

"MINE EYES, GLORY GLORY"

Written by

M.L.GOFORTH

V.4

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Mike L. Goforth
708 Kirkwood Circle
Woodstock, GA 30189
404.915.2070
goforthm@bellsouth.net

FADE IN:

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Barren landscape, hot, steamy; a vacillating curtain of heat climbs off an empty stretch of parched, cracked highway. Dust clouds swirl in miniature cyclones; washes over the asphalt in tidal flows of sand.

The GARBLE of station-changing radio static burps. Classic twist-knob variety.

RADIO (O.S.)

When you look into the sky and see
the sun, or the moon and the stars -
all the heavenly array- do not be
enticed into bowing down to them
and worshipping...

The droning THUNDER of a Monster-8 builds from backwoods silence until --

An ancient, dirty-white, CADDY thunders past. The Caddy trolls across the steaming blacktop spitting up road grit. The debris cloud spews out from under as the Caddy chews up the black highway.

The radio's POP and HISS spits:

RADIO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

His return is real. Very real.
Believe it. I do.

STATION-CHANGING STATIC: ROCKABILLY MUSIC.

Loose earth scatters, a powdery spray and a gravelly grit vomits from beneath the white shark's belly as it shanks the edge of the highway.

STATION-CHANGING STATIC cuts in:

RADIO (O.S.) (CONT'D)

... he is returning - so you might
want to start living like it.

The MONSTER-8 ROARS. The Caddy THUNDERS past. A blur of dingy white and metallic flare of reflected sun.

STATION-CHANGING STATIC: ROCKABILLY MUSIC.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

A BUZZING noise clatters from a flickering store sign: PORTERS; an inlet of progress in the middle of Anywhere, USA. Dirty pane glass and faded steel facade. Blinking green neon promises:

OPEN - 24/7/365 - LOTTERY, BEER, GAS, SMOKES, SNACKS -

Another ROCKABILLY tune scratches out from cheap, intercom speakers jutting from beneath the corners of the roof's ancient eaves. Sporadic POPS and HISSES supplement the rhythm and melody.

The gas pump lane is empty. Oil and gas rainbow-stain the faded patch of pavement beside the pump. A whispering wind whips assorted trash past: a stream of fast-food bags, candy bar and gum wrappers.

Against the Porters' aging facade --

Two home-spun, down-home, sun-glasses-wearing, late-teen locals, TOM and MARY, loiter cross-legged on the hot cement sidewalk, a green sleeping bag curled around their legs and feet. Backs to the wall. Killing time. Nothing but.

The rockabilly tune belches in rhythmic CLICKS and TAPS.

Tom coolly balances a generic brand beer can on his bent knee. He steadies it in place with the tip of his index finger, pulling away now and again in attempt to stabilize it. He's not having much luck.

Mary's sad eyes stare down at the ENTERTAINMENT magazine cradled in her hands. A worn Bible lies open in her lap. White-rimmed sun-glasses are perched atop her head; pushing back the long locks of her sandy blonde hair.

Tom pushes his black sunglasses back up his nose with the hand not attending to the beer. He tips back the beer. Sipping a little. His lip curls some; he coughs. Beer bubbles through his lips.

He drinks like an kid. Still searching for the taste for it. Tom dips his chin to his shoulder. Wipes the beer away with his shirt.

To his left, the six-pack's remaining five beers bake in the sun. From behind the dark sunglasses, Tom gazes out at the highway. He seems lost. They both do.

Mary absently fingers the gold cross and chain around her neck. She glances from the Tom to the Bible and back.

Her expression is one of longing. A silent sufferer she'll never leave the backwoods town.

EXT. PORTERS STORE / PARKING LOT - DAY

On the other side of the parking lot a group of ancient, Bible-wielding, old crows huddle in close conversation.

Hiding behind silver cat-eyes glasses secured by a gold chain dangling from the rims, HELEN watches Tom and Mary. She offers them a slight disapproving wag of her head and a slight scowl.

HELEN

Youth...

ROSE, shorter and a little thick in the middle, sports a black hair net, enormous curlers and a nice coating of makeup-by-Tammy Faye Baker.

ROSE

...is wasted on the young.

Both women snicker.

Another woman, AUDREY, manages to shiver even beneath the beige sweater pulled up uncomfortably around her neck. At her side --

MILLIE "chills" in black boots and slacks, a white blouse and a crocheted shawl hanging off her shoulders. An island of style in the rural countryside.

The venerable ladies take turns with the floor: GIGGLING, GOSSIPING, OPINING, CUTTING UP absent friends; and each other. Each sways subconsciously, with no lacking of rhythm, to the CRACKLING rockabilly tune. Helen nabs the floor:

HELEN

Well... Sadie Lominger said she saw him two days back. Over to the-

Rose stabs her Bible at Helen. A silent objection at first.

ROSE

Sadie lies. Ollie says she dreamed him first.

Helen snickers at her. Dismisses the comment with a flamboyant wave of her hand.

HELEN

Ollie's dreams come out a bottle.

Sinister snickers ripple through their ranks. Millie winks at Helen and --

MILLIE

Maybe we should invite Ollie down.

CAKLES erupt again; louder this time. Then --

ROSE

Well, Ollie said-

Audrey jumps in. Waving her finger and cutting off Rose.

AUDREY

Oh, poo. You're a big ole bag o' nuts. I ain't heard tell of him coming back.

Millie grins a wide grin; an obvious precursor to some quip.

MILLIE

That don't mean anything. You hardly hear a thing anyway.

The women erupt into another fit of controlled GIGGLES. Insulted, Audrey scowls at each of them in turn. Her vicious glare tells the tale. Mere seconds pass though, before she's once again grinning. She puts a hand to her ear:

AUDREY

What's that? Didn't quite get that.

Their derisive GIGGLES pipe out in every direction. Laughing; each at the other and each at themselves. The ROCKABILLY music spits and hisses from the loudspeaker and swims around them.

The ladies get down a bit: Rose bobs up a down; just a little. Audrey sways left, right; barely noticeable. Millie does a slight dip here and there. Helen dances a little jig-shake with her oversized bottom.

On the roadside, in front of the store, another woman, JUDY, same age, same look, scans the highway with a pair of binoculars. Judy turns slowly and scans the opposite direction.

Then, with an exaggerated sigh, she turns to her friends.

JUDY

Hey! Hey!

Helen peeks around her friends to see what Judy's going on about.

HELEN
What? What is it?

JUDY
I need somebody to spell me for a few.

Helen grins.

HELEN
How come? What's wrong?

The other ladies turn toward Judy too.

JUDY
Got to take a potty-break.

HELEN
Again?

Judy shrugs. She holds up a can of soda.

JUDY
These things are going straight through me. Besides...

ROSE
Besides what?

JUDY
It's time to change up. Somebody else's turn to keep watch.

The women all look at each other. Stare a moment, then --

HELEN
We took a vote, Judy-Judy, you get another hour for good behavior.

JUDY
Vote? Who voted? Hell-fire no. I got to go to the head.

The women crack up as Judy starts toward the store.

Rose gazes past Judy as she passes and casts the eye of scrutiny on Tom. She eyeballs him hard; the beer can too. Scowls; shakes her head with subdued loathing.

ROSE
America's future.

The other women all fret dutifully. Millie glowers sourly.

AUDREY

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

HELEN

We are aliens and strangers in your sight, as were all our forefathers.

The other women look at her; bemused. Helen shrugs.

MILLIE

Heaven help us.

Tom feels their scrutiny on him. He considers the women's accusing gaze from the behind the safety of the black shades. He shakes his head just a bit.

TOM

Bible-bats.

Mary snickers. She glances from the bats to Tom. Her blue eyes seem sad; lonesome.

MARY

Cluck-a-mucks.

Tom sighs heavily. Soured from the attention, he turns away from the Bible-bats, chugs on the beer, then balances it against his knee again.

TOM

Stuff tastes like horse piss.

Mary giggles.

MARY

In the habit of drinking horse piss, are we?

Tom ignores her. Takes another sip. Mary returns her attention to the magazine.

TOM

How long did you say we were gonna have to wait?

Her anger is quick. She snaps at him. Not even bother to look up, her cold reply hardly dignifies his question at all.

MARY

I didn't.

Mary FLIPS the magazine page. The page tears. Mary ignores it and thumbs another.

TOM

You didn't? What the heck is supposed to mean?

Mary shrugs.

MARY

It means what it means. I didn't say how long because I don't know how long, Tom.

Tom rolls his eyes.

TOM

Right.

He crushes the beer can on the pavement by his leg. He pulls another free of the six-pack. Pops the top. SWIISHHH! He chokes down two quick sips. Sighs.

TOM (CONT'D)

Horse piss.

Mary giggles.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The sun begins a slow descent. The burnt-orange orb bleeds into blacktop and desolate landscape. A GOSPEL ROCKER chugs from the static-charged station as the white shark THUNDERS past leaving a shroud of gravel and sand in its wake.

EXT. PORTERS STORE - DAY

Store and Parking Lot lights flicker on. Night is crawling in. The burning sun caresses the horizon. Three of Tom's beers are now gone. The empty cans lay scattered around him. He belches a noisy frog-burp.

MARY

Gross.

Tom grins proudly. He thinks a moment.

TOM

Mary, how long are you willing-

Exasperated, Mary drops the magazine to her lap. Swings her attention to Tom. Absently, she gives her brown locks a dramatic flip over her shoulder as she sets her glare.

MARY

Don't... say it, Tom.

She's openly hostile. Looks like she could bite his head off. Tom bites his tongue under the weight of that glare.

MARY (CONT'D)

He'll come, or he won't, Tom.

We'll just have to wait and see.

Tom stands. Shoves his hands in jean pockets.

TOM

Look Mary-

MARY

No, you look. I didn't make you come. You wanted to -- so you're here. If you don't want to stay-

He throws his hands up; surrendering.

TOM

I'll stay, I'll stay. Damn.

Mary grins. Satisfied again. He always caves.

MARY

It'll be worth it.

TOM

I gotta pee.

Mary rolls her eyes and goes back to her magazine.

Tom crawls out of the tangled sleeping-bag. Staggeres to his feet. He makes for the front door.

EXT. PORTERS STORE - NIGHT

Night has fallen. The Bible-bats are all hunkered down in and around a black sedan. Rose and Helen are chatting softly, Audrey is sleeping. Millie steals a guilty smoke at the back of the car.

Mary pulls the sleeping bag tighter. She leans her head over on Tom's shoulder. Tom smiles. Leans into her too.

MARY
Thank you for staying, Tom.

He shrugs.

TOM
No problem.

He pops the top on another beer. The last one.

MARY
Do you have to drink that?

He gapes at her; eyebrows raised. Is she nuts?

TOM
What else is there to do?

Mary huffs. She snatches her magazine back up. Folds it into her chest. Presses it against her heart.

MARY
Just think, Tom. A chance to see the King.

TOM
If you say so.

MARY
What's wrong?

Tom cups her hands in his.

TOM
Mary, he's dead. Been dead for a good while, as a matter of fact.

She shakes her head no. Adamant.

MARY
Well, that might be but...

She finishes with an exasperated sigh. Accents it with a simultaneous head twirl and hair flip.

Tom does the exaggerated eye roll again. Frustrated.

TOM
Mary-

Mary's having none of it. She cuts him off fast and furious.

MARY
He's the King.

She glares at him. Waiting. Tom smirks. He's not buying it.

MARY (CONT'D)

They said he'd be back and he is.

TOM

Who, Mary? Who said? This stupid thing?

Tom grabs the magazine. WAGS it at her.

Mary's lip trembles. She looks hurt. For a moment, it seems as though she might cave herself. But only for a moment. She bites her lip and defiantly hisses:

MARY

Everybody. Who do you think? It's been prophesied.

He laughs. Sarcasm oozes from him.

TOM

PROPHESED? Yeah right... and he's been spotted all over the US. Maybe the whole world.

MARY

Exactly. Now give me that back.

Tom looks at the magazine in his hands. He wants to throw it in the trash. He thinks about it but ultimately, just shoves it back to her and assumes a steady, mannered 'voice-of-reason' tone. Almost soothing.

TOM

Mary?

MARY

What?

TOM

Don't you think he'd return with a little more flair? A little flash.

Mary glares at him. Chews her bottom lip. She's pissed now. Tom continues.

TOM (CONT'D)

I mean, hey, what do I know? But... I think, and this is just me, he'd come back with a bang!

Tom SLAMS his hands together. SMACK! Then makes a mushroom cloud explosion with his hands.

TOM (CONT'D)

You know, set the world on fire.
Grab some headlines. Not go
shooting around backwoods towns
like Holly Fields hitting the local
grocery.

Mary spins away from him. She hates it when he's sensible,
rational and logical. She chews her bottom lip; unsure now.

MARY

Well...

Tom presses. Takes advantage of the gained ground. It doesn't
happen often. He's talking with his hands now too. Waving
them about. Like he does when he's excited.

TOM

I mean, hell, people been seeing
him everywhere. Or so they say.
Just last week, I read where some
kook in Atlanta saw his face on a
billboard; in a bowl of spaghetti.

Mary doesn't react. She just faces away from him. Gives him
his moment in the sun.

TOM (CONT'D)

Spaghetti, Mary. On a billboard!
And there was that lady in Dalton-

Mary holds a hand up to stop him.

MARY

Are you done?

TOM

Yeah, I'm done. I just don't-

MARY

None of that means a thing anyway,
Tom Pritchett. That woman probably
was a kook. But Darlene said she -

Tom's nodding cuts her off.

TOM

- Saw him here last week. Yeah,
yeah, I know. Get your facts, then
distort them as you please.

He stops. Frowns.

TOM (CONT'D)
Mark Twain said that.

MARY
And?

Tom rolls his eyes. Makes a painful face like she's causing a great suffering pain.

TOM
You ever stop to think Darlene might be a little kooky herself?

MARY
Why would she lie?

TOM
Psalms 31:18, "Let the lying lips be put to silence."

MARY
She wouldn't, Tom. Psalms 63:11, "...the mouth of them that speak lies shall be stopped." Anyway, Darlene ought to know. She's in the fan club?

Tom rolls his eyes with extreme exaggeration. It's like talking to a brick wall.

TOM
Who ain't in the club, Mary?

Mary dismisses him again with another flip of her hand.

MARY
Oh hush. You don't know anything.

TOM
Know enough to know all this sighting stuff is a bunch of B.S.

Mary shoos away the comment.

TOM (CONT'D)
It's true. Look at all those Bible-bats over there waiting...

Mary looks at the old women.

TOM (CONT'D)

Goofy smiles and crazy eyes. Next thing you know, they're gonna start a crusade. Your friend Darlene certainly has a big mouth.

Mary sighs. She's had enough. She raises the magazine.

Tom's gaze drifts away. He knows that sigh. It's her irritated sigh. The one that says he's getting on her nerves and she wishes he'd shut up. That nothing he says, no matter how much it makes sense, is going to change her mind.

Mary stands. Unrolls her sleeping bag. Smooths it out.

MARY

Look, I'm staying. You want to leave -- leave. You want to miss your chance to see the King— then go on. I'm staying.

TOM

True irreverence is disrespect for another man's god. Mark Twain.

Mary glares. She makes a 'W' sign with her index fingers and thumbs. Tom sighs, rolls his eyes, sits back and takes a sip from his beer.

EXT. PORTERS STORE - NIGHT

Tom settles into the sleeping bag. He kicks around until he finally manages to get comfortable.

Mary reads her magazine by flashlight.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The morning sun begins its daily broil on the blacktop. A stray dog hustles across the highway as the Caddy blows by.

The Caddy veers off the road into the store parking lot. Dirt and gravel kick out from under as it GRINDS to a stop.

EXT. PORTERS STORE - DAY

The sun peeks over the horizon. It starts the transformation from black to blue. Puffy, white clouds appear against the bright blue; drift closer.

Mary stirs. She shivers in the crisp morning and --

-- comes awake fully to the sound of HUSHED MURMURS swimming around her. Mary's eyes flutter open. She pushes crusted sleep from the corners and looks around. Foggy; still waking up.

The flock of blue-hairs is following someone out of the store. They're keeping their distance, but manage to hang close enough to bask in his glow.

Mary squints in the morning light until she lights on the object of their attention.

She stares. As slow realization spreads over her face, her jaw drops and her gaze widens. She can't believe it.

MARY
Oh... ohmigod!

She punches at Tom's sleeping bag repeatedly. Whispers:

MARY (CONT'D)
Tom... Tom?

Tom's MUFFLED COMPLAINTS crawl out from the sleeping bag.

TOM
Huuuh.... What--?

Mary punches the bag (and Tom) again; hissing:

MARY
Wake up! Will you wake up now?

Slowly, Tom's head turtles out of the sleeping bag. He looks around. Rub his eyes.

TOM
Huh, what? What is it?

His eyes are on Mary.

She's positively beaming. Mary points toward --

-- the parked Cadillac.

MARY
Look -- over there.

Tom shifts around to see what she's prattling on about. His eyes widen, his mouth falls open in wonder. A grin forms as --

An overweight, larger-than-life King sporting --

- A salt and pepper pompadour

- A pair of oversized, black sunglasses
- A dingy white robe and
- A white silk scarf

-- waddles slowly toward the Caddy. The once-white robe drags behind him and the ancient leather sandals grace the pavement.

TOM
No-effing-way...

Tom is dumbstruck by the sight. Behind him, Mary smirks triumphantly.

MARY
What do you say now, Doubting
Thomas?

He whirls toward her.

TOM
Oh... my... God. El-vis Christ!

The old crows stare, enamored:

- Audrey is mesmerized by the sight of him.
- Millie clambers for a better glimpse of him.
- Rose fans herself with a magazine.
- Helen swoons as he passes close.
- Judy presses the binoculars to her eyes for no good reason.

Something falls from the King's robes as he approaches the front of the caddy.

Judy drops the binoculars, scrambles to his side, and snags up the Twinkie from the dirt. She holds the offering back out to him.

The King wheels around. Strikes a Karate pose. Adjusts his black shades and snags the Twinkie. He grins:

THE KING
Thank you, thank you very much.

Continuing to the Caddy, he pops open the door. It SCREAMS from age and use.

As he climbs into the driver's seat, he chucks a white donut bag into the passenger seat. He glances once more at the dumb-struck observers. Offers another quick nod.

The King fires up the Monster-8. It ROARS. He guns the gas pedal twice: GGGRRRRNNNN GGGRRRRNNNN.

The Caddy starts to roll. It crawls past the gaping old crows and four hand-made signs rise up to glorify him:

LONG LIVE THE KING

HE HAS RISEN

HE HAS RETURNED

LIVE AT THE HOLLYWOOD BOWL

As the Caddy crawls forward, the King nods warmly at the old ladies.

The Bible bats swoon again; LOVING WHIMPERS.

The King adjusts his shades and turns to smiles his pearly whites at Mary. He floats the silk scarf to her as he passes.

The scarf unfurls lazily, swimming toward Mary atop the Caddy's jet wash. She grabs at the trailing white silk and snags it just before it hits the ground. She pulls it against her heart. She sighs with contentment.

MARY

Hallelujah.

Mary folds her hands together prayer-like. The white silk spills through her fingers. Her heart overflows with joy.

Tom wheels to face her. Shouting now.

TOM

Mary! Did you see? It was him,
Mary. The King!

Mary nods but stays silent; allowing her warm, but catty confidence to say 'I-told-you-so' for her.

The Caddy crawls toward the highway. Morning sunlight brushes the personalized plates that read: RAPTURE.

Tom shuffle-kicks the tangled sleeping bag. He clambers free just as --

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The King punches it. The Monster-8 THUNDERS to life, rear tread BAWLS and HOWLS as rubber grinds into asphalt. Black smoke bores out from under. Grit and gravel spit out from under as the Caddy fishtails out onto the asphalt.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Mary's gaze of longing fixates on the escaping Caddy. The fascinated expression reveals the depth rapture welling up.

Tom grins like a madman as his shell-shocked gaze chases after the Caddy. Then, being given to a little theatrics, he looks at Mary, makes a show of throat-clearing noisily and proclaims in a deep, announcer-like tone:

TOM

Ladies and Gentlemen, Jesus has
left the building.

Mary lovingly presses the scarf to her heart; murmurs:

MARY

Glory, glory.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Plowing the two-lane at eighty-plus the Caddy pushes for the rising sun. CHOIR SONG kicks off 'The Battle Hymn of the Republic.'

CHOIR SONG

"Glory, glory hallelujah. Glory,
glory hallelujah..."

FADE TO BLACK.