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SIGNS FOLLOWING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts
In
The Department of Drama/Communications

by

James Allan Moye'

B.A. East Carolina University, 1975

December 2002

INT. CAR ON CITY STREET - DAY

LEAH PARSONS, age 35, smartly dressed, behind the wheel, negotiates the car frantically through city traffic. Her passenger, JACOB HAWKE, 33, a bit scruffy, but in a hip way, grips a 35mm Nikon. He winces at an occasional maneuvering decision. Leah slams the car to a quick halt at an upcoming stoplight.

Jacob, looking through his window, spots a homeless woman sleeping on the subway grate. He aims his Nikon, frames her as steam rises through the vent, and snaps the shutter.

JACOB
I could've taken a cab.

Leah glances at him.

LEAH
(sarcastically)
You could learn to drive.

Jacob dismisses this. An old argument. Leah punches the accelerator- they're off again. The car careens around a double-parked taxi. The cabbie gives her the finger- Jacob snaps his Nikon just in time.

LEAH (CONT'D)
(continuing)
Sorry.

The phone rings. Jacob rolls his eyes as Leah picks up a headset, puts it in place.

LEAH (CONT'D)
(into phone)
Yeah. Hey Janet. I know. I'll be in soon. I have to see Jacob off. No, the bus station. Can you believe it? I date the only person on the planet who's not a redneck or a migrant worker who still travels Trailways.

Jacob frames Leah's face in his lens as she speaks. He lowers his camera to her breasts, focusing in on the revealing decolletage, then to her legs, where her short skirt, bunched up by the bucket seat, reveals ample leg.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEAH (CONT'D)

(still on phone)

Yeah, quirky artist type...

(playfully for Jacob's sake)

...you know, the kind I've always tried to avoid, but always end up with...

(winks at him)

...but you can't beat him in the sack, and the best photographer *Document* has ever had. Listen, keep the wolves at bay. They'll absolutely love the next issue. That's a promise. I'll be in soon.

She pulls the headset down around her neck and reaches down, playfully pulling her skirt a little higher for the camera. Jacob snaps. Leah puckers her lips in a sensuous kiss for the lens. Jacob snaps again.

EXT. BUS STATION - CONTINUOUS

The car pulls to the curb. Jacob gets out, reaching into the back seat for a travel case, a tripod sticking out of one end and a couple of camera bags. Leah circles the car quickly, joining him on the sidewalk, which is alive with street vagrants and panhandlers. One is a street preaching vagabond, complete with megaphone, expounding upon the necessities of a virtuous life.

LEAH

Mind if I don't go inside? These places give me the creeps.

Jacob understands, gives her a kiss. Leah then backs away with a sheepish smile.

LEAH (CONT'D)

I bought you a present.

Jacob is bewildered.

JACOB

Leah, what's the big deal? It's just an assignment.

LEAH

Not *just* an assignment and you know it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She reaches out- straightens his collar, brushes his jacket, fixes his unruly long hair.

LEAH (CONT'D)
Listen, I know we've been over this, but I'm a little more invested now.

JACOB
I'm a big boy. I've done all my homework. They'll like the piece.

LEAH
I'm not talking about the magazine. I'm talking me and you...us.

JACOB
I'll be fine.

A final adjustment.

LEAH
Sure you will. Anyway, it'll make me feel better if you take this.

She pulls out a brand new cell phone. Jason flinches.

LEAH (CONT'D)
(continuing)
I know. You hate the things. Indulge me, please. This once.

Jacob reluctantly gives in, taking the phone.

LEAH (CONT'D)
(continuing)
Everything's already programmed. Just hit this button...
(she hits the button, waits a couple of seconds. The phone in her car rings. She smiles.)
It'll be me.

She gives him a final kiss.

LEAH (CONT'D)
I love you.

JACOB
Me too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Leah begins to circle the car. She takes a look at the station, the people going in. Shakes her head.

LEAH
 (facetiously)
 I hope you have to share a seat
 with a smelly, talkative, fat
 woman.

He watches as she waves and climbs back in the car, pulling away.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS - MONTAGE

1. Jacob, in the window seat, takes a photograph of the passenger next to him- a corpulent man with a briefcase in his lap, head tilted down, a stream of drool sliding down one of his three chins, snoring loudly.

2. The passenger is now a large lady with thick glasses, holding multiple shopping bags, showing a half-interested Jacob pictures of her family.

3. A Mexican migrant worker sitting beside Jacob argues in Spanish with a defiant Mexican woman in the seat across the aisle.

4. The scenery passing by is green and mountainous. They pass a sign full of bullet holes, announcing Wild and Wonderful West Virginia. Jacob aims his camera at the sign.

5. Jacob sleeps as the bus enters Panther Falls, West Virginia. On the sign: 1006 Happy People and 3 Old Grumps.

End Montage

CUT TO:

EXT. PANTHER FALLS BUS STATION - DAY

The terminal is a small, shingled structure next to a gas station with a sign, Spencer's Lunch. There's no front door, but two windows opening onto the small lot, one marked *Bus Business*, the other, *Food Ordering*. A few old wooden picnic tables sit outside near the sidewalk.

Jacob approaches and sees A MAN in the food ordering window, working on a crossword puzzle. His shirt reads, *I'M SPENCER*.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB
I'd like to buy a ticket to
Pleasant Hollow.

SPENCER, dressed in a white apron, looks at Jacob.

SPENCER
What you think a ten letter word
for queer might be? Starts with an
"O".

JACOB
Outlandish.

Spencer nods in agreement and writes it down. He looks back
up.

SPENCER
Now, what can I do you for?

JACOB
Pleasant Hollow?

SPENCER
That's a bus question.

He points to the bus business window, just beside them.
Jacob looks at the vacant portal, sighs, picks up his bags
and shuffles to the other window.

Spencer removes his apron and hangs it on a hook behind him.
Then he grabs a green visor cap from an adjacent hook, places
it on his bald head and situates himself on a stool behind
the bus business window. As a final touch, he puts on a pair
of reading spectacles. He looks over the top of the glasses
at Jacob.

SPENCER (CONT'D)
Yes sir. How can I help you?

Jacob places his bags down again.

JACOB
I need a bus to Pleasant Hollow.

SPENCER
Ain't no such critter.

Jacob looks around.

JACOB
How far is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SPENCER

Bout thirty-one miles and six tenths as the crow flies, give or take a yard or two.

JACOB

Is there a taxi service?

Spencer is amused.

SPENCER

Where you from?

Jacob looks around. There's a MAN WITH A TATTOO sitting on one of the picnic tables, smoking, looking down the highway. The tattoo is crudely drawn, but depicts a furry, slender animal. The word mongoose is scrawled below the picture. As he takes a hit from his cigarette, Jacob notices the man is missing his middle finger at the knuckle.

JACOB

Listen, I just want to get to Pleasant Hollow. How would you suggest I do that?

Spencer looks beyond Jacob. He points toward the service station lot, where a man leans into the back of a station wagon, loading crates into the vehicle.

SPENCER

Tug, over there, lives up that way.

Jacob nods his thanks and heads for the station. A pickup truck pulls up to the curb and the tattooed man climbs in the passenger side, flicking his cigarette aimlessly toward Jacob. The burning butt rolls near Jacob's foot. Jacob steps on it, extinguishing the flame.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Jacob approaches the station wagon as the man slams the back door. Tug sees Jacob coming, turns to him.

JACOB

I'm told you might be going to Pleasant Hollow.

TUG, probably in his sixties, dressed in a white suit with yellow socks, wipes his forehead with a red kerchief pulled from his coat pocket and extends his right hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUG

Tug Bartlett. Glad to make your acquaintance.

Jacob puts a bag down and shakes Tug's hand.

JACOB

I'd be glad to pay you.

Tug sizes Jacob up and reaches down for the bag, opening the passenger door.

TUG

Well, git on in, son. Can't dance and it's too wet to plow. Might as well git on down the road.

Tug straightens his hood ornament, a chrome naked goddess with wings, as he rounds the wagon.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - DUSK

The sun sets on the Appalachians as the car travels a narrow, paved country road.

INT. TUG BARTLETT'S STATION WAGON - CONTINUOUS

Tug negotiates the tight turns, glances at his passenger occasionally.

TUG

What happen? Your car break down?

JACOB

Nope.

Jacob's bags are on the seat between them. Tug eyes them, finally breaks the silence.

TUG

You got business in the holler?

JACOB

You might say that.

TUG

I'm a business man myself. Do a little of everything.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUG (CONT'D)

Like today, I'm delivering some packages from the bus station. You were lucky to catch me, really.

Jacob nods. Much to Tug's consternation, his passenger is not volunteering any information. Tug winks at Jacob, reaches his arm into the back seat. He manages to flip open the top of a cardboard carton on the back seat and remove a bottle from it, bringing it to the front seat.

He unscrews the bottle-top with his teeth and takes a hit. The liquid makes him shudder. He offers the bottle to Jacob.

TUG (CONT'D)

First rate, A-number-one moonshine likker. Smooth as corn silk. I deliver a little of this too, when the sheriff's asleep.

Jacob sniffs the top of the bottle, then takes a small sip. He grimaces.

TUG (CONT'D)

That'll take the hair off your tongue.

Tug looks down at Jacob's bags again.

TUG (CONT'D)

Take pictures do you?

Jacob gives in.

JACOB

Yeah.

TUG

Sign Followers?

JACOB

Pardon?

TUG

Aint' the autumn leaves this time a year. Gotta be Sign Followers. You ain't the first.

Jacob stares out the window, silent.

Tug takes another swig from the bottle and passes it to Jacob, who refuses this time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TUG (CONT'D)

You ever been in these parts?

JACOB

Listen. I just wanted a ride.

TUG

Suit yourself. People are a little different around here is all. Set in there ways, you might say.

JACOB

I'll keep that in mind.

TUG

Well, I reckon you can find out for yourself soon enough. It's Sunday.

(he looks at his watch)

They probably be going at it 'bout the time we get there.

(pause)

You never met Oprah, did you?

JACOB

Beg your pardon?

TUG

Oprah. From the television. She lives in the city, hear tell.

JACOB

Oh. No. Never met Oprah.

Tug stares through the windshield at the headlights beams. He takes another drink.

TUG

I like Oprah.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW CHURCH OF SIGNS - NIGHT

The station wagon stops in front of a tiny church on the edge of a small community. There are a few cars in the dirt lot and some others parked beside the road. The white cinder block building has no windows, but a strong light comes through the open door, casting an oblong beam into the yard.

Beside the church, on the same lot, is a modest clapboard house of little distinction.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Beyond that, on the ascending slope of a mountain, tucked in the edge of the woods, is a single-wide mobile home resting on cement blocks.

Jacob gets out of the car with his baggage. The music coming from the church is an eclectic mix of country gospel, an improvisational cacophony of guitar, organ, and relentless tambourines.

Tug leans toward him, points up the street toward the center of the village. Slightly uphill, not too far down the street, a neon sign, *Ruby's Eats*, can be seen in a building window.

TUG

I'm heading up to Ruby's. Best chili melt in the valley. You're welcome to join me if you ain't up to this just yet.

Jacob closes the door, leans to the window.

JACOB

Thanks anyway.

He hands Tug some cash. Tug hands Jacob a fresh bottle of moonshine. Jacob tries to give it back. Tug waves him off.

TUG

Complimentary. You might need it.

He puts the car in gear, pulls away.

Jacob turns to the church, crosses the street and puts his bags down. He pulls a cigarette from his pocket, lights it as he looks toward the building.

Between the church and the nearby house, some kids play on an old rusting swing set. One of the older children- a GIRL of about eleven, thick glasses- watches as Jacob pulls a camera from his bag and takes a couple of photographs of the church. He frames the rustic cross in front with wood- burned letters: *Pleasant Hollow Church of Signs Following*.

Jacob walks closer, finds an old stump, sits and starts changing film in his camera. The girl leaves the swing set and watches him closely. Jacob closes the back of his camera and stands. The girl follows him as he slowly walks up the steps and into the church.

INT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

Jacob slips into the back of the church. The attention of the congregation is on the pulpit area, where a very CHARISMATIC PREACHER- a wild-eyed man in his late sixties- paces and speaks passionately. He's holding a soft drink bottle filled with kerosene, a small rag stuffed into the neck of the bottle.

PREACHER

Speak to me about faith, Brother Willard!

BROTHER WILLARD is a tall, skinny man standing at the pulpit reading from a King James Bible. His high-pitched monotone contrasts sharply with the preacher, who echoes Willard's recitation with fiery enthusiasm.

WILLARD

"For let him ask in faith.."

PREACHER

(shouting)

Faith! Ask in faith!

WILLARD

"...nothing wavering."

PREACHER

No wavering! Faith is solid as an oak. Faith is strong as a pit bull! Faith is a concrete foundation!

Jacob finds a metal folding chair against the back wall. The girl sits beside him, silently watching him, seemingly unperturbed by the growing evangelistic outbursts. Jacob peers over the heads of the congregation of about twenty men and women sitting in makeshift wooden pews and scattered folding chairs. An occasional "Amen" and "Praise Jesus" erupts from the room.

WILLARD

"For he that wavereth is like a wave of..."

PREACHER

(joining in)

"...a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed." Go ahead, Brother Willard.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The preacher takes a lighter from his pocket and lights the rag in the bottle. The flame grows and the black smoke drifts toward the ceiling.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways." That's what it says, ain't it, Brother Willard?

WILLARD

Amen.

PREACHER

That's what it says and that's what it means.

Some members of the congregation are standing now. Some of them bellowing indecipherable phrases. The preacher stands tall holding the burning bottle high in the air.

Behind him there are a few scattered musicians- a pimply teenager with an electric guitar, a sun-withered old woman with a tambourine. Jacob cannot help but be drawn to one particular WOMAN, around thirty, plainly adorned like all the others, but strikingly handsome, perched behind a portable electric keyboard.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Through faith I defy the wicked! I defy the devil himself! Without faith, a man is worth no more than the clothes on his back. He's a shadow waiting for the sun to go down.

The congregation becomes more animated. The tambourine reverberates. The preacher passes the flame beneath each of his outstretched arms.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

(continuing)

I, for one, will not burn. Brother Willard, read Hebrew, chapter 11.

Willard searches his Bible.

Jacob, feeling adequately isolated from the proceedings, lifts his camera and snaps the shutter as the Preacher moves the fiery bottle beneath his chin. The flames spread to his cheeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

WILLARD

"Who through faith subdued
kingdoms, wrought righteousness,
obtained promises, stopped the
mouths of lions,...

PREACHER

(joining Willard)
... and quenched the violence of
FIRE!!!

The guitar player launches into a chord, the woman on the keyboard follows suit, eventually finding the melody of a rollicking hymn. The preacher pulls down the bottle, looks across the congregation, challenges them.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

(continuing)
Brothers and sisters. Do you have
faith?

Many from the congregation leave their seats and gather around the pulpit. Some gyrate wildly to the music, others drop to their knees in tempestuous prayer. Brother Willard backs away from the pulpit as the preacher approaches and lifts a can marked *Red Devil Plumber's Lye*.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

(continuing)
"And they can drink any deadly
thing and it shall not harm them."
Devil, are you watching?

Jacob takes another picture of the Preacher as he puts the container to his lips and drinks the poisonous liquid. The girl beside Jacob watches curiously as he snaps away.

The music grows in volume and pace. Each church member seems individually captured by the spirit of the proceedings.

Willard drags a wooded crate to the center of the circle being formed by the worshippers and opens the lid. The preacher is the first to approach the box.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Don't fight it! It's the Holy
Spirit! Let it fill you up.

The preacher reaches into the crate and pulls out a rattlesnake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Jacob lowers his camera, disturbed by the presence of the reptile.

The snake slithers wildly in response to the preacher's gyrations. It writhes in the air, circling aimlessly, its tongue searching the air. The preacher shakes the snake hard. Suddenly, it grows limp in his hand.

PREACHER (CONT'D)

Glory, glory!

He passes the snake to another member of the church, who holds it high.

Jacob backs toward the open door. The preacher, pulling another rattler from the box, catches sight of Jacob as he passes through the threshold.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - SAME TIME

Jacob sits on the front stoop of the church, trying to compose himself. The girl follows, sitting beside him. She sees his camera on the steps, reaches out a finger and touches it.

The MUSIC from inside comes to an ABRUPT HALT.

INT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

The congregation pauses. They look toward the preacher as he struggles to loosen the fangs of the second rattlesnake from the muscle between his thumb and forefinger. He finally frees himself from the serpent.

The preacher, holding the snake in one hand, stares across the room, seemingly unfettered by the attack.

He looks toward the door, then hands the snake to a nearby church member who places the rattler back in the crate. The preacher slowly steps toward the door, pulling out a handkerchief, his bitten hand now dripping blood. The congregation watches as he leaves the building.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

The Preacher, holding the handkerchief to his hand, stands above Jacob. Jacob rises, facing the man, who looks deep into Jacob's eyes, fully aware of his own intimidating posture. An awkward beat passes before the Preacher relaxes, extends his good hand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PREACHER
Strangers are always welcome here.

The preacher puts his hand down.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
I've seen you before. Who might
you be?

Jacob hesitates. Looks straight into the preacher's eyes.

JACOB
Jacob Hawke.

The preacher is silent for a moment, stone-faced. Then, a broad smile crosses his face.

PREACHER
Well, Jacob Hawke. That's a mighty
fine camera you have there. May I
see it?

Jacob looks down at the girl and extends his hand. Delighted by the opportunity to handle the camera, she lifts it to him. Jacob hands it directly to the preacher.

Some members of the congregation have come to the door, watching. Others crowd behind.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
Mighty fine, indeed.

The preacher holds the camera for a couple of seconds, as if admiring it, then quickly opens the back, exposing the film. The preacher's wounded hand is swelling, his skin growing pallid.

The preacher returns the camera to Jacob, motions for the younger man to follow him back into the church.

INT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

The church members gathered by the door separate, allowing the two to enter. The girl comes in behind them, rushes to woman who had been playing the keyboard. The preacher stands beside Jacob in front of the congregation, puts his good arm around him.

PREACHER
A wondrous thing has happened
tonight. Perhaps a sign.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The preacher is growing weak, the venom of the snake taking effect. His words are not as comfortable coming from his mouth.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 Jesus has brought my son, Jacob,
 back to me after all these years.

The news generates murmurs of surprise and some more "Amens" from the assembly.

The preacher turns to Jacob.

PREACHER (CONT'D)
 (continuing)
 Now son. If you'll be so kind as
 to help me to the house. I'll need
 to lie down soon.

His knees weaken, and he almost falls, but Willard, standing nearby joins Jacob in supporting the preacher.

Together, they bear the preacher's weight, half-carrying him out the door.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

The keyboard player and the young girl follow along with a few others as Jacob and Willard lead the preacher across the lot to the nearby house.

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They pass through a simple living room- an old sofa, a well-used recliner, and a small television with rabbit ears. They continue into an adjoining bedroom where they deposit the preacher, still coherent, but distinctly ill, on the bed. Immediately, the bed is surrounded by a few members of the church, dropping to their knees to pray.

Jacob backs away, watching momentarily as his father is attended by the Sign Followers. One lady removes his shoes, another begins to wash his face with a damp cloth.

WOMAN WITH CLOTH
 You okay, Hayden?

Hayden looks at Jacob, standing next to keyboard player.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYDEN
(to woman with cloth)
I'm good.

Hayden closes his eyes.

The keyboard player touches Jacob's arm. Her eyes are strikingly beautiful and mysteriously penetrating. She takes Jacob by surprise.

WOMAN
I'm Minnie. I...

JACOB
We need to call a doctor.

Minnie leads him out of the room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob immediately looks around the room.

MINNIE
What?

JACOB
The phone? We need to..

Minnie is calm, trying to placate.

MINNIE
Hayden doesn't have one.

Jacob, exasperated, heads for the door. Minnie follows.

EXT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The screen door slams behind them. Jacob looks around nervously.

MINNIE
It wouldn't do any good.

Jacob ignores her, walks down the steps to the yard. He sees the children still playing by the swing set, many of the cars still parked in the church lot. Light still shines from the church door. Music can be heard.

The young girl appears, coming his way carrying Jacob's bags, his camera around her neck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob runs to meet her, takes his bags. Minnie follows and kneels beside the girl as Jacob searches through his things, locating his jacket. He pulls the digital phone from the pocket and fumbles with it for a moment, trying to dial.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Hayden wouldn't want a doctor.

The phone's display: "No service available." Jacob flings the phone into the darkness.

JACOB

Shit!

He looks around frantically.

MINNIE

(continuing)

We just have to wait.

Jacob looks at her, incredulous.

JACOB

Yeah? Well, my mother died in that same bed! You do what you want, I'm going to get a doctor!

Jacob runs toward the nearest parked car. He looks inside. No keys. He goes to another, this one an old pickup. This time he spots a rabbit foot dangling from the key chain in the ignition.

Jacob opens the door and climbs inside. He starts the engine, overturning the ignition, producing an awful grinding sound. He fumbles with the gear shift, dropping the automatic transmission into reverse.

The truck lurches backward, slamming immediately into a large tree. Jacob's head jerks back, smashes into the back glass. He falls forward onto the steering wheel.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. UNIDENTIFIABLE LOCATION

The space is hazy, not real, a suggestion of a room. A YOUNG BOY, perhaps eight, sits amidst a blaze of exaggerated flashing lights. He wears a fire helmet and is rocking back and forth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

As our view improves, it becomes clearer that the boy is riding in a small coin-operated fire truck, mechanical sirens wailing, bells clanging. He is exhilarated, but seriously intent on finding the imaginary fire.

BOY'S POV

A image of silhouettes against large windows backlit by an intense lightning storm. Two female figures lifting coffee cups to their lips, one smoking.

RETURN TO BOY

The boy is focused and intense, staring at the women as he bucks up and down. The sirens mix with the sound of thunder.

BOY'S POV

Between the women's darkened faces a great lightning bolt strikes outside, lighting the women for just a flash, their faces turning toward the boy. The sound of sirens and bells immediately die. The boy's scream takes over.

CUT TO

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jacob wakes with a jolt, disoriented from the dream. He's on the sofa with an ice-filled towel on the back of his head. Minnie, beside him, moves toward him, calming him with her hand on his shoulder. She turns toward an older man, DR. CASTELLO, sitting in the lounge chair.

MINNIE

Doctor.

Dr. Castello moves toward Jacob, checks his vital signs, seems satisfied. Minnie watches from behind.

DR. CASTELLO

You had these people worried, son.

Jacob focuses, looks around the room, trying to remember. He sees the young girl from the church looking over Minnie's shoulder.

MINNIE

Dr. Castello lives just up the road, just outside of town..
(pauses, looks behind her)
This is my daughter, Rebekah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The girl smiles, shyly. Jacob shifts his eyes to his father's bedroom. The door is closed. The doctor rises.

DR. CASTELLO
 (to Minnie)
 He's going to be just fine.
 (to Jacob)
 Rest is best for you now.

Jacob lies still, listening. Dr. Castello starts folding up his instruments.

DR. CASTELLO (CONT'D)
 (to Minnie)
 If you'd like me to check on
 Hayden...

Minnie shakes her head.

MINNIE
 You know Hayden.

DR. CASTELLO
 (regrettably)
 Yeah. I know Hayden.

Dr. Castello rises and picks up his medical bag. Walks to the door and exits.

Minnie looks at Jacob for a moment.

MINNIE
 Get some sleep.

Jacob looks toward his father's closed door again.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
 Don't worry. He's in good hands.

Jacob closes his eyes.

Minnie goes to Hayden's bedroom door, opening it.

INT. HAYDEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A couple of men and women from the church still kneel beside Hayden, praying. Minnie joins them.

CUT TO:

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - JACOB'S POV

Slowly coming into focus is a long-legged spider constructing a huge cobweb in the corner of a ceiling. Scanning the wall, there is a picture of a woman (familiar from Jacob's dream) holding a child (the boy in the dream) in her lap, who offers her a daisy. Next to it is a framed cross-stitched pattern with Jacob's name and the words, *Our Blessed Son*.

Lower, on a night table, is a carved wooden lamp shaped like a cowboy boot, with a silver plaque reading, *Jacob Hawke, Vacation Bible School, 1979*. Beside it is a small football trophy- *Punt, Pass & Kick, 1981, ages 10/11*.

ON JACOB

Jacob props himself up on his elbows and reaches to pick up the trophy. Looking at it, he smiles.

EXT. PROPERTY - CONTINUOUS

Rebekah exits the trailer and makes a bee line for Hayden's house. As she nears it, she slows, approaches a window. Shading her eyes, trying to block the sun, she peers through the glass.

INT. ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob returns the trophy to the bedside table. He swings his feet over the bed to sit upright. He shifts his attention to a wooden box, the words *Jesus is Lord* etched in its side.

Suddenly, Jacob recoils, pulling his feet back onto the bed. He retreats to the far wall, keeping his eyes on the box.

Rebekah watches, her face pressed against the window pane, unseen by Jacob. Jacob is shaking.

The door to the room swings open, revealing Hayden, fully dressed, attempting to button his sleeve around his still slightly swollen arm.

HAYDEN

Good mor...

Jacob springs from the bed and bolts past him, nearly knocking the man down. Hayden turns back to the bedroom, searching, sees the box as Rebekah disappears from the window.

INT. HAYDEN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob spots his bags on the sofa, grabs them in one quick motion, and keeps going. From the other room, he hears..

HAYDEN
Jacob! Son!

EXT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rebekah rounds the corner as Jacob bursts through the screen door and onto the porch. He looks around to get his bearings, sees the girl, then starts to the road. He continues up the street toward the middle of town. Hayden comes to the porch, still calling his name.

Hayden holds the wooden crate, the lid open. He turns it upside down.

HAYDEN
Jacob, son. The box is empty.

The words are lost, only heard by Rebekah, as Jacob continues up the street.

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob rushes past the houses as he heads toward the center of the small village. He recognizes a couple of people from the church service the night before in different yards. A man mowing his lawn, a lady stooped in her garden who looks up as he passes.

Up ahead, he sees Tug's station wagon parked in front of the two-story building, marked *Ruby's*. Jacob walks to the door and enters.

INT. RUBY'S - DAY

A bell hanging on the door rings as Jacob steps inside. It's part general store, video rental, and restaurant. There's a grill behind the counter at the far end and a few booths near the window facing the street.

Tug, reading a newspaper and sipping on a cup of coffee, sits in one of the booths, his white suit slightly wrinkled, a negligible shadow on his unshaven face.

Jacob is nearly out of breath, trying to collect himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TUG
You look like a rabbit caught in
car lights.

Jacob walks toward him.

JACOB
You going back to Panther Falls?

Tug examines the man before him, takes a sip on his coffee
before answering.

TUG
It'll cost you.

JACOB
Let's go.

TUG
Hold up a minute, son. I ain't
going nowhere 'til I had my bacon
and eggs. And some grits.

Jacob recognizes the futility of pressing Tug.

TUG (CONT'D)
Take a load off. Ain't nothing
can't wait until after Ruby's eggs.

RUBY, a attractive woman in her sixties, emerges from the
back room tying an apron around her waste.

RUBY
I thought I heard voices out here.

She stops by a small mirror hanging behind the counter and
fusses with her hair a moment before she turns to the two
men. She grabs the pot from the coffee maker as she heads
their way.

She automatically freshens Tug's cup, her eyes meeting his in
a knowing, lascivious glance, not unnoticed by Jacob.

TUG
Ruby, this is...

Tug is searching, realizing he doesn't know Jacob's name.

JACOB
... Jacob Hawke.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Ruby's face lights up into a big smile. Tug recognizes the connection.

RUBY

Well I'll be.

(she takes another good
look at his face)

Look at you! All grown up. You've
been gone a long time. Hayden must
be tickled pink.

Ruby holds the coffee pot in front of Jacob as an offering.
He sits, accepts.

TUG

Jacob Hawke! My goodness.

RUBY

I haven't seen you since you were
knee-high to a crawdad.

TUG

(to no one in particular)

Jacob Hawke.

The cups are full. Jacob takes a sip. Ruby studies his
face.

RUBY

One thing for sure, you still got
your mama's eyes. She used to
bring you in here and talk to me
while you rode that old fire truck.

She points to the corner to an dusty old coin-operated fire
truck, **now a catch-all, old displays and unfinished projects
rest on and around it.** A crinkled piece of cardboard with
faded writing announces it as out of order. **Jacob looks at
it, transfixed. It is the truck from his recent dream.**

RUBY (CONT'D)

You'd stay in that thing all day if
she let you. You were in it the
last time it worked.

(to Tug)

A storm was passing through and
lightning struck the power line up
the way. Little Jacob- bless his
heart- got a jolt from the steering
wheel. Poor thing, he cried all
day long. Never would get back on
it.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

RUBY(CONT'D)

Didn't matter I guess- lightning
fried it for good.

(back to Jacob)

You remember that, Hon?

Jacob still stares at the fire truck. The bell on the door rings. Hayden Hawke comes in the diner, Rebekah at his heels. He sees Ruby talking to Jacob.

HAYDEN

It's a blessing ain't it Ruby?

(he walks to them)

God works in mysterious ways.

Jacob is disturbed by Hayden's presence. He doesn't look up.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Get the boy anything he wants. Put
it on my tab.

Jacob looks up at Ruby.

JACOB

I can pay.

Ruby crosses the room for more coffee. Tug slides over in his seat to make room for Hayden. Hayden motions toward Ruby.

HAYDEN

(to Jacob)

She's still a Baptist. But I
hain't give up on her yet.

RUBY

Ain't everybody likes to saddle up
next to snakes.

HAYDEN

Serpents, Ruby.

Hayden hands Rebekah a nickel and the girl runs directly to the gum machine.

RUBY

Snakes, serpents, reptiles,
whatever. It don't appeal to me.

HAYDEN

They're all powerless when the Lord
is in the room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

RUBY

By the looks of that hand, He
must've left the room last night.

Hayden shakes his head, giving in. He looks at Jacob as he sits.

HAYDEN

You gotta love that woman.

Jacob watches as Rebekah returns, sits next to him, offers him a gum ball, gets no response. Jacob turns toward the men across from him.

JACOB

(to Tug)

Could you give us a minute?

Tug obliges, gets up, brushing by Hayden.

TUG

Don't mind me.

(to Rebekah)

C'mon little darling.

Rebekah jumps up, allowing Tug to grab her armpits, lifting her onto his shoulders. They head toward the counter, joining Ruby. Jacob sits across from Hayden.

JACOB

God didn't send me here, a magazine did. I'm a photographer. A damned good one. I need to know if I'll be able to take pictures in your church. If not, I'm wasting my time.

Hayden considers this, doesn't flinch. Takes a long sip from his cup. Puts it down.

HAYDEN

That's why you came?

JACOB

That's it.

HAYDEN

So you're a photographer.

(pauses)

Well, I'm a preacher. And the way I look at it, that makes me a shepherd of sorts.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

HAYDEN(CONT'D)

I look after my flock. And you ain't the first to come down here and gawk at us through a lens. Most of 'em think we're a bunch of backwoods freaks. Liken us to a carnival show.

JACOB

You are what you are. I just point the camera at the truth.

Hayden sits back. He looks his son in the eye.

HAYDEN

So you're looking for truth. And you think you can capture it and freeze it onto a picture.

(pauses)

Tell you what. We're hosting a revival next weekend. Signs Followers coming from three states to praise Jesus. Even Rev. Dewey Thomas is coming from Tennessee. The church won't be big enough. We're going to be building a brush arbor. If you want to take pictures of these good people, you need to earn their respect.

Jacob nods in a agreement.

JACOB

Fair enough.

(pauses)

I'm not staying in that house.

HAYDEN

(lifts his voice, to Ruby)

Ruby. You still have that room upstairs?

Ruby, with the others, listening from the counter, perks up.

RUBY

Sure do.

Hayden stands. Walks her way.

HAYDEN

Looks like you've got a boarder, a high and mighty city boy photographer from a fancy magazine, here to take pictures of the truth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Ruby rings the register open and finds a key in the drawer. She walks over to Jacob's table, puts it in front of him.

RUBY

The room's outside. At the top of the stairs. It's got a bathroom and a telephone. I'd watch what I say on the phone, though. It's a party line, and Vernie Mae Baker has her ear glued to it most the day. Welcome back to Pleasant Holler.

Hayden crosses to the door.

HAYDEN

(to Rebekah)

C'mon girl. We've got work to do.

Rebekah obeys. Follows Hayden.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

(to Jacob)

We start tomorrow. Early.

JACOB

I'll be there.

Hayden and Rebekah exit. Ruby puts her hand on her hips.

RUBY

Looks like the snake bit twice this time.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - DAY

Jacob lies on the bed, smoking. The room is small, but pleasant- a bed, a night table, a chair, a bathroom at one end, one window overlooking the town toward the church. A telephone hangs on the wall beside the window. A hand-written sign beside it reads, *NO LONG DISTANCE*.

Beside Jacob is his open wallet and an aged, faded photograph of a woman holding a child. This is very similar to the one in the bedroom at Hayden's house, same woman and child from the dream, but this picture is taken outside on the porch. A man's arm is around the woman, but the rest of his body has been ripped from the picture.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob picks up the photograph and looks at it. He rises from the bed and walks to the window, looks out toward the church and his father's house. The town is quiet except for a mongrel dog lazing in the heat. Jacob grabs his camera bag and walks out.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - DAY

Jacob walks the street down the slope toward the church with his camera, passing the same houses he walked by earlier. The same WOMAN, an white-haired old lady, is on her knees weeding her garden just beyond a picket fence. She looks up when she hears Jacob's shutter snap.

When Jacob gets a good look at her face, he pulls the camera down.

JACOB
Mrs. Harrison?

She pauses, trying to get a bead on Jacob.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Second grade. Wise County
Elementary. Jacob Hawke. Remember
me?

Mrs. Harrison smiles and gets to her feet.

MRS. HARRISON
My goodness. Hayden's boy.
(pauses, looks at him)
I remember, you were the quietest
thing. Smart as a whip, but always
peeing on yourself.

JACOB
I think I've finally conquered that
one.

Jacob looks her garden over. Flowers are rampant.

MRS. HARRISON
It's the soil around here. Takes a
while to get rid of all the rocks
and stones, but then you can't beat
it for flowers.

Jacob spots some yellow daisies. Mrs. Harrison sees him looking.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She bends toward the flowers, pulls a pair of scissors out of her apron, and cuts a few, bunches them together. She hands them to Jacob across the fence.

MRS. HARRISON (CONT'D)
Daisies always were her favorite.

CUT TO:

EXT. PATH THROUGH WOODS - DAY

A small footpath winds up a hill through the forest. The light streaks in through the trees onto Jacob carrying the flowers. At a split in the trail, he veers right and comes upon a small clearing. There, near a stream, is a old wooden rail fence surrounding a cemetery of mostly unkept graves.

EXT. GRAVEYARD - DAY

Jacob passes through the run-down gate and looks down at the various graves, overgrown with weeds, until he finds a marker that is clean and well-tended, the marker reading *Molly Dunlow Hawke, 1934-1981, In God's Hands*. Fresh daisies already adorn the site. Jacob adds his to the mound.

He pauses to look at the grave, then finds a nearby stone where he sits and lights a cigarette, listening to the stream.

From a distance, the SOUNDS OF LAUGHTER (O.S.) cuts through the trees, followed by A FEMALE VOICE speaking, too far away to be intelligible. This piques Jacob's curiosity. He follows the sound, which leads him further up the mountain, along the stream.

EXT. MOUNTAIN FOREST - CONTINUOUS

The terrain is tricky, and Jacob has to negotiate big stones and underbrush filled with thorns. The sounds die away, and he decides to head back to the footpath.

Near the trail, Jacob sees a deer grazing in the woods. He points his camera, prepares to snap the shutter when the laughter once again penetrates the forest. The deer, spooked by the sound, raises his head, then darts off.

Jacob again heads for the sounds. Pushing his way through some branches, he stops short when he spots Minnie and Rebekah near a small pond created by the mountain stream. Rebekah plays on the bank, seemingly searching for something. She carries a burlap sack and a long wooden stick with a looped metal hook on the end.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Minnie, barefooted, wearing a plain long sundress, stands next to the stream. Jacob lifts his camera. Suddenly, in one motion, Minnie lifts her dress over her head and steps into the stream. Enchanted by the sight, Jacob snaps a series of pictures as the woman drops her dress to the side of the pond and slips naked into the water.

Watching through the lens, Jacob is taken with the woman's beauty as she lies back in the stream, allowing the current to flow over her. Rebekah climbs the rocks across the way, rhythmically tapping the wooden stick on the stones.

Jacob adjust his position, hoping to find a better vantage point. His foot finds a loose stone, causing him to slip.

Protecting the camera, he slides in a sitting position a few feet down the hill. The noise attracts the couple below.

Obviously embarrassed, Jacob starts to get up, searching for an explanation to his voyeurism. A RATTLING (O.S.) noise is heard.

JACOB
Hello, I..uh..well...

Minnie interrupts.

MINNIE
(shouting)
No! Stop. Stay perfectly still!

She turns to Rebekah.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
(to Rebekah)
Do you see it?

Rebekah nods.

Jacob is confused. He watches as Minnie walks unabashedly out of the stream. She keeps her eyes on the hill as she picks up her dress and slides back into it. She holds out her hand toward Rebekah, who has come down the other side to join her. Rebekah hands her the pole.

They both start to climb the hill toward Jacob, proceeding with caution.

Jacob, confused, starts to speak when he sees the rattlesnake on the hill below him, about fifteen feet away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

(to Jacob)

Be quiet! You'll scare it away.

Jacob watches as the mother and child approach the snake. He carefully lifts his camera again. Minnie stops a few feet from the reptile and slowly extends the pole, leading with the metal hook.

Jacob momentarily freezes in fear when the snake, sensing the pole, coils to strike. When it does strike, Minnie expertly catches it in the loop and maneuvers the pole, bringing the snake near. She grabs the animal just behind the head, holding it at bay while Rebekah approaches with the sack.

Minnie smiles, lifts the snake high in the air. It is as long as she is tall.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

That's a good one.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN LANE - DUSK

Jacob walks beside Minnie, her dress wet and somewhat revealing, as they descend the mountain lane. Rebekah trails along behind, dragging the sack now holding the captured snake. Rebekah has Jacob's camera around her neck, lifting it occasionally and looking through the viewfinder.

Jacob looks back at the girl, who lags behind.

JACOB

(to Minnie)

She doesn't talk much?

MINNIE

She was in a car accident with her father when she was five. Spent three weeks in a coma. The doctors said she might not recover. Hayden arrived one day and went in Rebekah's room. He came out with her walking beside him, holding his hand. It was like she'd taken a long nap. But she wouldn't talk. Hasn't since.

(pauses)

Soon after that, I joined the church and Hayden let us move the trailer on his lot.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob looks back at the girl.

JACOB
Where's her father?

MINNIE
Away.

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob and the girls step from the wooded lane into the clearing near the church, it's door open.

MINNIE
He's in there. Praying.

Jacob looks at the dim light coming from the door of the church.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
He's a good man. He has his ways.
Be patient with him.

Rebekah hands her mother the snake bag. Jacob takes a couple of steps back during the exchange. Minnie notices. She takes the camera from around Rebekah's neck.

They watch as Rebekah runs down to the swing set. Minnie holds the camera.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
This magazine you work for, ...

JACOB
Document.

MINNIE
What makes them interested in Signs Following?

JACOB
You've got to admit it's a bit intriguing, handling snakes, fire, speaking in tongues...

MINNIE
What do you think?

JACOB
It doesn't matter what I think?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She hands the camera back to Jacob.

JACOB (CONT'D)

What do you do?

MINNIE

Mostly, I look after Hayden.
Clean, cook sometime, do his
laundry. Help him with the church.

(pauses)

You're going to help with the
arbor, I hear.

JACOB

News travels fast.

MINNIE

It's a small town.

She walks toward Rebekah. Jacob cannot help but admire her figure as she leaves.

JACOB

Good night.

She doesn't turn to him, but lifts her hand in a backwards wave.

Jacob heads for the street. He sees Minnie go to Rebekah, sit in one of the swings.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW CHURCH OF SIGNS - MORNING

In a small wooded area next to the church, families gather. Some men carry saws and various carpentry tools. A few of them are walking from nearby houses, some pulling up in automobiles.

Jacob approaches from the diner, carrying a camera bag, balancing a cup of coffee.

He arrives as people greet each other, men kissing other men on the lips in warm salutation. Hayden stands in front of the gathering, lifts his hand to quieten them all. They automatically close their eyes in prayer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYDEN

Lord, bless this gathering as we
undertake this worthy task...

As Hayden prays, Jacob tries to situate himself just behind the gathering, sitting his bags down, spills his hot coffee on his lap.

JACOB

Oh, shit!

The people praying turn as he jumps up. Minnie giggles. Hayden, eyes still closed, knows who it is. He doesn't look up.

HAYDEN

(continuing prayer)

...in the name of your son and our
saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen.

"Amen" echoes among the people.

Hayden looks up, catches sight of Jacob holding on to the crotch of his pants, keeping the liquid from his skin. Minnie passes by Jacob as the crowd breaks from the prayer, going to their various duties.

MINNIE

Nice form.

MONTAGE DEPICTING THE MORNING'S LABORS

1. Four trees are selected to serve as corner posts. Jacob watches as they begin sawing them down. He joins one of the men, helping at one of the posts.
2. Minnie joins some other women clearing the underbrush.
3. Rebekah and other children sit at picnic tables, making signs announcing the revival.
4. Jacob drags branches from the felled tree. He pauses, sweat on his brow. He's unaccustomed to the work, holds his back in discomfort. He sees Hayden across the way, working diligently. When his father returns his gaze, Jacob continues his work.
5. Ropes and pulleys are fashioned to hoist cut trees into place above the supports. Jacob runs to take the place of a man who falters with the weight. Minnie sees this and brings water to the man, smiles at Jacob. Another worker pats him on the back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6. Hayden sees branches from the fallen trees. He seems relentless in his dedication to the work.

7. Hayden is having trouble lifting a log into place for one of the bracings. Jacob walks up behind and helps.

END MONTAGE

EXT. ARBOR LOT - DAY

One woman rings a triangular bell to signal lunch. The men, working in various parts of the lot, put down their tools.

The women bring a potpourri of home cooking to tables that have been set up at the perimeter of the lot. The working men stand in line to accept the bounty. They scatter individually to various places in the shade to eat their food.

The men gather their in the shade. Jacob puts his head below one of the coolers, allowing the water to splash onto his neck.

Hayden nearly runs into Jacob. They stand for a moment in front of one another. Hayden then steps by him and walks toward the church.

Jacob sits on a stump with his dish. Rebekah joins him, sitting on the ground nearby. He notices that she's looking at his camera bag as she eats.

Jacob puts down his iced tea and opens his bag, pulling out the camera. He aims it at Rebekah. She puts her hand in front of her face.

Jacob aims his camera at one of the men sitting on another nearby stump, dipping his fingers into a bag of chewing tobacco. The man puts the wad of tobacco in his cheek and sees Jacob pointing the camera at him.

He holds the tobacco pack out, offering some to Jacob. Jacob shakes his head.

Jacob sees A WOMAN WITH A LARGE GLASS JAR making rounds, stopping to let others reach in and take a sample. She gets to Jacob and tilts the jar his way. Jacob is wary, what he sees through the glass is not appealing.

JACOB

What is it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN WITH JAR

Pig's feet. There's some tongues
in there too if you reach deep
enough.

Minnie walks up as Jacob hold his hand up to refuse the
offer.

JACOB

I'll pass.

WOMAN WITH JAR

Don't get 'em like this where you
come from, I 'magine. Chester
killed Jeff Davis jest yesterday.

JACOB

Jeff Davis?

MINNIE

(interrupting)

Their hogs. They name 'em after
Civil War Generals.

WOMAN WITH JAR

Union Generals. Makes it easier
for Chester to kill 'em.

MINNIE

(explaining)

They slaughter them alphabetically.
You should be honored- Jefferson
Davis was a celebrity. Last week
it was...

WOMAN WITH JAR

...Henry Eugene Davies. Nobody
knows much about him, but it was a
good pig.

JACOB

I believe I'll pass.

The woman offers one to Minnie, who eyes Jacob while
accepting.

MINNIE

(to Jacob, teasing)

Come on, city boy. Don't you want
to experience a little local color?

Minnie holds the pickled meat like a delicacy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She brings the pig's foot to her mouth and takes a small bite, tearing the meat from the bone. Rebekah, nearby, grimaces at the sight.

The challenge garners the attention of other workers. Jacob feels the pressure, plus he's somewhat amused and affected by the sight of Minnie with a little juice running down the crook of her lips. He can tell that she's only playing with him good naturedly.

WOMAN WITH JAR

(to Jacob)

Here, I'll git you a tongue.

The woman pulls out a pickled pink tongue and hands it to Jacob. Jacob, precariously holding the morsel, spots Hayden eyeing the proceedings from across the yard.

MINNIE

(to Jacob)

Now how can you knock it, if you don't try it? I bet you eat sushi.

WOMAN WITH JAR

What's that?

Jacob stares Minnie in the eye, opens wide and stuffs the entire pig tongue in his mouth. He slowly chews, his jaws pregnant with food, juice running from his lips.

Minnie's watches in disgust as Jacob makes a display of his dining, licking his lips, bringing his finger to his chin to return some of the escaping fluid to his mouth. He swallows, purses his lips, kissing the air.

JACOB

Now, that was good tongue.

He sees the MAN CHEWING TOBACCO staring at him, nauseated by the display.

JACOB (CONT'D)

(to the man)

Aren't you going to have one?

MAN CHEWING TOBACCO

Yech!.

Everybody laughs. Minnie hands her pig's foot back to the Woman with the jar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MINNIE

I never have been too fond of 'em
myself.

Another WOMAN WITH A PITCHER of liquid approaches.

WOMAN WITH PITCHER

What y'all need is some good ol'
ice tea.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARBOR LOT - LATER

The arbor is taking shape. Jacob seems to be enjoying himself more now, growing comfortable with the people around him. The trees inside the square created by the corner posts have been cleared and smaller post have been nailed across the top.

Rebekah shadows Jacob as he takes liberty to take a few photos of the workers, some who pause to pose for him in good nature.

Jacob turns to the girl. He takes another camera from his bag. This one is a Polaroid Instant camera. He aims it at her and snaps the shutter just as she sticks her tongue out at him. The film ejects automatically from the back of the camera. Rebekah watches intently.

Jacob bends down next to her, showing her the camera, as the picture forms.

JACOB

This is the shutter. When you
press this button, you capture
light onto a very sensitive film
inside the camera, reproducing the
image in front of you. That's how
pictures are made.

He holds the developing image in front of the girl as Minnie walks up from behind. Rebekah watches her face form in the photograph, her tongue caught at its peak extension.

Rebekah is delighted. To further her joy, Jacob hands her the camera.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Think you can handle this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She holds the camera gingerly, with wonder. Jacob adjusts it in her hands, showing her how to hold it.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Like this. Look through here.

Rebekah is very attentive.

JACOB (CONT'D)
You try it.

Rebekah aims the camera at her mother, snaps the shutter. She is delighted when she hears the click and the picture zip from the camera. She waits for the image.

Jacob then motions for her to walk around and take pictures.

JACOB (CONT'D)
You have eight more pictures on that roll. Get some good shots, okay?

She can hardly believe her fortune.

MINNIE
She likes you.

They watch as Rebekah wanders the grounds proudly with her camera.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
There's a carnival in Panther Falls tomorrow? Everybody'll be there. I know Rebekah would love to have you go with us, if you'd like.

They are still watching Rebekah as she points her camera at workers placing brush from the forest on top of the wooden post, creating a temporary ceiling. She snaps shots of two men, obviously twins, as they hammer together a rustic pulpit.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
That's Millard and Willard Lewis. You hardly see one without the other.

She points to two women near the church, putting away food in coolers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Those two are sisters. They're married to Millard and Willard. What's even stranger is that they live beside each other in those two houses.

Minnie points slightly up the hill. Jacob looks up to see two small houses, almost duplicates, identical picket fences around perfectly manicured lawns.

As they look, something in view changes Minnie's demeanor. Concern crosses her face. She quickly excuses herself and Jacob watches as she hurries toward Rebekah, ushering the girl briskly across the lot and to their trailer. Minnie takes one last look over her shoulder before disappearing through the door.

Jacob looks back up the hill, sees a man riding in a pickup truck, his tattooed arm hanging from the window with a cigarette. His middle finger is missing. It's the man from the station with the Mongoose tattoo.

Hayden, carrying some tree limbs to add to the brush pile, walks by, looks up to see what Jacob sees.

HAYDEN

Well, I'll be.

JACOB

Who is it?

HAYDEN

Trouble.

The pickup starts and the truck rolls slowly past the lot.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob's bags are open and emptied on the floor. The bathroom door is closed.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room has been converted to a temporary photographic darkroom, and chemicals resting on the sink and tub, shower curtain as a hanging line, a red bulb replacing the room light.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

On the line, drying, are pictures- Leah in the car seductively showing her leg, bum on the street, cab driver giving them the finger, people on the bus, Rebekah with the snake bag at the creek.

Jacob is busy at the wash basin, developing. He watches as an image of Minnie poised naked beside the stream appears. He takes it from the pan and hangs it beside a couple of others of her in the stream and those of her capturing the snake, her body showing sensuously through the wet dress.

Jacob pauses to admire these shots, the beauty of this simple, strong woman with such striking eyes.

EXT. JACOB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob steps outside, lights a cigarette at the top of the steps. The streets are quiet. Blue lights of televisions radiate from a couple of houses down the way.

He looks toward the church lot toward a dying bonfire, the remnants of a burning pile of underbrush. There's a light on in the church- Hayden praying.

Jacob is attracted by movement in a window from Minnie's trailer just beyond. He watches for a second, then disappears into his room, returning with his camera and a telephoto lens.

He props the long lens on the stair rail and bends toward the viewfinder. Through the lens he locates the window again.

Minnie is at Rebekah's bedside, putting away a book, giving her a good night kiss. She puts out the light and walks out of sight. Jacob picks her up again in another window, tracking her motion. She stops for a moment in front of a mirror on the wall, pulls a pin out of her long hair, letting it fall down her back.

Jacob loses sight of her again, pulls his lens down, looking around, slightly embarrassed once again by his voyeurism.

A light comes on outside the trailer and Minnie steps out onto her stoop. Jacob reaches inside his door to hit the light switch, eliminating any chance for him to be seen.

The SOUND OF A CAR approaching from the blind side of the diner prompts Jacob to put down his lens again. Tug's car comes into view across the street and stops in the shadows cast by the diner's neon closed sign. Country music blasts from the vehicle.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tug crawls from the car, then leans back in, grabbing a bottle of moonshine from a passenger inside. Tug turns it up. The music dies.

TUG
(to passenger)
Just wait for me.

Tug comes around the corner, just below Jacob, humming the tune from the car radio. He stops at Ruby's back door and knocks.

TUG (CONT'D)
(drunkenly)
Ruby.
(pause)
Hey Ruby.

A light comes on and Ruby shows up in the doorway, standing behind the screen in her robe. Tug pulls on the door, but it's hooked from inside.

TUG (CONT'D)
C'mon Ruby. I'll make you feel good.

RUBY
I felt just fine before you woke me up.

TUG
Oh Ruby.

RUBY
Hush up or you'll wake up the neighborhood. You know I don't like it when you're drunk. Now get out of here.

Tug accepts the futility of the situation. He walks to his car and opens the door. This time Jacob recognizes the tattoo on his passenger's arm. As the car pulls away, the passenger looks up and sees Jacob on the steps.

Jacob looks back across the town. The light in the church is off. There is now a light on in Hayden's front room. No sign of life anywhere else.

CUT TO:

EXT. PANTHER FALLS - MORNING

The carnival covers a large open lot beside the Panther Falls Fire Department. A ferris wheel hovers above the other typical rides. The small midway hosts a few tents and games, with good natured barkers, encouraging passersby to spend their money.

EXT. CARNIVAL PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The Jeep raises a bit of dust as Minnie locates a parking spot in the dirt lot.

As they get out, Jacob offers to help Ruby carry a large covered dish pulled from the back of the jeep. Rebekah steps out, the Polaroid camera still around her neck. She takes a picture of Ruby.

RUBY

(joking)

I swanee girl, you didn't give me a chance to fix my hair.

Rebekah holds the camera as the picture zips out the back.

They head for the entrance.

EXT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS- CONTINUOUS

As they walk through the gates, and across the small midway, Rebekah is fascinated by the carnival's displays. A clown, selling helium balloons, approaches them, holding a bright red balloon out for the girl to take. Rebekah shies away. Jacob takes it from the clown, pays for it, and offers it to Rebekah.

Rebekah looks at her mother, who nods her consent, then she accepts graciously. As they walk, Rebekah eyes some kids bouncing on a giant Moon Walk trampoline, having fun. Minnie notices Rebekah's interest.

MINNIE

Go ahead if you want. It's okay.

Minnie gives Rebekah a dollar, attaches the balloon to the girl's wrist. The girl starts to run off.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

The camera!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rebekah stops, reluctantly takes the strap from her neck and hands the Polaroid to Minnie before running off toward the ticket booth, nearly running headlong into Tug as he cheerily approaches.

TUG
(to Rebekah)
Hold your horses there, Annie
Oakley.

She nods to him apologetically, and continues her dash. Tug walks up to the rest of them, takes off his hat to Ruby, takes a big whiff of the air.

TUG (CONT'D)
That's got to be that A number one
award winning chili.

He focuses in on the dish Ruby' arms.

MINNIE
(explaining to Jacob)
Best chili you ever tasted. We're
with the reigning Chili Queen of
Wise County. Eight years running,
right Ruby.

RUBY
Nine. But who's countin'?

Ruby perks up as Tug takes the chili from Jacob, holds out his elbow to Ruby.

TUG
May I accompany you to the food
tent, my dear?

Ruby hesitates for a second, but it's obvious she's glad to see Tug.

MINNIE
(to Ruby)
We'll catch you later.

With a tip of his hat, Tug chivalrously escorts Ruby away, bowing goodbye to Minnie and Jacob.

Minnie holds the Polaroid, starts to put it away in her bag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

(to Jacob)

I've never seen her so taken with a thing.

JACOB

What?

She indicates the camera.

MINNIE

She slept with it last night.
Almost took her bath with it.

JACOB

She's got the bug.

MINNIE

Thank you.

(pause)

You know, you're different with her.

JACOB

What do you mean?

MINNIE

Most people talk to kids like they don't know anything. You look right in her eyes, treat her like a person. She likes that.

They watch as Rebekah stands in line.

JACOB

She reminds me of someone I once knew.

MINNIE

How old were you when you left Pleasant Hollow?

Jacob pulls a cigarette from his shirt pocket. Lights up. Stares off into the distance.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

I don't mean to pry, I was just...

Jacob looks toward Rebekah. She waves.

JACOB

Eleven. I was eleven.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

He sees Hayden in the distance, strolling through the fairgrounds, greeting people, shaking hands, handing them announcements of the revival.

MINNIE
(pleasantly)
Rebekah's age.

She sees Hayden too.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
He's always at it.

In another direction, they spot Millard and Willard Lewis and their wives at a milk bottle concession. Willard throws with point blank accuracy at the bottles, an action obviously wearing thin on the CARNIE operating the booth.

Millard sees them, waves. The twins' wives are laden with more stuffed animals than they can carry. Jacob lifts his camera and the Lewis families gather in pose for him, big smiles.

Millard then turns to the frustrated Carnie, offering payment for the next round.

WILLARD
(hollering to Minnie and
Jacob)
We gonna wipe this place out.

Minnie and Jacob return their attention to Rebekah, who is busy trying to achieve the perfect somersault, balloon still attached to her wrist.

MINNIE
So. Did you or didn't you?

JACOB
What?

MINNIE
Did you take pictures at the stream
the other day?

JACOB
I'm not sure what you're talking
about.

MINNIE
You know exactly what I'm talking
about.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Did you take pictures of me while I
was naked as a jaybird or not?

JACOB

(playfully)

Naked as a jay bird?

Minnie nods.

Jacob considers the person in front of him. Different now in
some way. Suddenly coy.

JACOB (CONT'D)

Absolutely not.

MINNIE

Thanks.

Minnie and Jacob turn back toward Rebekah, who rushes toward
them, shoes untied, out of breath from tumbling. Minnie
bends to tie her shoes. Rebekah takes the Polaroid, returns
it to her neck.

Rebekah taps her mother on the shoulder, excitedly, producing
a whole line of little red ride tickets, which spring out
like an accordion file from her hand, reaching nearly to her
knees.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Where on Earth?

Rebekah points to a man, RAY, approaching with a large cone
of cotton candy. Jacob recognizes him when he sees the
mongoose tattoo.

RAY

From me.

Minnie stands, obviously perturbed at his presence. She
looks first at Jacob, then at Ray, who holds the cotton candy
out to Rebekah.

Rebekah, reading her mother's body language, doesn't take it.
Ray looks at Jacob. An awkward moment.

MINNIE

What are you doing here, Ray?

RAY

Nothing wrong. I saw y'all come
in. Thought I might get a chance
to...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

MINNIE

To what?

RAY

Minnie, it's been a long time.
I wanted to see her. She don't
even remember me.

Minnie looks down at Rebekah. She puts her arm around the girl's shoulders, pulls her close.

MINNIE

You've seen her. Now you can go!

Minnie gives the balloon back to Rebekah and takes the tickets from her hand. She gives them back to Ray, still holding the huge cloud of cotton candy. He finally acknowledges Jacob.

RAY

Who's this?

Jacob starts to introduce himself. Minnie interrupts.

MINNIE

It doesn't matter who he is, Ray.
When did you get out?

RAY

A few days ago. They s'posed to
sent you a letter.

MINNIE

We moved.

RAY

Hayden Hawke got his hooks in you,
I see. You joined the church,
didn't you?

Minnie looks down at Rebekah, who stares at the ground, trying to avoid them.

MINNIE

(to Ray)
This ain't the time.

Jacob also looks at Rebekah, worried about her.

JACOB

(to Ray)
She's right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Ray ignores Jacob.

RAY
 (to Minnie, loudly)
 It ain't right, Minnie. She's mine
 too. Ain't nothing the law can do
 about that.

JACOB
 Maybe you should calm down.

Ray tenses up, gets tired of holding the cotton candy, throws it on the ground.

Rebekah watches as a passing dog runs to it, starts licking the sugar.

RAY
 And maybe you should mind your own
 business, since it don't matter who
 you are.

Ray takes a step toward Jacob, who, obviously out of his element, awkwardly braces himself for conflict. Minnie reaches out, grabbing Ray's arm.

MINNIE
 Ray. Stop it!

Ray pulls angrily away from her grasp. Rebekah loses hold of her balloon. They all watch it for a moment as it drifts above their heads and catches in the wind.

Ray backs off, curbing his anger for the girl's sake. Jacob clumsily holds his guard. Rebekah keeps watching the balloon, her eyes growing sadder.

A voice comes from behind them.

VOICE (O.S.)
 It's a beautiful day for a
 carnival, don't you think?

The voice belongs to Hayden Hawke, standing tall, his hand full of revival announcements. With him is Millard and Willard and a couple of other men from the church. Hayden smiles, completely at ease.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)
 (to Rebekah)
 There's my girl.
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

I've been looking all over for you.
I need some help handing out these
fliers.

Rebekah, relieved at the intervention, crosses over to
Hayden. She takes a handful of the papers. Ray watches
closely, showing disdain for Hayden.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

(to Ray)

Why, Ray. It's been a long time.

Hayden puts his hands on Rebekah's shoulder. Ray watches
carefully.

RAY

I got nothing to say to you.

(to Rebekah)

I'll come see you another time,
okay?

Rebekah, trying to avoid the tension, looks toward the sky,
catches a final glimpse of her balloon. Frustrated, Ray
walks away, heads toward the carnival gates.

Hayden turns toward Minnie and Jacob.

HAYDEN

Like I was saying, it's a beautiful
day for a carnival. You people
enjoy yourselves, you hear?

Minnie, looking at her daughter, stoically tries to rebound
from Ray's visit. She bends down to the girl, brushes the
hair from her face.

MINNIE

We plan to, don't we little lady?

Rebekah, holding the camera, manages a nod. She spies the
dog, finishing up the candy on the ground. She aims the
camera and snaps the shutter.

JACOB

I'll buy some tickets.

CUT TO:

EXT. MINNIE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jacob carries a sleeping Rebekah toward the trailer from the
Jeep.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Minnie's arms are filled with a menagerie of stuffed animals, one a huge green snake with a goofy red smile and large eyes. She opens the door and they pass inside.

INT. MINNIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Minnie points the way through the narrow trailer to Rebekah's bedroom.

INT. REBEKAH'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob puts the girl on the bed, starts to take the camera from her neck and the girl wakes momentarily, grabbing the Polaroid tightly despite her lethargic state.

Minnie places the animals on the bed, takes Rebekah's shoes off. Jacob leaves the camera in place.

They step back, admiring the girl in her slumber.

MINNIE

I had a good time today.
I'm glad you came.

JACOB

Me too.

MINNIE

She did too, despite it all.
(pause)
Sorry 'bout all that stuff with
Ray.

JACOB

Forget it.

Minnie turns off the light and they step out.

INT. TRAILER LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

It's a single wide, the kitchen separated from the living area by a row of tacky knickknack shelves. Minnie flops onto the sofa and catches Jacob staring at her. Suddenly, she breaks into an unexpected laugh.

JACOB

What?

MINNIE

You. In that bumper car.

Jacob laughs too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MINNIE (CONT'D)

What is it with you and cars?

JACOB

I never learned to drive. In the city I never had to.

MINNIE

(still laughing)

You were going the wrong way.

Minnie settles down. Her incredible eyes focus on Jacob. He's stricken with her simple beauty.

JACOB

I should head up the hill.

Minnie sits up quickly. A mischievous look on her face.

MINNIE

I've got a better idea.

She crosses into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator, producing a couple of tall cans of beer.

JACOB

Well, well. You Sign Followers are full of surprises.

MINNIE

We have our moments. C'mon.

EXT. MINNIE'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Minnie sits in one of the swings, swaying gently, sipping on her beer. She puts her head back, looking at the stars.

MINNIE

It's beautiful out here.

Jacob takes a cigarette from his pocket, lights it, sits in the swing beside her.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Got another one?

Jacob looks at her, a bit surprised, but pulls another from the pack.

She puts it between her lips, accepts a light. She takes a drag, blows the smoke out in a long stream.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MINNIE (CONT'D)

I used to smoke.

Jacob looks out across the town, pensive. Minnie tries a few smoke rings.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Another world, another time.

(pause)

It's not easy for you to understand, is it?

JACOB

What?

MINNIE

Following signs. The things we believe. The anointing.

JACOB

I don't have to understand. I just take pictures.

MINNIE

What *do* you believe?

JACOB

I believe what I see. Plain and simple. Black and white. Handle fire, you get burned. Handle snakes, you can get bit.

MINNIE

(dreamily)

I didn't understand it at first, myself. The first time I gave into the anointment, it almost scared me. Now, it comes so easy. It's like a wave that starts in the base of my spine and kind of works its way into my chest 'til my heart feels like its about to explode.

(she sighs deeply, lost in the description)

And then I'm not in control anymore, but it's not scary. I feel like I'm being cradled in the hands of God himself. I'm numb and I'm tingling at the same time, and I just want to shout to the heavens. There's nothing like it, that I know of.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Minnie, silhouetted by the stars, captivates Jacob.

JACOB
(sarcastically)
Except maybe a good hit of acid.

Minnie looks at him, smiles.

MINNIE
Not even close.

Jacob is impressed by the implication.

JACOB
Great sex?

MINNIE
(laughs)
I'm not sure I should say this, but
it's that's closer.
(pause)
But it's different. The anointment
isn't about physical pleasure.
It's another wonderful place to go,
what I imagine heaven might be
like.

They stare off into the sky, the Milky Way lit up like a sea.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
What's it like in the city?

JACOB
Different. Too bright for stars.

MINNIE
I couldn't live in a place where
you can't see the stars. I used to
sneak out my window when I was a
kid and lie on the roof of our
house and stare at them all night.
I'd look through books about
constellations, memorize all the
stories and greek myths. I use to
think I was going to be a
astronomer.

JACOB
What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MINNIE

Dead end. Dad left. Ma had no money. I had to work. Wonderful jobs.

Let's see: Burger King, Blockbuster, The Bowling Alley, Manilow's Drive-In Theater, the Fiberspun factory, Donut King, and the midnight shift at Laundry World, which is where I met Ray and promptly got pregnant right on the folding tables the third time he walked in the place.

JACOB

Sounds romantic.

MINNIE

A long three year mistake. But, I have Rebekah. I'll never be sorry for that.

(pause)

Look, there.

She points to a particular grouping of stars.

JACOB

What?

MINNIE

It's called The Serpent Holder. Just above Scorpio.

Jacob looks but doesn't see.

JACOB

Where?

MINNIE

It's there. You just have to use your imagination. Those six stars over there are his body, that bright star is the top of his head. His arms are reaching down, holding a snake.

She's pointing to a constellation just above the horizon. Jacob looks across her shoulder, lining his eyes with her extended arm, using her index finger as a sight.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

That group of stars to the right
are the serpent's head.

Jacob's head is nearly resting on her shoulder. Their closeness becomes apparent to them both.

JACOB

Too much for me. Just a bunch of
fill in the dots.

MINNIE

Sometimes you have to trust in
things that aren't easy to see.

Their faces are next to one another as she turns to him. Jacob, unable to resist, leans in, kisses her.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

My my, Jacob Hawke.

Minnie is ready to reciprocate, when the possibility of another kiss is interrupted by approaching headlights. A pickup truck is passing through town, slows as it nears the church.

The passenger door opens, revealing Millard Lewis and his wife. Hayden opening the door, turns to make his departing remarks and thank them for the ride.

As he crosses the yard toward his house, Hayden sees the couple on the swings. He pauses, taking a good look, sees the beer cans on the ground next to them. He continues inside.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUBY'S - NIGHT

Jacob walks up the hill toward the diner. Tug's station wagon is again parked on the street.

Jacob starts up the steps, pausing when he hears the distinct sound of love making coming from Ruby's open window.

Jacob smiles to himself, continues to ascend the steps. A phone is ringing inside.

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob steps inside, goes immediately to the phone on the wall.

INT. LEAH'S BEDROOM IN CHICAGO - NIGHT

Leah lies in bed, an open book beside her.

LEAH

Jacob?

INTERCUT PHONE LOCATIONS

The light in his room reveals the open bathroom door, the pictures of Minnie, naked, hang from the line.

JACOB

Leah?

LEAH

At long last. Tell me everything.

JACOB

Mountains, woods, fresh air, pollen, people with missing teeth playing banjos, "Bend over, Squeal like a pig." You know, West Virginia.

LEAH

Don't be glib. You don't answer your phone.

Jacob lights a cigarette.

JACOB

It's a dead zone. No cable TV either. No "Sex in the City."

Leah spreads out on the bed. She's hugging her pillow.

LEAH

Tell me about it. I'm missing you.

JACOB

How'd you get the number?

LEAH

Someone named Ruby. It's the only listing in Pleasant Hollow. What's it like? Churches, snakes?

Jacob looks at the picture of Minnie, tries to walk to the bathroom door but the phone cord is short. Reaches with his foot to push it closed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB
Another world, another time.

LEAH
Say something nice to me.

JACOB
What?

LEAH
I mean, I'm lonely, here in this
big, very empty bed.

Jacob looks out the window toward the church. He sees
Minnie's light go out.

JACOB
Can't. Miss Vernie Mae Baker would
spread it all over town.

LEAH
Who?

JACOB
Never mind. Besides, I've got to
shoot tomorrow.

LEAH
Well, not really.

JACOB
What do you mean?

Leah sits up. Bites her lip, hesitant to continue.

LEAH
That's the other reason I called.
(pauses, faltering)
You won't like this much.

JACOB
Bad news?

LEAH
Not all, there's some good.
(pause)
Document's dropping the piece.

JACOB
What!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

LEAH

Well. Not exactly dropping it. The New York office is hot for that pictorial you did on the urban tramps living in the subway tunnels about a year ago. Seems it's on the political hotplate. They want you back, which, is good news, right?

JACOB

No way! Not now!

LEAH

Jacob. This is big! The snake story can wait. They won't understand if you...

JACOB

Get someone else!

LEAH

It's your story, Jacob. Think about it. No one knows it like you do.

(pause)

Besides, you'll be back home. Is that so bad?

JACOB

You're the fucking editor! You approved this project. Tell 'em I'm staying until it's done.

LEAH

Jacob, I don't sign the checks. I only pushed for this assignment because you wanted it so badly.

JACOB

Make them understand, somehow.

LEAH

I've done all I can. If you want them to know, you can tell them yourself.

JACOB

I'm staying here!

Jacob hangs up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Leah holds the phone, the line is dead. She closes her eyes, frustrated, punches her pillow.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - DAY

Jacob walks down to the church lot. A few people are making final arrangements at the arbor, putting up signs- one man in a pickup truck is unloading a small sound system and a generator.

Minnie is carrying a large picnic basket from the trailer to the jeep. Rebekah plays near the swing set, hanging upside down on the crossbar. She spots Jacob, does a quick flip to the ground and runs to meet him.

She leads Jacob to her mother, loading the basket into the jeep.

MINNIE

(to Jacob)

Rebekah and I are heading up to Raven's Roost today. I packed enough fried chicken for one more.

Jacob looks back toward the town. Hayden is walking back from the diner.

JACOB

Sounds tempting, but I'm not sure if I...

MINNIE

Potato salad from heaven.

Rebekah nods her head excitedly, hoping Jacob will concede.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Great place to relax, get away.

Minnie gives him an unexpected, suggestive wink. She touches his hand.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

We want you to go.

Jacob turns back toward town to see...

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

Tug's station wagon pulls up and parks in front of the church. Tug gets out and starts unloading some crates from the back of the wagon. Hayden walks out onto the porch of his house, pulling up his suspenders, takes a look at the car and starts walking Tug's way.

EXT. MINNIE'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

Jacob, momentarily distracted from Minnie's request, watches Tug greet Hayden.

Minnie looks.

MINNIE

Tug never misses a chance.

Rebekah starts to run up to the church. Minnie spots Ray in the passenger seat of the station wagon. She stops Rebekah.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

(to Rebekah)

Baby, if you'll go in and ice down the tea I just brewed, I'll let you pack a couple of Co-Colas to take with us.

Rebekah stops, turns and obeys, goes into the trailer.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

Ray's eyes are on Jacob and Minnie.

Further up the street, Millard and Willard are trimming their identical lawns. They cut off the electric weed whackers and walk down toward Tug's car, joining Hayden as he talks to Tug.

EXT. MINNIE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jacob watches curiously as the men congregate at Tug's car.

JACOB

(to Minnie)

What's up?

MINNIE

Snakes. Fancy ones, probably.

(focuses on Ray)

Why'd he have to bring him along?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Minnie looks back at the trailer. She can hear Rebekah in the kitchen, fixing the tea.

Jacob pulls his camera from his bag and walks away, toward the car.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS - CONTINUOUS

Jacob keeps his distance as he rounds the small gathering with his camera poised. As he approaches, Tug is bending toward one of the crates.

TUG

(to Hayden)

You going to like this bunch.
They're top notch snakes.
Copperheads, rattlers, even a
couple of westerns. These ain't
easy to find. One of 'em, I happen
to know for a fact, came from a
church meeting down in Alabama.
Hear tell it nearly killed Whitey
Cunningham.

Ray remains in the car blowing cigarette smoke out the window. Hayden takes a look at Jacob as he walks up, camera poised, ignores him.

Hayden turns to Tug.

HAYDEN

Okay. Let's see 'em.

Tug opens the crate. There's a piece of mesh wire screen holding the reptiles in. Jacob moves a little closer, is able to snap a couple of shots of the snakes, writhing in the enclosure.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS

Hayden bends close to the crate.

HAYDEN

That's a mighty good looking
copperhead.

Tug stands proud.

TUG

That western rattler there. That's
the one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Hayden puts his hand next to the wire, thumps it with a finger. The snake coils and the shaking of the rattlers is loud.

Jacob steps back. Hayden looks up at his son, then the others around. He sees Minnie coming from the house.

Minnie approaches the car. Ray, who has been watching her walk up, gets out, meeting her before she gets to the others.

MINNIE

You shouldn't come here.

RAY

I'm just helping Tug. It's a free world.

MINNIE

Yeah, and not big enough, I guess.
(pauses,)
Just leave her alone.

Ray looks toward Jacob.

RAY

You seem to be seeing a lot of Mr.
It Don't Matter.

MINNIE

Like you said, it's a free world.

She gives him the evil eye, walks past him to the others. She stands close to Jacob. Ray stays put.

Hayden is glad to see Minnie.

HAYDEN

What you think, Minnie?

Minnie steps toward the crate for a closer look, bends down beside it. Jacob, keeping a safe distance, takes pictures of the woman at the crates.

MINNIE

They look hungry.
(looks closer)
But that is about as big and nice a
copperhead as I've ever seen.

TUG

I like a woman who knows her
serpents.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2) TUG(CONT'D)

(to Hayden)
I've been saving the best for last.

Tug reaches into the back of the station wagon and pulls out another crate.

TUG (CONT'D)
I been looking high and low to find something special for this revival.

Tug sits the crate beside the other one. This one has a Plexiglas top.

TUG (CONT'D)
Feast your eyes on this son of a bitch...uh,
(considering Minnie)
ah, pardon my French.
But don't get too close. He's a feisty rascal.

Hayden and Minnie approach the crate.

MINNIE
Tug! You outdid yourself this time.
You found a cobra.

Tug looks at everyone, pleased as a peacock. Hayden stands silent, looking down at the animal. He hesitates to get near. Jacob notices.

TUG
You ever handle one of these, Hayden?

Hayden keeps his distance.

HAYDEN
A serpent is a serpent.

TUG
Well, I hear tell you have. They say you picked one up at a church in North Carolina and the thing just went limp in your hand. That true?

Jacob takes a picture of the snake.

HAYDEN
You can just pack these things back in your wagon. This ain't no three ring circus. This is a revival.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

People hear there's a cobra here
and they'll come around just to see
it bite.

Hayden is already walking away. Tug scratches his head in wonder.

TUG

Whatever got up his crawl? I was
only trying to help.

Minnie can offer no explanation.

TUG (CONT'D)

Whatever floats your boat I guess.
I can get rid of 'em over in Jolo
if you don't want 'em.

(to Ray)

Help me get 'em back in the car
Ray.

Ray smashes out his cigarette, starts toward them.

EXT. MINNIE'S HOUSE

Rebekah walks out of the trailer, carrying a large jug full of iced tea toward the jeep.

EXT. CHURCH OF SIGNS

Minnie, hearing the door slam behind the girl, instinctively looks at Ray, who has his eyes on Rebekah loading the jeep in the distance.

Minnie grabs Jacob's arm.

MINNIE

(to Jacob)

Ready?

Jacob studies Minnie, then Ray. He nods.

They walk away. Ray, loading the crates, watches closely as they go toward Minnie's house together, meet up with Rebekah

The others at the car watch as well. Ray, visibly upset, gets back in the car, slams the door.

CUT TO:

EXT./INT. MINNIE'S JEEP - DAY

The jeep winds up rocky terrain, hardly more than a trail, Minnie behind the wheel, Jacob and Rebekah bouncing in their seats.

They level out on a grassy plateau which turns into a large field of rolling hills. Minnie stops the jeep. Jacob reaches into his bag, pulling out some more Polaroid film, giving it to Rebekah.

Rebekah gives Jacob a big hug, then jumps out of the vehicle with the camera, running through the meadow, looking for subjects to photograph.

Minnie turns to Jacob, then leans toward him, giving him an unexpected kiss. This one is longer than last night's. She sits back.

MINNIE

I owed you one.

JACOB

Minnie, I...

MINNIE

You didn't like it?

JACOB

No... I mean, yes.. I liked it, but I...

Minnie puts her finger on his lips, hushing him.

MINNIE

I'm beginning to like having you around, Jacob Hawke.

(pause)

Now, your turn.

Jacob is confused. Minnie gets out of the jeep and circles around to the passenger side.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Slide over.

Jacob looks at the steering wheel, reluctantly.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Can't have you banging into more trees.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob hesitates, but sees Minnie's determination. He slides over to the seat beneath the wheel.

Minnie shows him how to engage the clutch and put it in gear. The jeep lurches and cuts off. They see Rebekah, safely out of harm's way, aiming the camera their way, laughing her silent laugh.

Jacob tries again, this time going a little further, grinding the gears as Minnie clinches her teeth and hangs on. Another lurch, another stop.

Jacob looks at Minnie, a little deflated. He starts the jeep again, reaches for the gear knob.

JACOB

You sure you want to go on with
this?

Minnie returns his stare, looking straight in his eyes.

MINNIE

Do you think about having sex with
me?

Jacob's foot suddenly slips from the clutch. The jeep bounds into motion, Jacob loses control of the wheel. Minnie reaches over for it, stabilizing the vehicle the best she can, until he is able to recover.

HILLSIDE - CONTINUOUS

Rebekah looks down from the hillside at the Jeep veering left, away from the meadow and towards a crag of rocks jutting from the mountainside. The couple inside bouncing like mannikins.

BACK TO JEEP

Minnie looks up to see the coming cliff. Jacob panics.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

(shouting to Jacob)
The brake! The one on the right!

After a couple of missing stabs, Jacob locates the correct pedal, bringing the jeep to an abrupt halt on a large flat boulder, twenty feet or so from , Minnie catching herself against the dash.

Jacob looks at her incredulously.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACOB

What was that all about?

Minnie regains her position in the seat. Brushes back her hair.

MINNIE

I think I better take over from here.

JACOB

You know what I mean?

Looming beyond them is a tremendous view of the valley below, looking down over the Hollow, the Blue Ridge Mountains in the distance. Minnie reaches over, turns the key.

The wind blows over the windshield. Minnie grabs the top of it and pulls herself up, standing at the dash, so that the breeze hits her in the face. She takes a look back at Rebekah, who, halfway across the meadow, stops running toward them. She waves. Minnie returns the wave.

Rebekah becomes immediately attracted to butterflies in the meadow.

Minnie turns back to Jacob.

MINNIE

Last night after we kissed, I was in bed thinking how stupid it was that I was alone. I tried to think of every reason in the world not to desire you. I got my Bible out and read all about the sins of lust and adultery, but I still couldn't get it off my mind. The more I thought about it, the more I wanted it. This morning, I was still feeling it while I was frying the chicken.

(pause)

Is it something you feel?

Jacob turns toward the view.

JACOB

What?

MINNIE

Do you think about making love to me?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACOB

I think maybe you've been alone too long.

MINNIE

Don't make fun of me.

JACOB

(awkwardly)

Jesus Minnie! What do you want me to say?

Minnie is serious, looks dire.

MINNIE

I just want you to tell the truth about how you feel.

Jacob looks back, finding Rebekah, who now is playing on some closer rocks. She has caught a lizard, lets it run down her arm and up her neck.

JACOB

Here, now?

MINNIE

Jacob. I haven't had a man in eight years. I thought the church, my belief in God, the anointment, had somehow replaced all that. And, now it's back. Maybe I'm not very good at this, but I don't know what else to do other than tell you about it.

Jacob settles down. He recognizes the earnestness in her confession.

JACOB

You are amazing.

MINNIE

Besides, maybe I need to know.

JACOB

Know what?

MINNIE

What it's like just to be a woman again. I don't know if I can be sure of anything else in my life without knowing that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Rebekah runs toward them. She has the lizard cupped in her hands. She tosses it in the jeep toward Minnie, who catches it against her dress. The lizard scrambles down her neckline and down toward her breast before she can stop it.

She jumps out of the seat, trying to shake the thing out.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
(laughing, to Rebekah)
You. I'm going to get you.

She starts chasing playfully after her daughter, running away with glee.

Jacob sits, staring at them, not sure what he has just been confronted with.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARBOR LOT - EVENING

The arbor, now finished, is lit by torches and oil lamps placed around it's perimeter. The Sign Followers from the community are all present, sitting in makeshift pews and folding chairs purged from the church. One oil lamp is next to the pulpit, casting Hayden's giant shadow on the trees behind him. Jacob sits in the back with his camera bags, Rebekah beside him.

He situates himself, catches sight of Minnie with the other musicians behind Hayden. She smiles at him, gives a wave to Rebekah.

HAYDEN
(finishing a prayer)
...and we pray, Lord, for a baptism
of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

"Amen" is echoed throughout the congregation. Silence ensues as Hayden stands like an frozen icon, surveying the eyes of his flock. His stare falls on Jacob and remains there for a moment.

Jacob doesn't move. In the stillness it seems as though Hayden's eyes are penetrating his soul.

Hayden breaks the connection, tilts his head to the sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Lord, I want you to fill this
sanctuary with the Holy Ghost?
Prepare us for revival.

He steps around the pulpit, raises his hands. His audience follows suit, extending their hands to the heavens.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Feel it! Rid yourself of all
earthly woes. Surrender yourself
to the almighty.

Jacob watches from the back of the arbor as many in the congregation seem transfixed by Hayden's command. Jacob takes some shots of the small sea of hands lifted toward the thatched roof.

He quietly moves down the side aisle, snapping photos of faces that seem to be transforming, engaging in the anointment.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Do you feel it?

Some answer in affirmative shouts, some sway, all seem seduced by an outside force.

One very wrinkled woman separates from the congregation, walks up front, begins turning in circles, indistinguishable words rush from her lips. Jacob captures her with his camera. He moves further toward the front, finding different vantage points for his photos.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

The Lord wants to know if you
believe?

One of the musicians standing behind Hayden shakes his tambourine above a responding chorus of "I believe" and "hallelujah" emanating from the aggregation.

Hayden turns to a glass of liquid on a nearby table, takes another vial and pours in some solid crystals from the vial into the glass.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

It's a matter of faith.

He turns up the liquid. Jacob's shutter snaps.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Hayden walks to the first row of the crowd. He puts his hand on the shoulders of a man.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)
Do you believe, Homer Burton?

HOMER BURTON takes the glass from Hayden's hand and takes a sip.

HOMER
(shouting)
I believe!

Homer begins to prance around, hopping on one foot, shouting "hallelujah!" Jacob tracks him with his camera.

Jacob finds Minnie with his lens, her head also tilted back, hands raised, swaying like the others. He snaps a picture.

He returns his attention to Hayden, who is now standing in front of a woman with closed eyes, rocking in place.

HAYDEN
Do you believe, Fannie Bowen?

Fannie doesn't open her eyes.

FANNIE
I believe!

Fannie drops to her knees. Hayden continues to search his audience. He sees the twins, Millard and Willard. He walks to them.

MILLARD AND WILLARD
We believe!

Suddenly, Hayden spins toward Jacob, pointing directly at him, fire in his eyes. Jacob captures the man in his viewfinder, coming toward him.

Hayden lifts his voice for all to hear.

HAYDEN
Do you believe, Jacob Hawke?

Jacob lowers his camera, freezes in position, taken by surprise. He looks toward Minnie, her euphoric state broken by Hayden's attack. She seems embarrassed for Jacob.

Jacob scans the room. All eyes are on him. He stares at his father in disbelief.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Do you want to live forever in
glory, or be cast into the Devil's
fire?

The arbor is quiet now.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

(lighter now)

It's in you. You know it. It was
in your mother before you, son.

Anger wells up inside Jacob. He looks at Minnie, perplexed
by it all.

JACOB

Don't call me that!

Jacob storms away, disappearing from the arbor. Hayden looks
at the ground, then looks up, finding Minnie. She stares at
Hayden for a beat and starts walking down the center aisle,
toward the exit, following Jacob.

Hayden turns to his congregation, now still and quiet. He
grabs one of the lit torches sticking in the ground behind
him, seems about to speak again, but instead becomes
disoriented, as if the spell he has been under has abandoned
him, leaving him limp.

He grows pale, staggers. Millard comes to his side, takes
the torch from him. Willard brings a chair. Minnie, nearly
out of the arbor, hears the commotion, and turns to see
Hayden being attended to.

He's looking at her. She hesitates, lost momentarily in
decision, then turns and comes to help Hayden.

Hayden breathes heavily, finds some composure. He takes her
hand.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob enters the room, throws his camera bags on the bed. He
searches through one of his satchels in the corner, pulls out
the half bottle of moonshine.

He walks to his window, looks out. In the distance, down by
the church, he distinguishes Minnie and some others leading
Hayden to his house, disappearing inside.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob uncaps the bottle and turns it up, grimacing from the sour taste of the alcohol. He walks to his bed, picks up the picture of his mother.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The evening is quiet. Jacob stands across the street, looking at the house, lit inside. He smokes a cigarette. The bottle is in his back pocket. He sees his father, shirt off, pass by the window slowly.

Jacob walks toward the house and up the steps.

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jacob steps inside. The front room is empty. He hears HEAVING SOUNDS (O.S.) coming from the bathroom. The bathroom door is partially open. Jacob goes there.

INT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob, standing at the door, pushes it open further to see Hayden bent over the toilet. Jacob takes a step inside.

JACOB

Look at the great preacher now!

Hayden looks up in his sickness, wipes his mouth. He rises, steps by Jacob, walks back into the living room. Jacob follows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hayden sits in his recliner, weak, trying to recuperate. Jacob circles him.

JACOB

The great and powerful Hayden
Hawke. He heals the sick, handles
fire, treads on serpents!

Hayden speaks as if he is confronting an unknown devil, not looking at Jacob.

HAYDEN

I am only the vessel. Those things
don't mean a thing. Anyone can
handle a snake.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB
Serpent, I believe your term is
serpent.

Hayden replies with his eyes closed, shouting at the room.

HAYDEN
It is not the act. It is what
lives inside. It is about faith.

Jacob screams.

JACOB
Faith! Mom had faith. Look where
it got her.

Hayden looks up at his son, understanding now from where the
rage is coming.

HAYDEN
Jacob. You don't know what you're
saying.

JACOB
Maybe not. But I know what I saw.

HAYDEN
Your mother was anointed. God does
not promise that the serpent will
not strike.

JACOB
It struck all right. Flesh and
blood, old man. We're all just
flesh and blood.

HAYDEN
It is not for us to question the
will of the God.

Jacob shakes his head.

JACOB
Oh, leave Him out of this. You
killed her.

Hayden is stunned, mortified. He gets up, walks around the
room, pacing aimlessly.

HAYDEN
You believe in nothing!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jacob is exhausted. He talks softly now.

JACOB

One call. One simple phone call.

Hayden wanders the room, unable to look Jacob in the eye.

HAYDEN

It is better to die in faith than
to live in emptiness.

JACOB

(mimicking, softly)

"It is better to die in faith than
to live in emptiness."

(louder)

Preach talk. Look at me. We're the
only ones here! No congregation of
misguided souls. I don't give a
damned about your gospel.

This is easy, old man.

(looks him directly in the
eye)

You handed my mother a rattlesnake.
It bit her. She died.

Hayden feels the sickness return. A sudden attack sends him
back to the bathroom. Jacob, left in the room alone, can
hear him retching (O.S.).

JACOB (CONT'D)

(shouting to the bathroom)

Where is your god now, old man?

Hayden appears in the door wiping his mouth. He looks
stronger, more determined. He's had all he can take.

He walks directly to the door, opening it.

HAYDEN

Get out!

Jacob holds his ground.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Hear me! Get out. And take that
bottle with you. Your mother
didn't allow it in the house. Look
at you! She would be ashamed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Jacob takes one last look at his father and marches past him, out the door.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Jacob sits beside his mother's grave. The stars above him are brilliant. A meteor passes.

Jacob sits up, looks at the small amount of likker left in the bottle. He stares at the grave. He hurls the bottle into the woods.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jacob's bags are open on the bed. A few articles of clothing loosely strewn around. Jacob pulls a few more things from the dresser, then heads for the bathroom, yanking his developed pictures from the line. He stops momentarily to look at them, shaking his head as he flips through the ones of Minnie and Rebekah.

He hears a noise and looks up to see Minnie standing in the open door. He puts the pictures down in a pile on the bed, then turns back to the bathroom, gathers his chemicals, brings them to the main room, tightens the lids of the containers and sticks them in one of his open bags.

JACOB
You can say it!

Minnie looks at the group of photographs on the bed.

MINNIE
What do want me to say?

Jacob continues to gather his things.

JACOB
That I came here to take advantage of an old man who doesn't know any better than to be what he is... a crazed religious zealot.

Minnie takes a step his way, watching him pack his bags.

MINNIE
And are you any better?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob stands, walks to the window, looks out at the town below.

JACOB

You know, I remember good things as a kid. The smell of my mother's hair as she sat brushing it by the wood stove. Apple pies cooling off in the window. Her teaching me to ride my bicycle on that street. All that idyllic bull crap!

(pause)

He was always in the church, or away at some revival for days at a time, sometimes weeks. He'd come home and she would dote over him like he was some kind of war hero.

MINNIE

She loved him.

JACOB

Yeah. Well I didn't.

(pause)

And I can't love him now.

Jacob goes back to his bags, zips one of them up.

MINNIE

You know he's dying.

JACOB

Yeah? Well he can die without me.

Minnie stands her ground. She looks down at the pictures, a photo on top showing her naked by the stream. She picks them up and thumbs through them.

MINNIE

You said you didn't take these pictures.

JACOB

Well, I lied.

Minnie shakes her head.

MINNIE

Sometimes you're just pathetic, you know that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jacob looks at her, taken off guard by her attack.

MINNIE (CONT'D)

All that talk about truth. You had me going. Seems to me, you tell the truth when it benefits Jacob Hawke.

Jacob stands, not knowing what to do.

JACOB

I just wanted...

MINNIE

You wanted me to come in that door and stroke your head like a little puppy dog- tell you everything was going to be all right. And, truth is, I was all set to do that. But I changed my mind.

(pause)

Your father's dying and all you can do is yell at him. No, he isn't perfect. Can't you see? He only really wants one thing from you- he wants you to go to Heaven, spend an eternity in Paradise. What's so wrong with that?

(pause)

Your problem is that don't believe in anything.

Minnie walks out. Jacob stares at the empty room.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - MORNING

Bucolic country morning. Roosters crow. The sun peaks over the mountain drying the morning dew from the leaves of the brush arbor.

Mrs. Harrison works in her garden. A lazy dog lifts his leg to her hydrangea bush. She runs him off and he heads up the hill toward Ruby's.

EXT. RUBY'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

Through the window, Ruby serves breakfast to a couple of customers. A telephone rings (O.S.).

INT. JACOB'S ROOM- CONTINUOUS

The phone on the wall rings to an empty room.

CUT TO:

INT. "DOCUMENT" MAGAZINE OFFICES IN CHICAGO - DAY

Leah sits at a desk, separated from the main hallway by a glass wall. Activity in the other room as workers hustle by, going about their daily routines.

Leah has a phone to her ear, waiting. No answer.

INT. LEAH'S OFFICE

Leah listens to the ringing on her receiver. A woman about Leah's age, JANET, comes to the door. Leah puts the phone down. She seems uncomfortable, thinks a moment, then looks up at her friend.

JANET

Still nothing?

Leah shakes her head.

LEAH

I tried all night.

JANET

He could be on his way.

LEAH

I called the bus station. The bus left two hours ago, and they said nobody got on.

Janet walks in.

JANET

Go down there and get him.

LEAH

You think I should?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JANET

You *could* sit here in misery and get nothing accomplished until he calls.

LEAH

Yeah. Do you think you could handle...

JANET

That's why I'm here.

Leah begins to gather her things.

CUT TO:

EXT. RAVEN'S ROOST - DAY

Jacob sits alone on the mountainside overlooking the valley, deep in thought. He watches as the clouds pass, the sun casting moving shadows on the distant ranges.

He sees a lizard basking in the sun.

INT. MINNIE'S TRAILER - DAY

Minnie is in her small bedroom, sitting at the dresser in her nightgown. She takes a look at herself in the mirror, scans her body in the reflection. She pushes up her breasts with her palms. She stops, sighs.

She takes her long hair, fixes it up in a tight bun. Then she reaches down and pulls out a silver crucifix, puts it around her neck, admires it as it hangs on her bosom.

CUT TO:

EXT. BRUSH ARBOR - DUSK

The church lot is brimming with cars, some lining the street. The sky is overcast with lightning in the distance.

INT. ARBOR - CONTINUOUS

The Revival is in progress beneath the torch-lit arbor.

Minnie plays the keyboard, watching the congregation being led by Hayden and another man, REV. DEWEY THOMAS, as they exchange verbiage of religious encouragement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Rebekah sits near the far end, with some other kids, showing them her pictures. She keeps looking toward entrance of the arbor.

The anointment has begun, and a circle of worshippers are gathering at the front of the arbor, singing loud and reacting to the sermon.

Jacob enters. Rebecca sees him immediately, and goes to him as he sits in the back row. She sits beside him, opening the back of her Polaroid camera, revealing that she has no film.

Minnie sees Jacob as well, locks eyes with him for a moment.

Jacob pulls some film from his bags. He looks across the room.

JACOB

Think you can help handle this,
champ?

She nods, showing her excitement.

Jacob follows the action with his lens. There are familiar faces and many more unfamiliar ones, some of them seemingly just onlookers keeping away from the action.

This doesn't seem to affect the true Sign Followers as the circle near the pulpit grows. Many of them are already speaking in tongues, their twirling bodies already captured by the Holy Spirit. Some handle fire fueled by the kerosene bottles.

Jacob looks up to see Minnie leave her instrument to join the people in the front circle. She takes one more look at him before joining the others, determined to succumb to the power of the anointment. He shoots a few shots of her from the back of the arbor.

Jacob leaves his position and bravely goes closer to the front, toward the action.

He shuttles down the aisle. Rebekah mirrors him down the far aisle.

At the front, Jacob is not far from Minnie who, dancing around, reaches out a hand for him.

He hesitates at first, then places his hand in hers. She draws him into the circle, where the participants are singing and wildly dancing. Some speak in tongues and gyrate madly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINNIE
(to Jacob)
Sing!

The words are an easy, repetitive chant. *"Sanctify me, oh Lord, Sanctify. Cleanse my soul, oh Lord, Cleanse my soul."*

Jacob falls into the rhythm, clapping his hands, and eventually joining in the singing. He recognizes faces around him as they join hands and welcome him into the group of worshippers.

Rebekah snaps photographs from the audience.

Minnie leans toward Jacob.

MINNIE
Think of nothing. Let yourself go.
You are not here.

Jacob watches as Minnie drifts into a state of exhilaration, intoxicated by the event. He pulls back, sees an ethereal quality in her beauty as she lifts her hands to the sky and gives in to the anointing.

A torch is passed around the circle as they sing. Each anointed person takes it and holds a hand over the fire for a moment before passing it along.

The torch is given to Minnie and she passes it under her arm, the flames spreading against her skin. When it is held out to Jacob, he hesitates, but slowly waves his hand through the flame before passing it along.

Hayden spots his son in the circle. Jacob sees the man looking at him, drops back out of the circle a bit, resumes his picture taking.

The serpent boxes are brought to the pulpit, Jacob holds his ground nearby, watching as the clanging of the rhythm section reaches a feverish pitch.

Hayden is the first to reach into a crate. He pulls out not one, but two rattlers, one in each hand, raises them high above his head, defiantly bringing them to his face.

Jacob snaps his shutter, gets closer.

Hayden passes the snakes to another worshipper and they follow suit. One worshipper tosses the snake high in the air toward another church member who catches it and tosses it to another, as if they were playing catch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

One of the snakes is handed to Minnie. Jacob shows concern, but upon seeing the calm in her eyes and total lack of fear as she wraps the snake around her neck, he continues shooting.

In his lens, she is beautiful with the snake circling her shoulders, forming a moving reptilian collar. It moves to her head and her face is framed by the muscular body of the beast.

Jacob spots Hayden across the way backing out of the circle going slowly toward the side of the arbor, seeming somewhat disoriented.

Jacob points his camera, but lowers it as he notices his father growing faint. Hayden recovers, but retreats to a chair, obviously losing strength.

The anointment is at a high point, and no one else has seemed to noticed Hayden. Jacob walks his way. Hayden sees him as he approaches.

Hayden gestures to the crowd of believers. Jacob looks back to see Minnie in control, leading the action.

HAYDEN

There's nothing like it.

Minnie is indeed enraptured with the spirit.

Jacob watches her, transfixed by her undaunted assuredness. Then he turns to Hayden, who is weak.

JACOB

Are you okay?

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

Take me to the house, son.

Jacob sees the desperation hidden in the man's eyes. He offers him his arm and they duck out of the near-side of the open arbor into the darkness of the night.

Jacob looks back to see Rebekah in the back of the church, snapping photographs. She puts the camera down for a moment, possibly looking for him. She surveys the arbor, but does not see them.

EXT. ARBOR - CONTINUOUS

Jacob supports Hayden as they walk to the house. Hayden stops, looks back over his shoulder at the arbor, listens to the sounds, sees the people worshipping. Then he looks at the sky, the clouds moving in, the lightning getting nearer.

Despite the man's condition, Jacob can sense the overwhelming sense of satisfaction in the man's eyes.

Jacob looks back at the arbor. Rebekah has stepped outside, looking at them, still holding the camera. Jacob waves to her. She waves back.

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jacob leads Hayden across the front room and into his bedroom, where he helps him get situated.

HAYDEN

I just need to rest.

Jacob feels his father's forehead.

JACOB

You have a fever.

HAYDEN

Nothing the Lord can't take care of
one way or another.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUBY'S DINER - SAME TIME

Tug pulls up to the diner in his station wagon. Ray is in the car, smoking. He lifts a bottle to his lips. Tug takes a sip as well, before getting out of the car.

TUG

Suit yourself. I'm going in.

RAY

Leave the bottle!

TUG

Take it easy. The way you been
hitting that stuff, you'll explode
if anybody lights a match.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

RAY
Just leave the bottle!

Tug pulls the bottle out of his pocket and passes it back to Ray.

Tug disappears into the diner. Ray looks down the street at the arbor.

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Jacob sits by his father who lies on the bed, coughing hard, nearly regurgitating.

Jacob disappears for a moment. Returns to the room with a wet rag, puts it on Hayden's forehead.

JACOB
I'm calling the doctor.

Jacob rises.

HAYDEN
Wait!

Jacob stops, turning to his father.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)
That night.
(pauses, coughs)
I pleaded with her. I couldn't
stand to see her like that.

Jacob waits as his father, coughing again, tries to compose himself.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)
I loved her so much. I didn't
think I could go on if she...
(pause)
...if she left us. I begged her.
I told her I was going to get help.

Jacob walks back to his father, whose struggles with the words.

JACOB
It's okay. You need to rest.
I'll...

Hayden reaches out for Jacob's arm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAYDEN

She wouldn't hear of it. Her belief was stronger than mine. She just smiled at me. I know she was in bad pain, but she kept smiling. Kept looking at me, telling me to calm down, that everything would be alright.

(pause)

She was dying and still she worried more about me and you than she did her own self.

Jacob gets closer, wipes his father's face.

HAYDEN (CONT'D)

After she passed on, and Maddie came to take you away, I realized the only thing I had left was my faith. Nothing to live for but the word of God.

(pause)

I got hard.

Jacob is moved nearly to tears. He reaches for Hayden's hand.

JACOB

I'm going up to Ruby's to call the doctor. We're going to take care of you.

Hayden's eyes are small slits.

HAYDEN

She meant everything to me.

Hayden's eyes close.

Jacob fears the worst, but is encouraged when Hayden speaks again.

HAYDEN

Minnie...she likes you.

He drift off, his chest rising and falling in sleep.

Jacob stands, backs out of the room.

EXT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Jacob looks back at the arbor where the music continues and the worshipping is on-going. He turns the other way, looking up the hill toward Ruby's, starts to head that way.

Ahead, near Tug's car, he sees two figures, one considerably taller than the other, moving just outside of the street lamp's beam.

The taller figure glances over his shoulder at Jacob, and starts moving faster. Jacob realizes it is Ray and the smaller figure, Rebekah.

Ray pulls on the arm of Rebekah, hustling her to the station wagon. Rebekah attempts to pull away, but the man scoops her into his arms and opens the car door.

Jacob runs toward them.

JACOB
(hollering)
Hey!

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW COMMUNITY - CONTINUOUS

Jacob yells louder as he hears the car start. Ruby and Tug come out of the diner, hearing the commotion. Jacob draws near as the car squeals away.

TUG
What the blazes?

Tug sees his car leaving and chases it for a few steps down the street, waving his hat in vain. Jacob stops, catching his breath.

JACOB
(to Ruby)
Call the doctor! Get him to the
Hayden's house. He's in bad shape.

Ruby runs toward the diner. Tug turns back to see Jacob running back toward the arbor. Jacob runs straight to Minnie's jeep and jumps in.

He searches above the visor for the keys. They fall into his lap. He fumbles a bit, but starts the engine and puts it in gear.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The jeep lurches a few times before he successfully pulls onto the road. He nearly hits Tug, who stands in the street, drunk and perplexed.

CUT TO:

INT. TUG BARTLETT'S STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Ray, driving through the night, tries his best to placate Rebekah, who is frightened, confused.

RAY

Daddy won't hurt you. Don't be afraid. We going to have a good time, you and me.

The girl is in shock. She cowers in the corner of the seat.

Ray takes a swig from the moonshine, checking his rear view mirror. Light rain hits the windshield and he turns on the wipers producing streaks on the glass.

Crates slide around in the back of the car from his erratic driving.

Rattles sounds and hissing can be heard from the crates.

CUT TO:

INT. MINNIE'S JEEP - NIGHT

Jacob is having some trouble controlling the vehicle, but grows more confident as he continues. His only protection from the rain, since the Jeep has no top, is the large windshield in front of him.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUBY'S DINER - NIGHT

Ruby exits, running down toward the church.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The station wagon speeds along the wet road, heading into a curve, crossing into the oncoming lane.

CUT TO:

EXT. DIFFERENT CAR - NIGHT

A car pulls out of a driveway along the highway.

INT. DIFFERENT CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Castello turns on his wipers, tries to wipe the condensation from the inside of his windshield. His medical bag is in the seat beside him. He cleans it just in time to see the station wagon is coming at him.

Dr. Castello yanks on his wheel, tries to veer out of the car's path.

INT. STATION WAGON - NIGHT

Ray sees the other car and pulls sharply on the steering wheel.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

The station wagon misses Dr. Castello's car, but goes into a skid, flips once and lands in the ditch bank, right side up.

The other car, driven by Dr. Castello, slides and comes to a stop sideways in the middle of the road.

INT. MINNIE'S JEEP

Jacob sees Dr. Castello's car in the center of the road. Dr. Castello is getting out in the rain. He waves a warning to Jacob, who slams the jeep to a halt.

Jacob gets out. Dr. Castello looks back toward the car in the ditch, leans back into his car and grabs his medical bag.

Jacob runs toward the busted car.

Jacob runs past the Dr. Castello. He sees headlights pointing out of the ditch bank up ahead.

Dr. Castello runs behind Jacob, but cannot keep up.

DITCH BANK

Tug's station wagon is tilted in the ditch next to a high bank of boulders, it's top dented in and the hood smoking, the driver's door all but torn away. The headlights from Minnie's Jeep shine toward the car, giving Jacob the only light as he approaches the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob slows when he sees movement to the right. Ray lies in the grass, scarred and bloody, moaning, recovering from being thrown out of the vehicle. Dr. Castello comes up behind Jacob, sees Ray.

Jacob goes to him. A high pitched SCREAM comes from the vehicle. Ray looks up at Jacob.

RAY
Rebekah! She's in the car.

Jacob runs to the car. He gets to the open door, the twisted metal offering a passage.

INT. CAR

Rebekah is in the back seat, against the far door which is pinned against the rocks of the ravine. She is conscious, disheveled, eyes wide.

JACOB
Don't worry. I'm here.

He can see fear in her eyes. He tries to open the back door, but it's jammed. Through the beaded, wet window he sees movement inside.

Jacob realizes that the car is rampant with snakes. Crates are strewn throughout the vehicle, open and empty.

Rebekah looks up at Jacob. Her lips are trembling, but she manages...

REBEKAH
Help me!

Her eyes shift toward the console of the car. There, Jacob sees the most ominous object of her concern- the cobra is coiled, lifted into striking position, its head flat, pointed toward the girl.

Jacob stops dead still, terrified.

JACOB
Stay very still!

Dr. Castello comes up behind him, looking in.

DR. CASTELLO
Oh my God!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jacob collects his fear. He looks up at the sky, his face wet from the rain.

JACOB
(to Rebecca)
I'm coming in. Don't move.

Jacob moves toward the front door and slowly edges into the car.

One of the rattlesnakes slides across the console, stopping to consider Jacob's movement.

Jacob freezes, tries to control his breath. The snake dips his head and continues, moving into the floorboard and beneath the seat.

Jacob scoots into the car and peers over the seat. The cobra remains poised, waiting for movement from the girl. Another rattler crawls through the headrest in front of Jacob. Once again Jacob freezes. The snake slithers past and out the door.

JACOB (CONT'D)
(whispering to himself)
Faith.

Dr. Castello backs away. Jacob slowly starts to back away. Rebecca looks at Jacob. The cobra senses and follows her slight movement.

Jacob waves his hand to attract the cobra from Rebekah. The snake turns to him and immediately strikes. Jacob lifts his arm in front of his face just as the snake lunges toward him. The cobra plants his fangs into Jacob's raised hand.

Jacob catches the creature just behind its head with his other hand. He pulls it from his hand, backs out of the car with him and slings it into the darkness.

Rebekah is SCREAMING.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - CONTINUOUS

A couple of cars arrive, pulling up to the scene.

BACK TO STATION WAGON

Jacob reenters the car and bends across the seat, pulling Rebekah out between the headrests. He lifts her into his arms and out to the street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Jacob holds onto Rebekah. They see Minnie jump from one of the cars and rush toward them. Jacob carries the girl toward Minnie. Minnie stops in front of them. Jacob passes her to her mother.

REBEKAH

Mama.

Minnie looks at her daughter, brushing the wet hair from her eyes, amazed at the sound of her voice.

MINNIE

Yes. Yes, Rebekah. Oh Rebekah.

Minnie hugs the girl tightly, looking across her shoulder at Jacob, silhouetted by the headlights in the drizzling rain, Dr. Castello checking his wound.

The doctor begins to fashion a pressure bandage on Jacob's hand, wrapping it up tightly.

Jacob is white, feigning to the venom.

REBEKAH

(to Minnie)

The cobra.

Minnie goes to the doctor.

MINNIE

Thank God you're here!

DR. CASTELLO

Not much I can do to a cobra bite. We don't keep any serum for that. Best thing to do is keep him from going into shock until we can get him to the hospital.

MINNIE

Do we have time?

Dr. Castello is pinning up the bandage. Jacob looks blurry eyed.

DR. CASTELLO

Probably not. And even they're unlikely have the anti-serum.

Minnie looks at Jacob. He smiles at her.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACOB
Not too bad. My face is numb.

MINNIE
(to Dr. Castello)
What do we do?

DR. CASTELLO
We've done what we can. The
hospital's too far. It would take
too long.

Jacob knows the situation. He can see the desperation in their eyes.

JACOB
Dad. Take me to Hayden.

Minnie looks at Dr. Castello, hoping for an answer.

JACOB (CONT'D)
Take me to my father.

He lifts his hands, not having an alternate answer. Millard Lewis approaches.

Millard helps Minnie and Dr. Castello carry Jacob to the car.

CUT TO:

EXT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE - DAY

The same house, but different. The wood is not as aged, the brush around the perimeter not the same. The house has an unworldly glow.

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE

The room is brightly lit. The furniture well placed, and in good condition- the familiar recliner, new and hardly used. The walls are covered with fresh, clean wallpaper and hung with fresh pictures of Hayden, Jacob, and Jacob's mother, Mary.

A fire burns in the wood stove. A chair beside, with A WOMAN, leaning forward, her face covered by the long straight dark hair she brushes toward the floor. She wears a flannel night robe.

VOICE (O.S.)
Mom.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She continues brushing.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 Momma!

The woman lifts her head, listening for the voice. It is the woman from Jacob's photographs, his mother, MARY HAWKE. She looks toward the far bedroom.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 (once again)
 Momma.

Mary stands, crosses the room at a methodical pace, goes to the bedroom door. She peaks in.

BEDROOM

JACOB is in bed, looking at her.

JACOB
 Momma, I can't sleep.

Mary goes to the bed. Her voice is quiet, soothing, angelic.

MARY
 Of course you can, Jacob. All you have to do is close your eyes.

JACOB
 I'm afraid.

MARY
 I know you are, Jacob. I know you are.

She leans toward him, kisses his forehead lightly. She looks down on him. He stares up at her, her ageless face aglow, bathed in unnatural light.

JACOB
 I miss you.

MARY
 I'm right here.

JACOB
 I had to come back.

MARY
 I know, Jacob. It's all right.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB
What do I do now?

She reaches out, touches his face lightly, lets her fingers trace his skin. She reaches over, turns out the light next to the bed.

Just think of nothing. Let
yourself go. You are not here.

CUT TO:

INT. HAYDEN HAWKE'S HOUSE (SAME BEDROOM)- DAY

Jacob, in bed, opens his eyes. His hand sports a new bandage. He is groggy, his vision is blurred.

LEAH (O.S.)
Welcome back.

Leah is by the bed.

LEAH (CONT'D)
How do you feel?

Jacob tries to move, decides against it.

JACOB
One hell of a hangover.
(focuses)
What are you doing here?

LEAH
(with levity)
I was in the neighborhood. Boy,
what a neighborhood.

The door opens. Dr. Castello enters.

DR. CASTELLO
Ah. The hero's decided to join us.

He approaches the bed, checking Jacob's vital signs.

LEAH
You're practically famous.

Jacob looks around. Flowers are everywhere.

JACOB
What's the deal?

Dr. Castello finishes his check-up. He stands.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. CASTELLO

Not only did you save the girl's life, but seems you're one of a handful of people to survive a King Cobra bite.

JACOB

Rebekah. Where's Rebekah?

Leah smiles, looks up at Dr. Castello.

LEAH

(to Castello)

Can he stand up?

DR. CASTELLO

Ask him?

Jacob answers by slowly shifting his legs to the side of the bed, lifts his bandaged arm carefully. Leah takes his other arm, leads him carefully to the window.

Jacob looks outside. In front of Minnie's trailer is a mobile television truck. A reporter is on the front porch of the trailer, her microphone in Rebekah's face, a cameraman pointing his video camera at the girl, standing with Minnie.

Jacob turns to Leah, perplexed.

LEAH

Kind of surreal, isn't it?

JACOB

How long was I out?

Castello looks at his watch.

DR. CASTELLO

About forty four hours now.

Minnie looks over the cameraman, sees Jacob at the window as Rebekah talks shyly to the reporter.

Leah watches closely as Jacob exchanges looks with the woman outside.

DR. CASTELLO (CONT'D)

I'm glad Hayden can't see that.

LEAH

The paparazzi hits Hooterville.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Jacob turns to the doctor.

JACOB
Where's my father?

Dr. Castello motions for Jacob to follow him.

They leave the bedroom, cross the living room and enter Hayden's room.

INT. HAYDEN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Hayden is in bed with a double I.V. hookup attached to his arm. He's reading the Sunday comics when Jacob enters.

DR. CASTELLO
He took care of you and I'm taking care of him.

HAYDEN
I did nothing. It was the Lord's work. That young man is strong as an ox.
(to Dr. Castello and Leah)
You two leave us alone. I want to talk to my son.

Dr. Castello and Leah exit, closing the door. Jacob goes to his father.

JACOB
I saw Momma.

HAYDEN
Was she beautiful?

JACOB
Yeah. She was beautiful.

HAYDEN
I can't wait to see her again. What was she wearing.

JACOB
Her robe.

HAYDEN
The old flannel thing I gave her.

JACOB
Yeah. That one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACOB (CONT'D)
The other night, those things I
said, I ...

HAYDEN
It was the Devil talking.

Jacob stops. Nods.

JACOB
Thanks.

HAYDEN
You owe me nothing.
(pause)
That's a pretty nice filly you got
out there.

JACOB
Yeah.

HAYDEN
You goin to marry her?

JACOB
I don't know what I'm going to do.

HAYDEN
I told Castello I want to live long
enough to see a grandkid. Looks
like you both got your work cut out
for you.

Jacob nods. His father leans his head back into his pillow.

Jacob looks at him for a moment before walking to the door.

INT. HAYDEN'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jacob enters to find Minnie and Rebekah in the room with Leah
and Dr. Castello. Rebekah runs to him. She still has the
camera around her neck.

REBEKAH
Jacob.

Minnie watches proudly.

MINNIE
(correcting Rebekah)
Mister Jacob.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEAH

(to Jacob)

Me and the doctor are going up to
Ruby's.

(mocking southern accent)

We ain't et in a long time.

Dr. Castello rolls his eyes at Leah's good natured southern affectations. It's clear the two have gotten to know each other a bit in the last couple of days. Leah looks at Jacob, then at Minnie, starts to exit.

REBEKAH

I wanna go.

Leah leans toward Rebekah, affectionately.

LEAH

Okay. We'll talk about those
pictures of yours.

This excites Rebekah.

REBEKAH

Okay.

They exit, leaving Jacob and Minnie alone. Jacob is a bit overwhelmed with all the information he's receiving.

MINNIE

They're using Rebekah's polaroids
in your magazine.

JACOB

Really? I guess I better keep my
eyes open for a new job.

MINNIE

You could've told me you were
seeing somebody.

JACOB

I guess I didn't want you to know.

MINNIE

Those pictures you took of me...

JACOB

You want them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MINNIE

Not really. I actually thought they were pretty good. But the church might frown on it. And Rebekah.

JACOB

Okay. We'll burn 'em. But I'm keeping the negatives.

Minnie smiles.

MINNIE

You are a tease, Jacob Hawke.

JACOB

How's the revival going?

MINNIE

Good. Tonight's the last night. You up to it?

JACOB

I wouldn't miss it.

An awkward beat, Minnie wanders the room.

MINNIE

You know I'm in love with you?

JACOB

Really? A pathetic non-believer?

MINNIE

Nobody's perfect. Besides, you'd be dead now if you were a total heathen.

(pause)

Do you love her?

JACOB

People are asking me a lot of difficult questions today.

MINNIE

I wouldn't blame you if you did. I'd like her a whole lot more if it wasn't for you. Rebekah would go back to Chicago with her, I think.

Minnie stares at him for a bit. Changes gears.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MINNIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, they're making me a deacon of sorts at the church. I actually get to preach some, but then they can't really let a woman be pastor. It's in the Bible that way.

JACOB

They'll get over it one day.

Minnie walks up to Jacob and kisses him.

MINNIE

Just checking.
(pause)
Let's go eat.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLEASANT HOLLOW CHURCH OF SIGNS - NIGHT

There is an abundance of cars on the side of the road. The crowd beneath the thatched roof overflows, spilling out of the arbor. The music is loud and the worshipping is reaching a crescendo.

Jacob, his hand bandaged, sits near the back of the arbor with Leah and Rebekah.

Minnie is up front, snakes in her hands, leading the anointed. Rev. Dewey Smalls passes fire to others in the circle. Rebekah moves closer to snap photos.

Leah can hardly watch, averting her eyes from Minnie, who lets the snake crawl on her head and face. Leah reaches over to take Jacob's hand, squeezes hard.

Millard Lewis spots Jacob from the front of the arbor. He makes his way through the crowd and greets Jacob with a kiss on the lips and a shake of the hand. He motions with his head for Jacob to follow him back to the front.

He follows Millard through the congregation, greeting townspeople he knows as he passes, all of them glad to see him, patting him on the back, saying hello and blessing him.

Jacob, somewhat flattered by the attention, looks back at Leah. She gives him a good-natured shrug from across the sea of heads.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Millard leads Jacob to the circle of anointed, next to Minnie, encouraging him to join them in their worship. Jacob begins swaying to the music, gives in to the rhythm, joins in the singing.

Leah watches from her seat. She looks down to his camera bag, reaches in to grab a camera. An envelope falls to the floor as she pulls the camera from the bag. She picks it up, discovers some photographs. She begins thumbing through them.

Jacob has his hands raised, swaying with the worshippers.

Leah looks up from the pictures, sees Jacob and Minnie together. Leah returns the camera and pictures to the bag and walks out.

He looks at Minnie affectionately, beside him. She is framed by rattlesnakes, intoxicated by the rapture of the anointment, totally at peace. Her face is a picture of contentment, rapt in euphoria. She is unaware of Jacob's presence.

Jacob then looks for Leah. Her seat is empty. He looks at Minnie one last time before making his way through the congregation, toward the exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. GRAVEYARD - NIGHT

Jacob watches the stars from beside his mother's grave. The worshipping can be heard in the distance. He picks a fresh daisy from the vase against the headstone.

JACOB
Hope you don't mind.

He walks off.

CUT TO:

INT. JACOB'S ROOM - NIGHT

The door opens slowly. Jacob peaks his head in. The lamp is on, Leah sits on the wooden chair in the corner, hugging her knees.

Jacob steps in. He's holding the daisy.

JACOB
Couldn't handle it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Leah doesn't move.

JACOB (CONT'D)
It is a little tough.

He walks to the bed, sniffing the flower.

LEAH
So. Did you do it?

JACOB
Do what?

LEAH
You know, the usual Saturday night:
Shake snakes, fiddle with fire,
guzzle strychnine, rap to the gods,
fuck Minnie!

Jacob looks at the daisy, walks calmly to the bed. Sits down.

JACOB
None of the above.

Leah stands. Paces. Irritated that her statement didn't rile Jacob.

LEAH
I shouldn't have come here.

She wanders next to the window, stops, reaches out a finger and wipes a layer of dust from one of the venetian blinds.

Jacob looks beside the chair. Leah's suitcase is packed, ready to go.

JACOB
It's a long trip back.

LEAH
Yeah. Well I've got a lot to think about.

JACOB
Yeah. I guess so.

He stretches on the bed, his head lands on the pillow, puts his hands behind his head, daisy resting on his chest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Leah walks over to her suitcase. Stands there, looks at Jacob. Forlorn.

JACOB (CONT'D)
It's a pretty drive. You should
wait until daybreak.

Leah picks up her suitcase, walks toward the door.

LEAH
I don't think so. I couldn't sleep
anyway.

Jacob swings his legs over to the side of the bed.

JACOB
Okay. Have it your way.
(pause, looks up)
I promised Dad we'd come back and
visit on holidays.

Leah looks at him for a second.

LEAH
We?

JACOB
I hope you don't mind.

A smile creeps across Leah's face as this sinks in. She drops the bag, runs to him, pushes him back on the bed in an embrace. Big kiss. Leah stops. Sniffs his breath, then his skin.

LEAH
Snakes. You smell like a zoo.

Jacob pushes her over onto her back. The daisy has been crushed, he tries to revitalize it a bit, presents it to her.

FADE OUT:

THE END

VITA

Allan Moyer is a recipient of the Governor's Award for Screenwriting at the Virginia Festival of American Film and has received honors from America's Best Competition and the Wisconsin Screenwriter's Forum. Two of his screenplays have been optioned by Hollywood producers. He lives in Virginia where he teaches at Mary Baldwin College. He writes and performs for the music group, the Findells. Moyer drives an old Toyota Van with faulty door locks.

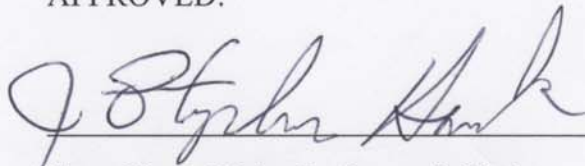
THESIS EXAMINATION REPORT

CANDIDATE: James Allan Moyé

MAJOR FIELD: Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing,
Low Residency Option

TITLE OF THESIS: *Signs Following*

APPROVED:

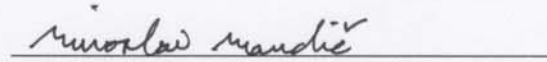


Steve Hank, Major Professor & Chair



Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:



Miroslav Mandic



Richard Katrovas

DATE OF EXAMINATION: 11/19/2002