

## ACT ONE

Tuesday, December 22, 1959

Having lost her mother recently, a young girl on the brink of womanhood (Swallow) is joined by her father (Boone) and younger sister and brother (Brat and Poor Baby) in a small church in Louisiana, as the congregation sings "**Vaults of Heaven**". After the song, the minister concludes his sermon, and the congregation go their separate ways (**Overture**). Poor Baby complains that "**I Never Get What I Pray For**", before he and his sisters, Swallow and Brat, meet up with their farmhand, Ed, who is about to euthanize some kittens. Swallow manages to save them and the siblings realize that they should have been "**Home By Now**".

The Snake Preacher, Earl, and the rest of their nefarious troupe arrive in town, looking for a place to put up a tent for their traveling revival meeting, where "folks go to dance with snakes" in order to test their faith in Jesus.

That evening, a radio is playing music in the family home, when the program is suddenly interrupted with the breaking news that there has been a prison break and that an escaped fugitive may be heading towards town.

During dinner, Boone tries to convince his children that "**It Just Doesn't Get Any Better Than This**". Swallow leaves to go feed the kittens, while singing "**Whistle Down The Wind**" to herself. In the barn, she prays that God will look after the kittens, but is startled by a loud cry, and a man jumps out at her. When she asks who he is, he only manages to moan "Jesus Christ..." before he collapses. Believing this to be true, Swallow, Brat and Poor Baby promise they won't tell anyone that he is there: "**The Vow**".

In a bar, Ed is singing "**Cold**" to entertain the townspeople. The Sheriff arrives at the bar to warn the town that there is an escaped killer on the loose, and that he could be hiding out nearby.

Wednesday, December 23, 1959

The Man wakes in the barn to find himself surrounded by children, who all promise to take care of him and to keep his existence a secret. Left alone, he looks back on his life with anger and regret "**Unsettled Scores**". He looks forward to the future with grim despair.

Swallow brings him some food, and asks him if he will bring her mother back. Together they sing of their desire to see things they've lost come back to them: "**If Only**".

Amos, and his opportunistic girlfriend, Candy, sing of longing to get away from the town they live in, to a place they can be free: "**Tire Tracks and Broken Hearts**". Overcome by fear and hysteria, men and women in town are arming themselves and preparing to kill in the name of God "for the sake of all the children": "**Safe Haven**".

Outside the barn, the children are discussing what it would mean if the mysterious man really was Jesus Christ, and what a difference it would make to their lives: "**Long Overdue for a Miracle**". They realize that if they do everything right, they could save him, and that this could be the night "**When Children Rule The World**".

In the barn, they beg The Man to tell them a story. Unable to meet the demands for a story from the Bible, he offers up one from "the next testament": "**Annie Christmas**". When he finishes, they ask repeatedly what the moral is. He snaps under the pressure, yells at them, and collapses in despair. He admits that he doesn't know. The children approach him tenderly, offer him gifts, and promise that "**No Matter What**", they'll always love him. The Man is genuinely and visibly moved by their love for him. Across town, the adults prepare to hunt down the escaped killer, their anger in complete contrast to the children's innocence and happiness.

## Act Two

Thursday, December 24, 1959

The Man asks Swallow to retrieve a package for him, 4 miles away at the train tunnel, and on noticing that she is scared and shaking, tells her to **"Try Not To Be Afraid"**.

Amos arrives at the barn to visit Swallow before he leaves town with Candy, and asks if she will tell him her big secret before he goes. He says if they share secrets, they'll have to seal them with a kiss, and that **"A Kiss Is A Terrible Thing To Waste"**. The Man, hiding in the barn, overhears their conversations and joins in as Amos sings the song, realizing it seems to correspond to his life- "The emptiest words that there'll ever be, it could have been me- it could have been me".

Swallow asks Amos to take her to the train tunnel before he can kiss her. There, she retrieves the package, but is almost killed by a train, though Amos manages to push her out of the way in time. "You saved my life, Amos! That means I owe you one now!" she says, then she tells him: "Jesus is in my barn"! They are interrupted by the Sheriff, who thinks he has discovered the killer, and is rather disappointed to find it is only Swallow and Amos.

Earl has been hiding in the train tunnel the whole time and has overheard Swallow's secret.

At home, Swallow finds Poor Baby, who is upset because his kitten, which he asked "Jesus" to look after, has died; Swallow suggests they ask "Jesus" why he allowed the kitten to die: **"If Only (Reprise)"**. In the barn, The Man tells them another story to explain why the kitten died: **"Charlie Christmas"**, saying that everyone dies in the end, "even the cat, even old Charlie...even your mother".

Swallow gives The Man the package she retrieved from the train tunnel and confesses her love for him. Alone, The Man tries to make sense of what is happening: **"So Many Cries"**, and reveals the contents of the package: a

loaded gun. Unseen by The Man, Amos arrives at the barn and witnesses the unwrapping of the gun. He rushes off in search of Swallow.

Meanwhile, Candy waits for Amos: "**Off Ramp Exit To Paradise**", but when he eventually turns up, it's only to ask her where Swallow is, as he says she's in trouble. When he runs off, Candy meets Earl, who says he knows Swallow's big secret, and knows why Amos is rushing off in such a hurry. Desperate and angry with nothing to lose, Candy decides to get back at Amos and Swallow, interrupting the revival meeting: "**Wrestle with the Devil**". Candy reveals the big secret to the entire town: "The Devil is in Swallow's barn"! The townspeople decide that the killer has to be found once and for all, in order to save the children: "**The Hunt**".

Swallow runs back to the barn to warn The Man that the whole town is heading for the barn to catch him- when he says he will have to try and run for it, she begs him to stay, promising that she will protect him. He tries to make her realize that he is not the person she thinks he is: "**Nature of the Beast**". She says that she realizes that now, and simply needs him to be whoever he is. The Man gives Swallow a final kiss on the forehead and shoves her out of the barn, which is now surrounded by adults being kept at bay by the children. The Man, now trapped inside, douses the barn with gasoline, strikes a match- and sets it ablaze.

When Swallow manages to get back in, there's no trace of him left. Swallow is convinced he hasn't left for good, saying, "He'll be back...I just know he will." Her father tries to make her see that he wasn't Jesus. She still isn't completely convinced, asking, "But how do you know"? The family, together again, sing "**Whistle Down The Wind**". The family exits, leaving Swallow alone in her world, as she hears The Man's voice sing the final verse, "So whistle down the wind, for I have always been right there".