

UN-HANGABLE BY DUEL STONE

FADE IN:

EXT. DEVIL'S BEND-FARM - DAY

CRAWL

"DEVIL'S BEND MISSISSIPPI 1893"

Young. Ruggedly handsome, Ben McSwain (19). Stunning blue eyes. Dark wavy hair. Olive complexion. Glistening white teeth. Infectious Smile. Five feet, ten inches tall. One hundred and sixty pounds. Muscular build that women love and men envy. In khaki shirt and pants. Naive. Humble. Well mannered. Kind hearted, but head strong. Determined. Perplexed about physical and spiritual worlds. ***Ben wears glasses. Has the nervous habit of removing his glasses with one hand and taking out his handkerchief with the other. He unconsciously cleans the lenses when he is deeply thinking or under pressure.***

(The only actor directions encouraged: character's nervous habits should be paramount with all dialogue throughout.)

Ben is plowing tiny cotton with a mule named QUEEN. His beautiful dog, RUFF, follows. BIRDS ARE MAKING HAPPY NOISES about the freshly plowed field. Ben talks to Ruff as though he were a person.

A TRAIN WHISTLE BLOWS...a mile away at Devil's Bend.

BEN

Come on, Ruff. Come up here, boy!

(Ruff obeys, runs forward)

Ruff! I'm finally old enough, but I'll never be a man until I become a member of the White Caps. First, I have to go to a meeting as a visitor.

SHOTS OF DOG. THE MULE. THE PLOW TURNING THE DIRT around the small cotton stalks.

Suddenly, THE PLOW HITS A STUMP. STOPS ABRUPTLY. Plow handle twists. Almost breaks Ben's wrist. BEN JUMPS AROUND. Holds and shakes his injured wrist.

BEN (cont'd)

(yelling)

OH! Whoa! Queen. Whoa! Slow down you flop-eared mule! Whoa! If I had lights, I'd plow you to midnight for that; you no good hussy!

(MORE)

BEN (cont'd)
You slow down, or I'll beat you within
an inch of your life. Now, get up!

PLOWING AGAIN. Continues conversation with Ruff.

BEN (cont'd)
Ruff, we better get on home so I can
go to the meeting. Whoa, Queen!

Ben TURNS AROUND at the end of the row. UNHOOKS QUEEN FROM PLOW. Leaves plow in field to begin plowing when he returns.

EXT. BACK OF THE MCSWAIN HOUSE - DAY

Ben WALKS UP. Leading Queen. RUFF following.

MR. WILL MCSWAIN. (40 years old). Neat. Khaki clothes. WALKS OUT OF HOUSE. Stands on back porch. BEN REMOVES HARNESS FROM QUEEN. POURS SOME FEED IN FEED TROUGH. SADDLES HIS HORSE named DUKE.

WILL
How did it go today, Ben?

BEN
Fine, Dad, but Queen goes into a run
close to quitting time. Almost broke
my wrist a while ago when we hit a
stump.

WILL
Comes natural when you're plowing new
ground.

The next door neighbors, JASON COLE (30), a fireplug of a man. Round, red, puffy face. Noticeable brown eyes. Dark brown, wavy hair. Shiny, reddish-highlights atop of waves. TATE COLE (28), skinny. Hollow-eyed. Deep-set hazel eyes. Piercing. Blond, straight, limp hair. Parted down the middle. Lanky torso. Appears to have a serious disease, but does not. Both men are finely dressed. They RIDE THEIR HORSES INTO THE MCSWAIN YARD.

JASON
Hello, Ben! Mr. McSwain!

BEN
Jason! Tate!

WILL
Evening, boys.

JASON

Mr. McSwain, we were wondering if you might sell us your land if we made the price right?

WILL

No, son! The Lord gave me this land an' I intend to stay here until I go to meet Him. Y'all have all the land around us. How much is enough?

Tate looks at Ben.

TATE

Just a little bit more.

WILL

Lord says you ought'a be content with what you have!

JASON

Yes, Sir! We are. But if you ever want to sell, we'd be much obliged if you'd let us have the first option to buy it.

WILL

If I ever do, I will. I need to get back to work now, if y'all don't mind.

JASON

Yes, Sir! See you later, Ben. Good day, Sir!

BEN

Okay, Jason! See you, Tate!

WILL

Good day to y'all, too.

Jason and Tate GALLOP OUT of the yard. Will LEANS AGAINST A COLUMN on the porch.

Ben sits on back steps. TAKES OFF HIS DIRTY WORK SHOES. Places them beneath the back steps of the porch. Ben's mother, MARGIE MCSWAIN YELLS from the kitchen.

MARGIE (O.S.)

(yells)

Ben, take off your work shoes out there! I don't want field dirt in the house; I just cleaned!

Ben places the shoes under house as mother says lines.

BEN

Okay, Mom! Dad, what do you think of the Cole brothers?

WILL

They are as far from the Lord as one can get...as lost as a goose.

BEN

Why?

WILL

Because their mama and daddy, KITTY an' CLAYTON COLE, the richest couple in Marion County, spoiled them rotten. They don't go to church; they just think about more land.

Will continues to lean against the column. After placing shoes beneath house, BEN RETURNS AND SITS on back steps.

BEN

This 120 acres is all they don't own for two square miles.

WILL

Yeah! And I wouldn't have it if Mr. Slade hadn't let us barter eight bales of cotton for it. This 120 acres is straight from the Lord, and I intend to keep it until I die.

BEN

Hate to rush off, Dad, gotta meet Roy Lee, James and Robert Earl at Devil's Bend.

WILL

Son, I wish you wouldn't hang around that type.

BEN

What do you mean?

WILL

Society rejects. Bunch of bums. Don't work, don't shave, don't accomplish anything. Just entertain each other, every day at their hangout the General Mercantile.

BEN

I can be friends, can't I?

WILL

You being with them is like Lot's family in Sodom and Gomorrah.

BEN

Graduating high school don't make me any better than them...

WILL

You told Reverend Swan you had God's call to be a preacher. Can't serve two masters; better heed what the Lord says.

BEN

Primitive Church don't pay their preachers a dime. Besides that, I wanna have friends and things life has to offer. I wanna be somebody...

WILL

Like Satan or Jesus? Black dog or white dog? They're the only two somebodies you can liken yourself to in this life.

BEN

I mean somebody like a member of the White Caps, Daddy.

WILL

Now you listen to me, Ben McSwain. That group is up to no good!

BEN SQUIRMS on the steps under the pressure of the parent. Removes his glasses. Rubs lenses with handkerchief.

BEN

You're a member of the KKK! White Caps are just as good, do the same things!

WILL

The KKK quit, because GOVERNOR CRENSHAW got laws passed against secret organizations. He promises to destroy the White Caps, completely!

BEN

They aren't as bad as the KKK!

WILL

They're just a wild bunch of snotty-nosed kids looking for excitement, terrorizing the countryside...clapping for the devil!

BEN

Just because they're younger don't mean they're not just as good as the KKK!

WILL

They're not trying to help uphold the southern laws the way the KKK does.

BEN

I don't know that, yet. I'm going to the meeting tonight, and if someone will sponsor me, I'll be a White Cap!

Will's next statements will be used as FLASHBACKS later.

WILL

You go ahead, Son. Don't obey me or the Lord, but remember Galatians 6 verse 7, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap."

BEN

What do you mean?

WILL

The flesh and the Spirit, constantly fighting one another. It's like having a black dog and a white dog down inside of you fighting all the time.

BEN

And...

WILL (O.S.)

When you do something bad, the black dog won, when you do something good, the white dog won. I'm telling you, the White Caps are black dogs clapping for the devil!

BEN

Which dog is the KKK?

BEN STANDS. TURNS AROUND. STOMPS UP THE BACK STEPS.

WILL

Wait a minute, Son. You look like somebody shot your dog, ol' Ruff. Are you angry?

BEN

Yes, Sir. Mad as a wet setting hen!

WILL

(smiling)

You have the same clothes to get glad in. Now, go on about your business. I just want you to know how much I care.

BEN

(forced smile)

Yes, Sir.

BEN GOES INSIDE. RUNS OUT OF THE HOUSE. MOUNTS HORSE. BEATS HORSE INTO A RUN. RIDES on dirt road toward Devil's Bend.

BEN

(yells)

No, Ruff! You can't go! Ruff! Stay!

Ruff is BARKING. Wanting to go. He BARKS until Ben gets out of sight.

CUT TO:

EXT. DEVIL'S BEND - DAY

Only three businesses are in the town of Devil's Bend. The General Mercantile Store. Livery Barn, and Blacksmith Shop. A railroad is behind the three businesses. People are outside each of the three places of business. BEN RIDES to the front of the store. DISMOUNTS. TROWS REIN AROUND THE EMPTY HITCHING POST. WALKS BRISKLY IN.

INT. MERCANTILE STORE - DAY

BEN RUSHES INSIDE. THE SOUND OF HIS BOOTS ON THE WOODEN FLOOR causes ALL INSIDE to look and see who is entering. MR. HOWARD BLAIN (50) owns store.

ROY LEE JONES. Tall. Lanky. Redhaired. 21 year old man. Wears coveralls. Having so many freckles on his face gave him an inferiority complex at an early age. His looks give him a mean-mouth, bossy attitude as an abusive person. Has a cowlick. ***A lock of unruly, red hair hangs in his face. He finger-combs it back from his eyes.***