switch twice. No electricity. She walks through the living room patting picture-box on the table and exits into the kitchen.

INT. DESTINY'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Jaxee enters the bare kitchen and opens refrigerator door. It's empty inside and clean.

JAXEE

Much obliged, Joe.

Jaxee closes door and goes to open freezer door but stops.

Taped to freezer door is a crayon picture Destiny drew of Benjamin, Edita, and her. Crayon figures are holding hands.

Jaxee falls back clutching her heart then hears front door open. She slides crayon drawing inside her shirt and exits.

INT. DESTINY'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jaxee enters and freezes. Destiny stands in new work-clothes with tears streaming holding her tiny arms up helpless.

Jaxee steps back in fear then sees a plaque in picture-box.

"Love one another as I have loved you. *John 15:12*"

Jaxee looks straight up, shakes head grumbling, then kneels with open arms. Destiny runs to her and hugs her neck.

JAXEE

It's okay, sweetie. God wants us to wash their memory --into our hearts.

Both cry hugging. **TURNING POINT.**

EXT. TOWN'S CEMETERY - NEXT DAY

Small cemetery behind a church. An open double-grave has two side-by-side coffins inside it.

MINISTER, looking like an 1800's preacher, finishes eulogy.

MINISTER

Amen.

Jaxee stands stoic. Destiny stands beside her. Both wear second-hand black dresses.

Joe, in uniform and sunglasses, sniffles wiping eyes.

Milly and Young Parents, all in black, stand *sniffing*.

ALL

Amen.

Jaxee grabs handful of dirt and throws it on top of coffins.

JAXEE

Dust to --.

TRINITY "BUNNY" BROWN, Caucasian, late 30s, pretty, sashays in a too-tight black dress with a black-veiled hat.

JAXEE

Dirt.

BUNNY

Thanks for not inviting me to the party after making me do your dirty-work. But you won't keep me from getting what's mine after all these years. Uh-uh, no sir.

Joe steps between Jaxee and Bunny.

JOE

Maybe this ain't the right time?

JAXEE

No, but from her --.
(dry-spits to side)
Expect nothin' less.

Bunny bends way too sexy at the waist down to Destiny.

Husbands tilt heads at Bunny's "bend." Wives glare at them.

BUNNY

Here's my little Destiny! Don't you
want to hug --.

(lifts veil)

Your real momma?

JAXEE

Court said you're not fit to say
that!

Bunny holds her arms open for a hug. Destiny shrinks back.
Joe takes Bunny's elbow. She yanks it away.

JOE

Bunny, uh, Ms. Brown, why don't
you wait in the church office?

JAXEE

No need, she's leavin'!

Bunny stands to pull the too-tight dress down off her hips.

BUNNY

Not till I gets what's mine!

Bunny yanks down her veil and exaggerates hip-swing exiting.

Husbands watch Bunny's hips exit. Wives punch their Husbands
shoulders. Husbands feign innocence, they don't succeed.

Destiny looks up at Jaxee with questioning-eyes. For the
first time, Jaxee takes Destiny's hand glaring after Bunny.

JAXEE

Don't you fret none little one. We
live --with Grace.

INT. JAXEE'S DINING TABLE - NEXT DAY

Jaxee sits at the dining table in bib-overalls, dirty t-shirt
and boots drinking from a beer bottle. Grace sits beside her.

Destiny, bruises healed, in earlier set of "new" work clothes
exits kitchen with two plates of sandwiches. She sets one for
Jaxee then pats Grace as she sits with her own second plate.

JAXEE

Could get used to being waited on.
How 'bout you, Gracie-girl?

Grace nods her head up and down animated.

Knock on car-port door.

All Three look to it.

JAXEE

Who now? Done already signed the
real e-state and inshury papers? --
Supperin'! Come back later or let
yourself in! Your choice!

Door opens. SOCIAL WORKER, Caucasian, 40s, skinny, in thrift
skirt-suit wearing glasses with a tight ponytail, clipboard
cradled in one arm, stands Drill Sergeant ramrod straight.

JAXEE

Shut the door from either side,
flies are movin' in.

Social Worker enters closing door, sees Grace, and points.

SOCIAL WORKER

Is that --?

JAXEE

Grace, yes'm. You heard a' her?

SOCIAL WORKER

Should I?

Grace *passes* gas. Social Worker is beyond disgusted.

JAXEE

Now you has.

SOCIAL WORKER

What is that *thing* doing in here?

JAXEE

Being well-mannered, which is a
heap sight better then you're
being. How can we help --.
(beer-belches word)
Yuuuuu --?

Social Worker grabs at her chest like having a heart attack
then wags an accusing finger pointing at Destiny.

SOCIAL WORKER

Is that Destiny Fenton?

Jaxee takes a swig of beer. Grace nudges her shoulder.

JAXEE

Yes'm. And she's a real lady,
'cause she woulda said by now why
she's standin' here a-gawkin'.

SOCIAL WORKER

Thought she couldn't speak?

JAXEE

Figure a' speech she chooses not to exercise just yet, but we all sure wish you would.

SOCIAL WORKER

I'm from County Services. We received a complaint you're harboring an injured child.

JAXEE

"Harborin'!" Only one person I know uses them kind a' big city words.

Grace nudges Jaxee's shoulder who sets down her beer bottle. Grace picks up bottle up by its neck in her teeth, throws her head back, and *guzzles*. Grace puts the empty bottle down then looks at Social Worker and *belches*.

Social Worker steps back mouth-open grabbing her chest again.

SOCIAL WORKER

You give alcohol --to a donkey?!

Grace steps forward angry. Social Worker steps back more.

JAXEE

Mule, full fledged pedigreed mule!
Best you not be using that --.
(whispers aside warning)
*Other word. She tends to get a
might touchy on the subject.*

SOCIAL WORKER

Where's Destiny's room?!

JAXEE

End a' the line. And stop yellin'
so much. Disturbin' my digestion.

Destiny points and Social Worker exits down bedroom hallway.

JAXEE

Like some vittles?!

No response. Jaxee leans to Destiny whispering.

JAXEE

Kinda' scrawny, pile her a plate.

Social Worker re-enters up hallway writing on clipboard.

SOCIAL WORKER

I'm filing for an emergency custody hearing to place Destiny in a foster home.

No response. Social Worker lifts her nose in the air.

SOCIAL WORKER (CONT'D)
And what, do you think of that?

JAXEE
I say "thankee" --for makin' my
mind up for me.

SOCIAL WORKER
How so? I don't under ...?

JAXEE
Done made no secret of the fact I
don't relish bein' no "mom" again.
But if grabbin' those reins means
this special little girl don't get
reigned in by some woman of ill
repute, well then, there it be.

SOCIAL WORKER
I don't get your way of thinking?

JAXEE
No surprise there. I "think" you
need to take a load off of --.
(points to Worker's butt)
That. Want a beer? Grace'll get it.

Grace bows on a front knee and *brays*.

Social Worker writes furious then exits house in a huff.

Grace's tail lifts and she *passes* gas.

JAXEE
My thoughts exactly.

Destiny goes to hug Jaxee who pats her back.

JAXEE
There, there, child. Ole' Mammy
ain't letting no wicked witch of
the world get anywheres near ya.
(baby-talk to Grace)
Are we, girl?

Grace pulls on the refrigerator's pull-down handle with her
front teeth, grabs a beer bottle inside with same teeth, then
closes door with her butt as she carries new bottle to Jaxee.

JAXEE
Right as rain as usual. This does
call for a sellee-bration.

Destiny is puzzled. Jaxee opens the new beer bottle and pours some into her old bottle explaining.

JAXEE
Hard choices come with livin'.
C'aint run away from 'em.
(snort-laugh)
Won't let you! Had to happen sooner
or later. Better sooner, so we can
get on with livin', later.

Jaxee slides old bottle near table's edge. Grace picks it up with her teeth. Jaxee *clinks* her's then both guzzle.

JAXEE
Time you learn the truth 'bout,
(beer-belches word)
Yourrrrrrr "other" mom.

Grace nods her head animated then *belches* too.

INT. JAXEE'S DINING TABLE - THAT NIGHT

Grace watches Destiny and Jaxee, now in different clothes, eating dinner. Knock at the carport door. All Three look.

JAXEE
Hope you brought desert!

Door opens. Joe enters in uniform taking off her hat.

JAXEE
Joe-Joe! Pull up a chair-chair.

JOE
No thanks, can't stay. Uh --did a
social worker visit you today?

JAXEE
Yep. She needs to sell flowers or
somethin', she's down right crabby.

JOE
Well, whatever you and Grace did,
it got her to get to --the Judge.
(hands a business card)
This attorney is expecting you in
the morning. She needs to file a
T.R.O. to stop the injunction.

JAXEE
"Injunc --?" What's going on, Joe?

JOE

County wants to put Destiny in a foster home.

Destiny looks worried at Jaxee who pulls out a pipe, strikes a wooden match on table-leg, then lights her pipe's tobacco.

JAXEE

In general, my natural constitution has always been to do the opposite of bein' told by others what to do.

Jaxee puffs a moment then *blows* interlocking smoke rings.

JAXEE

This pipe be my husband's. I use it to remind myself a' him and his way of takin' a moment to think things through, before not doin' them.

(slow turns to Destiny)

Do you want to live here with both of us little lady? Yes or no?

Destiny nods animated.

JAXEE

Then it shall be so.

Jaxee stands at Destiny's side smoking. Grace stands up on Destiny's other side. Both look resolute as her guardians.

JAXEE

They be wantin' to take her away, you say? Well now, you know --.

(squints a *Popeye*-eye)

That ain't happenin'.

INT. TOWN ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - NEXT DAY

Small window-front office on Main Street with Thanksgiving Decorations. PEDESTRIANS walk by outside its picture-window.

CHARLOTTE E. RAY, Caucasian, 40s, in three-piece suit, sits behind an oak desk with full legal bookshelves on all walls. Two wing chairs are angled in front of desk. *Knock* on door.

RAY

Happy Thanksgiving!

Door opens. Jaxee steps in wearing a worn white shirt and string-tie holding her hat. She freezes taken aback then reads the business card and checks its address on the door's outside plate.

JAXEE

There a "Ray" about?

RAY

A woman called her kid, "Ray, come here!" Eight kids came running. "You named all eight, Ray?" a person asked. "If I wants just the one, I call by their last name.

They stare at each. Jaxee *sucks* her teeth not amused.

JAXEE

Gots a partner?

RAY

And twice on Sundays.

Jaxee doesn't understand. Ray points straight up.

RAY

Destiny with you?

JAXEE

Joe's giving her a ride-along.
Thought it best just me and --?
(scans wall diplomas)
You?

RAY

May I ask a personal question?

JAXEE

You can ask.

Ray hand-motions "sit" to Jaxee who closes door standing.

RAY

You color-blind?

JAXEE

(nods self-reflexive)
Most folk like to think they are.
Till caught off guard --like now.

RAY

I secured a Temporary Restraining Order on the State's motion but if you would prefer me to withdraw ...

Jaxee offer her hand. Ray stands. They shake.

JAXEE

Friends, call me --Jaxee.

Jaxee sits.

JAXEE (CONT'D)

That was God's little self-test.
Pretty sure I just failed.

(shakes head)

My husband taught our son to see
past a person's skin color then
tried same on me. Didn't take.

Jaxee takes out her pipe, strikes a match, and draws on it.

JAXEE

The hard part of bein' flawed, is
dealin' with all your flaws.

RAY

I've studied your case file but I
still need as much information you
can give me about Trinity ...

JAXEE

Bunny.

RAY

But I filed under Trinity Brown?

JAXEE

"Bunny" is her stage name.

RAY

What kind of stage?

Jaxee fidgets uncomfortable then cranes neck to look away.

RAY

Start at the beginning please so I
can plan our best legal offense.

(no response)

Unless of course, you don't really
want custody of Destiny?

Jaxee crosses her legs and folds her arms tight glaring.

RAY

That is what we defense attorneys
call "flawed representation."

JAXEE

Lose the attitudeness, jack-ass.

RAY

Look who's braying.

Ray stands and opens her front door.

RAY

Nice, not to have met you.

Jaxee storms to the door and slams it. *Boom.*

JAXEE

Don't even dream about losing this case whitey or I will become your worst night's mare.

Ray sits motioning for Jaxee to sit who does tossing her hat into second chair then pulls out a Buck knife and piece of pine to begin whittling on it giving Ray the stink-eye.

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - NEXT DAY

Small courtroom of shiny dark wood, church-type pews, two attorney tables, witness stand, and several ceiling fans. A small Thanksgiving paper-turkey is on the Judge's Bench.

MALE SPECTATORS, all Black retirees, are sprinkled in pews.

Jaxee wears earlier black funeral dress and sits at Defense Table with arms folded tight. Destiny, in same funeral dress, sits beside Jaxee studying Ray.

Social Worker sits at Prosecution Table whispering to female PROSECUTOR, Caucasian, 50s, Southern Bell femme-fatale with deep Southern prejudices. Both wear cheap two-piece suits.

BAILIFF, African-American, 40s, very tall, in tan Sheriff's uniform, enters out the Judge's Chamber door.

BAILIFF

All rise!

All stand as the JUDGE, grand-fatherly Caucasian, balding, enters wearing a Judicial Robe to sit behind his Bench.

BAILIFF

Be seated.

ALL sit as the STENOGRAPHER, African-American, 20-something, prim and proper, begins typing silent into her machine.

BAILIFF

Hear ye, hear ye, the custody case of Destiny Fenton is now before this Court.

Prosecutor stands. She has a very thick Southern drawl.

PROSECUTOR

Your Hona', the State intends to prooove, this Defendant is not, and could not be, any child's caretaker. Therefore, custody should revert to the birth mother.

JUDGE

Proceed.

PROSECUTOR

State calls, Ms. Trinity Brown.

Bunny enters the courtroom wearing another clingy dress and sashays to the Witness Stand.

Male Spectators fold arms and cross legs as one watching her.

Bunny raises her right hand. Bailiff administers *The Oath*.

BAILIFF

You promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

JAXEE

Ha!

BUNNY

Always.

JAXEE

HA!

Bunny sits. Judge raises his gavel glaring at Jaxee.

Ray fake-coughs into one hand as she hits the back of Jaxee's head with her other palm.

PROSECUTOR

Ms. Brown, what exactly is your relationship to the child Destiny Fenton in question?

BUNNY

I'm her real mom, her birth mother.

PROSECUTOR

And after you bore this child some twelve year ago, you then separated from her negro daddy one year later. Who's she lived with since?

Jaxee's eyes narrow to slits.

BUNNY

Thought it best my child have a two-parent home so she stayed with him.

PROSECUTOR

When you say "two-parent," do you mean your husband already had a wetback lover while still married?

RAY

(jumps up angry)
Objection, your Honor! Derogatory, inflammatory, and misleading! Both parties had been separated for 12 months. Her Ex did not remarry until after divorce became final.

PROSECUTOR

Withdraw my question, your Hona'.

RAY

What is your profession?

BUNNY

Don't see what ...?

RAY

Your Honor, please instruct the witness to answer all questions. They go direct to credibility.

Judge turns to Bunny. She is attractive so he has to smile.

JUDGE

Please answer all questions.

Jaxee reaches over and covers Destiny's ears with her hands.

BUNNY

I'm a dancer.

Judge wags his gavel at Jaxee as a warning.

JUDGE

Would you mind not doing that?

Jaxee removes her hands from Destiny's ears. Ray sees.

RAY

Your Honor, I ask the Court now excuse Destiny Fenton during the course of this witness testimony.

JUDGE

On what grounds?

RAY

Prosecution has already invoked
"The Rule" at their Deposition.

JUDGE

Do you intend Destiny Fenton's
presence later, as shown by your
Party, to be essential to the
presentation of your Party's cause?

RAY

Yes, your Honor. In addition, Miss
Fenton's specific testimony will
carry greater weight to her true
impartial testimony later if she
does not hear what is said now.

Judge looks to Joe, in uniform, standing in the back.

JUDGE

Deputy, would you escort Miss
Destiny out for some ice cream?

JAXEE

Chocolate!

PROSECUTOR

(rockets to standing)
I object!

JUDGE

Got something against "chocolate?"

All African-Americans glare at Prosecutor who sits sullen.

PROSECUTOR

Withdrawn.

Joe extends a hand to Destiny who hugs Jaxee.

JAXEE

Always does what a police-person
asks, they're your friend.

Destiny takes Joe's hand and both exit courtroom.

RAY

You said you're a "dancer." May I
ask what style?
(no response)
Ballroom?
(no response)
Would the exact form of your
dancing best be described as Go-Go?

Male Spectators all raise an eyebrow as one.

Bunny shrugs.

JUDGE

Must answer verbally, please.

BUNNY

Some call it that.

RAY

Is it true you have no permanent residence because you constantly move from job to job staying in various motels doing "Go-Go?"

Male Spectators all raise their second eyebrow as one.

No response. Ray looks at Judge.

JUDGE

Witness must answer all ...

BUNNY

Don't recall!

RAY

Do you "recall" if a Court awarded Joint Custody of your only child?

Bunny looks away then folds arms and whispers indignant.

BUNNY

No.

RAY

"No" you don't remember or "No" you never filed for Joint Custody?

BUNNY

Busy.

RAY

"Busy?!" So busy you didn't file for visitation rights or call your only daughter for over a decade?!

BUNNY

Don't recall.

RAY

Well, I'm sure your daughter does!
(no response)
In your motel rooms, do you entertain men with alcohol?

No response. Ray looks to Judge who raises his gavel.

BUNNY

Yes! Alright, yes. *Sometimes.*

RAY

So if granted custody, where would
Destiny stay during "sometimes?"

No response. Ray looks frustrated at Judge.

BUNNY

Of course she'd stay with me!
(looks away angry)
Ain't got no summer home.

RAY

Is "Bunny" your stage name?

BUNNY

May be.

RAY

"May be" --I can call you "Bunny?"

BUNNY

Don't you never call me!

Male Spectators *chuckle*. Judge *taps* his gavel.

BUNNY

I'm not a bad person!

RAY

Never said you were. But your last
response leads to my last question.
Why are you really here filing for
custody of your daughter today?

BUNNY

I want her!

RAY

I'm sorry, you want "her" or do you
want her insurance money?

No response. Ray spins to Judge.

RAY

Your honor, under Federal Rule of
Evidence 611-C, this witness is
continually unresponsive and
evasive. I request permission to
ask a necessary leading question.

JUDGE

Granted.

RAY

Bunny, is it true, the only reason we're all here today in court, is because you see custody of Destiny Fenton as your only means to cash in on your ex-husband's insurance? (changes to forceful)
Don't think! Answer truthfully for once in your life! Yes or No?!

BUNNY

Yes! Yes! I'm due, okay? It's been a hard road I've had to go down.

RAY

Then why do you want your only daughter, to go down it, too?

Ray walks to Defense Table with her back to Bunny.

JUDGE

Witness is excu ...

RAY

Witness has not answered my last question, your Honor.

JUDGE

Made your point, Counselor.

RAY

(turns to face Judge)
Thank you, your Honor. But I am not making my "point" --for you.

BUNNY

(breaks down)
No, no I don't. No one should.

RAY

(sits)
No further questions.

PROSECUTOR

(stands)
Ask the Witness be released.

JUDGE

Witness is excused.

Bunny runs out of Courtroom *sobbing* as Jaxee shakes her head.

JUDGE
Call your next witness.

PROSECUTOR
State calls, Mrs. Jaxine Fenton.

Jaxee goes to Witness Stand and puts right hand on Bible.

BAILIFF
Do you solemnly swear to tell the
truth, the whole truth, and nothing
but the truth so help you God?

JAXEE
Every day in every way, yes.

Jaxee sits. Prosecutor smiles evil pacing in front of her.

PROSECUTOR
Mrs. Fenton, have you ever been
arrested on a Felony?

JAXEE
Whicha time?

Male Spectators *laugh*. Judge *taps* his gavel.

PROSECUTOR
Pick one.

JAXEE
Well, let's see. Been arrested
eight separate for drunk in public,
mostly back in higher school.

PROSECUTOR
And did you graduate?

JAXEE
From the school a' hard knocks.
Come to think on it, none of my
charges went to Felony, so "no" I
can truly say, I ain't no Felon.

PROSECUTOR
But you have spent time in jail?

JAXEE
In this town, who ain't?

Male Spectators *guffaw*. Bailiff turns to his wall smiling.

PROSECUTOR
Are you an addict?

Ray jumps up waving a file.

RAY

The Witness was never an "addict," your Honor! As the Prosecution is well aware since it was given a copy of this, Mrs. Fenton's medical history, before trial.

Bailiff takes file to Judge who puts on granny-glasses.

PROSECUTOR

I'll rephrase, your Hona'. Do you at least admit to having at one time been a drug user?

JAXEE

Have to, ain't allowed not to.

PROSECUTOR

And do you have a drinking problem?

JAXEE

Yes, sir!
(folds arms indignant)
Costs too much.

Judge raises gavel glaring at Male Spectators. *Crickets.*

PROSECUTOR

Are you an alcoholic?

JAXEE

Just said, c'aint afford to be.

PROSECUTOR

But you did testify to being in jail multiple times which makes you a criminal. And to taking Class 1 drugs, which makes you a junkie! But now-ow, you state you're not an alcoholic which is about the only thing you haven't admitted to. How can you expect the Court to believe anything you say here today?

JAXEE

Is true, I was once lost, but then I got found. That's why I confessed about my past. Now if what you're really calling me is a liar, I suggest we step outside so I can un-convince you "non" legal-like.

RAY

(half-stands)
Your Honor, what my client means...

JUDGE

Oh, I think it's quite clear what Mrs. Fenton "means."

JAXEE

Permission to speak at the Court, sir, your Honor, sir?

JUDGE

Just, "your Honor."

JAXEE

Everyone knows how much I wasted, and was wasted, in my youth. Even after I gots married, I continued my evil ways.

Male Spectators nod in agreement.

JAXEE

Well sir, a person can't change lessen they wants and I didn't, couldn't. So how does a person go from bad nature to good? Well sir, some find it within, others without. There's a word, had to look it up so as to remember so as not to forget.

(quotes meaning)

"Sudden insight into the essential meaning of something initiated by a simpler experience."

JUDGE

Epiphany.

JAXEE

Yes, sir! Some say it can come as a man-eee-festation but for me, it were a voice.

PROSECUTOR

(jumps up)

Note for the record the Witness claims to talk to G ...!

Judge threatens to throw his gavel at Prosecutor who sits.

PROSECUTOR

Withdrawn.

JAXEE

Nah, I knew it were my own voice. But it said somethin', something I hadn't heard before, something very clear, very honest.

Jaxee spins in witness chair to the Judge.

JAXEE (CONT'D)

You see, I didn't have the best of daddy's so couldn't know no better. Done figured if being mean-spirited were good enough for him, well --. Well sir, suddenly it came clear, clear as rainwater. Just because somebody hurts you, doesn't mean you, have to hurt --any body.

Courtroom is pin-drop silent. Jaxee sits up straight.

JAXEE

That's when I changed my ways. And I think everyone in here pretty much has a different opinion of me these past ten year.

Male Spectators *murmur* agreement. Judge waves a hand, *Shhhh*.

JAXEE

I ain't never heard that voice a'gin till the night Desty's folks, my son, died.

(chokes up)

It said I had a chance, a second chance, to be the difference in a young person's life. I tried to fight it but, ever since Desty come to stay with me I've felt, *felt* --.

Jaxee's lower lip quivers. She covers her eyes with a hand.

JUDGE

Felt what, Mrs. Fenton?

JAXEE

Agape! God's true love, both for and from someone. I love her, Judge, just plain love her with all my heart! And it'll break in two if you take her away.

Judge is touched and *taps* his gavel standing.

JUDGE

Recess, one hour.

BAILIFF

All rise!

All rise. Jax tries but has wobbly legs. Judge puts a hand on Jax's shoulder as he walks by paraphrasing *John 1:9*.

JUDGE

*"If we confess our sins, our sins
will be forgiven."*

INT. COUNTY COURTROOM - LATER THAT DAY

MORE MALE SPECTATORS, friends with first ones, sit in pews.
Destiny sits at Defense Table. Jaxee has an arm around her.
Social Worker is on the Stand. Proscecutor questions her.

PROSCECUTOR

To continue, you just testified
Mrs. Fenton lets farm animals live
in her home. Any other pertinent
facts you can share with us?

SOCIAL WORKER

Only that her only source of income
is Social Security and she spends
most of that touring the county
giving shows with her donk --.

Destiny and Jaxee lean forward glaring.

SOCIAL WORKER

Mule, her mule. It's outside!

JUDGE

Their mule is outside, in a
trailer, in this hot sun?!

SOCIAL WORKER

No sir, it's in the shade under the
old oak tree.

JUDGE

She left it tied up there?

PROSCECUTOR

No sir, it's --just sitting there.

Judge jumps up and rushes to window. Bailiff is surprised.

BAILIFF

All Rise!

ALL in courtroom jump up.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE FORECOURT - MOMENTS LATER

Grace stands under an old oak tree as a CROWD, both sexes,
pet her. A PARENT puts their CHILD on her back.

ALL take pictures with big smiles. Grace is complacent then looks up at Judge standing in the window and nods.

INT. COUNTY COURTROOM - CONTINUOUS

Judge catches himself waving back and pulls his hand down. He turns, turns back, then sits at his Bench *muttering* to himself. His eyebrows go up and looks like he might stand.

Bailiff watches Judge, almost speaks, but waits until sure.

BAILIFF

Be seated.

ALL sit except Proscecutor.

Judge recovers wondering then turns to Jaxee.

JUDGE

Did you train your mule to earn extra money by putting on shows?

JAXEE

No sir, we was told to go out and raise money for Children's Cancer.

Judge throws both arms up in the air nodding, *Of course.*

SOCIAL WORKER

Where the Defendant sleeps in her mule's trailer! That's hardly the life for a handicapped child.

RAY

(jumps up)

Move to Strike, your Honor! No evidence has been presented that Destiny Fenton is "handicapped."

PROSCECUTOR

Your Hona'? She c'aint --talk?!

Social Worker jumps up stab-pointing at Jaxee.

SOCIAL WORKER

And no wonder, living with a drunk!

Judge *bangs* his gavel hard, then calms down smiling.

JUDGE

Now if you all stand up, then I have to stand up, and if I stand up, everyone has to stand up. So why don't two of you --sit, down.

Ray and Social Worker sit. Judge *clears* his throat.

JUDGE

Destiny Fenton is non-verbal so I will have to rule later if she is, in fact, handicapped. But first, "who" is a drunk? Mrs. Fenton?

SOCIAL WORKER

Both! Both get drunk in front of the poor little girl. *Disgusting!*

JUDGE

Are you, under oath, testifying that Mrs. Fenton forces her mule to drink alcohol?

SOCIAL WORKER

No sir, Grace picks up the bottle to drink all by her lonesome. She's an alcoholic!

Male Spectators lose it *laughing*.

Judge *taps* his gavel while fake-coughing to hide his grin.

JUDGE

Is that true, Mrs. Fenton?

JAXEE

Yes sir. Grace drinks occasional same as me. But no sir, impossible for her to become no alkie.

PROSECUTOR

How so?

JAXEE

C'aint open bottles.

ALL except Prosecutor and Social Worker burst out *guffawing*.

Judge goes to tap his gavel but can't help himself and tosses it over a shoulder *chuckling* as he stands.

BAILIFF

All Rise!

ALL go quiet as they stand.

JUDGE

Thirty minute Recess for The Court to compose itself. When we return, we'd like to "discover" --Grace.

Judge *raps* his knuckles on his Bench-top and exits.

EXT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE FORECOURT - MOMENTS LATER

Jaxee and Destiny exit courthouse then lead Grace up its steps to re-enter. Crowd gossips then follows them inside.

INT. COUNTY COURTROOM - LATER THAT DAY

GALLERY is now standing-room only of all sexes and origins with Outside Crowd and OTHER COURT PERSONNEL in suits or uniforms leaving Male Spectators squashed in their pews.

Jaxee stands next to the Defense Table holding Grace by her halter. Destiny stands with her head laying on Grace's ribs.

Bailiff enters through the side-door, is wide-eyed surprised by Gallery size, and spins back inside. He re-enters with the Judge behind him who hurries to his Bench.

BAILIFF

All rise!

Gallery rises. Judge sits quickly.

BAILIFF

Be --.

Most sit, but since all pews are filled, some have to stand.

BAILIFF

Quiet?

Jaxee releases the bridle head-motioning to Grace, *Go on.*

JAXEE

Grace visit, visit Grace.

Grace goes to Bench and bows her head.

JAXEE

Ask Grace how old Destiny is.

JUDGE

Ask who, what? Grace?!

(clears throat)

Excuse me Grace, but do you know
how old your friend Destiny is?

Grace *scrapes* the floor twelve times with a front hoof.

GALLERY

Uuuuuu --.

Judge is impressed and *claps* under his Bench.

JAXEE
Tell Grace to sit.

PROSECUTOR
(jumps up)
I ob ...!

JUDGE
SIT!

Grace and Proscecutor both sit. Judge is now having fun.

JAXEE
Ask her to paint.

JUDGE
Ask her to what?!

Joe sets up an easel with blank canvas near the Bench.

Jaxee carries a large pallet with a brush and dabs paint on the brush then puts brush's handle in Grace's mouth and holds the canvas on its easel. All look at Judge, *Well?*

JUDGE
Oh, uh, Grace --*paint?*

Grace moves her head up and down with brush painting canvas. Jaxee takes her brush, dabs it in a different color paint and puts handle back in Grace's mouth. Grace now moves head side-to-side. Jaxee hands the finished painting to Judge.

JUDGE
For me? Well thank you, Grace.

Judge shows painting to Courtroom. It is of a *Cross* same as in Jaxee's bedroom. Gallery *claps*. Bailiff takes Cross-painting away. Joe takes away all the painting materials.

JUDGE
Most unique day I've ever had but I really need to speak to Destiny as a witness for the Defense. Any more witnesses for the Prosecution?

PROSECUTOR
(half-stands, re-sits)
None, your Hona'.

RAY
(stands buttoning jacket)
The Defense calls, Destiny Fenton.

Destiny looks at Jaxee who nods. She goes to Stand. Bailiff puts a jumper-seat in the witness chair. She has to climb onto it then raises right hand with left on Bailiff's Bible.

BAILIFF

Do you promise to tell the truth,
the whole truth, and nothing but
the truth --.

BAILIFF/JAXEE

So help you God?

Destiny nods strong. Bailiff steps back against the wall.

JUDGE

Indicate the Witness nodded, "Yes."

Stenographer types into her machine as Proscecutor jumps up.

PROSCECUTOR

Your, Hona'! There's no objective
way for me to question the Witness.

RAY

(half-stands, re-sits)
Courts have ruled a speech impaired
person can testify in writing or
through gestures, your Honor.

JUDGE

Yes, but psychological trauma is a
type of damage to the psyche that
occurs as the result of a severely
distressing event. It can lead to
extreme confusion and insecurity
which may prove too taxing and even
require institutionalization.

PROSCECUTOR

Exactly, your Hona'! That's why I
had to bring this before The Court.

JUDGE

This is a difficult decision for
me, Destiny. I wish you could tell
me who you want to live with.

No response. Grace goes to stand beside the witness stand and
moves her lips at Destiny like she's trying to talk.

Proscecutor jumps up. Judge gives him a sniper's thousand-
yard stare. Proscecutor sits pouting.

Grace moves her lips again. Nothing. Grace butts her head on
Destiny's shoulder. Nothing. Grace *taps* a hoof on the floor
and moves her lips animated. Nothing. Grace *snorts* placing a
hoof on Destiny's foot. Destiny jumps up pointing at Jaxee.

DESTINY

Mammy!

GALLERY

Uuuuuuuu --!

Jaxee rushes to hug Destiny. WOMEN in Gallery dab their eyes.

JUDGE

I'd say that's conclusive evidence.
(grins at Proscecutor)
Does the State --care to rest?

Proscecutor is defeated and falls back in her chair nodding.

JUDGE

Must answer verbally, please.

PROSCECUTOR

State retires, your Hona'.

Judge smiles big then turns to Destiny smiling bigger.

JUDGE

What helped you to finally speak
here today, little lady?

DESTINY

(strokes Grace's neck)
Gracie!

GALLERY

Awwwwwwww --.

Gallery mob-glares at Judge.

JUDGE

Oh, please. I hereby award custody
of Destiny Fenton to her "Mammy"
Mrs. Jaxine Fenton.

Judge *taps* gavel. Gallery *erupts* into applause and cheers.

BAILIFF

(arm-pumps)
Yes!

Bailiff is embarrassed and looks at Judge who smiles.

Grace goes to Social Worker and "kisses" her cheek. Social Worker *shrieeks*, shirks, then rubs Grace's snout timid. ALL react *laughing* except Proscecutor who still pouts.

EXT. AERIAL OF JAXEE'S RANCH - NEXT MORNING

Beautiful mountain panorama. Dawn is breaking. ROOSTER *crows*.

EXT. BACK OF JAXEE'S RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Large field-corral holds a MULE-IN-TRAINING and TWO HORSES.

Separate forty-foot circular corral *Show Ring* where Jaxee and Grace give their "home" performances. There's also a Tack Room, CHICKENS in chicken-coop, and a red weathered hay-barn.

Jaxee, in her red-faded Long Johns under suspender-jeans and wearing combat boots, enters her barn carrying a pitchfork.

INT. JAXEE'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Jaxee swings the barn's door open and freezes seeing Grace laying on her side with Destiny in her work clothes lying behind Grace with an arm over her. Both are asleep.

This is the first time we see Jaxee truly smile as she backs out quiet closing the door.

EXT. JAXEE'S BACK YARD - LATER THAT DAY

Concrete patio with lawn-furniture leads to the large sliding-glass door that Grace uses to enter the home's Great Room.

Door slides open and Jaxee exits. She looks for, then sees Destiny and Grace playing "tag" around farm equipment.

Jaxee watches smiling then grabs clangor to *ring* a hanging dinner triangle. It *echoes* loud. She yells over its din.

JAXEE
Turkey n' Fixin's!

Jaxee re-hangs clangor to enter house sliding door closed.

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Table now has decorations set for Thanksgiving supper.

Jaxee carries in a small turkey on platter. There is a third plate between theirs near table's edge with Grace's treats.

Sliding-glass door opens and Destiny followed by Grace enter. Destiny waits for Grace then slides door closed and sits.

JAXEE
Wash your hands, little lady?

DESTINY
Did.

Jaxee gives Destiny the stink-eye. Destiny shrugs then goes to kitchen sink and washes her hands.

DESTINY

Well I "did" --before breakfast.

Grace goes to nibble off a plate. Jaxee shoos her away.

JAXEE

Wait for grace, Grace.

Jaxee and Destiny sit at their plates. Grace sits on the floor at hers. All Three bow their heads.

JAXEE

Mostly folk ask for what they ain't got rather than give thanks fer what they do. So --thanks.

(slices turkey)

Couldn't be happier. How 'bout you?

DESTINY

I hate missing both of them but --.

(tears-up)

I love living with both of you.

JAXEE

Well almighty then. Looks like life is startin' to make sense a'gin.

(serves carved turkey)

Honey-suckle, what really made you decide it was okay to talk at?

DESTINY

Remember when Grace stepped on your foot and you taught me what to say?

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. JAXEE'S BARN - EARLY ON COURT DAY

Destiny, in court-clothes, enters barn followed by Grace. Destiny looks sad and stands still, then starts crying. Grace walks over and steps on one of Destiny's boot-tips. Destiny is surprised, stops crying, and pushes against Grace. Grace doesn't step off, but looks at Destiny and moves her lips. Destiny pushes harder but can't move Grace and cries more. Grace nods her head up and down animated moving her lips. Destiny hits Grace's shoulder then gets mad and yells.

DESTINY

OFF!

Grace steps off Destiny's boot-tip and bows on one knee.

RETURN TO.

INT. JAXEE'S DINING TABLE ON THANKSGIVING DAY - PRESENT

Jaxee reaches over and rubs Grace while talking to Destiny.

JAXEE

So Grace motivated you to finally
speak your mind, huh?

DESTINY

No. Grace, taught me, it was okay,
to feel again. I love you, Mammy!

Jaxee is visibly shaken and tries to recover nonchalant.

JAXEE

And I love you too, sweetie. If my
hubby and I had a daughter, you --.
(fake-coughs rubbing eyes)
Hold on. Gots somethin' in my eye.

Jaxee fakes *blowing* her nose in napkin but is really wiping
away tears. She clears her throat twice, *Whew*.

JAXEE

Ever been to a row-dey-o?

Destiny looks up surprised with mouth full then swallows.

JAXEE

Grace and me been invited to do a
show at the State Fair.
(shakes head)
'Course, don't know where you're be
a-stayin'?

Destiny breaks off a sandwich-corner and throws it at Jaxee.

JAXEE

Hey, don't waste food! Of course
you're comin' along.

Destiny jumps up and runs around Grace to hug Jaxee's neck.

Grace stretches her neck to eat Destiny's sandwich crumb.

JAXEE

See? Grace don't waste nuthin'.

Destiny runs back to her chair and pulls her plate in close.

DESTINY

I'll share, just ask.

Grace *brays*. Jaxee and Destiny *laugh* first-time together.

EXT. JAXEE'S RANCH - SIMULTANEOUS

Beautiful multi-color sunset behind majestic mountains.

Jaxee and Destiny's laughter *echoes* under ominous *thunder*.

EXT. STATE FAIR - DAYS LATER

Typical fair of tents, rides, games, and noise, as all types of FAIR-PEOPLE, walk in all kinds of country-clothing.

Jaxee drives her truck now slowly pulling its horse-trailer with Grace inside. Destiny is passenger. Plastic Christmas wreathes are on truck's front grill and the trailer's gate.

INT. JAXEE'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Destiny looks everywhere in awe. Jaxee smiles watching her, then scans the Fair-People.

JAXEE

In general, I like all folk. Just prefer 'em one at a time.

DESTINY

Why?

JAXEE

People act different in a bunch. Try to show off, or act mean. Be something they're not, or ever got.

DESTINY

"Ever got?"

JAXEE

What's the opposite of love?

DESTINY

Hate?

JAXEE

Nope. Indifference. If you don't love something with all your heart, that leaves room for other feelings to creep in like envy, distrust, and even love's badder half, hate.

DESTINY

I love Grace, and you.

They park near the Fair's 40' round metal-fence *Show Ring*.

JAXEE
Ditto, kiddo.

Parked nearby is a cargo van painted on both sides with a TV station's eye-ball logo and "*Eye-Witness News*" printed under.

Jaxee and Destiny unload Grace down her trailer's rear gate.

EXT. GRACE'S STATE FAIR SHOW - LATER THAT DAY

MONTAGE: Jaxee has Grace play an organ, push a baby carriage, open a mail-box to get "junk" mail and throw it away, answer a phone, answer questions *tapping* a hoof, then paint a Cross.

Destiny and CROWD watches *clapping*.

JAXEE
Folks, we all know the Good Lord
provides for our needs. So what I
needs now is an assistant. Desty-
darling, come on out here, please.

Destiny is surprised then goes to Jaxee. Fair-People *clap*.

JAXEE
Wave to all the good folk, Destiny.

Destiny waves to them. Fair-People wave back.

In the Crowd, BOCEPHUS "BO" BEAVERS and EARNHARDT "ERNIE" SKAGGS, Rednecks, late 20s, in worn-torn cowboy-clothes, drink beer out of large red plastic cups studying their prey.

Jaxee puts Destiny up on Grace's back then whispers.

JAXEE
Do you believe in Grace?

Destiny nods.

JAXEE
Then just like Life, hold on tight.

Jaxee places Destiny's hands on a halter-rope around Grace.

JAXEE
My "assistant" will help Grace dunk
a regulation height basketball!

Jaxee kicks a basketball over. Grace picks it up with her teeth, rears-up with Destiny, and drops it in the 10' hoop.

Crowd goes *wild*. Bo and Ernie are open-mouth speechless.

Jaxee lifts Destiny off Grace and sets her down who is one big smile. Jaxee takes Destiny's hand and leads her to a 6' self-standing wooden *Cross* and kneels. Grace kneels beside it. Destiny stands. All Three bow their heads. Crowd now bow their heads. Jaxee delivers a sage sermon.

Bo and Ernie do not bow but back up into the shadows.

EXT. GRACE'S NOW EMPTY SHOW RING - LATER THAT DAY

Fair is over. Fair-People are gone. Only Bo and Ernie remain leaning on show-ring's railing chewing on their cups watching Jaxee's truck with Grace in her attached trailer pull out.

BO

Never seen a mule do all that. You ever seen a mule do all that?

ERNIE

No sir. How'd it get so smartified?

BO

Learned, I guess. Cain't be easy to teach all that, which makes it --?

Bo looks at Ernie who's slow on the up-take, then *Gets it*.

ERNIE

Special?

BO

So "special," might be worth something special if it went --?

ERNIE

(in sync now)

Missing! Then some good ole' boys,

BO

Find and return it, after --.

ERNIE

A reward be posted! --Could work?

BO

Ernie-boy, I do believe, we finely discovered --Grace.

Bo and Ernie toast their empty chewed-on cups to toss over their shoulders *laughing* as only selfish litter-bugs can.

INT. JAXEE'S TRUCK CAB - THAT NIGHT

Jaxee drives along a desolate highway towing Grace's trailer.

DESTINY

(wakes, stretches)

Mmmmmmm. --Where are we?

JAXEE

(quotes Robert Frost)

"And miles to go before I sleep."
Like the show?

DESTINY

Yes, thank you. Grace is amazing.

JAXEE

Amazing Grace, always is.

Both drive along in silence, then Destiny fidgets.

JAXEE

Go ahead and ask.

DESTINY

Is it okay to hate God?

Jaxee takes her foot off the gas pedal so truck slows down.

JAXEE

I hated God twice in my life.
First, 'cause how my daddy treated
me. Second, when my husband died.
The problem with hating is it
blocks out all the good feelings
that come with just being alive.

DESTINY

I hate God for taking my parents.

JAXEE

And I hate missing your dad. But I
don't hate you and your sunshine
bein' brought into my dark life.

DESTINY

I love you and Grace, but --.

JAXEE

Concentrate your love with Grace.
Know what her name really means?
"Divine assistant given to Humans
for sanctification."

DESTINY

Sank-what? Sanctuary?

EXT. AERIAL OF JAXEE'S TRUCK WITH TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Their truck and trailer drive into the night.

JAXEE
Close e'nuff.

EXT. AERIAL OF BO'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

A beat-up rusted pick-up follows far behind Jaxee on their same desolate highway. An empty beer bottle flies out the passenger's window back into the truck's bed where it *clinks* hitting a pile of other rolling empties.

INT. BO AND ERNIE'S TRUCK CAB - CONTINUOUS

Bo drives.

BO
Hand me some bug juice.

Ernie opens a beer bottle with a vintage opener.

ERNIE
Man oh man, this guy ever go to the out-house?

BO
The crumb-snatcher will. That'll be our chance. Remember the plan?

ERNIE
I jump, you back, I unhitch, re-hitch.

BO
Without a stitch.

Ernie hands his bottle to Bo, then opens a second bottle. They *clink* their bottle-necks together as a toast.

BO
Champaign taste --.

ERNIE
Onna beer budget.

EXT. AERIAL OF BO'S TRUCK - SAME

Their truck drives into the night following Jaxee.

BO
Close e'nuff.

EXT. 24-HOUR GAS STATION - LATER THAT NIGHT

Old-style two-pump gas station in the middle of nowhere.

BOOTH ATTENDANT, Caucasian teen with bad acne, is asleep behind his office window.

Jaxee parks at a pump, exits, stretches, puts on her hat, then walks to the back of trailer.

JAXEE
You still my one and only?

Grace swishes her tail in Jaxee's face knocking her hat off.

JAXEE
Might as well be.

Jaxee puts on her hat then grabs a pump-handle.

Destiny opens her passenger door to slide out on the ground.

DESTINY
Going to the lil' girl's room.

JAXEE
Sure. --Wait! I'll walk with you.

Jaxee puts gas-handle back to take Destiny's hand. Both disappear around a far side of the building. Jaxee jogs back around alone and talks through Attendant's glass-hole.

JAXEE
Ladies room key, please, and --.
(points to trailer)
Keep an eye on my trailer there.

Attendant sleepy-slides a key on a long dowel-rod through his slot. Jaxee stares at the extra-long rod, then jogs back around corner. Attendant is groggy and falls back asleep.

Bo and Ernie's truck parks beside Jaxee's. Both jump out and pull Grace's trailer over to drop onto their rear-bumper ball-hitch, fast-wrap its chain around it, then drive away.

Grace brays and kicks as Bo's truck disappears into the dark.

A COYOTE howls. Dry-Lightning up in the sky then low thunder.

Destiny and Jaxee walk back around the corner with key-rod.

JAXEE

Want some gut-wash?

DESTINY

Where's Grace?

Jaxee spins, is shocked, then *strikes* the key's wood-handle on booth-glass breaking its rod in half and waking Attendant.

JAXEE

Supposed to watch it, nit-wit!

ATTENDANT

Watch, what?

JAXEE

You're as useless as a twenty-two in a twelve gauge. Call the cops, and I do mean, right now, Boy!

Jaxee runs to truck and starts pumping in gas. She fumes.

JAXEE

Calm down, Jaxee. You're dead on "E" so has to fill up first, then you go lookin'. She'll be okay.

(looks straight up)

Right?

(lightning flares)

Well all righty then.

Gas *dings* going into her truck. Jaxee looks down the road, up it, then looks at the shoulder's dirt. More thunder *rumbles*.

JAXEE

Trailer's too big for a u-turn.
Nope, musta' gone up ahead so --.

Lightening *explodes* showing Jaxee's face is twisted in hate.

JAXEE

Gonna have "Man for Breakfast."

DESTINY

Attendant was asleep. I made him call the state police. What do we do? Is Grace okay?

JAXEE

Whoever took her is in for a world a' hurt when they try to back her out. You ain't never seen Grace go plumb mad-dog mad.

DESTINY

I couldn't take it again if ...

JAXEE

Destiny honey, I just know it's gonna' turn out okay, but I need you to believe that, too. Okay?

DESTINY

Okay. What did you mean, man for breakfast?

JAXEE

What? Oh, uh, that in the morning, I'll be, uh, real hungry.

Jaxee squints looking up the dark road to repeat sinister.

JAXEE

Real, hungry.

INT. BO & ERNIE'S TRUCK NOW WITH GRACE - MOMENTS LATER

Bo is driving fast. Ernie stares in his side mirror.

ERNIE

Nope, no headlights, so slow down.

BO

Ernie ole' buddy, I do believe, we done done it.

ERNIE

Great! Where we doin' it?

BO

Remember that hunter's shack we found way back up in the woods?

ERNIE

Yeah? But that was 'fore we went away over four year ago?

BO

Even if it fell down, there'll still be plenty of fresh water and thick trees to hide us.

Grace *brays* and kicks the trailer's back-gate twice.

Both look back at the trailer. Ernie smiles, then sings *Kenny Rogers* "Three Times a Lady."

ERNIE

"That's once, twice --."

Grace *brays* and kicks her trailer's gate a third time.

BO/ERNIE
"Three times a lady!"

Both *laugh* then rough-house pushing on each others shoulders.

EXT. SAME 24-HOUR GAS STATION - NOW MIDNIGHT

Two 1990 Ford Crown Victoria State Police Cruiser's with red lights rotating but no sirens are parked at angles. Both cars have plastic Christmas Wreaths on their front grills.

TROOPER ONE, African-American, late 20s, fit, in state police uniform, is interviewing Booth Attendant outside his booth.

TROOPER TWO, Latino, 30s, fit-for-age, in uniform, is talking to Jaxee. Destiny stands next to Jaxee hugging her waist.

Troopers One and Two excuse themselves to have a meeting.

TROOPER ONE
Einstein took a dirt-nap.

TROOPER TWO
Granny took her kid to the bathroom so didn't --. Hey!? Remember that custody case where they brought in a trick mule?

TROOPER ONE
Yeah? Nah? This them?

Trooper Two nods. Both Troopers go hands-on-hips reasoning.

TROOPER TWO
Why take a mule? Kicks?

TROOPER ONE
They just put on a show at The State Fair. Were they followed?

TROOPER TWO
If so, then this is a kid, uh, mule-napping.

TROOPER ONE
Ransom? Makes sense. Or maybe, just hide out, then wait for the reward.

TROOPER TWO
Sure. Return when there's no questions asked.

TROOPER ONE
Could take weeks. The little girl's pretty upset. I'll radio the Major and see if he'll contact the Press.

TROOPER TWO

And, the National Guard. See if they'll use their new chopper.

TROOPER ONE

Let's make it happen, partner, for the lil' girl.

Both Trooper's fist-bump then walk to their own Cruisers.

Letters under station's overhead neon sign flash, *Last Stop*.

EXT. JAXEE'S CHEAP MOTEL - THAT DAWN

Small rundown motel up the road from the 24-hour gas station. Its neon sign's first six letters "V-A-C-A-N-C" are burnt-out so sign now only flashes a lonely humming-staccato "-----Y."

Jaxee's truck is the only vehicle parked in front of a room.

INT. JAXEE'S CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

A chipped nightstand is between two single beds. Its lamp is off. A low dresser has a TV on top which is on but muted.

Destiny is asleep in one twin bed and stirs under her covers.

Jaxee sits leaning back on top of the second twin bed still in same clothes sharpening a belt-knife then sheaths it in scabbard. She folds her arms watching TV and is surprised.

JAXEE

What the --?

Jaxee scoots to end of her bed and turns up the TV's volume.

EXT. 24-HOUR GAS STATION - SIMULTANEOUS

Both Cruisers still parked same. National Guard vehicles are now parked with uniformed NATIONAL GUARDSMEN milling about.

Also parked is the Fair's earlier *Eye-Witness News* van.

REPORTER, 30s, Latino female, in skirt-suit, is *Live* filmed by her CAMERAMAN, Asian male, 20s, long hair, thin, aiming his shoulder-cam with back-pack both having same news logo.

REPORTER

...off Route 66 where a state-wide man-hunt begins for criminals who stole a trained mule last night.

Cameraman pans all the vehicles then follows Reporter to a NATIONAL GUARD COLONEL, military-fit, in uniform, standing by a U.S. Army Jeep using its radio.

REPORTER

Excuse me, Colonel. Can you give our live audience an update?

COLONEL

(keys off mike)

We're using this as a missing-person exercise. Our helicopter is in a widening grid pattern. Don't worry, we'll find that donk --.

INT. JAXEE'S CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - IMMEDIATELY

Jaxee leans forward fuming watching T.V.

COLONEL (FILTERED)

Uh, mule, uh, it, uh --?

REPORTER (FILTERED)

Grace.

Jaxee sits back nodding.

EXT. 24-HOUR GAS STATION NEWS COVERAGE - CONTINUOUS

Reporter holds her microphone closer to Colonel.

REPORTER

Do you hold out hope for its owner and granddaughter?

COLONEL

Yes ma'am, we're all professionals, highly trained and motivated.

Colonel turns away keying on his radio.

Reporter goes to Troopers One and Two. Cameraman follows.

REPORTER

I understand you are the original responding Officers and refuse to leave until you discover Grace.

TROOPER ONE

Yes ma'am. My partner here has a little girl her same age so we're taking this criminal act serious.

Reporter thrusts her mike at Trooper Two.

REPORTER

Trooper, is there anything you'd like to say to your own daughter?

INT. JAXEE'S MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUS

T.V. Screen shows Cameraman zooms-in on Trooper Two who is flustered.

TROOPER TWO (FILTERED)

Oh, uh, it's okay, sweetie, we'll find Grace. Daddy'll be home soon.

Cameraman pans to Reporter for her End Close-Up.

REPORTER (FILTERED)

The state-wide search by local, state, and now federal agencies, continues for the mule known as Grace stolen earlier this morning. We'll be reporting on this truly heartbreaking story live throughout the day. If you see Grace, please call the authorities. We now show you video footage from their show at yesterday's State Fair.

Reporter's coverage cuts to videotape of Grace dunking the basketball with Destiny on her back.

DESTINY

That's me!

Jaxee turns to see Destiny is now awake and sitting up.

DESTINY

So what do we do first?

JAXEE

We find her. But first, breakfast.

DESTINY

Man?

Jaxee looks up through eyebrows. Her reckoning is coming.

Nightstand's vintage AM clock-radio turns on *playing* country.

EXT. MUSIC-MONTAGE OF SEARCH AND DRIVING - THAT DAY

National Guard helicopter flies over in all directions.

Law Enforcement vehicles, with lights flashing, drive roads.

Jaxee's hand nails *Missing* posters with Grace's picture onto telephone poles, stop signs, everywhere. She and Destiny stop at shops, restaurants, anywhere, to hand out *Missing* posters.

SHOP OWNERS put up *Missing* posters in their windows.

All while Bo and Ernie drive through back-wood mountain roads pulling Grace's trailer as the Sun moves across the sky.

EXT. BO AND ERNIE'S TRUCK - NOW SUNSET

Bo drives truck and trailer slowly up a dirt road.

INT. BO AND ERNIE'S TRUCK CAB - MOMENTS LATER

Ernie *bangs* on the dash above its radio.

ERNIE

Sure wish the dang radio worked.

BO

Don't like my singing?

ERNIE

That what that was? Thought we was draggin' a cat.

Their headlights illuminate a rundown shack ahead.

BO

I'll check the cabin, you take the bucket down to the creek.

ERNIE

You takin' a bath? Sure needs one?

BO

For our guest, nummy. And you're no nose-gay neither.

ERNIE

Sure wish we brought beer and food. Don't think we thought this all the way out?

BO

(brandishes hunting knife)
These woods got plenty of rabbit and squirrel.

ERNIE

Sure could go for some squirrel in squirrel-gravy, mmm-mmm.

BO
With homemade figs and biscuits,
yes'm. But don't fret none, our
meal-ticket's in back.

Grace brays kicking her trailer's gate.

ERNIE
Hold your horsie, we're hungry
too-ee!

BO
She can eat grass till I go in town
tomorrow for her feed and us chow.

ERNIE
And beer!

EXT. JAXEE'S NEW MOTEL - SIMULTANEOUS

Modern two-story motel with Christmas Decorations. Parking lot is full with Jaxee's truck in front of a room. Motel's sign letters "V, A, C, Y" burnt-out so flash "NO --CAN--."

INT. JAXEE'S NEW MOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Double-bed motel room with "newish" 1990 furniture. A well-used decorated toy plastic Christmas Tree is on the bureau.

Destiny is asleep in one double-bed.

Jaxee sits fully clothed on the other bed sharpening her knife again while watching TV-News with sound off. She sheaths knife, folds arms, and stares blank. She moves shoulders grimacing then grabs a wrist wincing in pain.

EXT. FEED STORE PARKING LOT - NEXT MORNING

Bo parks his truck-only in front of the store and enters.

INT. FEED STORE - CONTINUOUS

Typical farm-animal feed store; shelves, pallets, sale signs.

Bo enters, wipes his nose on a sleeve, then walks to counter.

FEED STORE MANAGER, 30s, a body-builder, stands behind the sales-counter in tie and white shirt wearing a red vest.

MANAGER
How can we help you, sir?

BO
Sell beer?

MANAGER
No? Agriculture products only?

BO
Then one bag of whatever mules eat.

FEED MANAGER
This your first mule, sir?

BO
Might windy on a still day.

FEED MANAGER
Just curious.

BO
Know what they say about that.

FEED MANAGER
How old is your mule?

BO
Don't know, don't care. Somebody
else here that can step n' fetch?

Bo sees one of Grace's *Missing* posters and starts to back up.

TROOPER TWO
Man asked you a question, mister.

Bo turns to see Trooper Two holding a hand on his gun-butt.

TROOPER TWO
A lot of police work is dumb luck.
And you're looking, awful dumb.

Bo panics and pulls his hunting knife.

Trooper Two draws his weapon shaking his head.

TROOPER TWO
You couldn't pour piss out a boot
if instructions were on its sole.

CUSTOMERS, all male, have been listening, and encircle Both.

Bo steps one way, then the other, threatening All with knife.

State Trooper pulls his handcuffs to flip open one cuff.

TROOPER TWO
Put the knife down, son. No mule is
worth dying over.

Customers look mean and step in closer to Bo.

Bo sees Customers, handcuffs, and decides *death-by-cop*.

BO
Ain't goin' back!

Bo charges Trooper Two but a fifty-pound bag of mule feed hits him from behind knocking him flat on his stomach.

Manager stands behind fallen Bo with both arms out-stretched.

MANAGER
Cash or check, sir?

Trooper Two covers Bo as he moves in with handcuffs.

TROOPER TWO
Hands behind your back, Hands
Behind Your Back!

No response. Trooper Two circles behind, kneels, puts a knee in Bo's back, then holsters his gun. He pulls Bo's free wrist out and cuffs it then pulls other wrist out from under Bo and freezes seeing it is covered with blood. Trooper Two quickly cuffs Bo's bloody-hand and turns him over. Bo's blade is stuck hilt-deep in his own stomach.

TROOPER TWO
Son, I'll get you medical, but
first, tell me where Grace is.

BO
(smiles crooked, whispers)
Like me --dead and gone.

Bo *coughs-up* blood then passes out.

EXT. FEED STORE PARKING LOT - LATER SAME DAY

Rescue Squad Ambulance parks with lights flashing but no siren. TWO EMT's in firefighter uniforms pull a gurney out its back and push-pull running with it into the store.

Trooper One parks his Cruiser with red lights flashing but no siren and opens its back door. Jaxee and Destiny exit out.

Two EMT's now exit store pushing Bo, with knife still in but wrapped in gauze, strapped to gurney followed by Trooper Two.

Jaxee rushes to stop Bo's gurney.

JAXEE
Where's my Gracie?!

Bo's eyes flutter-open. His mouth curls into an evil-smile.

BO

Where you'll never find her.

Jaxee's world is rocked. She sits on ambulance rear bumper then grabs her right forearm in pain and turns to Destiny.

JAXEE

Sorry --.

Jaxee goes down to both knees then falls on side unconscious.

A car parks with windows down. Its radio *plays* country music.

EXT. AERIAL VIEW OF FEED STORE PARKING LOT - IMMEDIATELY

MUSIC MONTAGE: Both Troopers get on knees and begin two-man C.P.R. on Jaxee as Destiny wrings her hands.

Same Two EMT's load Bo's gurney into their ambulance then pull out a second gurney and rush to Jaxee.

Both Troopers and Two EMT's load Jaxee onto second gurney then into same ambulance beside Bo.

EMT ONE gets in back of the ambulance. EMT TWO closes doors, gets in front, and drives away with the lights and *siren* on.

Trooper One picks up Destiny to put her in his Cruiser then follows the ambulance with his lights and *siren* on.

Trooper Two searches Bo's pick-up.

BYSTANDERS and Customers gather in the parking lot pointing to now disappearing ambulance.

National Guard's UH-1 Huey helicopter flies-in overhead and follows the racing ambulance with Trooper One following behind then helicopter veers off back to the mountains.

INT. JAXEE AND BO'S AMBULANCE - MOMENTS LATER

EMT One works on Jaxee, then Bo. Both wear oxygen masks.

Their two gurneys are side-by-side with EMT One between.

Jaxee reaches over to grab at knife sticking out of Bo.

EMT ONE grabs Jaxee's wrist and holds it on Jaxee's chest.

INT. JAXEE'S HOSPITAL ROOM - THAT NIGHT

Jaxee sits on her bed in a hospital gown with I.V. in arm and air-hose in nose. Her heart-monitor beeps. Jaxee has her arms-folded tight. She is not happy. Destiny sits in chair beside.

JAXEE

Whole bunch of nonsense, ask me.
Got things to go, places to do.

DESTINY

Now Mammy, Doc said you just had a cardiac "event." He just wants to be sure before releasing you.

JAXEE

Sorry about throwing a scare in ya'. Thought I was in better shape.

DESTINY

Doctor said you hadn't slept in two days and stress brought it on.

Destiny gets concerned but not about Jaxee who senses it.

JAXEE

Gracie's fine, otherwise I'd know.
But it's, it's just so frustrating,
not knowing where she is.

DESTINY

That bad man came out of surgery okay. Troopers'll question him in the morning. Nothing more to be done tonight. Get some sleep.

JAXEE

Well listen to Nurse Destiny. You done grown up so much in such a short time. Hope you can stand to hear it, but your folks, my son, shoot, everyone, are proud of you.

DESTINY

Go to sleep, I'll be right here.

Jaxee slides down under her covers smiling.

JAXEE

Yes'm.

Destiny slides down in her chair, puts on Jaxee's hat and pulls brim down over her eyes, then stretches her legs out.

DESTINY

Well alrighty then.

EXT. RUNDOWN SHACK IN THE BACKWOODS - SIMULTANEOUS

Trailer is quiet. Ernie squats by a small open fire beside it hugging his knees.

ERNIE
Garl darn cabin's so full a' bugs
c'aint sleep in there. No food, no
heat, no beer, no Bo.

Ernie looks at Grace's trailer, taps his knee, then *snaps* fingers-in-time singing Roger Miller's "King of the Road."

ERNIE
"No phone, no pool, no pets --.
Ain't got no cigarettes. Ahh, but
two hours pushin' broom, buys an
eight by twelve four-bit room. I'm
a man a' means by no means --King
a' the rooaaaad!"

Grace *brays* and kicks the back of her trailer.

ERNIE
Yeah? Well? I'm kickin', too.

Ernie picks up a stick and plays with his fire.

ERNIE
But I also know something happened
to my Bo, so I'll be ridin' you
outta' here come daylight.

Ernie lies down by the fire and drifts off humming and *snapping* his fingers to his favorite song.

INT. BO'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Bo is in a bed, air-line tubing in nose, I.V. in as monitor *beeps*. He opens his eyes and tries to move but both wrists are cuffed to either raised bed-rail. He *rattles* his cuffs.

JAXEE
Reap what ya' sow.

Bo glares at Jaxee leaning in a corner fingering her hat.

BO
Thought you was dead.

JAXEE
Back atcha'.

BO
Saw you reach for it.

JAXEE

The Devil literally made me do it.
Sorry. But also made me think why
we're both still here. You?

BO

Leave me be!

DESTINY

Why, you didn't "leave me be?"

BO

Left my spur tracks on you though.

JAXEE

That how you want folk to remember
you --mean, selfish, hurtful?

BO

Better than not remembered at all.

JAXEE

I used to think like that. Hating
life, but really hating myself.
Then I discovered Grace. Trained
her to do things few can, used her
talent raisin money to help others.
What you done with your life, boy?

Bo *rattles* his handcuffs smiling evil.

JAXEE

Any negative experience can become
a positive one if ya' wants to
learn from it, son.

BO

"Son?!" Well, "mom" what do I
"wants to learn" from this one?

JAXEE

Help everyone and hurt no one.

BO

Ain't you the G.D. philosa-phizer!
Nope, dye's cast, too late for me.

JAXEE

Never too late for no one. You just
don't know it --yet. I'll be
praying you do.

BO

"Praying?!" You mean cursing. Ain't
you gonna' ask me where Grace is? I
mean, that's why you're here right?

Jaxee stands in open doorway shaking her head.

JAXEE

Wrong as wrong can be, son. I came
to give you grace, just like
someone did for me, years ago.

Bo stares confused at Jaxee. **TURNING POINT.**

BO

Main highway, north a' Brisco.
(spits in bedpan, *Ding*)
Old logging road up past the
waterfall off 33. Back about five
mile there's a hunter's shack.

Trooper One and Trooper Two, still in same uniforms, now with beard-stubble, enter from hallway on either side of the door.

TROOPER ONE

Read him his Rights?

TROOPER TWO

At the feed store. You call it in,
I'll take his statement.
(to Jaxee)
You did good, Mrs. Fenton.

JAXEE

(puts on hat)
Friends, call me Jaxee.

TROOPER ONE

Ready, "Jaxee?"

Trooper One and Jaxee go to exit as Destiny runs in past them holding a black book over to Bo's bed.

DESTINY

Thank you.

Destiny hands Bo the hospital Chapel's Bible. She pats Bo's hand then goes to Jaxee who pats her head. Trooper One, Jaxee, and Destiny exit.

Trooper Two gets out his notebook and *clicks* his pen open.

Bo stares at the Bible, sees a bookmark, opens to its page, then reads aloud a highlighted Verse.

BO

"No one will be declared righteous
by the works of the law. Rather
through the law, we become
conscious of our sin."

TROOPER TWO
Romans, Three, Twenty. Never too
late, to change one's tune.

Bo clutches Bible to his chest humming "*Amazing Grace*."

EXT. GRACE'S TRAILER BY THE RUNDOWN SHACK - SIMULTANEOUS

Ernie drops the loading gate from inside Grace's trailer.
Boom. He begins cursing inside unintelligible.

ERNIE
X#\$@!

INT. GRACE'S TRAILER OUTSIDE THE SHACK - MOMENTS LATER

Ernie pushes his shoulder into Grace's chest trying to get her to back out of the trailer. He *grunts* pushing harder but Grace won't budge. Ernie stops to wipe his brow.

ERNIE
Now I knows where "stubborn as" --
come from.

Ernie tries pushing again, gives up, and glares at Grace.

ERNIE
Okay, if you so dang smart, suppose
all I has to do is just asks. So --
Back Up!

Grace backs out of her trailer onto the ground and *snorts*.

EXT. GRACE'S TRAILER IN BACKWOODS - CONTINUOUS

Ernie exits trailer and stands hands-on-hips glaring.

ERNIE
You couldn't just a-say-so?

Ernie grabs Grace's rope-halter, mounts and gets comfortable.
He spurs his heels into Grace's sides. Grace doesn't move.
Ernie repeats same action three times. She doesn't budge.
Ernie thinks, it's hard, then remembers the State Fair.

ERNIE
O-kay, so you got "ta-do" words,
huh? Let's see what happens if I
says --Giddy Yap!

Grace rears up on her hind legs. Ernie slides off her rump
falling flat on his back hitting his head on a rock.

Grace backs away from Ernie *braying*. Her halter-lead hangs.
Ernie stands with wobbly legs.

ERNIE
That lil' stunt's gonna' cost you.

Ernie picks up the rock his head hit and throws it at Grace.
Grace moves so the rock misses her then she trots away.

ERNIE
STOP!

Grace stops on the ravine's edge behind the cabin with the sound of its running *stream* below.

ERNIE
Gonna' beat sense into ya', just
like done by my dear ole' --Mammy!

Grace reacts to word "Mammy" and curls her head to Ernie.
Ernie *breaks* a branch off a tree and smacks it on her rear.
Grace mule-kicks Ernie in his chest sending him airborne.
Grace steps on end of halter-lead pulling her head down and loses her footing to slide down over the ravine *braying*.
Ernie lands against his same tree impaling his arm on its now broken branch-stump, then he hears Grace's *braying*.

ERNIE
Serves ya' right!

Ernie looks at the branch-stump sticking through his bloody left arm's shirt and *raspberries*.

ERNIE
And left.

Ernie yanks his arm off the branch and rips the torn shirt-sleeve off to reveal a bleeding hole in his tricep. He wraps sleeve's cloth around his wound and stands wobbly.

ERNIE
Bo ole' buddy, don't think we
thought this thru --too good.

Ernie falls face forward unconscious.

EXT. RAVINE'S CREEK BED BEHIND CABIN - LATER THAT DAY

Grace opens her eyes.

She's on her side in creek's mud. She tries, then stands. She takes several steps limping, puts her hurt hoof in deep water, and stands still. She vibrates her lips *snorting*.

EXT. AERIAL OF A MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - THAT SUNSET

Trooper One's Cruiser races with its lights and *siren* on.

INT. TROOPER ONE'S CRUISER - MOMENTS LATER

Trooper One drives fast, buckled-in. Jaxee sits next to him as passenger buckled-in. Destiny is in the back. She unbuckles her seat belt and slides up to the Cage.

TROOPER ONE
Seat belt on, please.

Destiny slides back and *clicks* her seat belt on.

DESTINY
How much longer?

TROOPER ONE
Pretty far back up there.

JAXEE
C'aint use a hee-low?

TROOPER ONE
Army tried. Trees too thick, can't see through. Can't land, and a bad storm is moving in. Bad all around.

JAXEE
Hounds?

TROOPER ONE
In the morning. Be dark soon, gonna' be a rough night. Sure you don't want to wait at your motel?

JAXEE
Waited long enough.

EXT. THEIR CRUISER ON CURVY ONE-LANE ROAD - CONTINUOUS

All drive in silence with *siren blaring*.

Sun is setting.

Lightening flashes over top of the mountains ahead.

EXT. BACKWOODS CABIN - LATER THAT NIGHT

Earlier National Guard vehicles, News Van, and Ambulance with red lights rotating, but no siren on.

All vehicle headlights and spot-lamps are on illuminating the trees in all directions.

Trooper One's Cruiser parks. He, Jaxee, and Destiny, exit as same National Guard Colonel approaches them.

COLONEL
Medics took dummy two to M.A.S.H.
He'll live. How's dummy one?

TROOPER ONE
Getting smarter. Any sign of Grace?

COLONEL
(points to ravine)
Slipped over that hill and down
into its creek. Must be okay
because she walked away. We'll find
her in the morning.

Destiny hugs Jaxee's waist as Colonel goes hands-on-hips.

COLONEL
Why don't you let this Officer take
you and your's back to the motel?

JAXEE
Take Destiny, I'll ...

TROOPER ONE
Jaxee, nothing any of us can do
tonight. Let me take you both.

Jaxee looks down at Destiny who's tired then yells.

JAXEE
Grace!

No response. All look at Jaxee. She is beyond obsessed.

JAXEE
Take her! but don't, don't leave
her alone please.

Trooper One brushes hair out of Destiny's eyes who looks up sleepy. He smiles at Destiny then looks at Jaxee and nods.

JAXEE
Need your word on it.

TROOPER ONE
Always had it.

Trooper One hands Jaxee his mag-flashlight who disappears down into the ravine yelling.

JAXEE (O.S.)
Grace! --GRACIE!
(finger-whistles)
GRACE! --Grace? --Gracie?

A NATIONAL GUARDSMAN holds Reporter and Cameraman near their van. Reporter begs National Guardsman who lets both go.

Cameraman turns on his light and follows Reporter who runs to Destiny and holds out her microphone with its station-flag.

REPORTER
How does it feel to be so close yet
still not find your mule?

DESTINY
(stares into camera)
We want to thank everyone for their
kindness and concern. We've been
treated so good. Both State
Troopers never left our side. I
just know she'll be found okay.

All around stop to watch Destiny. Reporter goes to say something but Destiny bows her head. ALL bow their heads.

DESTINY
Through grace, all things are
possible.

Cameraman pans showing everyone in silent prayer then zooms-in on Reporter. Reporter raises her head and *clears* throat. Cameraman steps in closer and zooms-in.

INT. NEWS VAN - SIMULTANEOUS

Various monitors and electrical equipment hum as TECH, 30's, long hair, fine-tunes the monitor his Reporter is playing on.

REPORTER (FILTERED)
Reporting live as everyone's
search continues, for Grace.

Reporter bows her head again.

Cameraman turns his light off.

Tech flips a switch then keys his handheld radio.

TECH
That's a Wrap.

Tech turns on his van's radio. It *plays* country music.

EXT. BACKWOODS SEARCH - NIGHT INTO DAY

MUSIC MONTAGE: Ground search continues for Grace during the rainy night amid lightening and *thunder*. National Guardsmen pitch tents and make campfires taking breaks in shifts.

At dawn, a truck arrives with a HANDLER and TRACKING HOUNDS.

Trooper Two gets out of his Cruiser to talk to Handler.

Jaxee walks up overtop of ravine, muddy, clothes torn, face and arms scratched. She tosses mag-flashlight to Trooper Two shaking her head then hands Grace's halter rope to Handler.

Jaxee and Trooper Two get into his Cruiser and exit.

Handler has his Hounds smell Grace's rope then they pull him over the ravine's edge *baying*.

EXT. HEAVILY WOODED FOREST - DAY INTO DUSK

MONTAGE CONTINUES: Search goes on with National Guardsmen looking. Tracking Hounds *bay* pulling their Handler, sniff air, then move on. Huey helicopter flies overhead always.

At sunset, Hounds are loaded back into their truck and it exits with Handler.

National Guard Vehicles disappear one-by-one.

Helicopter flies away. Colonel's jeep exits.

TV-News Van is the only vehicle left then it drives away.

Sun sets through the trees. Their shadows move like giants.

EXT. GRACE'S MOUNTAIN TREK - SAME SUNSET

Grace walks. She comes upon a Brown Bear who stands on rear legs *roaring*. Grace rears up on her hind legs showing she's healed and *brays*. Bear runs away *crying*. Grace *snorts* and keeps walking. Grace gives a big yawn then sees a tree snag has fallen horizontal across a lower branch forming a large natural Cross. Grace sits on her haunches and lowers her head in same "*At The Cross*" position from earlier State Fair show.

Her silhouette on mountaintop is against a beautiful sunset.

INT. DESTINY'S BEDROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Destiny's bed lamp back-lights her on both knees with head bowed and hands in prayer in front of her own Cross-painting.

A picture of Grace sitting *At The Cross* is now on her bureau.

INT. SAME COUNTY COURTROOM - ONE WEEK LATER

Doors have plastic Christmas Wreathes centered on both. They open. Previous Gallery enters to take seats in the pews.

Trooper One and Trooper Two, now clean-shaved in pressed uniforms, sit in front pew behind Proscecutor at her table.

Across from them sit Destiny, in earlier black dress, and Jaxee in jeans whose hair is disheveled with bloodshot eyes.

Step-Back Door opens. Bo and Ernie enter in orange prisoner coveralls and shackles. Joe, in full uniform, enters behind them to stand by the door. Bo and Ernie have healed and shuffle to their Defense Table to talk with Ray.

Judge's Chamber door opens and Bailiff enters courtroom.

BAILIFF

All rise!

ALL stand. Judge enters and goes to sit at his Bench. There is now a small plastic decorated Christmas tree on it.

BAILIFF

Be seated.

ALL do. Bo and Ernie play-push off each others shoulders.

JUDGE

Gentlemen?

Bo and Ernie look around, *Who came in*, then at Judge who looks at Ray.

JUDGE

Both defendants agreed to plead guilty and allocute in open court?

RAY

(half-stands, resits)
Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE

(looks at Proscecutor)
The State have any objection?

PROSECUTOR
(half-stands, resits)
Only to what they did, your Hona'.

Judge hand-motions "Stand" to Bo and Ernie. Ray stands.

JUDGE
You wish to make a statement?

No response. Ray fake-coughs hitting Bo up the back of his head. Bo tries to answer sincere but doesn't know how.

BO
We did it.

JUDGE
And --?

ERNIE
And won't do it again!

JUDGE
Why, won't you do it again?

BO
Uuuuuuh, 'cauuuuse weeeee --?

ERNIE
Don't like jail?

JUDGE
I see. You don't, but I do.
(clears throat)
Bocephus Beavers and Earnhardt Skaggs, having shown no real remorse before this court, the State does not accept your plea colloquy in exchange for a reduced sentence. Court sentences you both to the maximum term for mulenapping under the Animal Welfare Act.

RAY
But your Honor, it's a mule? And they didn't demand ransom?

JUDGE
Both Defendants gave written statements their goal was always profit through theft with ultimately aggravated assault on a companion animal. Therefore, the Defendants are sentenced each to not less than three years at a State Farm.

ERNIE

"Farm?"

JUDGE

Both Defendants are eligible for
Convict Leasing to private
enterprise.

RAY

What kind of "enterprise," your
Honor?

JUDGE

Brokering manure.

BO/ERNIE

Shovelin' Shinola?!

JUDGE

You can thank the two Troopers for
suggesting your location. It has a
well-attended prison ministry.
Which of you ministers there?

Both Troopers raise their hands.

Judge smiles, raps his gavel, stands, then exits.

BAILIFF

All rise, for his most Honorable.

ALL do. Joe finger-motions to Bo and Ernie "Oh, boys."

Jaxee pulls a whiskey flask out of back pants pocket, holds
it up as a toast to Bo and Ernie, and takes a swig. Destiny
tries to take away her flask. She pushes Desty's hands away.

EXT. JAXEE'S RANCH - THAT NIGHT

Sunset over the mountains. It rained, so fog is at their
base. Grey smoke rises out of Jaxee's chimney.

INT. JAX'S GREAT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Jaxee sits in easy-chair staring at the fire. She holds the
half-empty pint of whiskey from her night stand in one hand
and a jelly glass in the other. She chugs its last glassful.

End-table phone *rings*. Jaxee answers. Other voice not heard.

JAXEE

"Comment?" Yeah. --Leave, Me, Be!

Jaxee throws the entire rotary dial-phone across the room.
Destiny enters and picks up phone to put back on end-table.

DESTINY
You're scaring me, Mammy.

JAXEE
Yeah? Well --.
(drunk smile)
Scare happens.

DESTINY
No! You, you're scaring me. You've
changed since losing Grace.

JAXEE
(sad)
She's everything to me.

DESTINY
(sadder)
Thought I was?

Destiny tears-up. Jaxee sees her tears. **TURNING POINT.**

Jaxee puts down glass and holds out arms. Destiny runs to her. They hug. Jaxee kisses her forehead. They hug tighter.

JAXEE
Oh sweetie, just like you, it was
so hard for me to let myself open
up to being hurt again. First my
husband, then your dad, I didn't
mean it. Yes, you mean more to me
than life itself.
(holds Destiny away)
Faith is believing with your head.
Thoughts become deeds so you has to
listen good, to hear the good. I am
sorry, for not listening gooder.
(smiles lovingly)
And to prove how sorry I be, take
this here bottle and throw it out.

DESTINY
And the one in the cupboard?

Jaxee *chuckles* and re-hugs Destiny tighter patting her back.

JAXEE
All of 'em.

DESTINY
And the beer?

Jaxee has to think on this one then looks straight up.

JAXEE

Uh, just hide 'em for now. I may be redeemin', but I ain't rich.

DESTINY

I saw the envelope with Daddy's insurance check.

JAXEE

Ray already put it in a Trust Fund for your education.
(smiles bigger)
So let's celebrate! Let's go out for chocolate ice cream.

DESTINY

Frozen yogurt.
(no response, explains)
Healthier.

Jaxee turns on the table's radio and country music *plays*.

Jaxee stands and offers her hand. They side-sway dance as one with Destiny standing on top of Jaxee's boots.

EXT. JAXEE'S RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Breathtaking rainbow forms as the Sun sets. White smoke now wisps out of chimney. Jaxee and Destiny's laughter *echoes*.

EXT. GRACE ON THE PLAINS - NIGHT TO DAY INTO NIGHT

MUSIC-MONTAGE: Grace continues her trek home. She is out of the mountains and now in low lands but still follows creeks for water. She munches on grass and stops to *yawn*, long and big. She's dirty, but healthy. She continues walking through a field of huge bright sunflowers as a four-legged *Dorothy*.

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - ONE WEEK LATER

Live decorated Christmas Tree with wrapped packages under it.

Christmas lights are draped all around the ceiling edges and across the fireplace mantel.

Jaxee and Destiny sit on couch, healthy and smiling. Jaxee wears a Santa Hat. Destiny wears reindeer-antlers.

Reporter and Cameraman stand across room interviewing them.

REPORTER

I'm sure our viewers remember the search three weeks ago for Grace the amazing mule. We're here, on Christmas Eve, with her owners ...

DESTINY

Friends.

REPORTER

With Grace's "friends," Jaxine Newton ...

JAXEE

Friends call me, Jaxee.

REPORTER

And her granddaughter, Destiny.

Reporter turns to them. Cameraman focuses-in on All Three.

REPORTER

Jaxee, how are you coping with your loss?

JAXEE

She ain't lost!

DESTINY

Just ain't found.

REPORTER

So you both still hold out hope?

JAXEE

Not hope, faith. I know she's finding her way back to us. I ...

DESTINY

We! We believe.

REPORTER

Is that why you both still go up into the mountains searching?

JAXEE

"God helps those that help themselves." *Mostly.*

DESTINY

Benjamin Franklin, 1757.

All look at Destiny.

DESTINY

What, I Google?

REPORTER
And "what" did you ask Santa to
bring you?

INT. POV CAMERAMAN'S INTERNAL VIEWFINDER - CONTINUOUS

Camera zooms-in on Destiny's face.
Destiny goes to say something, freezes in stare of disbelief.
Camera pans to Jaxee's face who has same stare of disbelief.
Camera pans to Reporter's face who turns to stare same.
Cameraman shakes camera in frustration then pans 180°.
Grace is outside looking in through the sliding glass-door.
Jaxee and Destiny rush to throw open the sliding door.
Grace enters. She is muddy and thinner but healthy.
Cameraman films Destiny and Jaxee hugging then kissing Grace.
Destiny puts her reindeer antlers on Grace who *brays*.
Cameraman swings to Reporter who is caught off-guard *crying*.
She sees his camera's light, recovers, and wipes away tears.

REPORTER
Discovering Grace, all things are
possible.

INT. JAXEE'S FIRST CHEAP MOTEL ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Jaxee's first-night motel up from their 24-hour gas station.
Bunny now sits on bed watching the static TV nursing a drink.
Reporter smiles at the camera now a professional again.

REPORTER (FILTERED)
Tune in tomorrow for our follow-up
Christmas Day Special of this most
wonderful of holiday reunions.
Thank you all for watching, and
believing. God Bless.

Bunny stands barefoot with a half-empty liquor bottle and
toasts the TV with it.

BUNNY
"God Bless us, every one!"

Bunny chugs her bottle drunk-crazy *laughing*.

INT. NEWS VAN OUTSIDE JAXEE'S HOUSE - IMMEDIATELY

Tech sits watching his TV-monitor as Cameraman now zooms-in on Jaxee and Destiny kissing Grace's muzzle. Grace looks at the camera then gives a huge smile. Tech flips master switch to *off* then keys on his handheld radio.

TECH

Now that's, a Christmas Wrap!

Tech hums "Jingle Bells" while turning off his equipment.

INT. BUNNY'S CHEAP HOTEL ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Bunny throws her bottle at the TV-screen which *explodes* both.

Liquor soaks into the carpet under her. *Pounding* at the door.

HOTEL OWNER

What's going on in there!

BUNNY

Uh, the T.V.! It uh, It Broke!

Bunny pulls the TV off its bureau letting it fall.

SLO-MOTION: TV shatters on the wet carpet where Bunny stands.

EXT. BUNNY'S CHEAP MOTEL ON CHRISTMAS EVE - IMMEDIATELY

Empty parking lot. HOTEL OWNER stands outside Bunny's room *pounding*. Suddenly, all hotel lights flicker then go out.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NOW CHRISTMAS DAY

Its bed-stand has a small plastic Christmas tree on it.

Bunny lies in a bed with air-tubing in nose and an I.V. in one wrist. Her monitor *beeps*. She's been crying.

JAXEE

Looked better.

Bunny angry-wipes her eyes to see Jaxee standing in the doorway holding her hat.

JAXEE

Know what "prejudice" mean?

Bunny looks at Jaxee *"Are you kidding me?"*

JAXEE (CONT'D)

Had to look it up so not to forget.
"Holding an opinion not based on
reason or experience."

BUNNY

Apology --.
(looks out window)
Not accepted.

Jaxee goes to and parts same window blinds to look out also.

JAXEE

Why is it folk don't see their own
bias when looking at a child but
that's all they see in an adult?
(turns back to Bunny)
Ain't my place in this world to
pass judgement, ain't nobody's. So
I c'aint leave, till I asks.

BUNNY

For?

JAXEE

Forgiveness.

BUNNY

Keep asking.

Jaxee frisbees her hat so it hangs on top of Bunny's I.V.
stand then pulls a chair next to Bunny's bed and sits.

JAXEE

Know what drove a wedge between me
and Benjamin that last Christmas?
Love. My son still loved you as a
human being and wanted to save you.
Know what I said?

BUNNY

No.

JAXEE

Exactly. Know what "Benjamin" means
in the Bible?

Jaxee tosses a small flat wrapped Christmas package onto bed.

JAXEE

Means, son of my right hand.

Jaxee head-motions to present. Bunny rips it open. It's the picture from the bureau of Benjamin as a boy. She hugs it.

JAXEE

Neither one of us had the best a'
daddies and I'm old enough to be
your momma. Which means my time on
this here Earth is drawing nigh.

Jaxee puts a hand on Bunny's. Their eyes meet.

JAXEE

You brought something very special
into this world. She's been through
so much and yet still chooses to
remain a sweet and loving person.

(kisses Bunny's hand)

Destiny deserves, no, she's earned,
the right to have a loving adult
care for her when I'm gone. So now
it's your turn to choose what kind
of person you really want to be.

Same Nurse enters with a prepared sedative-syringe.

JAXEE

I used some of her inshury money to
put you in a dry-out program. It'll
take a lot out of you, trust me,
but we'll ride it out together.

BUNNY

"Together?"

NURSE

You need to sleep now. Things'll be
better when you wake. Always is.

Nurse injects Bunny's I.V. tube then checks her pulse.

Jaxee stretches her legs out then pulls hat over her eyes.

JAXEE

I also put Milly in a program,
different type, which means her
store'll be needing a new clerk
with a new name tag. --"Trinity."

Bunny is now TRINITY who flutter-closes her eyes. This is the first time we see she has a beautiful smile.

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON'S PERIMETER FENCE - NEW YEAR'S DAY

Trooper One and Trooper Two lean back on their Cruiser hoods, wreathes now gone, with arms folded, watching through fence.

TROOPER ONE
See on the news about Grace?

TROOPER TWO
Saw it with my daughter.

TROOPER ONE
(head-motions to fence)
Think they did?

EXT. INSIDE SAME PRISON'S PERIMETER FENCE - CONTINUOUS

Troopers are watching Bo and Ernie who wear striped prison uniforms picking-up Cow Apples off the field by hand to put them into burlap bags hung over their shoulders.

BO
Can't decide if this be a curse --.

ERNIE
Or a blessing? I know the feeling.

BO
But do know we finally got in a --.

ERNIE
G.D., G.E.D. program.

BO
(head-motions to fence)
Thanks to those --.

ERNIE
(looks up at them)
Two law-guys.

Bo and Ernie tip "imaginary" hats to Both Troopers.

EXT. OUTSIDE PRISON'S PERIMETER FENCE - IMMEDIATELY

Trooper One and Trooper Two tip their "real" hats back to Bo and Ernie then look at each other and smile.

TROOPER TWO
Renews my faith.

Trooper One and Trooper Two fist-bump.

TROOPER ONE

Go with grace.

Both get in their respective Cruisers to exit on the state road in opposite directions.

EXT. INSIDE PRISON'S PERIMETER FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Prison loudspeakers turn on with *squelch-feedback*.

Bo and Ernie cover their ears.

The unseen PRISONER D.J. announces.

PRISONER DJ (FILTERED)

Happy New Year every swinging duck!
Here's a shout-out from some jolly
saint judge for our two mule
skinners. It's, *Hee-Haw, Hee-Haw* --
"The Annual Braying Contest!"

Sound of a needle *scratching on* a record then it *plays* mules repeatedly *braying*.

Ernie and Bo look at each other, shrug shoulders, lock arms, then dance in repeated figure-eights re-locking arms.

INT. JAXEE'S GREAT ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

Jaxee and Destiny sit at the dining table now with "*Happy New Year*" tablecloth, paper plates, and wall-banner decorations.

Grace is wearing a "*Happy New Year*" cone-hat with rubber band and sits on her haunches eating treats off her plate. She's healthy and clean with a shiny coat.

Knock on the carport door. All Three look at it.

JAXEE

Enter --our Newer Year!

Door opens. TERRY JOHNSON, African-American, 30s, in worn Cowboy hat, clothes and boots, enters with a faded U.S. Army duffle bag over a shoulder. He takes off hat and closes the door. He stares at Grace who is chewing and staring at him.

TERRY

It's true. Grace is amazing.

JAXEE

Tell us something, we don't know.

DESTINY

Mammy means, how can we help you?

TERRY

Other way around. Saw you on T.V. I
come to see if I, can help, you.

Grace goes to rub the top of her head on Terry's shoulder
knocking off cone hat. He catches it. She kisses his cheek.

JAXEE

Pretty strong endorsement you're
gettin' there. You a waddie?

TERRY

Been a twine-twirler, puncher,
swamper. Heck, even cut pecker
poles. But for some reason, my
first love's always been mules.

Grace nods up and down animated. Destiny looks at Jaxee.

DESTINY

School starts next week. You'll be
needing a day-hand.

JAXEE

What about your family?

TERRY

(hangs head)
Ain't got none.

Jaxee pushes the empty chair on other side of table out from
underneath with her boot.

JAXEE

Do now.

TERRY

(looks up grinning)
"Start by doing what's necessary,
and suddenly, you're doing the
impossible."

DESTINY

Saint Francis ...

JAXEE

A' Assistance.

Terry and Destiny tilt their heads at Jaxee.

JAXEE

Patron saint a' animals. Right?

Destiny sets a fourth place-setting for Terry.

DESTINY

When your heart is empty inside,
only two things can fill it.

Destiny spoons a heaping of "Hoppin' John" on Terry's plate,
sets its pot on table mat, then re-sits at her own plate.

Terry drops duffle-bag to frisbee his hat onto the coat-stand
next to Jaxee's then washes his hands in the kitchen-sink.

TERRY

What's the other?

Knock on the door. All Three look at Jaxee.

JAXEE

Place is busier than Grand Central.
(to door)
All Aboard!

Door opens part-way. Joe in uniform enters removing hat.

JOE

Can't stay long, just --?
(sniffs air)
Is that Hoppin' John?!

JAXEE

Yes'm, and plenty of it. Destiny
darling, get her a plate, please.

JOE

Uhhh --? Got enough for two?

JAXEE

You bring the Sheriff, too?

Awkward silence, then Joe opens the door fully.

Trinity stands in a simple dress. Her real hair color is
growing out. She's put on weight and looks healthy.

TRINITY

I asked Joe to bring me here 'cause
I have something to say --.
(tears-up at Destiny)
To my beautiful daughter.

Destiny runs to Trinity and they hug. Both start *crying*.

TRINITY

Oh Destiny my love, I'm so sorry
for never being there for you.

JAXEE

Being this the first day of the new
year, why don't we make it, the
first day of the rest of our lives?

Jaxee stands. She's come full-circle and understands why.

JAXEE

Trinity, when you're released next
week, why don't you move in here?
(to Destiny)
That is, of course, if that's
alright with you?

Destiny smiles big nodding.

Jaxee opens her arms. Trinity runs to and they hug. Destiny
runs for a group hug. Jaxee talks over their shoulders.

JAXEE

Joe, meet my new ranch hand. Terry,
meet the nicest badge ever.

Terry stares at Joe. Their eyes meet. Romance sparks fly.

Grace paws the floor with a front hoof in approval.

EXT. JAXEE'S RANCH - MOMENTS LATER

Surrounding mountains are white-capped. White-smoke wisps out
of the chimney. It's a *Currier & Ives* card. Grace brays.

DESTINY

We are all --searching for Grace.

Sound of chairs being pulled out and sat in then cutlery
clinks as All Five eat, talk, and laugh.

A light snow begins falling. A white dove flies over their
house then into the camera.

WHITE OUT.

*The real "Grace The Amazing Mule" lives in Front Royal, VA.
She is listed on IMDb being in two films. On her own Youtube
channel you can watch her do everything as written here. Co-
star in "Get Low" and neighbor Robert Duvall visited often.*