

SUPER ON SCREEN

"You must have aspirations as high as the mountains,  
and faith as firm as the rocks" Alice Lloyd

UP FROM BLACK

AUDIO - SOUND OF A BREEZE THROUGH TREES SUMMER

We open to a lush Appalachian mountainside during a Kentucky summer, trees swaying in the hot breeze. The sound of the leaves change into the sound of a hog lot. We see **ABISHA JOHNSON**, a pale, thin man about 55 years old. He doesn't look well, slightly humpbacked. He is leaning against a fence post, sweat dripping from his forehead.

SUPER ON SCREEN

Knott County, Kentucky  
1915

We see his windowless cabin, his wife on the porch washing clothes and a **small daughter** helping. The cabin yard looks clean, but poor. The sound of the hog lot increases as Abisha's gaze goes from his cabin to the sides of the mountains and across the holler that surrounds his home, and then to the fenced in hogs.

Without a word, a boy **ANGUS JOHNSON** brings a hog to Abisha. The hog fights as they force it to the ground and lay the hog's neck over a tree log on the dirt.

Both on their knees holding the hog down, Abisha reaches across the ground and grabs a 3' long cutting blade. At first, Angus looks like he will strike but he hands the blade to his son. Young Angus lifts the blade above his head and, with little emotion, strikes down toward the hogs neck.

We hear the **AUDIO swish** of the blade and the **SCREAM** of the hog dissolve into

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFICE OF "BOSTON GLOBE"/SOUND OF OFFICE - DAY

SOUND OF A TYPEWRITER CARRIAGE slams to the side

We hear the sounds of chatter and typewriters and sights of a newspaper office

CUT TO:

**INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE/OLIVER #9 TYPEWRITER - DAY**

**ALICE LLOYD**, a frail thin woman about 40 years old, working behind her desk at her newspaper. A young woman of color works next to Alice on a file.

TEXT ON SCREEN  
**Boston Globe Office**  
**Massachusetts**

SECRETARY

Here are the corrections

Alice takes the files, it is obvious she doesn't feel well.

ALICE

Well, well

CUT TO:

**INT. EDITORS OFFICE - DAY**

**THE EDITOR** sits at his desk in an office with large windows overlooking the newsroom. There is a commotion, we see Alice collapsed behind her typewriter. Her secretary calls for help and the editor jumps up from his chair toward the door.

DISSOLVE

BEAUTIFUL MELODY OF Hammered dulcimer and banjo theme begins

**FIRST CREDITS ROLL**

**SPRING:** We are high above the Kentucky mountains **IN SPRING** as the camera swoops down in-between two close mountains as we see the blooming dogwoods and red bud trees and we go at high speed in a holler, lifting up and seeing the huge expanse of the Appalachian mountains in early April

CUT TO

**INT. HOSPITAL ALICE IN BED - DAY**

**THE DOCTORS AND NURSE** huddle around Alice's bed. Alice's husband **ARTHUR**, a stern and unemotional 55 year old, is there with her Mother, **MRS. GEDDES**, a small woman in her late 70's.

DOCTOR  
It's not just the spinal meningitis

ARTHUR  
There's more?

DOCTOR  
You've had a stroke, that's why you  
can't use your arm

ARTHUR  
What?

MRS GEDDES  
Dear God ...

DISSOLVE

**SECOND CREDITS ROLL**

**Theme music now joined by Mandolin and string quartet**

**SUMMER:** We are high above the same mountains **IN SUMMER** as we plunge down in-between two lush green close mountains as we go at high speed in the same holler, lifting up and seeing the huge expanse of the Appalachian mountains in July

CUT TO

**INT. ALICE AND ARTHUR DRS OFFICE - DAY**

ALICE in wheel chair next to large window overlooking the Boston harbor. The doctor, Arthur and Mrs. Geddes. Doctor is checking Alice, pulls a chair forward and sits directly in front of her

DOCTOR  
The combination of your illness and  
the stroke has rendered you ... I'm  
afraid you are permanently fated,  
Alice.

ARTHUR  
Meaning?

DOCTOR  
You are terminal.

(Mrs. Geddes starts weeping)

ALICE  
How long?

DOCTOR  
Six months, maybe longer if you  
move to a warmer climate

ARTHUR  
Move?

ALICE  
How? After the hospital there's no  
money left

DOCTOR  
Here, the pastor has given me  
permission to offer you this

(Dr opens an envelope)

ALICE  
(takes the letter and reads)  
Kentucky?

(She hands the letter to Arthur)

DOCTOR  
It's warmer there and the church  
has a mission home for your use,  
free of cost.

ARTHUR  
Leave Boston for Kentucky? Now?

MRS. GEDDES scolding  
Arthur!

ALICE  
Why ... Why is this cabin available  
and why is it free?

DOCTOR  
The missionaries are not there any  
more ... The locals ran them off,  
so the cabin is ... Free.

ALICE  
How long can I expect?

DOCTOR  
Two more years, maybe three.

CUT TO:

**INT. ALICE AND ARTHUR'S HOME - EVENING**

Long emotional scene of silence. Their home is elegant middle class. Alice sits in front of her fireplace with a blanket, Arthur stares out a large window overlooking the Boston harbor. He moves and sits in front of his wife.

ALICE

I know.

ARTHUR

One life wasted is unavoidable, my dear. Two lives wasted is senseless.

DISSOLVE

**THIRD CREDITS ROLL**

Theme music now joined by GUITAR and percussion

**AUTUMN:** We are again high above same mountains **IN AUTUMN** as we swoop down between two mountains fully ablaze with fall colors as we go at high speed in a holler, lifting up and seeing the huge expanse of the Appalachian mountains.

CUT TO:

**EXT. APPALACHIA / ALICE and MRS. GEDDES - NOVEMBER DAY**

Alice and Mrs Geddes in a horse and buggy heading along a mountain road, loaded with belongings. The mountains are bare and gray from late autumn. There is a light drizzle. They pull up in the mud to a small windowless cabin in a holler.

Alice descends the cart with the help of her mountain driver.

CUT TO:

**INT. CABIN / SAME DAY - RAIN**

We are inside the dark windowless cabin and the door opens as Alice stands as a silhouette against the stark mountain background as the rain pours down behind her

DISSOLVE

**FINAL CREDITS ROLL**

**Theme music now joined by full orchestra into soaring melody and then subsides back to only the hammer dulcimer and ends**

**WINTER:** We are high above the same mountains **IN WINTER** as we swoop down in-between the same two mountains, white and stark with snow, as we go at high speed in a holler, lifting up and seeing the huge expanse of the Appalachian mountains in winter as it snows

DISSOLVE TO:

**EXT. ABISHA / APPALACHIAN WINTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

We see the top of a snow covered tree stump up close and hear the continued sound of someone walking in the snow. A man's hand abruptly sweeps the snow off the stump top.

A foot clomps down. The foot has no shoe, but is bound with cloth against the snowy tree stump. Hands appear, tightening the strings of the cloth that bind the straps on his foot.

We see the small man bundled against the cold. **ABISHA JOHNSON** places a log upright on the stump. Gripping his ax handle tightly, he aims at the log before him and swings. We see the snow falling straight down toward us as the loud wood chopping continues. Abisha stops and listens to the echo of his last chop bullet through the airborne snow and into the mountainsides of the holler.

We hear the voices of **SMALL CHILDREN** echoing from the house and off the mountainside. Not laughter, but a muted discussion. Abisha looks toward his small windowless home sitting next to the hog lot.

In the faint dusk light we see teenage Angus stacking firewood next to a coal pile outside the door. One small child plays in the snow with a dog.

TEXT ON SCREEN  
**Knott County, Kentucky**  
**February, 1916**

We see his young daughter **SARY**. She is thin but pretty. She does not smile, but she is not frowning.

Six year old Sary is handed a bundle of wood from her older cousin, ANGUS, about fifteen years old, with no words. She looks toward her father and then disappears into the house.

We see his home, two mountains sweep down on either side of the windowless log house with the expanse of the holler disappearing behind it in the snowfall. Smoke from the chimney hangs, suspended in the mountain holler.

Abisha's eyes gaze at the imprisoning visual of his family against the mountains, and then over to his small barnyard. Two old cows and several chickens congregate together against the cold as five large hogs search beyond the fence. Abisha stares at the hogs, then at his children.

Abisha grips his handle. As he readies to swing, his coat falls and we see he is humpbacked. He re-bundles his cloak and raises the ax above him.

The ax swings down against the log and the handle shears at the ax base. The metal blade bounces up from the stump and slams against Abisha's head with a thud.

He falls.

We are lifted up above Abisha's limp body in the snow, over the gray mountains as the snow pours in toward us.

CUT TO:

**INT. ALICE LLOYD'S CABIN - NIGHT**

ALICE LLOYD and her mother MRS. GEDDES in their small, dark log home with no windows. Alice sits in her chair, her mother across from her. We hear the wind outside, blowing ashes and sparks down the chimney into the room.

MRS. GEDDES

Good heavens, Alice. Get the broom.

They quickly put out the sparks.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABISHA'S HOUSE - EVENING**

By the light from a coal lamp we see Abisha sitting in front of his table. The bloody bump above his eye is being tended to by young Sary. The house is dark except for the light at the table.

We see half of Abisha's nine children sleeping on floor cots. ANGUS, the cousin, is the oldest of the children.

We see **ABISHA'S WIFE**, a thin, hard looking woman about 50 years old. She, too, is quiet, but very concerned and attentive. She stands by the fireplace and brings a pot of very hot water toward the table.

As the wife approaches the table, Sary peers closely into Abisha's cut that she is tending. Abisha looks weary and simply allows it.

Sary presses her rag against the cut. Abisha reacts to the pain, scaring Sary. Sary moves back quickly into her mother who drops the pot of hot water on Sary.

Sary cries out.

HIS WIFE

Sary!

(Sary's cries blend into the sound of the wind)

CUT TO

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN - NIGHT**

Alice is reading a book through her wire rimmed glasses. The wind howls and she looks up to listen. Her mother sits by the fire, with the broom in her hand, as though waiting for another downdraft. She places another log on the fire as the wind howls again. She looks toward Alice.

MRS. GEDDES

The wind sounds so cold and sad.

CUT TO

**INT. ABISHA'S BED - SAME NIGHT**

Abisha and his wife lay together in bed by the light of the fireplace. Sary and another young child sleep between them.

Abisha's eyes are open in the dark, deep in thought. His wounds glisten against the small flames of the fireplace. We can barely see his breath hang in the air from the coldness of the cabin.

HIS WIFE

I be hearin' your mind in the darkness.



(Abisha sits up in bed with his back to his wife)

HIS WIFE (cont'd)  
Sary be stout to heal.

Abisha gets up, walks over and leans over the fireplace. His wife gets out of the bed. One of the children coughs.

HIS WIFE (cont'd)  
Be you havin' the dream agin?

Abisha turns and faces her, but says nothing. She looks hard into the flames, across the room to her sleeping children and then back toward her husband.

HIS WIFE (cont'd)  
Then it be the will of God 'hovy.  
It be your duty to go to them, for  
our'n and the other chillin's.

CUT TO:

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

Mrs. Geddes stares into the fire, deep in thought. She pulls at the sweater over her shoulders.

MRS. GEDDES  
I thought we traveled to Kentucky  
for warmer weather, not snow.

ALICE  
Even the south must have its cold,  
Mother.

The sound of the wind interrupts them.

MRS. GEDDES  
We're hardly here two months and I  
already miss the sound of the  
Boston Harbor so, and windows.

CUT TO:

**EXT. ABISHA'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

Abisha closes the door of his cabin behind him. He coughs into his hands as he looks straight up into the snow as if he was praying.

CUT TO:

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

Mrs. Geddes gets up from her chair and places another log on the fire, mumbling.

MRS. GEDDES

No windows, no indoor privy.  
Alice, dear, if we had a window we  
could at least see the weather.

ALICE

The weather can be seen as it comes  
down the fireplace.

CUT TO:

**EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE - SAME NIGHT**

Abisha travels through the night, treading by foot through the snow and wind. He arrives at the edge of a frozen stream, stares up and down and then at the ice. He carefully steps on the ice and walks forward. The ice breaks and Abisha falls into the water. He screams from the cold. Up to his waist in cold water, he plows through the ice and breaks his way to the shore, disappearing into the snow.

CUT TO:

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

Alice looks up from her book, takes off her glasses. As she does, the book falls from her lap. We see that she uses only her left hand, her right arm is crippled. Mrs. Geddes sits before the fire, now mending a garment.

MRS. GEDDES

Have you heard from Arthur? Has he  
sent you any more funds?

ALICE

I hoped you would make it through  
the whole day without asking.

MRS. GEDDES

Well, I thought perhaps that vile  
little man would take pity and help  
you, as is his duty.

ALICE

Perhaps, and maybe in the meantime  
I will regain my health and return  
to Boston a mountain princess.

The sound of the wind overtakes the moment.

CUT TO

**EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE - SAME NIGHT**

The sound of the wind blends into the sounds of Abisha's struggles through the dark woods as he climbs up a mountainside. Snow clings to the branches as his face is whipped by tree limbs that slap him as he climbs. He slips on the icy ground and slides down the incline. He grabs his cloth bound feet. One foot has all but been abandoned by the makeshift wrapping. Abisha rips off the cloth and throws it aside. Barefoot, he continues his climb through the snow.

He reaches the top of the mountain and peers across the snowy, dark holler. We see Alice's windowless cabin, barely visible against the white blanket of snow.

Breathless and freezing, Abisha heads down toward the cabin.

CUT TO

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN DOORWAY - SAME NIGHT**

The two women sit quietly. Not talking. Alice sits at a table before the coal oil lamp, writing a letter with her good hand. Mrs. Geddes nods off in her chair.

They are startled by the sound of footsteps. Mrs. Geddes gets out of her chair and reaches for the fireplace poker.

There is knocking at the door. They call out, but no one answers, just a weak rhythm of pounding against the door. Alice slowly reaches for the door latch and Mrs. Geddes positions the iron poker behind her.

The door opens as Abisha, with frozen ice crusting his face, falls to the floor.

MRS. GEDDES

Dear God, who is he?

ALICE

Get a blanket!

DISSOLVE

**INT. ALICE'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

We see the burning fireplace in Alice's cabin. The women drag Abisha toward the fireplace. Alice covers him with the blanket and both women see the swollen mass of blood and ice that are his feet. Mrs. Geddes shuts the cabin door.

ALICE

Who are you ... what do you want?

Abisha tries to sit up. His face, laced with ice, contorts in pain and he falls back down.

CUT TO:

**INT. ABISHA'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT**

Sary sleeps against the pillow. The light of the coal lamp approaches and lights her as her mother comes to the bedside. Sary turns and we see the LOOSE FLESH AND BURNS on her opposite cheek. Sary's eyes open and she sits up.

SARY

Momma?

Sary's mother lifts her daughter off the bed, away from her sleeping brother. She sits on a chair next to the fire and puts Sary in her lap. Mother starts to rub butter on the burn wounds, while singing a soft, lonesome mountain song. Sary notices her father is not in the house.

The older cousin, Angus, sleeping on the cabin floor, awakens and comes to the fire. He puts his hand on Sary's forehead and pushes her head back to see the burn. Sary says nothing.

ANGUS

Pappy in the privy?

(Mother looks up and shakes her head)

MOTHER

He seed the vision agin', Angus.

The boy has a very negative look on his face.

ANGUS

Uncle 'lishy preached to let the fernors be. Pappy heard.

MOTHER

What Pappy heard louder be across those mountains.

CUT TO

## INT. ALICE'S CABIN - SAME NIGHT

Abisha is seated on a crate before the fire. He is wrapped in a blanket, his hair and clothes soaked from the thawing ice. Mrs. Geddes hands him a cup of hot tea. Abisha stares at the steam coming up from the cup, holding it in his hands for the warmth. Slowly, he places the cup back on the floor and turns toward Alice. He hesitates, then speaks.

ABISHA

I was afeered to come to the house  
of the ferin womin.

ALICE

Are you in trouble?

ABISHA

My troubles be in my heart, for my  
chillin.

ALICE

Are they sick, do they need a  
doctor?

Abisha begins to weep. Mrs. Geddes picks up his cup from the floor and tries to get him to hold it.

MRS. GEDDES

Here now, drink this. It will stop  
your shivering.

Abisha takes the cup and sips at the tea.

ALICE

What is your name?

ABISHA

I be called Abisha fer my daddy and  
his daddy before him. Abisha  
Johnson. They call me 'Bishy, my  
kinfolk do.

MRS. GEDDES

What is it then? Why have you come  
to us?

Abisha returns the teacup slowly to the floor. To their surprise he gets down on his knees before them and clasps his hands. Alice, startled, begins to stand from her chair. As she does, the Bible on the armrest falls to the floor in front of Abisha. He picks it up and holds it to his chest.

ABISHA

I was afeered to approach the  
ferrin women.

(MORE)

ABISHA (cont'd)

But I heered the voice in the  
dream. The voice of the lord God  
'hovy beseachin' me to summons you,  
to call my youngin's away from  
their sickenin's and weakenin's

ALICE

We are not medical. . .

ABISHA

The voice said to throw myself down  
before you and summons you to make  
my youngin's live unliken the hogs.

Alice and her mother exchange their confused disbelief.

(pointing to the Bible on the floor in front of them)

There be the dreams of the god-uv-  
my fathers. But I have no 'bility  
to read the words, nor to give them  
such dreams, so they can rise above  
liven as the hogs.

Abisha, very emotional, claps his hands together once, and  
speaks as though he is making a solemn oath.

I see'd in my dream that the  
ferrin' wimen seek not the alms. I  
hain't got no gifts of money.

ALICE

Mr. Johnson there is no need to-

ABISHA

If the ferrin wimen come to Caney  
and teach my youngin's the larnin'  
I will build for you a schoolhouse  
on my land. I will build for you a  
cabin bigginer than this one, and I  
be givin you the land for teachin  
my youngins the larnin'.

Alice leans against the wall by the fireplace, looking into  
the eyes of this near crippled stranger. She looks around  
the dark, tattered cabin and then at her mother. She sits  
back in her chair

ALICE

I don't understand, why do you want  
to give us your land?

(MORE)

ALICE (cont'd)  
 How will you live? How will you  
 take care of your children?

ABISHA  
 The lord god 'hovy summonsed you in  
 my dream, to give my youngin's a  
 life better'n the hogs. I've come  
 to the house of the ferrin womin to  
 teach them the larnin'.

Alice, by now very concerned and perplexed, simply looks at  
 her mother. Alice leans and picks the Bible up off the floor.

ALICE  
 Why can't you just send your  
 children to a schoolhouse? Surely  
 there's a teacher-

Abisha, once more, with abruptness, clasps his hands  
 together, and repeats his plea, as though he had rehearsed  
 this moment in his mind long before coming to Alice's cabin.

ABISHA  
 If the ferrin wimen come to Caney  
 and teach my youngin's the larnin'  
 I will build for you a schoolhouse  
 on my land. I will build for you a  
 cabin bigginer than this one, and I  
 be givin you the land for teachin  
 my youngins the larnin'.

Alice moves toward the fireplace. She looks over to Abisha  
 and his red, crusted feet, his hump back. Then to her mother.

MRS. GEDDES

(whispering)  
 Windows ...

(After a pause)

ALICE  
 Where is this land?

ABISHA  
 Across the mountains over yonder,  
 on the Caney creek.

CUT TO: