

A Wayne Scott • *LifeHouse* Production

**THE
CROSS**
AND THE **SWITCHBLADE**

Script By
CATHY FLORES

Based on the 1963 book by David Wilkerson with John and Elizabeth Sherrill

© Copyright MMIX by Cathy Flores/W. Scott – LifeHouse Productions, Inc.
All rights reserved.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(In Order of Appearance)

Linda	Strong of faith, she volunteers at a modern Teen Challenge Center (age 18-25)
Ralph	Heroin addict, desperate for money and suicidal.(age 18-25)
Officer Jim	Police officer acting as security at the modern Teen Challenge rally (age 25-40)
David Wilkerson	Naïve country preacher struggling to achieve God's calling for his life, he is noticeably thin (age 27)
Michael Farmer	Crippled from polio, he walks with a limp. Unable to run or defend himself, he is murdered by the Dragon gang (age 15)
Dragon 1	Luis Alvarez, President of the Dragons (age 16)
Dragon 2	Leoncio “Jello” DeLeon (age 16)
Dragon 3	Charles “The Big Man” Horton (age 18)
Dragon 4	Leroy “The Magician” Birch (age 18)
Dragon 5	George Melendez (age 16)
Dragon 6	John McCarthy (age 15)
Dragon 7	Richard Hills (age 17)
Judge Irwin Davidson	Conservative, but somewhat paranoid, he oversees the Michael Farmer trial (age 40-60)
Renee	One of the Dragon's Debs, she testifies at the Michael Farmer trial (age 16-22)
Defense Attorney J. Murray	The Defense Attorney for the Dragons (age 25-50)
District Attorney R. Reynolds	The Prosecutor (age 25-50)
Luis Alvarez, Sr.	Luis Alvarez's father, a devout Christian, full of hope (age 38-45)
Pastor Vincente Ortez	Hispanic pastor of a small church in a poor section of New York (age 30-40)
Delia Ortez	Pastor Vincente Ortez's wife, she loves music and sings beautifully (age 30-40)
Buckboard	President of the Bishops, despises the Mau Mau gang (age 18-22)
Stagecoach	Vice president of the Bishops, and Buckboard's best friend (age 18-22)
Israel Narvaez	President of the Mau Maus, his manner is soft and charming, he is a stark contrast to his best friend Nicky (age 18-22)
Nicky Cruz	Vice president of the Mau Maus, his face is as hard and cruel as his personality, he loves to fight (age 20)
Officer Tom Brady	A cynical police officer, devoid of hope, pity, or empathy (age 30-40)
Tommy	Intelligent and observant, member of the Bishops (age 15-20)

Willie	Likes to intimidate others, member of the Bishops (age 15-20)
Nancy	Vain and self-absorbed, a Bishop Deb (age 16-22)
Maria	A heroin addict who feels trapped and helpless, she longs for a family above all else and sees the gang as that family, a Bishop Deb (age 16-22)
Elaine	Somewhat shy member of the Bishop Debs (age 16-22)
Chuck	An extremely large and tall boy for his age, a bully (age 12-14)
Young David	David Wilkerson as a small, thin boy (age 12-14)
Johnny	Youngest, most naïve member of the Bishops (age 15-18)
Jo-Jo	Proud and cocky, homeless youth who plays the trumpet (age 15-18)
Chaplain	A prison chaplain assigned to the Dragons, arrogant and cocky (age 30-40)
Carlos	The Mau Maus ex-president, slightly wiser than the others (age 18-22)
Roberto	He has a weakness for women, especially Dixie, Mau Mau member (age 15-20)
Tico	Overly excited about practically everything, Mau Mau member (age 15-20)
Dixie	Roberto's gal, a Mau Mau Deb (age 16-22)
Lydia	Nicky's gal, secretly a back-sliding Christian, a Mau Mau Deb (age 16-22)
Rosa	A heroin addict, a Mau Mau Deb (age 16-22)
Mrs. Allworthy	An old busy-body who loves to criticize (age 50-60)
Gwen Wilkerson	David Wilkerson's wife, loving and understanding, she is pregnant with her third child (age 25-30)
Grandpap Wilkerson	A fiery traveling preacher, he believes in going the extra mile to help others, a wise and faith-filled counselor (age 50-70)
Old David	David Wilkerson (age 77)
Old Maria	Maria, clean from drug use, a wife and mother who works full time with her church in Puerto Rico, one of the rally's guest speakers (age 66-72)
Old Nicky	Nicky Cruz, now a minister and evangelist, also one of the rally's guest speakers (age 70)
Mother	David Wilkerson's mother (age 30-40)
Father	David Wilkerson's father, he is dying from duodenal ulcers (age 30-40)
Doctor Brown	The doctor attending David Wilkerson's father (age 40-50)

Police Officers, Press, Church Members, Modern Congregation, Gang Member Audience

“THE CROSS AND THE SWITCHBLADE”

By Cathy Flores

SYNOPSIS OF SONGS

ACT I

Overture

1. “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” Linda
2. “Onward, Christian Soldiers” Church Members
3. “Amazing Grace” Church Members
4. “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” Modern Congregation

ACT II

Entr'acte

1. “Holy, Holy, Holy” Delia
2. “It Is Well With My Soul” Delia
3. “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” Linda, Modern Congregation

“The Cross and the Switchblade”

© Copyright MMIX by Cathy Flores—W. Scott—LifeHouse Productions, Inc.
All rights reserved.

ACT I

Overture

SCENE 1: TEEN CHALLENGE (MODERN DAY)

(The front of a modern Teen Challenge facility is seen with a fire-escape along the side of the building leading up onto the roof. A large sign on the Teen Challenge building reads: “Rally This Evening!” Linda enters by walking outside through the Teen Challenge doors, and begins to place rally programs on a table near the door. Linda wears a cross hung from a chain around her neck and a cardigan sweater. She half sings, half hums the following hymn)

SONG: “JESUS, KEEP ME NEAR THE CROSS”

Linda Jesus, keep me near the cross
There a precious fountain
Free to all, a healing stream
Flows from Calv'ry's mountain

In the cross, in the cross
Be my glory ever
Till my raptured soul shall find
Rest beyond the river.

(While Linda is singing, Ralph enters. Ralph is sweating excessively and shaking nervously; he is experiencing severe heroin withdrawals. Ralph eyes Linda, and then flicks open a switchblade knife. Edging himself close to Linda, Ralph grabs her from behind and puts the switchblade to her throat)

Ralph Don't scream, don't even breathe!
Linda What do you want!
Ralph Your money, all of it!
Linda I don't have any money.
Ralph Give me your money or I'll slit your throat!
Linda I don't have any! I don't have any!
Ralph What about that jewelry you're wearing. How much is that worth?
Linda It's not worth anything.

(Officer Jim enters)

Officer Jim *(Speaking into a walkie-talkie)* Rudy? You there? I'm setup at the rally entrance. Copy that?
Ralph *(Seeing the officer, he shoves Linda toward the fire-escape)* Get up there. Now!
(As Ralph and Linda climb the fire-escape, Officer Jim positions himself in front of the Teen Challenge building. Other rally attendees begin to filter in and walk through the Teen Challenge door into the rally; some of them take programs from the table. Other Modern Police mill through the crowd)

Officer Jim *(Speaking into a walkie-talkie)* What's the big deal about this rally anyway? *(Pause)* David Wilkerson is speaking? Who else did you say....? Who's that? Seems like a big fuss over nothing if you ask me. *(Pause)* Yeah, everything is secure here.
(Ralph and Linda stand on the roof of the Teen Challenge building. The lights go down on the front of the building and up on Ralph and Linda on the roof)

Ralph What is going on down there! The cops are everywhere.
Linda There's a rally tonight.
Ralph The what?
Linda There is a meeting at Teen Challenge today. David Wilkerson and some others are going to speak.
Ralph I don't care. How can I get off this roof without being seen?

Linda I guess you could wait until the rally's over.
Ralph What? Are you crazy?
Linda Please, let me go. I have nothing of value to you, and I—
Ralph No, if I'm stuck on this roof so are you. So sit down and shut up.
(The rally attendees have all arrived. Officer Jim stays outside the building. The sound of muffled clapping is heard. David Wilkerson's muffled voice is heard on the roof)
Wilkerson *(Muffled)* Good evening and welcome. My name is Pastor David Wilkerson, and I am the founder of Teen Challenge. I began my ministry to the New York gangs fifty years ago. Today, the work I began in 1958 continues throughout the world in over 1,000 Teen Challenge centers just like this one in more than 80 different countries. Tonight we have some very special guests ready to give their incredible testimony which I detailed in my book "The Cross and the Switchblade."
(Muffled clapping is heard again. Ralph and Linda talk over David's speech)
Wilkerson *(Heard under Ralph and Linda's dialogue)* I have been privileged to meet many extraordinary young people over the course of my ministry. Many have come from backgrounds unimaginable to us. They have fought through drug addiction. They have experienced the blood-lust and violence of gang life. God has rescued them from the depths of the pit to live as a testimony to God's love and power.
Ralph How are we hearing that?
Linda I think there's an air vent over there that connects to the assembly room.
Ralph Great. I'm not only stuck here, but I'm stuck listening to some old windbag's speech.
Linda Perhaps it would do you some good.
Ralph Don't get preachy with me. Give me your sweater.
Linda What?
Ralph Give it to me!
(Linda takes off her sweater and hands it to Ralph. Ralph stuffs the sweater in the air vent and David's voice is abruptly cut off)
Ralph There, and good riddance.
Linda I wanted to listen to that.
Ralph Too bad, we can't always get what we want. *(Ralph shivers and wipes his brow)*
Linda So, what are you on?
Ralph Excuse me?
Linda Obviously, you're taking something.
Ralph Correction, if you had some money I'd be taking something, but as for now—I'm 18 hours clean and counting.
Linda Inside the center, we have people who know what you're going through. They could help you —
Ralph I don't want your help—I just want a fix!
Linda Well, we can't always get what we want....
Ralph Don't talk back to me! I won't take lip from a girl. I'll stick you and leave you to die, got that?
Linda What's your name?
Ralph So now you're all friendly. Just remember I'm the one with the knife; that's all you need to know.
Linda I'm Linda.
Ralph Great. Now you've introduced yourself just like the preacher downstairs. Do you have a speech to give, too?
Linda Would you listen to it?
Ralph Does it have to do with getting off this roof?
Linda No.
Ralph Probably not then.
Linda But if I were you, I would listen to anything that kept my mind off—the withdrawal pain.
Ralph But you're not me.
Linda I've known many like you, and so has David Wilkerson —
Ralph The preacher downstairs?
Linda Yes.
Ralph Give me a break.
Linda When he started his ministry fifty years ago, he brought hope to gang members and drug addicts.
Ralph Stop —
Linda It all started when he read an article in Life magazine.
Ralph I said stop! Do I have to remind you again who has the knife here?
Linda I just thought you might be interested.

Ralph Well, I'm not.
Linda It was a pretty grizzly murder.
Ralph Murder?
Linda His name was Michael Farmer, and he suffered from polio. He was attacked and killed by a gang called the Dragons.
(As Linda continues to speak, a spotlight comes up on center stage. We see Michael Farmer limp into the light; seven Dragon gang members including Luis Alvarez circle him and begin to act out what Linda relates)

Linda They stabbed Michael in the back seven times with their knives, then beat him over the head with garrison belts. They went away wiping blood through their hair saying—
Luis Alvarez We messed him good.
(The Dragons exit the stage. Michael Farmer's body stays in the spotlight)

Linda David Wilkerson read about the murder in LIFE magazine and decided to try and help the boys.
Ralph But Michael Farmer was already dead.
(The light on Michael Farmer's body fades out)

Linda No, no, the boys. He went to help the Dragons.
Ralph What? I don't understand.
Linda Do you want to hear what happened or not?
Ralph Listen, I've had just about enough of your sassy mouth. If I listen to this story of yours, it's because I ain't got nothing better to do at the moment, got that?
Linda Got it.
Ralph And keep your voice low. There's no need to attract attention.
Linda Well, I think the best place to start would probably be at the Dragons' trial for the murder of Michael Farmer.
(The light fade out on the modern Teen Challenge center roof, and come up on the courtroom)

SCENE 2: THE MICHAEL FARMER TRIAL COURTROOM (1958)

(A courtroom. Judge Davidson is seated behind a large podium upstage center. Stage left of the judge is the witness stand where Renee sits. District Attorney Reynolds stands in front of the witness stand. In front of the judge towards stage right, Luis Alvarez and the six other Dragon gang members sit at a table accompanied by their Defense Lawyer Murray. In front of the judge towards stage left is another table for the prosecution to sit. District Attorney Reynolds sits at another table.. A switchblade knife sits on a small evidence table. The court officials are separated from an audience of spectators by a gated partition. In the audience sit several members of the press as well as: Luis Alvarez, Sr. (Luis's father), Pastor Vincente Ortez, Delia Ortez, Buckboard, Stagecoach, Israel, Nicky, and David Wilkerson. Several police officers stand watching the proceedings including Officer Tom Brady. Buckboard sits with Stagecoach on one side of the audience while Israel and Nicky sit on the opposite side. Judge Davidson beats his gavel once as the lights come up)

Judge Objection overruled.
D.A. Reynolds Continue, Renee.
Renee The Magician said we should go to the park. He always plans the rumbles.
D.A. Reynolds Who is "the Magician?"
Renee *(Points at Leroy)* Leroy Birch. He said the Jesters would be in the park. Wouldn't know what hit 'em, he said. So, Luis, Jello and the Big Man grabbed their switchblades and headed to the park. I went along.
D.A. Reynolds For clarification, you and the defendants went to the park to fight a rival gang?
Renee I went to watch. But Luis, Jello, and the Big Man went to bust up those Jesters.
D.A. Reynolds So, Luis Alvarez, Leoncio DeLeon also known as "Jello," and Charles Horton also known as "the Big Man, went to the park that night looking for a fight. Where was Leroy Birch?
Renee He didn't come with us.
Nicky Chicken.
Judge *(Slams gavel down and then points it towards Nicky)* One more outburst like that from you, young man, and I will hold you in contempt of court. Continue, Counselor.
D.A. Reynolds What happened when you arrived at the park?
Renee Well, the Jesters weren't there, just some crippled kid.
D.A. Reynolds Michael Farmer?

Renee Yeah. Then I hear Luis say something about how kids like that don't deserve to live. It all happened so fast. Before I knew it, the kid was on the ground, and Luis was asking me to wipe the blood off his switchblade.

D.A. Reynolds Do you remember anything else?

Renee No. I cleaned the switchblade. That's all.

D.A. Reynolds *(Picks up a knife from the evidence table)* Is this the knife you cleaned?

Renee Yes.

D.A. Reynolds No further questions. *(To Murray)* Your witness. *(Walks to the prosecutor's table and sits)*

Defense Murray *(Stands)* Are you a member of the Dragon gang?

Renee I am one of the Dragon Debs.

Defense Murray A Deb? What is a Deb?

Renee I'm one of the Dragon's girls. What's it to you?

Nicky *(laughs)* She's a whore, you stuffed shirt!
(The audience reacts with shock)

Judge *(Slams gavel several times)* Order! Order in this court! Give me one good reason why I shouldn't hold you in contempt, young man!

Defense Murray Your Honor, I have no further questions for this witness.

Judge The witness may step down. This court will stand adjourned until nine tomorrow morning. And you, young man, are denied further attendance at these court proceedings. *(Slams gavel)*
Dismissed.

Wilkerson *(Stands abruptly and begins walking towards the judge's bench pushing through the gate in the partition. He holds a Bible)* Your Honor! Your Honor, please, would you respect me as a minister and let me have an audience with you?
(The police officers including Officer Brady rush forward and grab Wilkerson. The judge quickly exits the room. The press seated in the audience begin flashing pictures. Defense Attorney Murray escorts the Dragons out of the room)

Brady All right, mister. Where's the gun?
(The officers forcefully search Wilkerson)

Wilkerson I don't have a gun.

Brady Who are you?

Wilkerson My name is David Wilkerson. I need to speak with Judge Davidson.

Brady That's not gonna happen. Are you the one that threatened the Judge's life?

Wilkerson What?

Brady The Judge has been receiving death threats.

Wilkerson No, no! I'm a pastor. My papers of ordination are in my pocket if you don't believe me.

Officer 1 *(Pulling the papers out of Wilkerson's pocket and reading them)* They look genuine.

Brady What are you doing here?

Wilkerson I've driven all the way from Philipsburg, Pennsylvania to preach the gospel to those boys on trial.

Brady You're kidding right? So your some kind of naïve country preacher come to save the lost children of New York? Well, for your information, the electric chair's too good for kids like that. You got to teach young punks like that a lesson. Make an example out of them.

Officer 1 What are we gonna book him on?

Brady You've got some kind of nerve standing up in court like that, but I'm gonna let you off with a warning this time. Don't come back, though, got it?

Wilkerson I must see those boys —

Brady If you step foot in this court again, you will answer for it. *(to the other officers)* Ok, boys. Let the sharks have him.
(The officers let Wilkerson go and he is immediately surrounded by members of the press. The officers watch from a distance)

Reporter 1 Hey, Rev'ren. What's that book you got there?

Wilkerson My Bible.

Reporter 1 You ashamed of it?

Wilkerson Of course not.

Reporter 1 Then hold it up!
(Wilkerson holds up his Bible, and the press furiously begins to take pictures)

Reporter 1 Thanks, that was a great shot. A real Bible-waving country preacher if I ever saw one!

Reporter 2 Why do you want to preach the gospel to those boys? They committed such a heinous crime.

Wilkerson Have you ever looked at those boys' faces?

Reporter 2 Yes. Sure.

Wilkerson And you can still ask that question? Yesterday, I was reading a LIFE magazine article about this trial. At the top of the article there was a drawing of the boys on trial for murder. The artist had captured such a look of bewilderment and hatred and despair in their eyes that I began to cry.

Reporter 3 What about Michael Farmer? Did you shed any tears for him?

Wilkerson What happened to Michael Farmer revolts me; it turns my stomach. In my little mountain town, such things seem mercifully unbelievable.

Reporter 3 What those boys did does more than turn my stomach! God, I hate them!

Wilkerson God seems to be the only one who doesn't. Otherwise, He wouldn't have sent me here to help them.

Reporter 1 Thanks, again, Rev'ren. You'll be on the front page tomorrow.
(The press exits. Wilkerson begins to exit dejectedly, and is stopped by D.A. Reynolds)

D.A. Reynolds You really want to see those boys?

Wilkerson More than anything.

D.A. Reynolds Legally, you need written permission from each one of their parents. Then you can visit them.

Wilkerson Thank you, so much! Where can I find their parents?

D.A. Reynolds That I can't tell you. Good luck, pastor. You're going to need it.
(The D.A. exits. Most of the audience has exited during the dialogue. Buckboard, Stagecoach, Israel and Nicky stay behind)

Nicky Hey, Preach! Nobody wants your voodoo here so why don't you just split.

Israel Just leave him alone, Nicky.

Buckboard Why don't you just split! This ain't Mau Mau turf, man.

Nicky Do you want to make something of it?

Buckboard Just try me.

Israel Everybody just cool it. Not in front of the fuzz.

Stagecoach Yeah, Buckboard, this ain't nobody's turf. This is police turf.

Buckboard I'm just saying give the preacher some respect, man. He ain't no chicken. And the cops don't like him neither, that makes him one of us.

Israel Let it go, Nicky.

Nicky Just stay away from me, Preacher, or I'll stick you and leave you in the gutter to bleed.
(Nicky and Israel exit)

Wilkerson Who was that colorful young man?

Buckboard That's Nicky. He's the vice-president of the Mau Maus.

Stagecoach And the friend holding his leash is Israel—president of the Mau Maus.

Wilkerson Those boys are gang members?

Buckboard *(Laughs)* What kinda hole you been living in, man? What a rube.

Wilkerson I suppose I've been shutting my eyes to a great deal for a long time. My name is David Wilkerson.
(Offers his hand for the boys to shake)

Buckboard *(Seeing Wilkerson's outstretched hand)* No, no, like this. Just slip it. *(He slides his palm over Wilkerson's)* I'm Buckboard, president of the Bishops.

Stagecoach *(Slipping Wilkerson's palm)* Stagecoach, vice-president of the Bishops.

Wilkerson And the Bishops are another gang?

Buckboard Yeah, man. You know, if you really want to help the Dragons, you better start getting some street-smarts.

Stagecoach Yeah, we could help you. You wanna meet the rest of the gang?

Buckboard Sure, Preacher, you're one of us. Come and meet the rest of the gang.

Wilkerson What do you mean I'm one of you?

Buckboard The cops don't like you, and the cops don't like us; we're in the same boat, man. Come on.

SCENE 3: THE BISHOP'S BASEMENT "CLUBROOM" (1958)

(Members of the Bishop gang and the Bishop Debs lounge about the room: some are smoking, some are drinking, some are obviously high on drugs. Maria sits near a door high on heroin; she is scantily dressed. A coded knock is heard on the door: two quick and four slow. Maria opens the door and Buckboard, Stagecoach, and Wilkerson enter)

Buckboard Hey, Maria. I want you to meet a friend. This is David Wilkerson; he's a preacher. He stood up in the middle of the Michael Farmer trial, and the cops almost arrested him. Can you believe that?

Tommy His picture is gonna be in the paper tomorrow.
 No kidding? A real celebrity? I'll look for you in the paper tomorrow. Your face is kinda easy to remember.

Wilkerson Thank you.

Tommy It's no compliment.

Willie *(Opening his switchblade and walking up to Wilkerson, he casually runs the knife over the buttons of Wilkerson's coat)* You're all right. But if you ever turn on us or tell anyone where this place is

—

Wilkerson What's your name, young man?

Tommy That's Willie.

Wilkerson Willie, I don't know why God brought me to this town, but let me tell you one thing. He is on your side. That I can promise you.
(Willie pauses, closes the switchblade, and walks back to his seat)

Nancy Why did you stand up in the trial, Preacher?

Wilkerson I wanted to tell the boys on trial about God's love.
(All the Bishop's laugh except Maria, Buckboard, and Stagecoach)

Buckboard Shut up! Give the preacher some respect!
(The room becomes quiet)

Maria You weren't afraid?

Wilkerson “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” That's a verse from the Bible: Zechariah 4:6. I memorized it years ago when I was a boy, and we had just moved to Pittsburgh. Even before my first day of school, I learned about Chuck. He was a bully that always beat up the new kids. What was I going to do when I met him? I asked God this question and an answer came quickly and clearly: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.” One spring afternoon I started home from school— alone.
(Wilkerson positions the gang members in the room to act out his story)

Wilkerson I saw Chuck bearing down on me like a snorting, angry bull. He towered above me; I had to bend my neck to look him in the eye. I shook with terror as he began to circle me with his fists clenched. I didn't say a word, but something inside of me kept repeating: “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.” I felt my fear melting and smiled. But the more I smiled, the madder Chuck became. Suddenly, Chuck hit me... but the blow was hesitant and didn't hurt. I laughed. Chuck was dumbfounded—he turned and ran. The next day at school, I began to hear how I'd beaten up the biggest bully in town. Chuck had been telling everyone I was the toughest guy he ever fought. But I hadn't even thrown one punch. Some fights cannot be won by our own might or power, but only by trusting in God's might and power.

Willie *(Thoughtfully)* You're coming through, Preach.

Wilkerson I'm coming through?

Tommy He means 'you're reaching us.' Keep it up, Davie.

Wilkerson I had the courage to stand up in court today because I trusted that God was on my side. And God is on your side as well. He loves you just as you are, and he wants you to have the courage to stand up amid these vodka bottles and used syringes and start a new life. Not by your own might or power, but with God's power. God yearns for you to have what you are looking for: stimulation and exhilaration and a sense of being sought after. But not out of a cheap bottle in a cold tenement basement, and not from a drug that satisfies for a moment and then leeches your life from you. God has much higher hopes for you. God has the power to transform your life, if you only have the courage to step forward and ask for it.

Maria Not me.

Wilkerson Why not you, Maria?
(Maria pulls up her sleeve revealing large tracks on her arm from heroin usage)

Wilkerson I don't follow you, Maria.

Maria I'm a mainliner. There's no hope for me, not even from God.

Wilkerson You may not have the strength to fight your addiction, but God's power is greater than—

Maria Do you think you can come in here, preach a sermon, quote some scripture and everything will just be OK? I am a mainline heroin addict. Do you even know what that is? I inject heroin directly into my bloodstream. There is no hope for me.
(The door of the basement flings open, and Johnny falls into the room. Johnny is beaten and bleeding, and the other gang members help him to a chair)

Buckboard What happened, Johnny? Who did this to you?
Johnny *(Struggling to speak)* It was the Mau Maus. They jumped me.
Buckboard It was Nicky, wasn't it.
Johnny I don't know. There were so many.
Stagecoach How did it happen, Johnny?
Johnny I was chilling in the candy store on fifth street— minding my own business— when the Mau Maus busted me up. They said I was on their turf. Since when is the candy store their turf?
Buckboard This was Nicky's idea, man. He's been asking for a fight. Well, we'll give him one.
(The crowd reacts with general agreement)
Wilkerson Wait! Where does the violence stop? They hurt you, so you hurt them back?
Buckboard You're damn right we hurt them back.
Wilkerson No! God calls us to have the courage to love our enemies.
(Johnny swoons and falls out of his chair. Several of the Debs try to bring Johnny back to consciousness. Johnny comes to and one of the Debs helps him off stage. The Deb re-enters during the dialogue)
Buckboard What you're saying doesn't make any sense, Preacher. Maybe in your hick town you can love your enemies, but here? Here you stick your enemies before they stick you, man.
Willie Let's go, Buckboard. Let's waste that candy store!
Tommy We'll burn those Mau Maus! We'll burn them all!
Stagecoach Not so fast. We need a plan.
Maria Stagecoach is right. We should plan a war council—
Buckboard No, no war council. We surprise them.
Maria Just listen!
Buckboard Why should I listen to you?
Maria The Debs have elected me as their next president.
Buckboard Have you taken the initiation?
Maria No—
Nancy I think we should vote again. Maria's always high on something, how can she lead us?
Elaine Shut up, Nancy. You know Maria's tougher than all of us put together.
Nancy Then why don't she just take the initiation already?
Buckboard Yeah, why don't you take the initiation right now. We can burn the Mau Maus tomorrow.
Maria We need more of a plan —
Buckboard Are you chicken, Maria?
Maria You know better than to call me chicken, Buckboard!
Buckboard Then the initiation begins now!
(Buckboard and Stagecoach grab Maria and place her against the wall)
Wilkerson No, wait, stop! You don't have to do this, Maria!
Buckboard Will someone put a cork in the preacher or throw him out?
(Stagecoach holds Wilkerson back. Each of the gang members takes turns beating Maria (some punch her in the stomach and others bloody her face). The gang members cheer each other as they batter Maria, but Wilkerson continually pleads with them to stop. Eventually, Maria collapses on the floor unconscious, and Wilkerson runs to her to see if she is all right. The rest of the gang seems unconcerned and laugh as if the whole thing were a harmless game)
Wilkerson Maria? Can you hear me?
Buckboard Leave her with the preacher. Maybe he'll learn something. We have a war to plan.
(All exit except Maria and Wilkerson. Maria opens her eyes and looks toward Wilkerson)
Wilkerson Are you all right, Maria?
Maria H... I need some H...
Wilkerson H?
Maria H... some Horse... heroin! I need a fix!
Wilkerson Calm down, Maria. I know you're in pain, but —
Maria Get away from me! *(Maria crawls to where some empty syringes lay on the floor. One by one she examines them and tosses them away as she realizes they are empty)*
Wilkerson Maria, look at yourself. Look at the life you are living. God has a much grander plan for your life. He loves you.
Maria The gang loves me, too.
Wilkerson How can you say that after... They beat you and laughed, Maria.
Maria The gang is my family. My only family.
Wilkerson Maria...

Maria I know what you're doing! I know why you're here! You are trying to break up the gang, admit it! Well, I won't let you! This is all I have! If I lost the gang... I'd lose everything.

Wilkerson No, Maria, here you have nothing. God wants to give you everything.

Maria No! No one else wants me. If I lost the gang... I'd kill myself. *(Pause)* Get out of here, Preacher. You don't belong here.

SCENE 4: THE STREETS OF NEW YORK (1958)

(A row of apartment buildings line a street. A candy store front is visible. Jo-Jo sits on the steps of one of the apartment buildings playing a trumpet. The soft singing of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" is heard in the background coming from inside one of the apartments. Jo-Jo tries to figure out the notes of the song on his trumpet and is obviously not playing them correctly. Wilkerson enters walking along the street)

SONG: "ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS"

Church Members *(Heard in the background)* Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before;
Christ, the royal Master

Leads against the foe;
Forward into battle,
See His banners go!

Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before.

Wilkerson *(Sitting on the steps of one of the apartment buildings, David Wilkerson begins to pray)*
Lord, why am I here? Why did you send me here?
(Wilkerson pulls a magazine article out of his pocket)
When you first showed me this magazine article, I felt so certain that you were guiding me here. I could almost hear your voice saying: "Go to New York and help those boys." But I am lost in a world I cannot fathom, and I have been opposed on every side. Every door has slammed shut, all but one. The district attorney told me I would be able to see those boys on trial if I obtained their parents' permission. If I am here on your errand, please, guide me. I have reached the limit of my humble ideas. Lead me where I must go.

Jo-Jo Are you talking to yourself, mister, or are you talking to me?

Wilkerson I was praying.

Jo-Jo Praying? What for? It looks like you've got everything, rich man, what else could you want?

Wilkerson I'm lost.

Jo-Jo Yeah, I'll bet. Someone dressed like you must be lost if they found their way to this part of town.

Wilkerson What do you mean?

Jo-Jo There are ten kids in my family. We're on relief. They kicked me out— there wasn't enough food to go around.

Wilkerson Where do you live then?

Jo-Jo You're sitting in my parlor.

Wilkerson But, where do you go when it rains?

Jo-Jo I move down to my suite in the subway. What you got there in your hand, rich man?

Wilkerson A picture. *(Wilkerson hands the article to Jo-Jo)* I'm looking for their parents.

Jo-Jo This is the Dragon gang! Why are you looking for their parents?

Wilkerson I'm a pastor, and the only way I can get to see them is with their parents' permission. I want to tell those boys how God can change their lives.

Jo-Jo Look, rich man, it's all right for you to talk big about God changing lives. You've got new shoes and you've got a suit of clothes to match. Look at me! I'm a bum, and bums like me are lucky if

they have shoes at all.
Wilkerson *(Takes off his shoes and hands them to Jo-Jo)* Here, try these on.
Jo-Jo Hey, what's the gimmick? What are you trying to prove? That you got a heart or something? I'm not going to put your stinking shoes on.
Wilkerson You've been griping about shoes. Put them on.
Jo-Jo I ain't never had new shoes.
Wilkerson Put them on.
(Jo-Jo carefully puts on the new shoes as Wilkerson takes back the magazine article and begins to exit barefoot)
Jo-Jo Wait, pastor! You're forgetting your shoes.
Wilkerson They're your shoes, now.
Jo-Jo Pastor, I forgot to shake your hand.
Wilkerson *(shaking Jo-Jo's hand)* Pastor David Wilkerson, pleased to meet you....
Jo-Jo Jo-Jo, that's what the Dragons called me.
Wilkerson The Dragons?
Jo-Jo Yeah, I was part of their gang before the police busted 'em. But I didn't have nothing to do with messing up that Farmer kid.
Wilkerson So, you know the parents of these boys.
Jo-Jo Sure, most of them's at the Wednesday church meeting. Ain't much of a church really, just Rev'ren Ortez's apartment, that's all they can afford.
Wilkerson And where is that?
Jo-Jo Well, you're standing right in front of it!
Wilkerson Thank you, Lord!
Jo-Jo Uh, excuse me.
Wilkerson Oh, thank you, too, Jo-Jo. Thanks to you, I'm not lost anymore.

SCENE 5: REVERAND ORTEZ'S APARTMENT (1958)

(A church assembly is gathered in the apartment of Pastor Vincente Ortez. The Reverend leads the assembly, including Luis Alvarez, Sr., in another hymn ("Amazing Grace"). Delia Ortez accompanies on a piano)

Delia Ortez

SONG: "AMAZING GRACE"

Church Members Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

Vincente Senor Alvarez, would you please close the service with prayer.
(Luis Alvarez, Sr. walks to the front of the assembly)

Alvarez, Sr. Dear Lord, we humbly ask for your mercy and grace. Please, remember our children who are on trial for committing the unspeakable. Grant them, Lord, your amazing grace. Thank you, for the miracle I witnessed today; for the pastor who stood up in the trial and tried to help our boys. Please, help him in what you have called him to do. Amen.
(A loud knock is heard on the door. The assembly reacts with worry)

Vincente Stay calm. I'm sure it's nothing.

Member 1 Why won't they just leave us alone? Our children killed someone, not us.

Member 2 People keep bringing me newspapers and complaining. Do they have any idea what it is like to open your paper each day and see pictures of your boy, how he is on trial for murder?

Member 3 Someone wrote on the side of my house: "Get out of town, or get killed."

(There is a second, louder knock. Vincente opens the door, and Wilkerson and Jo-Jo enter)

Alvarez, Sr. It's him! The preacher who was thrown out of court!
(The assembly reacts with relief and joy)

Alvarez, Sr. We have been praying that you would come, and now you are here!
(Alvarez, Sr. shakes Wilkerson's hand)

Alvarez, Sr. My son is Luis Alvarez. I know God has sent you to us; I know that you will help our boys.

Wilkerson I want to help them, Mr. Alvarez, but I won't be able to see them without written permission from you and the other parents.

Alvarez, Sr. Is it as easy as that? Just give me something to write with!
(Luis Alvarez, Sr. and three other members of the congregation begin to write permissions on slips of paper. Delia Ortez walks to her husband near Wilkerson)

Vincente Wilkerson *(Offering his hand which Wilkerson shakes)* Reverend Vincente Ortez and this is my wife Delia.

Vincente Wilkerson David Wilkerson.
May I ask where are you staying in New York?
Actually, I've been sleeping in my car.
(Everyone in the room stops what they are doing and stares at Wilkerson)

Vincente You mustn't do that. It's dangerous. More dangerous than you know. You must stay here, in our house. You must spend this night and any night you are in town right here with us.

Wilkerson I couldn't possibly —

Delia We must insist. It is a miracle you haven't been killed.

Wilkerson Are the streets really that dangerous?

Vincente Absolutely.

Wilkerson *(Turning to Jo-Jo)* Then I would be heart-broken if this child spent another night without a roof over his head. Could your hospitality be stretched to include the both of us?
(Indignantly) Live with them?

Jo-Jo You have been God's providence to me, Jo-Jo. I'm not sure I want to let you go quite so easily.

Wilkerson What is that supposed to mean?

Jo-Jo *(Unsure)* There is a place for you on our couch, if you want it.

Delia Listen, lady. *(taking out his switchblade knife)* Those streets you say are so dangerous, that you are so afraid of, well, I'm one of those things that makes it so dangerous. Are you sure you want to bring that into your nice clean house?

Jo-Jo *(Lowering Jo-Jo's switchblade with the palm of her hand)* That is a risk I'm willing to take.
(Putting his switchblade away and motioning to the piano) That your piano, ma'am?

Delia Yes.

Jo-Jo There is sure some pretty music that I hear coming from here. *(Lifting his trumpet)* Do you think you could teach me some?
I would love to.

Delia All right, then I'll stay.

Jo-Jo *(Coming up to Wilkerson)* Here are the signatures of the parents' who are here, and the addresses of the parents who are not.

Alvarez, Sr. Praise God. Tomorrow, I will attend the court proceedings and speak with the district attorney.

Wilkerson Do you think that's wise?

Alvarez, Sr. What other choice do I have?

Wilkerson Then I'm coming with you.

Vincente And so am I.

Alvarez, Sr. Jo-Jo, I think I have some clothes that might fit you.... And some shoes that might fit you, David....

Vincente Pastor Wilkerson, what happened to your shoes!
(Jo-Jo snickers and then bursts into laughter, showing off his new shoes. Wilkerson and the rest of the room join him in laughter except for Delia who apparently can't get the joke)

SCENE 6: THE MICHAEL FARMER TRIAL COURTROOM (1958)

(The same courtroom from scene 2. The district attorney and defense are seated at their corresponding tables. The audience is being let in and they are seating themselves. The police officers stand at attention around the room, and one Officer 1 observes as the audience filters in through the door. Several reporters question a Chaplain near the front of the courtroom)

Reporter 1 Do you believe the pastor should have been thrown out of court yesterday?

Reporter 2 Where is the moral example for these boys in prison?

Chaplain Please, please! You all know, as the prison chaplain for the New York state prison, I have spoken with these unfortunate boys on numerous occasions, and I can assure you they are spiritually nourished. Fanatics like Pastor David Wilkerson are dangerous. His outburst in court yesterday damaged and confused those tender children....

(Reverend Ortez, Luis Alvarez, Sr., and David Wilkerson enter the room, and the officer notices them)

Officer 1 Hey, you! You're the bum from yesterday.
Brady Get that nut out of here!
(As the police surround Wilkerson, the press scrambles to take pictures)
Wilkerson I need to speak with the district attorney!
Alvarez Sr. I am the father of Luis Alvarez, and I demand you let this man see my son!
Wilkerson I have obtained signed permissions from each one of those boys' parents allowing me to speak with them.
Brady Let me see those!
(Brady takes the permissions from Wilkerson and examines them briefly before taking them to the district attorney)
D.A. Reynolds These signatures are genuine. He must be allowed to see the boys.
Chaplain Wait one moment. Don't the boys themselves have a say in this?
Defense Murray Yes, technically you need the boys' permission as well, Pastor Wilkerson. I will go and ask them.
(Defense Attorney Murray exits)
Chaplain You really know how to make an entrance don't you, Pastor Wilkerson?
Wilkerson I just won't give up so easily. God has called me here to New York.
Chaplain God has called you? Are you sure that's not just your own pride and arrogance talking? Why would God send you here?
Wilkerson I only know that—
Chaplain I have been counseling these boys for several months. Introducing a new figurehead of Biblical guidance would only be disturbing to their spiritual welfare at this time. If you really have the boys' best interest at heart, entrust them to the shepherd God has already given them.
(Defense Attorney Murray enters holding some papers in his hand)
Defense Murray Pastor Wilkerson?
(Wilkerson walks over to Defense Murray, and the Chaplain follows him)
Chaplain What did they say?
Defense Murray I have the permission forms here. Each boy signed. They will see you, Pastor.
Chaplain *(Taking the forms from Defense Murray and tearing them in half)* Go home, Pastor Wilkerson.
Defense Murray You can't do that.
Chaplain I am spiritual counselor of these boys, and I refuse to let David Wilkerson see them. God has not sent you here, Pastor Wilkerson. Go back to your parish that you have abandoned for this self-righteous cause.
Wilkerson I cannot accept that. You are wrong...
Chaplain How God will ever work through you again, I don't know. I will be praying for you, Pastor Wilkerson. *(To the reporters)* The boys on trial have refused to see David Wilkerson. He will be returning home.

SCENE 7: THE STREETS OF NEW YORK (1958)

(The same row of apartment buildings from scene 4 line the street along with the same candy store front. Wilkerson, Reverend Ortez, and Delia Ortez walk along the street toward the steps of the Ortez's apartment. A trumpet is heard practicing "Onward Christian Soldiers" from inside the apartment)

Vincente Wilkerson You did your best, David. We'll think of something else.
Delia It's no use. Tomorrow I'm heading back to Pennsylvania.
(Hearing the trumpet) Pastor, listen. It's Jo-Jo...
(The three pause to listen to the final struggled notes of Jo-Jo's trumpet. The Bishops: Buckboard, Stagecoach, Tommy, Willie, Johnny, Maria, Nancy, and Elaine walk out of the candy store. On the opposite side of the stage the Mau Maus enter: Nicky, Israel, Carlos, Roberto, Tico, Dixie, Lydia, and Rosa)
Carlos There they are, Nicky! Just like I told ya! Those Bishops are in our candy store!
(As Wilkerson and the Ortez's duck out of the way, the two rival gangs tear into each other. The brawling fist-fight soon stops, as Nicky and Buckboard meet in the middle brandishing their switchblades. After a short knife-fight between Nicky and Buckboard, Buckboard throws his knife at Nicky. Nicky jumps out of the way of the knife, but the knife hits Johnny in the chest. Johnny falls to the ground dying. Nicky sees the blood and begins laughing. The rest of the Bishop gang (except for Buckboard, Stagecoach, and Johnny) quickly exit. The Mau Mau's exit on the opposite

side of the stage, but Nicky is laughing so hard, Israel has to pull him offstage. Buckboard kneels by Johnny)

Buckboard Johnny? You're gonna be ok....
Johnny We shouldn't have done this, Buckboard. We should have listened to the preacher...
(The sound of police sirens approaches as Johnny quietly dies)
Stagecoach We need to get outta here.
Buckboard Can you move, Johnny? Johnny!?
Stagecoach Come on, Buckboard. He's gone.
Buckboard This is my fault. My fault....
Stagecoach Buckboard! Come on!
(Stagecoach pulls Buckboard away from Johnny and starts to pull him offstage. Buckboard catches sight of Wilkerson for the first time and pauses. Stagecoach tugs Buckboard again, and the two exit. Officer Brady and the other policemen enter as the sirens stop. Brady walks up to Wilkerson as the rest of the policemen assess the scene)
Brady *(To Wilkerson)* You again?
Wilkerson Officer, there has been an accident.
Brady Accident? This was another gang rumble! Tomorrow their will be another. Probably another kid will be dead, too. These are the criminals you want to help? Blood lust, hate, violence. You want to bring them hope? What about the innocent bystanders, like Michael Farmer? I will bring them hope because I won't rest till each one of these kids burns for the crimes they've committed.
Wilkerson "... all have sinned and fallen --"
Brady I thought you were going home, Pastor. You're not wanted here.
Officer 1 *(holding a switchblade knife with a cloth)* He had this on him.
Brady Pack up that stinking gang member's body. The gutter's too good for him.
(The officers and Brady carry the boy offstage as they exit)
Wilkerson *(Praying)* Why did You send me here?
(Blackout)

SCENE 8: DAVID'S HOME IN PENNSYLVANIA (1958)

(Gwen and Mrs. Allworthy sit on a couch in the living room of a quaint, country house. Gwen is visibly pregnant, and Mrs. Allworthy holds a newspaper in her lap. A telephone sits on a table in the corner)

Allworthy What kind of egotist do we have for a preacher? Does he think that every whim he gets is a mandate from God?
Gwen If you could please lower your voice, Mrs. Allworthy, my little girls are sleeping.
Allworthy Well, maybe they should wake up and realize who their father is. Maybe this whole town should wake up. *(holding up the newspaper)* Look at him! Holding up that Bible as if he's some sort of lunatic. Is this his idea of cheap publicity?
Gwen I'm sure David did his best. The newspapers have probably just put him in a bad light. You should give him more credit, Mrs. Allworthy....
(The phone rings)
Allworthy They're at it again, Mrs. Wilkerson! You can't seem to carry on a quiet conversation without the telephone ringing every five minutes!
(Gwen stands and answers the phone)
Gwen Hello? *(pause)* Oh, it's you! I thought you were another... um... nevermind. *(pause)* Yes, I would love to have you over. *(pause)* No! It wouldn't disturb me in the least. *(pause)* Yes, see you soon. *(hanging up the phone)* I'm afraid our conversation will have to wait until another day Mrs. Allworthy, David's grandfather is coming over to visit with Debbie and Bonnie.
Allworthy He's a preacher, too isn't he?
Gwen Yes, Mrs. Allworthy.
Allworthy One of those fire and brimstone ones I'll wager! Now I know why David is so —
(David Wilkerson walks in the front door)
Gwen David! You're home!
Allworthy Pastor Wilkerson. You've caused quite a ruckus since you persuaded your congregation to fund your outrageous mission work!
Wilkerson Good morning, Mrs. Allworthy, it's good to see your rheumatism is doing so much better. Gwen, I missed you.
Allworthy I assume by your presence here that you have finally realized that you confused God's will for

your own in this venture you took to New York.

Wilkerson New York. That very name is a symbol of embarrassment to me. I don't like the place, and I am manifestly unsuited for life there. I revealed my ignorance at every turn. I have been humbled and humiliated. Perhaps, it was to teach me a lesson.

Allworthy And I certainly hope you have learned that lesson, Pastor Wilkerson. And for what it is worth, I suppose your congregation still wants you, even if nobody else does.

(Mrs. Allworthy begins to walk toward the front door)

Wilkerson Before you go, Mrs. Allworthy, let me ask you one thing: If it is true that the job of us humans here on earth is to do the will of God, can we not expect that in some way He will make that will known to us?

Allworthy Are you or are you not admitting you were wrong in going to New York, Pastor Wilkerson? Think hard about how you answer. Others may not be as forgiving as I am. You could lose your ordination.

Gwen David, don't be too quick to say you were wrong. 'The Lord moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform.' It's just possible this is all part of a plan you can't see from where you're standing.

(A loud knock is heard at the front door)

Allworthy Oh, no. The other one is here. Good day, Pastor Wilkerson, Mrs. Wilkerson.

(Mrs. Allworthy opens the front door to leave as Grandpap walks in)

Grandpap Good morning.

(Mrs. Allworthy sneers at Grandpap and quickly exits)

Grandpap Charming woman. David! When did you get back?

Wilkerson Just now. I haven't even had a chance to sit down.

Grandpap Well, by all means, let us sit.

Gwen I'll put on a pot of coffee.

(Gwen exits into another room of the house while Grandfather and Wilkerson sit on the couch)

Wilkerson I suppose you read all about what happened in New York.

Grandpap Yes.

Wilkerson What do you make of it, Grandpap? Do you think I had a real call from God to help those boys in the murder trial?

Grandpap No, I don't.

Wilkerson But so many things—

Grandpap I think that door's slammed just about as tight as you'll ever find a door shut, David. I don't think the Lord's going to let you see those seven boys for a long, long time. And I'll tell you why. Because if you see them now, you may figure you've done your duty among the teenage boys in New York. And I think there are bigger plans for you.

Wilkerson What do you mean?

Grandpap I've got a feeling, David, that you were never intended to see just seven boys, but thousands of boys just like them.

Wilkerson You think that God is calling me to help all the teenagers in New York?

Grandpap Yes. You know, some time ago I was walking through the hills when I came across an enormous snake—

Wilkerson What?

Grandpap Bear with me, son. I was afraid of the snake and I didn't move for a long time, but, lo and behold, while I was watching, I saw a miracle. I saw a new birth. I saw that old snake shed its skin and leave it behind, and he went off new and really beautiful. Don't be petrified by the outward appearance of these boys. God isn't. He's just waiting for them to crawl out of that old sin-shell and leave it behind. He's waiting and yearning for the new man to come out. That's the heart of the gospel, David: Change. A transformation. Being born again to a new life. Never forget that when you see your snakes on the streets of New York.

Wilkerson I can't go back there. I've met these boys. They're full of hate and sin— murder, drugs, prostitution— How could God possibly be calling me— a country preacher who's been sheltered all his life— to preach the gospel to these boys?

Grandpap They've got to start over again, son, and they've got to be surrounded by love.

Wilkerson I can't help those boys.

Grandpap Well, you're right, David. If these boys are going to change dramatically, the transformation will have to take place in their hearts. You can't bring that about. Only the Holy Spirit can.

Wilkerson If I go back to New York, it will be as a test. A test to see if God has really called me.

Grandpap Go back to New York, David. Preach the gospel out in the open, on the street, and wait for the

Holy Spirit to act.
(*Gwen enters the room holding a coffee service*)

Wilkerson Gwen, I'm going back to New York.
Gwen I was afraid you would say that. (*Gently touching her stomach*) Do you think you'll be back for

when the baby is born?

Wilkerson I'm— well, I—
Gwen Oh... but that's all right. Babies have been born before without the father's assistance. The doctor's wouldn't let you hold my hand anyhow, and that's what I'd want. So I'd miss you anyway. You do feel you've got to go, don't you?

Wilkerson Yes.
Gwen Then go gladly. And God be with you, David.

SCENE 9: THE STREETS OF NEW YORK (1958)

(*A lamp post stands in the middle of a square. The Mau Maus: Nicky Israel, Carlos, Roberto, Tico, Dixie, Lydia, and Rosa enter holding various weapons*)

Israel So, this is the place?

Nicky Yeah, those Bishops are pretty sore about losing their poor little Johnny. This rumble should be a good one.

Israel Keep sharp, here they come.
(*The Bishops: Buckboard, Stagecoach, Tommy, Willie, Maria, Nancy, and Elaine enter carrying various weapons*)

Stagecoach We are gonna waste you Mau Maus for what you did to Johnny!
Nicky Looks like your president can't handle sticking one of his own. What's the matter, can't let little Johnny go? Need a tissue?— looks like you've still got a little blood on your hands!

Buckboard I'm going to kill you, Nicky. Bishops— now!
(*The two gangs rush towards each other, but stop in confusion as they hear the sound a trumpet blaring "Onward Christian Soldiers." Jo-Jo and Wilkerson enter upstage; Jo-Jo is playing his trumpet, and Wilkerson carries a Bible. Jo-Jo and Wilkerson walk to center and walk downstage between the gangs. Wilkerson climbs up on the base of the lamp post to address the boys*)

Willie It's the preacher!

Stagecoach What are you doing here, Preach?

Nicky Hey, ain't you the skinny guy from the Farmer trial?

Tico What we gonna do now?

Wilkerson I know I'm just a country preacher three hundred miles from home, but I have a message for you.
(*Officer Brady and the other policemen enter and push through the gang members to get to Wilkerson*)

(*The gang members quickly hide their weapons*)
Brady (*Pushing through the gangs*) All right. Break it up. Move on. (*To Wilkerson*) Get down from there!

(*Wilkerson climbs down from the base of the lamp post and faces Brady*)

Wilkerson Hello, Officer Brady—

Brady What are you trying to do? Start a riot?

Wilkerson Of course not, I'm preaching.

Brady Well, you're not preaching here. We've got enough trouble in this neighborhood without having a mob scene on our hands. I thought I made it abundantly clear that you are not wanted here, Pastor. Go home.

Wilkerson Let me ask you something, isn't it my right as a citizen to speak on a public street?

Brady All right, I'll humor you, Pastor. Yes, you can— as long as you speak under an American flag.

That's the law. Now will you please remove yourself from—

Wilkerson Does someone have an American flag?

Brady What?

(*One of Brady's fellow officers begins to say something and Brady glares at him, silencing the police officer*)

Wilkerson Anyone?

(*Willie takes off his jacket which has a flag patch on the shoulder. He passes it to Wilkerson*)

Brady You can't use that little patch as a American flag!

Wilkerson Why not? Are you going to stop me?

(Wilkerson hangs the jacket on the lamp post)

Brady I'll be right over there, Pastor— watching. Nothing better happen.
(The police officers move to the side of the stage; the gang members remain at center with Wilkerson and Jo-Jo)

Wilkerson *(Opening his Bible)* “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That's what it says here, in the Bible. God loves you as you are, right here, right now. He knows who you are. He knows your hatred and your anger. He knows that some of you have committed murder.
(Buckboard looks intently at Wilkerson, and Wilkerson returns his gaze)

Wilkerson God loves you anyway. He can see what you are going to be in the future, not only what you have been in the past. If anyone here would like to know more about the future God has planned for their life, please, step forward.
(Everyone is silent; no one moves. Buckboard is crying softly, though he is trying to hide it)

Wilkerson All right, then. I've seen and heard that you're both pretty tough gangs. I want to talk to your presidents and vice presidents. If you are so big and tough, you won't mind coming up here in front of all these people and shaking hands with “the skinny preacher.”

Stagecoach Sure, we'll slip you some skin, preach. Come on, Buckboard. Buckboard?

Nicky What's the matter, Buckboard? You scared?

Buckboard *(Pulling himself together)* Watch it, man.
(Buckboard and Stagecoach walk up to Wilkerson. Wilkerson tries to shake their hand)

Stagecoach Just slip it. *(He slides his palm over Wilkerson's)* You're all right, Preach. Still ain't got no street-smarts, but you got guts coming back here.
(Slipping Wilkerson's palm) You're really coming through, man.

Buckboard I'm not the one who's coming through, Buckboard, the Holy Spirit is.

Wilkerson The who?

Stagecoach The Holy Spirit is God— here with us. He is trying to reach inside your pride, and your arrogance, too, and your complacency. That's all just a shell to hide the real, scared, lonely you. The Holy Spirit wants to get inside that shell and help you start all over again.

Buckboard How can I— start over again?

Stagecoach Yeah, what we supposed to do?

Wilkerson I want you to kneel down right here on the street and ask the Holy Spirit to come into your lives so that you will become new men: 'New creatures in Christ.'

Stagecoach No way! You're crazy. I'm not gonna kneel in front of all these —

Buckboard Wait, man, just wait. I want to be new more than anything. Don't you?

Stagecoach You want to, Buckboard? I will if you will.
(Buckboard and Stagecoach take off their hats and kneel with their heads bowed)

Wilkerson *(Praying, on the point of tears)* Lord Jesus, here are two of Your own children, doing something that is very, very hard. They are kneeling here before everyone and asking You to come into their hearts and make them new. They want You to take away the hate, and the fighting, and the loneliness. They want to know for the first time in their lives that they are really loved. They are asking this of You, Lord, and You will not disappoint them. Amen.
(Buckboard and Stagecoach stand. Buckboard is crying)

Nicky Hey Buckboard! You got religion now?
(The Mau Mau's snicker)

Buckboard Lay off, man!

Stagecoach Come on, Buckboard, let's split.
(Buckboard and Stagecoach exit the stage)

Wilkerson I'll speak with the president and vice president of the Mau Mau's now.

Nancy Israel! Nicky! You're next!

Elaine Come on, you afraid?

Tommy You gonna chicken out?
(Israel and Nicky walk up to Wilkerson. Israel offers Wilkerson his hand; they shake)

Israel I dig the message, Preach. Keep it up.

Wilkerson Thank you. You must be Israel. I've heard a lot about you. And this must be Nicky. *(He offers Nicky his hand, but Nicky just stands there)*

Nicky Go to hell, Preacher. You come near me, and I'll kill you.

Wilkerson You could do that. You could cut me into a thousand pieces and lay them out in the street and every piece would love you. I love you, Nicky, as Jesus loves you.
(Nicky slaps Wilkerson across the face and spits on him. The police begin to react, but Nicky,

Israel and the other Mau Mau's quickly exit. The Bishop's exit slowly as well, but Maria stays behind)

(Officer Brady and the other policemen walk up to Wilkerson and Jo-Jo)

Brady You love boys like that? Well, it won't do them a bit of good. There's no love on earth that can reach boys like that.

Wilkerson For once, you're right, Officer Brady. No love on earth could.

(Officer Brady and the other policemen exit)

Jo-Jo Pastor Wilkerson? Don't be discouraged. Something good happened today. I can feel it.

Wilkerson Jo-Jo—thank you.

Jo-Jo Pastor, the biggest problem here on the streets is lonesomeness. You feel like nobody loves you; nobody wants you. All of my friends, in the gangs, are very lonely people.

Wilkerson *(Remembering his Grandfather's words)* They've got to start over again, and they've got to be surrounded by love. *(To Jo-Jo)* They need a house, Jo-Jo. A really nice house, all their own, where they could begin life all over again, surrounded by love instead of by hate and fear. They could live in their house any time they wanted to. The door would always be open. If only I could begin by showing them the truth of God's love. If only I could show them that God can change their lives.

Maria Change our lives? You expect God to change someone like me? To be a confirmed drug addict is to be one of the walking dead. There are two habits you've got to kick if you're hooked. The body habit, and the mind habit. The body habit's not too much of a problem: You just stay in sheer hell for three days, then put up with a little less torture for another month and you're free. I've done that before, and I'll probably do it again. But that mind habit— that's something terrible. There's a thing inside you that makes you come back. Something whispering to you. That thing inside of you will do anything to get a fix. Anything! You'd steal, lie, kill— even sell your own body. The things I've done.... I disgust myself. He's always on your back; making you become someone else that you don't want to be. But you can't get rid of him, and God can't get rid of him either.

(The lights fade out on Maria, Jo-Jo and Wilkerson, and come up on the roof of the Modern Teen Challenge Center)

SCENE 10: TEEN CHALLENGE (MODERN DAY)

(Ralph and Linda sit on the roof of the Modern Teen Challenge Center. Officer Jim still stands outside the Teen Challenge building)

Ralph That's right. That's how it is. You can't quit. It's death on the installment plan, but you can't quit.

Linda Like you, Maria felt there was no hope, but that was because she didn't know the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ralph No! Don't talk to me about “the power of the Holy Spirit,” I don't want to hear it.

Linda But—

Ralph I know why your telling me this story, and it won't work. It's too late for me. You want me to let you go? Fine! Go! Just leave!

(Ralph pulls the sweater out of the vent and throws it at Linda)

Wilkerson *(muffled from the air vent)* Will you please join me in singing: “The Old Rugged Cross.”

SONG: “WHEN I SURVEY THE WONDROUS CROSS”

Congregation *(Heard in the background while the scene progresses; muffled from the air vent)*

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

(Ralph walks to the edge of the roof)

Linda What are you doing? Please, come back from there! It's dangerous!

Ralph There is only one way of breaking a habit like mine.

Linda No! That's not true! Stop and think!

(Ralph begins to lose his balance and shuffles his feet to maintain it. Officer Jim, still

standing underneath him, looks up and sees him)
Officer Jim *(Speaking into a walkie-talkie)* There's someone on the roof! I think he's going to jump! Call for back-up!

(The sound of police sirens is heard. The lights dim as the song concludes)

End of ACT I

ACT II

Entr'acte

SCENE 1: TEEN CHALLENGE (MODERN DAY)

(Ralph stands on the edge of the roof. Linda stays toward the back of the roof, but pleads for Ralph not to jump. Officer Jim stands on ground level waiting for back-up)
(The sound of police sirens grows louder)

Officer Jim Hold it up there! Don't move.

Linda Please, get down!

Officer Jim Is there someone else up there?

(Several Modern Police officers rush on stage)

Linda *(Creeping closer to Ralph)* You need help, and I know where you can get it. Just take my hand.
(Very close to Ralph, Linda offers him her hand. Instead, Ralph grabs Linda and puts his switchblade to her throat)

Ralph Nobody move! Don't try to come up here!
(The Modern Police officers run inside the Teen Challenge building)

Linda God help us!

Officer Jim Drop the knife. No one's going up there. We can talk this through.

Wilkerson *(muffled from the air vent)* We have a very special guest speaker tonight. Most of you know her from my book "The Cross and the Switchblade." Maria, would you please —
(Sound of muffled applause)

Ralph *(Catching his attention)* Did he say Maria?

Modern Police *(Muffled from the air vent)* We have a situation outside. We need to evacuate the building. If you could please exit in a calm and orderly fashion. We apologize for the inconvenience. Thank you.

Officer Jim I said drop the knife!

Ralph (To Linda) Is Maria here? Is it the same Maria?
Linda There were a lot of guest speakers listed, but, yes, I think so.
Ralph But all that stuff you were talking about, that happened so long ago.
Linda Fifty years ago.
Ralph (To the officers) I want to see Maria!
Officer Jim Let the girl go, and then we can talk, not before then.
Ralph Bring Maria up here, or I will slit her throat!
Officer Jim You aren't thinking rationally. Who is this Maria?
(The audience members from the rally begin to exit the building)
Ralph (Shouts to the crowd) Maria! Which one of you is Maria?
Old David Why do you want to see Maria?
Ralph Who are you?
Old David I'm David Wilkerson.
Ralph I don't want to see you. I want to see Maria.
Old Maria (Stepping out from the crowd) Why do you want to see me?
Ralph I need to talk to you, up here.
Officer Jim I'm sorry, ma'am, but I can't let you go up there.
Old Maria (To Ralph) If you let the girl go, I'll come up there.
Officer Jim No, not without an escort at least.
Old Nicky (Stepping up to Maria) I'll go with her.
Officer Jim You?
Old Nicky Don't worry. I can take care of myself.
Old Maria We are both coming up to you, is that all right?
Ralph Sure, I think I can handle two old fossils.
Old Maria Now, let go of the girl.
Ralph I'll let her go, but the knife stays out.
(Ralph lets Linda sit back down, but keeps his knife ready)
(Old Maria and Old Nicky walk up to the roof)
Old Maria So what do you need to talk to me about, son?
Ralph You're clean, aren't you?
Old Maria From heroin? Yes, for many, many years now.
Ralph How is that possible? You said yourself you had no hope.
Old Maria I was wrong. (Begins to cough)
Ralph How did you finally kick the drugs?
Old Maria Well, David Wilkerson came to New York city fifty years ago to preach the gospel to some boys who were on trial for murder.
Ralph I've heard all that already. Tell me about what happened to you after the big street meeting with the flag.
Old Maria Well, let's see. After the street meeting, I went to see David Wilkerson—
Old Nicky No, you went to see the Mau Maus.
Old Maria What?
Old Nicky The rumble, remember?
Old Maria Am I telling this story or are you? The rumble is not really important to—
Old Nicky Not important! Let me tell it. I'll get it right.
(The light fade out on the modern Teen Challenge center roof, and come up on the Mau Maus hideout)

SCENE 2: THE MAU MAU'S HIDEOUT (1958)

(The Mau Mau's lounge around: some drinking, some smoking. Rosa and Carlos are not present. Israel is talking with Lydia. Nicky is asleep. Suddenly, Nicky screams and jumps awake; he pulls out his switchblade)

Israel Nicky, it's all right, man. It was just a nightmare.
Nicky (Whispering to Israel) Don't let the others see me like this.
Israel (Shouting to the gang) Back to your own business! (Back to Nicky) None of them would dare look at you if you didn't want them looking, Nicky. I guess your nightmares are getting worse, huh?

Nicky Yeah, I blame that preacher and his witchcraft.
Israel The preacher isn't a witch, Nicky, he's different from your parents.
Nicky I told you never to mention my parents!
Israel I didn't mean nothing by it. I just think you should give the preacher a chance.
Nicky If I see his weaselly face again, I'll kill him.
Israel Nicky, I think the preacher is right. I think we should listen to him.
(Nicky takes out his switchblade and points it at Israel. The door flings open and Maria is escorted by Rosa and Carlos into the middle of the room)
Carlos The Bishops have a response. Go on, talk.
Maria The Bishops don't want another rumble.
Carlos There you have it. The worst chicken is a religious chicken.
Nicky I'm not going to let Buckboard off the hook just because he's got religion now.
Maria I don't agree with the decision; I'm just the messenger. Personally, I think David Wilkerson is to blame for all of this. First, no more rumbles. Then, everybody will decide to go legit. Where will I get a fix?. The gang will just fall apart.
Nicky You know, for the first time, I actually want to shake the hand of a Bishop.
(Shakes Maria's hand, but then grabs her arm threateningly) Tell them the rumble will be tonight, same place, same rules. If they chicken out, we will hunt them down.
(Maria exits)
Israel Maybe we should leave them alone, Nicky. They aren't a threat to us anymore.
Nicky Don't push your luck, Israel. You are the only person on this earth I call my friend. But tonight, I wanted to kill you. Even you.

SCENE 3: REVERAND ORTEZ'S APARTMENT (1958)

(Wilkerson, Reverend Ortez, and Jo-Jo sit at a dinner table together. Delia Ortez serves the meal and begins carving the meat at the table with a large knife. Jo-Jo eats heartily paying little attention to anything else)

Wilkerson Thank you, Delia, the meal looks delicious.
Vincente Why do you think I married her?
(Delia gives Vincente a loving slap on the arm, while everyone else at the table chuckles)
Delia I'm glad you decided to come back to New York, David, but what made you change your mind?
Wilkerson What if God never intended for me to help those seven boys on trial? What if, all along, God intended for me to reach out to all the gangs in New York?
Vincente *(Nods)* These kids need someone to give them hope.
Wilkerson I spoke to some of them, out on the street, somewhere in the Fort Greene Projects. The response was astounding: two boys kneeled down in front of all their peers and accepted Christ.
Delia Praise God!
Vincente Amen to that!
Wilkerson But, I'll tell you frankly that I don't know what I'm supposed to do next. The experience on the streets of Fort Greene may have been a one-time piece of good luck.
Delia David, you wanted a miracle and you got one. Why are you trying to argue it away?
Wilkerson I just can't see how it can repeated on a larger scale.
Vincente We could rent an arena.
Wilkerson It would take thousands of dollars to rent a big arena.
Vincente What about Benigno Delgado?
Delia Yes, the attorney!
Vincente He attends the church services here. I'm sure he would help us financially.
Delia And we could take up a collection during the meetings to reimburse him.
Vincente A massive rally. At least two days.
Delia We could rent the prizefighting center... what's it called?
Vincente Saint Nicholas Arena! What do you think, David?
Wilkerson Well I— *(pause)*— I for one think it is a wonderful beginning. Who knows, maybe someday they'll even have their house!
Vincente House?
Wilkerson Oh, it's just a dream, an idea really, of a place where these kids could start over again, surrounded by love.

Delia That sounds like a beautiful dream.
Wilkerson But it would take a miracle. No, a series of miracles such as I've never seen.
Delia People who don't believe in miracles shouldn't pray for them. Where is your faith? Trust in God, David.
(A loud knock is heard on the front door)
Vincente It's somewhat late for visitors. Are you expecting anyone, David?
Wilkerson No.
(Vincente answers the door. Maria enters. Maria is high on heroin: her hair is mussed and her hands shake)
Wilkerson Maria?
Maria *(To Wilkerson)* Why are you trying to break up the Bishops?
Delia What do you mean, Maria?
Maria Coming down and trying to give us religion. I know you— you're trying to break up the gang.
Vincente Maria—
Maria Get back!
(Maria grabs the large carving knife off the table. She points the knife at each person in the room lingering a moment as she points it at Wilkerson. Then, she briskly brings the knife up to her own throat)
Maria I'm going to slit my own throat. I'm going to stick myself like a pig, and you're all going to watch.
Delia Maria, I know you are hurting inside. I know you are lonely and feel hopeless. But you are not alone; God is with you. And you are not hopeless; God has a beautiful future planned for you. I can see you. Not as you are now, but as you will be then: your hair is combed and shines in the sun, your clothes clean, and skirt starched, and your shoes are new. But most importantly, I see your husband, proudly standing by your side, and children— your children—loving and trusting you, and your hands—they don't shake, they are graceful and relaxed. You will be free. Do you really want to miss out on all that? God loves you, Maria. Don't give up.
(As Delia talks, Maria slowly lowers the knife until it clatters to the floor)
Maria There's no hope for me. I'm hooked and there's no way out.
Wilkerson Maria, why don't you give God a chance with you?
Maria No. That's not for me. You—you've killed them with your preaching.
Wilkerson What?
Maria Tonight at Fort Greene, the Mau Mau's are gonna slaughter them if they won't fight back.
Wilkerson There's a rumble tonight at Fort Greene?
Maria What's it matter to you?
Wilkerson Come on, Maria. We have to stop them.

SCENE 4: THE STREETS OF NEW YORK (1958)

(The lamp post stands in the middle of the square. On one side stand the Bishops wielding various weapons: switchblades, baseball bats, chains, etc. On the other side stand the Mau Maus also wielding weapons. Nicky rushes at Buckboard, and the fighting begins. The gang fight erupts into a violent brawl with several wounded falling to the ground. The sound of police sirens is heard, and the police (including Officer Brady) rush onstage. The police endeavor to stop the fighting, but become embroiled in it. Finally, Nicky signals the Mau Mau's to retreat. The Mau Mau's exit along with the majority of the Bishop gang, dragging their wounded away with them. Buckboard's leg is wounded badly and he can't run. Stagecoach stays behind with Buckboard, and the two are arrested by the police and handcuffed. Wilkerson and Maria rush onstage)

Wilkerson Buckboard, Stagecoach! Am I too late?
Buckboard They wasted us, man.
Stagecoach We shouldn't have fought them, Buckboard. We should have let them just blow their steam.
Buckboard I didn't know what else to do. What should I have done, Pastor?
Brady You again. I should of known.
Wilkerson Will they be all right?
Brady They aren't wounded badly. They'll be fine. Probably would have been better if he lost that leg, though. Then he wouldn't be back to street fighting in a matter of months. Come on kids.
(The police officers begin to escort Buckboard and Stagecoach offstage)
Stagecoach We don't want to fight no more, Preach, honest.

Brady Get moving.
(The police officers, Buckboard, and Stagecoach exit)

Maria A lot of good you did them. You gave them a brand-new, shiny hope and then dropped them back in the slime you found them in. What exactly did you expect?
(Maria saunters offstage)

Wilkerson *(Praying)* why am I here, Lord?... Only You know. This rally the Ortez's want to give—I see wonderful potential in it. You could convert many at this rally. But these boys—if they are converted—cannot be abandoned. They need to be raised in their Christian life just like children are raised by their parents. They need a home. Lord, I'm asking for a miracle. Let this rally be only the beginning of a great and awe-inspiring work here in New York.

SCENE 5: THE FIRST RALLY MEETING (1958)

(A large auditorium is seen. The chairs placed for the audience are empty. A stage sits in front of the audience with a large curtain hanging on both sides (on one side of the curtain, we can see a small alcove in front of an EXIT door). Wilkerson, Vincente, Delia, and Jo-Jo stand on the stage making last minute preparations)

Wilkerson I can hardly believe this is all happening.

Vincente I told you Benigno Delgado could get us the arena.

Delia And the buses full of those you invited to come, David. They should be arriving any minute.

Vincente Remember that this is just the first day, too. Don't get your hopes up too high.

Delia What are you talking about? We are on the verge of a miracle!
(The doors open and various gang members pour into the audience. The audience is sparse.)

Jo- *Jo takes a seat in the front row of the audience. Wilkerson and Vincente exit, and Delia takes the center of the stage)*

Delia We would like to begin tonight's service with a hymn. Feel free to sing along if you know the words.

SONG: "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY"

Delia *(As Delia sings, the crowd hoots and hollers at her not paying attention at all. The crowd becomes more and more offensive until she is forced to stop after one verse)*

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be

(Wilkerson and Vincente enter again. Delia exits. Vincente is carrying an offering bowl)

Wilkerson Thank you all for coming tonight.
(The audience jeers and hisses)

Wilkerson We are going start today's service by taking up a collection.
(The audience reacts mockingly: "So, you want our money now?" "What kind of Preacher are you?" "Guess he's just as greedy as the rest of us.")

Wilkerson Please do not feel obligated to give anything. But if you feel inclined, please, give from your heart.
(Vincente takes the offering bowl out into the audience. The audience begins throwing the bowl around the auditorium like a beach ball. He eventually gets it back and retreat to the stage. Vincente exits)

Wilkerson Tonight I have a story I want to share with you about the power of prayer. You know none of you would be here tonight if it weren't for the power of prayer. This entire rally wouldn't have been possible without the power of prayer. And my father would not be alive if it hadn't been for the power of prayer.
(A spot light comes up on a platform to the side of the stage while the lights dim slightly on Wilkerson and his audience. Father lies in bed holding a Bible while Mother stands beside him. A Doctor checks the Father's vital signs. Young David enters the room, and his Mother