

C A R N I V A L E

"Tipton"

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EXT. TIPTON - DAY

SLOW-MOTION as the front door of a wooden building opens. REVEREND TOM GOYER emerges. To his left, on a bench, sit a woman and girl. And to his front, SHERIFF LYLE DONOVAN stands in the roadside. Behind Goyer, several men are carrying a wooden coffin embossed with a cross. Women and children follow. Donovan and the rest place their hands on their hats and heads, perhaps in a gesture of mourning, as the men load the coffin into a wagon.

CLOSE ON

a Carnivale truck as it drives by.

The townsfolk stop and watch the trucks go past. BEN HAWKINS rides atop of one of the trucks. He looks down at the coffin. It's a scene from an earlier dream...

FADE INTO:

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - DAY

SAMSON and CLAYTON JONES, a.k.a. "JONESY" are walking through the carnival. GABRIEL follows.

SAMSON
Beans, lard, flour... milk and sugar if
they got it.

He hands Jonesy a wad of cash.

SAMSON
Hawkins!

BEN (O.C.)
Yeah, boss?

SAMSON
Go with Jonesy.

Ben saunters over.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Jonesy is driving a truck down a dusty road. Ben is the passenger.

BEN
This a good town?

JONESY
Tipton? Never worked it.

BEN
Don't y'all have a regular, you know...

JONESY
Circuit?

BEN

Yeah.

JONESY

Used to. Now it's just town by town,
catch as catch can, and that ain't
hardly nothin'.

BEN

Since when?

JONESY

(a beat)

Since you showed up.

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - DAY

Samson yells directions to his men, who are in the process of erecting a tent. Sheriff Donovan approaches.

SAMSON

That's right! Stake it down tight. We
could be in for another blow.

LYLE

Jumpin' the gun a bit, ain't ya?

Samson turns around. He smiles and the two men shake hands.

SAMSON

Lyle. What brings you out to these
parts? Thought you was in Troy.

LYLE

Ma got sick. Come down to keep an eye on
her. Got myself elected two years back.

SAMSON

I'll be damned.

LYLE

I was the only fella in the valley. Last
fella let out with a contingency fund,
four colts and a Thompson gun.

SAMSON

Did you catch him?

Samson checks the time on his pocket watch.

LYLE

I will. I sure would like that Thompson gun.

SAMSON

(laughs)

I'll bet you would.

LYLE

I guess you know I didn't come out here to jaw.

SAMSON

I expect not. I'll tell what though, we're kinda skinny right now. The best we can do now is 10 now, 10 on the gate.

LYLE

There ain't gonna be no gate.

SAMSON

Okay, 20.

LYLE

Not 10, not 20, not 30. I can't let you set up. I'm sorry, it's just the way it is. I gotta look after my people.

SAMSON

Your people? What the hell you talkin' about Lyle?

LYLE

These people barely got a pocket to turn out and I'm not gonna let 'em get shook down by no carnies.

SAMSON

(angry)

Shook down?! Why-- We run a clean operation here, Lyle, and you know it!

LYLE

I know what kind of operation you run. Maybe next year.

EXT. FARMER'S EXCHANGE - DAY

The carnival truck pulls up alongside a wooden building. Jonesy and Ben get out. Jonesy approaches one of the farmers, while Ben takes a look around.

JONESY

How you doing?

FARMER

Howdy.

JONESY

Got any milk?

FARMER

No, no water, cows are dehydrated.

JONESY

Oh. How much for this corn?

FARMER

What do you got?

Jonesy starts sifting through a bag of corn.

JONESY

This ain't hardly real corn. I'll give
you a buck for the lot of it...

In front of a building (Tipton Tool & Supply), a man loads truck painted "Big Sky Farms." Ben reaches into his pocket and pulls out a photograph. It's of a woman, his mother, Flora, standing in front of a truck, possibly the same truck, for it too is marked "Big Sky Farms." The writing on the back of the photo says "H.S." and "FLD."

JONESY (CONT'D)

There ya go. Load it up back there.

MADDY (O.C.)

That's him, Grammy!

Ben turns around. It's MADDY CRANE, the crippled girl he healed back in Milfay. She's accompanied by her GRANDMOTHER.

GRANDMOTHER

You sure, baby?

MADDY

Yes, ma'am.

The grandmother walks over to Ben, clasps his hands and kneels on the ground.

GRANDMOTHER

Oh, glory be praised! He's the one!
Saved my little Maddy! She was lame and
he touched her and made her to walk. Oh,
bless you sir!

Suddenly, more impoverished and sickly residents of Tipton appear. They surround Ben, putting their hands on him so he might heal them too. Ben struggles to get away from the mob.

BEN

C'mon, now c'mon.

GRAMMY

She's walkin' now 'cause you touched her
with your hands!

BEN

Let me go, now. Jesus Christ, lady.

Jonesy finishes loading the truck. He looks up at Ben and the mob scene the boy's inadvertently caused.

JONESY
Hawkins, get in the truck.

The "Big Sky Farms" truck pulls away. Ben watches it leave, distressed that he's not in any position to follow it.

JONESY (CONT'D)
Hawkins, get in the truck!

BEN
(to the crowd)
Hey, come on, goddamnit!

Ben forces his way through the crowd and climbs into the truck.

EXT. CHIN'S - DAY

A cloth banner is raised so that it covers the neon sign for Mr. Chin's, the former prostitution and gambling establishment of Mintern's Chinatown. The banner reads: "Dignity Ministry. Come Worship With Us."

ELEANOR MCGILL, a dirt-covered elderly woman, is handing out programs to the migrants who are headed inside Chin's.

ELEANOR
Praise Jesus, brothers and sisters! Come
hear the word of the Lord through his
servant in Christ, Brother Justin!
Welcome. Praise the lord! Praise the
lord! Welcome...

INT. CHIN'S - DAY

On stage at the front of the main hall, BROTHER JUSTIN CROWE and his sister, IRIS CROWE, are leading their congregation in a rendition of "Old Time Religion." Eleanor's son LESTER plays the accordion. Everyone else claps along with the music.

CONGREGATION
"...makes me love everybody, and it's
good enough for me. It will do when I am
dying. It will do when I am dying. It
will do when I am dying, and it's good
enough for me!"

Applause and cheering.

JUSTIN
Yes, that good time religion, brothers
and sisters, rising like a phoenix from
the ashes of sin and degradation. Where
there was a den of flesh and debasement,
there is now a glorious, shining temple
dedicated to the Lord God Almighty!

More applause and cheering.

JUSTIN

Amen.

(a beat)

Now there were those who laughed when we started our great mission, men of the cloth, respectable learned men, who said the migrants had lost their faith.

The congregation reacts negatively with shouts of "No!"

ELEANOR

Never!

IRIS

No.

JUSTIN

He said that they believed that God has abandoned them. And so they in turn have abandoned God.

ELEANOR

No!

JUSTIN

Well to them I say, who has more faith in God than those who have borne witness to His Fury?

ELEANOR

Amen, brother.

JUSTIN

Who has more faith in God than the brother who has seen his land blow away in a raging tempest?

Applause and cheering.

IRIS

Praise the lord!

JUSTIN

Who has more faith in God than the sister who has buried her children in the hardscrabble left behind? Who has more faith in God than the families that wander the wilderness in search of the Promised Land? From Kansas to Colorado! From New Mexico to Oklahoma!

The singing resumes.

CONGREGATION

"Give me that old time religion. Give me that old time religion. Give me that old time religion, and it's good enough for me! Give me that old time religion..."

FADE INTO:

EXT. CHIN'S - DAY

Justin and Iris are standing in the doorway outside Chin's, shaking hands with the parishioners as they leave.

JUSTIN

Well, thank you for coming. Thank you.
God Bless. God bless...

ELEANOR

It's a miracle. It is!

JUSTIN

Not a miracle, just a lot of hard work,
sister.

He laughs.

Eleanor departs as NED MUNSON and VAL TEMPLETON, who, by their nice suits and overall degrees of cleanliness, are obviously *not* migrants, approach.

NED

Brother Justin?
(a beat)
Munson. Ned Munson.

JUSTIN

Mr. Munson.

NED

This is quite an operation you have here,
quite an operation. It's very impressive.

JUSTIN

Thank you, sir.

NED

There is a lot of talk about this down
in city hall. People who'd like to meet
you, see what you've accomplished.

Justin and Iris exchange looks.

NED (CONT'D)

Maybe you could give myself and the other
councilman here the old nickel-tour?

JUSTIN

Well, I suppose it would be an honor.

NED

It'd be our honor, Reverend, it'd be our honor. So we'll see you tomorrow.

(to Iris)

Ma'am.

Munson and Templeton leave.

IRIS

Well, well...

While Iris wears a look of puzzlement and distrust on her face, Justin seems unconcerned, and continues to say goodbye to his congregation.

JUSTIN

Thank you for coming. Thank you...

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - DAY

The carnival truck pulls in. Jonesy barks an order to Ben, then gets out and walks toward Samson.

JONESY

Hawkins, grab that crate.

(to Samson)

Hey boss, something's funny about that rube. You should've seen what happened in town. People were coming up to him, calling him "Jesus"--

SAMSON

Yeah, well, I don't really care about that right now!

Jonesy looks around. He sees that the carnival is no closer to being set up. In fact, it looks like the rousties are disassembling the tents.

JONESY

What the hell's going on here?

SAMSON

Remember Lyle Donovan from Troy?

JONESY

The cop? Yeah, he was a sport.

SAMSON

Yeah, well, he's a sonofabitch now. Says he doesn't want us shakin' down his people. *His* people, like he owns 'em.

(to O.C.)

Hey, careful with that!

Silence between them. Then, Jonesy takes a look at Ben. Jonesy's got an idea.

JONESY

Let me get this straight, what did the
cop say?

SAMSON

He said we had to clear out.

JONESY

No, before that.

SAMSON

He said we couldn't set it up--

JONESY

The carnival, right? The carnival.

SAMSON

Well, yeah, what am I speakin', Swahili?

Samson follows Jonesy's gaze to... Ben Hawkins. The boy doesn't have a clue
what the carnies are planning.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

Samson is sitting across from Reverend Tom Goyer.

TOM

A revival?

SAMSON

Yes, sir, Reverend. Sheriff Donovan's
got us all wrong. We ain't been the
carny-trade for a dog's age.

TOM

You don't say.

SAMSON

We all come to the Lord when a young
stranger wandered into our midst, a
powerful young healer by the name of
Benjamin St. John. Perhaps you heard of
him. He was in town earlier today. I
understand he caused quite a stir...

(a beat)

What we do, Reverend Goyer, is travel
from town to town, preachin' the word,
bringing hope where there is none,
healin' the lame, the sick, and the
poor-in-spirit.

TOM

For a small donation, of course.

SAMSON

Of which a full fifty percent is
contributed to the local churches. This
is the only church in town, is it not?

TOM

There's St. Andrews just down the road.

Samson smiles.

SAMSON

Well what say we let the Cat'lics take
care of the Cat'lics.

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

CLOSE ON

a banner that reads "Prophet * BENJAMIN ST. JOHN * Healer."

FELIX "STUMPY" DREIFUSS is well dressed in a tuxedo. He stands behind a sort
of pulpit, waving a Bible, addressing the men and women as they make their
way into the REVIVAL TENT.

STUMPY

Step right up, brothers and sisters!
Step right up and witness the amazing
Benjamin St. John! Fresh from a
triumphant tour of Bethlehem, Jerusalem
and the Holy Land! Experience the Lord's
healing touch through this latter day
prophet...

LIBBY

(waving)

Thank you. Right this way! There's
plenty of room for everybody!

Normally scantily clad Cootch dancers LIBBY and DORA MAE DREIFUSS are tonight
conservatively dressed. They hold baskets to collect the crowds' money.

DORA MAE

God bless you, ma'am.

LIBBY

Thank you.

DORA MAE

Thank you, sir.

CUT TO:

Sheriff Donovan angrily bangs on Samson's trailer. Samson opens the door.

SAMSON

Well, hello, Lyle.

LYLE

I told you to leave.

SAMSON

Well, you told me we couldn't set up a carnival-show. This here's a revival.

LYLE

I don't give a tinker's damn what you call it. It's a clip-joint, plain and simple and if you don't shut it down, I'm gonna to shut it down for you.

SAMSON

Well, I wish I could, but if I did, you and I would both have to answer to a higher authority.

LYLE

The Lord?

SAMSON

Nope. The Bill of Rights. Freedom of Religion.

LYLE

Don't you be quotin' me your rights. You listen up you shyster--

SAMSON

Well, hello, Reverend Goyer! I'm so pleased that you could make it by this evening.

Reverend Goyer is escorting a group of men and women to the revival. He turns to greet Samson.

TOM

I wouldn't miss it for the world, Brother Samson. Hello, Lyle.

LYLE

Tom.

TOM

A fine night for a good old-fashioned revival, huh? Just what the folks need.

The crowds surrounding him nod their heads in agreement.

CROWD

Yes, sir. It is.

TOM

A little old-time evangelism to shake out the cobwebs, stir up the spirit. Right, Sheriff?

Donovan smiles and nods politely.

SAMSON

Enjoy, Reverend.

(to Lyle)

Lyle, I'm tellin' you, this operation is a hundred percent legit.

LYLE

I never heard an honest man use the word "legit."

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

The staging area outside the tent. Ben sits in front of a table and mirror. He's wearing a tuxedo. LILA, "Bearded Lady of Brussels," takes a handful of pomade and rubs it in Ben's hair. The boy squirms.

LILA

Now, hold still.

BEN

Let me see myself.

LILA

Not yet.

RUTHIE and her son Gabriel enter. Ruthie stares at Ben in shock.

RUTHIE

Dear Lord...

BEN

This dumb, forget it.

Ben gets up from the chair. Lila shoves him back down.

LILA

Easy, handsome. You're gonna be just fine.

Enter Samson.

SAMSON

Damn straw house. Gotta hand it to Jonesy.

(noticing Ben)

Holy cow...

RUTHIE

It's like seein' a ghost.

SAMSON

(to Ruthie)

Ain't it time you got ready?

Ruthie leaves.

SAMSON
(to Lila)
Who picked out this get-up?

LILA
There something wrong with it?

SAMSON
It was Lodz wasn't it?
(to Ben)
You gonna knock 'em dead, kid.

BEN
I wanna see myself.

Ben gets up and looks in the mirror. He doesn't seem to recognize himself.

BEN (CONT'D)
I ain't doin' it.

SAMSON
Now, those are just butterflies, kid.
It's only natural to be a bit nervous.

BEN
I look like a damn fool.

SAMSON
Well, hell, kid. You look like Valentino.
(to Lila)
Doesn't he look like Valentino?

LILA
Spittin' image.

BEN
Forget it.

Ben attempts a hasty retreat retreat. But Gabriel blocks his path.

SAMSON
That ain't an option.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

The crowd finishes singing the hymn "Shall We Gather at the River." Stumpy takes the stage. Behind him is a large painting of the pyramids in Egypt, and an empty chair. Gabriel stands patiently in front of the stage. Included in the crowd are Reverend Goyer and several of the carnies.

STUMPY
Welcome to the traveling St. John
Crusade and Revival!

Applause and cheering.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

My name is brother Lazarus Dubois and I stand before you tonight as living testimony to the power, to the glory, and to the almighty love of Jesus Christ!

WOMAN

Praise Jesus.

STUMPY

Four years ago, I was a salesman, a sinful man.

Libby shakes her head in mock shame.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

Full of lust and cheap hootch. Sellin' lighting rods door-to-door. Cheatin' good, honest farmers out of their hard earned pay. Seducin' their wives. Seducin' their daughters. I was a drunkard! I was a thief! And I was an adulterer! I was a profane man ruled by profane desires with a one-way ticket to eternal damnation!

Everyone shouts in agreement.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

When, ironically, I was struck down by a bolt of God's own blue fire from the sky!

More applause and cheering.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Backstage. Samson is dusting off Ben's tuxedo.

BEN

You said if I didn't feel one hundred percent comfortable, you'd have Schmidt do it.

SAMSON

It's too late now.

BEN

I don't even feel fifty percent comfortable.

SAMSON

You listen up, boy. We got the whole nut ridin' on this deal.

BEN

What if I foul up?

SAMSON

You ain't gonna foul up. All you gotta do is sit there lookin' cryptic. It's automatic.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

STUMPY

...When the man that you came to see here tonight laid his hands upon me and brought me back from the veritable edge of the abyss!

(a beat)

Brothers and sisters, I give you the right, Reverend Benjamin St. John!

Applause and cheering as Ben walks (well, trips) onstage. Ben sits in the empty chair and surveys the crowd. He's sweating profusely.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

Follow my lead, boy, it'll be all right.

(to the audience)

Reverend St. John! Hallelujah!

Samson joins LODZ, the blind mentalist, and Lila who are watching from the back rows. Lila is wearing a black veil over her face to cover her beard.

SAMSON

(to Lodz)

That was some cute trick.

LODZ

The tuxedo? Is he wearing it?

SAMSON

You know goddamn well he is.

Lodz laughs.

STUMPY

It is important, brothers and sisters, it's vitally important that you understand that unlike our Lord Jesus Christ, the Reverent St. John here, is but a mortal man of flesh and blood. His constitution is such that he cannot lay his hands on but one poor soul a day. To do so otherwise... could prove fatal.

The crowd gasps.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

Now, brothers and sisters, is there anyone amongst you faithful who is in special need of Christ's healing power?

They all raise their hands.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

Who is here? Who is here? Where are you?
Who? Who is here?

(pointing)

The woman in the wheelchair.

(to Gabriel)

The woman in the wheelchair in the back,
boy. Bring her up, boy. Give her a hand,
young man, so we may commence the healin'!

Gabriel goes to the back of the tent and wheels the woman forward. She's completely covered in cloths and rags, her face obscured and frail body slouched over on one side. (In reality, the sickly woman is Ruthie.) Gabriel and another man lift the wheelchair onto the stage.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

I say gently, gently with her, boys.
Careful, careful. Praise Jesus, this
woman is injured.

(to Ruthie)

What is your name, sister?

RUTHIE

Gertrude.

STUMPY

And what's ailing you, sister?

RUTHIE

(weakly)

I gots the stomach cancer...

STUMPY

She's got stomach cancer.

The crowd gasps again.

RUTHIE

Doctor says it ate my back bones. So's
my legs don't work no more...

STUMPY

It's eatin' her back bone. Her back
bone's gone. She cannot walk. Her legs,
they are useless.

(to Ruthie)

Are you ready to be healed tonight,
sister?

RUTHIE

I sure do hope so...

STUMPY

Hallelujah.

(a beat)

Brothers and sisters, we need to put our hands together now and repeat with me, Jesus. Repeat with me, Jesus. Jesus... Jesus... Jesus...

The crowd clasps hands and chants together.

CROWD

...Jesus... Jesus... Jesus...

LILA

...Jesus... Jesus... Jesus...

Samson smiles. The crowd's good and ready.

SAMSON

Jesus...

STUMPY

(to Ben)

Lay your hands on her, boy.

STUMPY and CROWD

...Jesus... Jesus... Jesus...

Ben leans over and warily places his hands on Ruthie. She peaks out from under her disguise and smiles at him.

STUMPY

By the power of the Almighty God, by the power of the Son and the Holy Ghost, we command you Satan's black cancer, to leave this woman and to make her healed!

Ruthie flings herself backward and forward in her chair. She breathes heavily. The crowd continues to murmur amongst themselves. They shout out words of encouragement to "Gertrude."

STUMPY (CONT'D)

(to Ruthie)

Gertrude, dear sister, I want you to walk to me now.

CROWD

C'mon, walk! Walk!

STUMPY

Walk to me, now. I want you to stand out of the chair and walk to me.

Ruthie pretends to struggle as she stands up.

STUMPY (CONT'D)

Now walk, sister! Stand up and walk,
sister! Stand up and walk to me! Come to
me. C'mon!

She staggers over to Stumpy.

RUTHIE

Lord God, I'm healed! I'm healed!

The place goes absolutely nuts. Everyone's standing and clapping, screaming
and hugging each other.

LILA

Thank you, Lord! Thank you, Jesus!
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Praise the
Lord!

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

EXT. DONOVAN HOUSE - DAY

A young SCUDDER is leaning against a porch railing. He rolls a silver coin
across his knuckles. To his right is a woman in a white dress. She's looking
out toward the yard. It's possibly a summer day, for they both appear quite
hot and bothered. "Love Me or Leave Me," sung by Ruth Etting, plays in the
background.

MUSIC

"Love me or leave me, let me be lonely.
You won't believe me. I love you only. I'd
rather be lonely than happy with somebody
else. You might find the nighttime the
right time..."

As Scudder stands and walks back into the house, the music begins to skip.

MUSIC (CONT'D)

The nighttime, the right time, the
nighttime, the right time..."

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - DAY

MUSIC (CONT'D)

"the nighttime, the right time, the
nighttime, the right time..."

Ben opens his eyes. He's been sleeping in his familiar spot: on the ground,
underneath a trailer.

MAN (O.C.)

Hey, turn that thing off, will you?!

A carny switches off a gramophone and the music stops.

CUT TO:

MAN

Ready, boss?

SAMSON

Let's go.

Two men lift Samson onto a table. Lodz, Lila, Dora Mae, Libby, Stumpy and Ben are among the carnies seated at nearby tables.

SAMSON

Children, children! Gather 'round. I have an announcement to make. Due to the unprecedented success of our new endeavor, no small thanks going to master Hawkins.

Someone slaps Ben on the back, approvingly.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

I'm pleased to announce, Possum and Bobby, armed with ample greenbacks, have braved the forty-plus-miles to Jefferson City and have procured... fresh eggs!

They gasp and applaud.

SAMSON (CONT'D)

Bacon!

More applause.

COOK

And orange juice! Come and get it, c'mon!

They get up and make their way to the Cook's tent to get themselves breakfast. Several more of the men congratulate Ben as they walk by.

MAN

Good work, Hawkins.

MAN

Good job.

Ben spots SOFIE watching across the way. She gives him a stern look. Ruthie, however, rubs her hand across Ben's back and smiles at him.

CUT TO:

Jonesy, Ben and other rousties are at a table eating breakfast.

MAN
The bugs extra?

The men laugh.

JONESY
Hawkins, get the boys some more juice.

Ben picks up a pitcher. As he gets up and turns around, two of the men steal food from his plate. Sofie walks by carrying a tray.

SOFIE
(sarcastically)
Congratulations.

BEN
I didn't do nothing'.
(a beat)
How's your ma?

She turns around.

SOFIE
Better. Not great, but at least she's talking.

BEN
That's good.

Sofie walks away. From her expression, it seems this latest encounter with Ben Hawkins has left her (consistently) confused.

Samson approaches.

SAMSON
How's my boy?

BEN
Good.

SAMSON
We got a morning show at eleven sharp.
Morning "service," I mean. You ready to knock 'em dead like last time?

He laughs.

BEN
Hey, boss? I got somethin' that needs takin' care of in town.

SAMSON
Take the Chevy. Be back ten, though. Ten thirty at the latest.
(a beat)
You're my gold mine, boy!

EXT. FARMER'S MARKET - DAY

CLOSE ON

the photograph of Ben's mother, Flora, standing in front of the truck marked "Big Sky Farms."

An OLD FARMER hands the photo back to Ben. He steps off the porch of the market and begins to load baskets onto his flatbed truck.

OLD FARMER
Can't help you.

BEN
What about Big Sky Farms? You know where that is?

OLD FARMER
Can't says I do.

BEN
Thank you.

Ben begins to walk away.

OLD FARMER
You might want to talk to Mrs. Donovan, used to be her truck. Pretty sure that fella you saw bought it at the auction.

BEN
Auction?

OLD FARMER
Sad thing about the Donovans. Used to own half this here town. Pretty nearly the only thing she's got left now is that big old house... and a shovel full of dust in her lungs.

BEN
Where she live?

OLD FARMER
Oh, about thirty minutes south on Moreau. You can't miss it.

BEN
You got the time on ya?

The farmer checks his pocket watch.

OLD FARMER
Quarter past ten.

EXT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - DAY

Ben stops his truck on the road that leads into the carnival. The traffic in the area is heavily congested. Cars are parked haphazardly and people are freely roaming about. Ben approaches a WOMAN standing next to a car.

BEN

What the hell happened here? There a wreck?

WOMAN

No, there's a healer up there. Healed an old lady with the cancer last night I hear'd.

As he makes his way down the road toward the carnival, a woman wearing a sign around her neck, which reads "FOR THERE SHALL ARISE FALSE CHRISTS, AND FALSE PROPHETS, AND SHALL SHEW GREAT SIGNS AND WONDERS; INSOMUCH THAT, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE, THEY SHALL DECEIVE THE VERY ELECT - MATTHEW 24:24," begins to shout:

WOMAN WITH SIGN

Look! That's him! That's the miracle-man!
That's Benjamin St. John!

In a repeat of yesterday's scene outside the Farmer's Market, flocks of people begin to surround Ben, laying their hands on him, shouting "Please!"

BEN

Hey, leave me alone. Back off. Let go!
Back off!

Jonesy and other men try to control the crowd while Gabriel slings Ben over his shoulder and carries the boy to safety.

EXT. CHIN'S - DAY

Dirt-covered migrant workers are resting and socializing on the porch outside Chin's.

INT. CHIN'S - DAY

Inside, more migrants are assembling pews. Brother Justin is giving Ned Munson and Val Templeton, and two other men who make up the councilmen's entourage, the promised nickel-tour. The councilmen feign enthusiasm.

JUSTIN

And this is our main hall. At this point we can seat almost a hundred, but once we get the pews finished, we should be able to accommodate double that.

NED

Double?!

CUT TO:

The upstairs of Chin's. Young boys are painting the walls. Iris is dusting the furniture.

JUSTIN

This is our children's shelter. We're not quite finished yet, but we should have room for about a dozen boys. The girl's dormitory across the hall is already completed.

(to Iris)

Iris?

Iris turns around. She walks over and stands next to her brother.

JUSTIN (CONT'D)

Iris, this is City Councilman Munson.

NED

Hi.

JUSTIN

And... Templeton. Gentlemen, my sister, Iris.

IRIS

Hello. Mr. Templeton, was Carroll your cousin?

VAL

My nephew.

IRIS

Well, you have our deepest sympathy.

JUSTIN

Lord knows that without Carroll Templeton none of this would've been possible.

VAL

That's a real comfort. I'm amazed how much work you put into the place. I just wish you'd come to us before.

JUSTIN

Well, believe me, we'd appreciate all the support you could lend in the future. We need all the help we can get.

VAL

Well, that's not exactly what I meant. Ned?

NED

I think what Val's trying to say is... this whole block is slated for demolition.

JUSTIN

Demolition. When?

NED

Well, that's the old rub. City planner originally had it down for the Spring of '31 but that was before the crash--

VAL

We took a real beatin', I'll tell you what.

NED

But we bounced back some.

(to Val)

Didn't I tell you we were gonna bounce back?

JUSTIN

Gentlemen! When?

NED

Middle of next month.

JUSTIN

That is unacceptable.

NED

Of course it is, Padre, of course it is. You didn't think we were just gonna throw you out, did you? Is that what you thought? There is a... There's a big old empty roadhouse about five miles outside of town. Now, it's a nice piece of land. It's owned by Water and Power, but--

JUSTIN

No.

NED

Well, Reverend, don't be so hasty.

JUSTIN

I'm not a fool, sir. I know this has nothing to do with "city planning." It's all about the migrants. The Okies. The Ginks. The Roadites. It's fine as long as they stay outside town but, oh, don't let them within the city limits, no, they might get a mind to stay here! Try to make it their home!

NED

Reverend, I think you got us all wrong.

VAL

Shut up, Ned.

(a beat)

Now, you listen to me, Reverend. We're offerin' you a nice piece of property in exchange for this cracker-box. Or we can exercise eminent domain for fair market value, which I'd say, looking at this place, it's about, I don't know, fifty bucks and a dead cow's fart!

(a beat)

So what's it going to be?

Justin glares at Val before bolting from the room. Iris runs after him.

IRIS

Excuse me. Justin! Justin!

CUT TO:

Iris catches up with Justin in the hallway outside the boy's dormitory. He takes a handkerchief out of his pocket and wipes the sweat from his face.

IRIS (CONT'D)

Justin, wait! I know this place they're talking about, maybe we should just--

JUSTIN

No. No. The Lord was clear. He spoke to me, Iris. He chose this place, no other.

IRIS

But Justin--

JUSTIN

No!

CUT TO:

Suddenly, a ZOOM-IN on Val as he drops his hat and clutches at his throat!

NED

Val, Val you okay?

VAL

(wheezing)

Can't breathe...

The men catch him as he begins to fall backward.

NED

Get a doctor! Let's take him outside, boys. Easy, easy. Watch his head.

CUT TO:

The men escort Val Templeton out of the dormitory. Justin reaches out to help--

VAL
No, don't...

NED
Val...?

Iris turns and shoots her brother an accusing stare. Justin appears defiant, but off Iris's look, he hangs his head in shame. Iris goes back into the dormitory.

INT. SOFIE'S TRAILER

The sounds of the morning revival are audible within the trailer. The congregation is again singing "Shall We Gather at the River."

Sofie is feeding and conversing with her mother, the catatonic APOLLONIA. She gets up and looks out the window. The revival has let out.

SOFIE
Yeah, they're done. ... Who
needs help? ... What kind of help? ...
Oh, so now I'm his chauffeur?

A knock at the door.

SOFIE
Come in.

Ben Hawkins, still wearing his tux from the show, enters the trailer.

SOFIE
Hey.

BEN
I was wonderin'--

SOFIE
Yeah, meet me in the Chevy. And hunker
down under this. I'll get the keys.

She hands him some sort of sheet, then grabs a set of keys that are hanging on the wall. She exchanges looks with Apollonia, who just stares vacantly upward.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sofie is behind the wheel, Ben the passenger.

SOFIE
So what's so important about this
Mrs. Donovan?

BEN
It's personal.

SOFIE
What do you mean, personal?

BEN
It's family business.

EXT. DONOVAN HOUSE - DAY

They pull up alongside the Donovan house -- the house from Ben's dreams. On the porch, a ghostly image of Scudder and the woman appears, then disappears. "Love Me or Leave Me" plays faintly for a moment.

MUSIC (O.C.)
"Love me or leave me, let me be lonely.
You won't believe me. I love you only.
I'd rather be lonely..."

CUT TO:

Ben and Sofie step onto the porch. Ben knocks on the front door. A servant, WALTER, answers.

WALTER
Yes?

BEN
I'd like to see Mrs. Donovan.

WALTER
Well, I'm sorry, son, but Mrs. Donovan
is in dispose.

BEN
It's important.

WALTER
Well, I'll be... You're the miracle-man.
Well, c'mon in. We ain't go time to
fritter. She been waitin' for you.

INT. DONOVAN HOUSE - DAY

A bedroom. Ben, Sofie and Walter enter. In bed is BECCA DONOVAN, the woman who appeared earlier in Ben's dream. But now, she's old and dying.

WALTER
Miss Donovan? Miss Donovan. Your man's
here.

BECCA (O.C.)
I knew you'd come.

She starts to cough. Walter goes to her bedside and holds out a handkerchief for her to spit up into.

BECCA (CONT'D)

(to Ben)

Come sit close where I can see you.

Ben takes a set on the bed.

BECCA (CONT'D)

You got his eyes, boy.

(a beat)

Walter? Why don't you show that young lady to the kitchen for a spot of lemonade?

WALTER

Yes, ma'am.

Walter escorts Sofie out of the room. Ben removes a photograph from his pocket and hands it to Becca. It's a picture of Scudder wearing a tuxedo and top hat. The photo is titled "The Gentlemen Geek."

BECCA

Crazy old bird...

BEN

When was the last time you seen him?

BECCA

Oh, long time ago. Fifteen years, or more. Old Hack Scudder and me. We got thick as thieves, we did.

BEN

You know this woman?

He hands her the photo of Flora in front of the truck marked "Big Sky Farms."

BECCA

Course I do. That's Flora. He showed me this picture, told me about her... good things.

BEN

You heard from since?

BECCA

Just dreams. You know that. Sent you one about me, Ben Hawkins. You got the gift, just like him. You might not see it as a gift, probably think it's more of a curse. Fact is, it's both. There's rules, boy. You give life, you gotta take it somethin' else. Could be an acre of wheat. Could be Walter's old bird-dog, Jim... Could be that little girl you brought in here.

LYLE (O.C.)
What the hell are you doing here? Get
outta my house!

Sheriff Donovan storms into the room and throws Ben off the bed.

BEN
No--

LYLE
I know what you're sellin' and I ain't
buyin'!

Sofie steps into the doorway.

SOFIE
Ben. Ben...

LYLE
Yeah, that's right. Get.

Ben looks at Lyle, then at Becca, coughing and dying in her bed, and reluctantly leaves. Lyle goes to his mother, takes her hand, and kneels on the floor next to her.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Sofie is driving the truck back to the carnival.

SOFIE
I don't suppose you're gonna tell me
what that was all about.
(a beat)
Family business?

BEN
Yeah.

SOFIE
So, who was she? Aunt? Long lost cousin?
Grandma?

BEN
Yeah. She was my grandma.

SOFIE
You never saw that woman before in your
life.
(a beat)
She said you had his eyes. Whose eyes?

Ben doesn't answer. Sofie stops the truck.

SOFIE
Get out.

BEN

What?

SOFIE

You heard me.

BEN

What do you want from me?

SOFIE

I want to know who the hell you are. I want to know what you did to my mother.

BEN

Hey, I told you, I didn't do nothin'--

SOFIE

You're a liar!

Ben gets out of the truck and begins to walk away. Sofie waits, the anger building in her face, before she starts the truck and drives it straight at Ben, sending him running into the growth on the side of the road.

BEN

Crazy damn bitch!

The truck stops. Sofie backs it up, nearly sideswiping Ben again.

SOFIE

What'd you call me?

BEN

I called you a crazy damn bitch.

SOFIE

Get in.

BEN

Go to Hell.

Ben walks to the other side of the road and sits on the ground. Sofie turns off the truck's ignition.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Backstage at the revival. Samson pulls back the tent and peaks through. It's almost showtime and it's another straw house.

SAMSON

You're sure he ain't around someplace?

JONESY

Nobody seen hide-nor-hair of him since the last show.

SAMSON
Damnit. Goddamnit!
(to Lila)
Lila, get Schmidt ready for the show.

SCHMIDT, a boy roughly Ben's size, sits down in front of the dressing table and mirror. Lila massages some pomade in Schmidt's hair.

JONESY
Think they'll buy it?

SAMSON
These birds? They'll buy anything.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - NIGHT

The same scene, much later. Sofie is still in the truck, Ben sitting on the ground, smoking. An owl hoots. A car drives by. Sofie looks over at Ben. He's shivering in the cold, although he'd stubbornly refuse to admit it.

SOFIE
Can I have a cigarette?

BEN
(a beat)
Can I drive?

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

The revival has begun. Schmidt, made up in a tuxedo to look like Ben, is sitting in the chair on stage. Stumpy is dancing around on stage, Bible in hand. Samson, Lodz, Lila and Jonesy are again observing in the back. The crowd is singing and clapping to "When the Saints Go Marching In."

CROWD
"Oh, when the saints go marching in. Oh,
when the saints go marching in. Oh, how
I want to be in that number, when the
saints go marching in."

The singing ends.

STUMPY
Is there any of you fine folks here
tonight who's in special need of Christ's
healing power?

People raise their hands and several cripples stand up.

MAN (O.C.)
Reverend, pick me!

STUMPY

You there! You, sister on the end.

(to Gabriel)

Why don't you go help her up here, boy?

Help her up, little sister. Praise Jesus!

Gabriel escorts Dora Mae, who is hobbling with the aid of two canes, to the stage.

MAN (O.C.)

Praise Jesus!

STUMPY

Let me help you up. Need any help up?

You up.

(a beat)

Now what is your name, little sister?

DORA MAE

Verna.

"Verna" is horribly mangled. A humorously over exaggerated amount of blood is running down her leg.

STUMPY

Oh my God. What misfortune has befell you, sister Verna?

DORA MAE

How I got runned over by a thresher.

The crowd gasps.

STUMPY

Lord, girl! You are lucky to be alive.

DORA MAE

I thank the Lord Jesus Christ every day.

CROWD

Amen!

STUMPY

Folks, do you hear that, folks? This little girl, this poor little crippled girl, thanks Jesus just for sparin' her life. Now isn't that inspirational?

They all whoop and holler.

LILA

Hallelujah! Thank you, Jesus. Thank you, Lord.

STUMPY

There, sweet, sister Verna. Are you ready to be healed tonight?

Dora Mae nods.

LYLE (O.C.)

No!

Everyone turns and sees Sheriff Donovan walking in with his mother in his arms.

LYLE

By Jesus. You're gonna help my ma, you sonofabitch!

STUMPY

I'm sorry, Sheriff. We've already chosen this young lady here to be healed. Perhaps you could bring back your mother tomorrow.

A WOMAN in the crowd stands up.

WOMAN

She ain't got till tomorrow.

MAN

Heal the girl tomorrow!

WOMAN

Heal Becca!

Samson and Jonesy look around irritated and apprehensive as the crowd starts to cheer for "Benjamin St. John" to heal Becca instead.

Then, Lyle takes a closer look at Schmidt.

LYLE

You ain't him. That ain't him!

Shouts of "No!" from the crowd.

LYLE (CONT'D)

Where's the healer? Where is he, goddamit?!

BEN (O.C.)

I'm here.

Ben enters the tent and walks over to the Sheriff.

BEN

Set her down.

They rest Becca on the ground and everyone looks on silently. Becca gasps and wheezes.

BEN

Don't die. Hey... I need to know them rules. I don't want to have to hurt nobody.

Ben studies Becca, a woman with ties to his family and past, as she shakes in the throes of death. Then, he looks into the crowd: a little girl, a young woman... Sofie, remembering "give life, you gotta take it somethin' else."

BEN
(waving)
Stand back.

Lodz stands up, his curiosity peaked.

BEN (CONT'D)
You gotta get back.

Lyle and Gabriel step aside. Samson looks on, eager to see what Ben will do. Ben reaches out to lay his hands on Becca...

BECCA
No. Don't touch me. No.

BEN
(a beat, then to the crowd)
You all saw. She don't wanna be healed.
She doesn't want it!
(to Becca)
Henry Scudder... when he left you, where
did he go?

BECCA
Babylon...

She dies.

LYLE
Mama...? Mama? Oh, mama...

FADE OUT.

FADE IN.

INT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Ben and Gabriel are loading a truck as the carnival makes its final preparations before departing. In the background, a carny plays "Waltzing Mathilda" on a harmonica. Ben lights a cigarette.

SAMSON (O.C.)
What if she hadn't stopped you?

BEN
What?

SAMSON
Well, you was makin' like to lay hands
on that woman. So my question to you is,
what if you she hadn't stopped you? What
was you fixin' to do?

Ben doesn't answer.

SAMSON

Well, that's what I thought. You shovelin' shit. It's latrine duty. No more headlining for you.

BEN

I didn't ask for it.

SAMSON

Well, you ain't gonna get it, not 'til you earned it. Maybe not even then.

SAMSON

Okay, children, start 'em up! We got dust to shake!

Jonesy climbs behind the wheel of a truck. Samson sits beside him.

INT. TRUCK - NIGHT

Jonesy starts the truck.

JONESY

Where we headed?

SAMSON

Stay on 54. Pick up route 66 to 27 south.

JONESY

Through Texas?

Samson nods.

JONESY

(a beat)

That's gonna take us awful close to Babylon.

SAMSON

No, it's gonna take us *to* Babylon.

JONESY

Jesus Christ...

SAMSON

Yeah, on a bicycle.

EXT. CARNIVAL GROUNDS - NIGHT

Samson and Jonesy pull out, the remaining trucks following. The carnival leaves Tipton and heads out into the night....