



SAVING SALEM, M.I.

"SMASH THE HELL-E-VISION"

Written by

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This episode is based on a true story.

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"SMASH THE HELL-E-VISION"

BASED ON A TRUE STORY

TEASER

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - DAY

PRESENT TIME: 1971.

A DRAGON LAMPPOST, two beasts spewing a housed flame from a forked post, gives little light to the tiny midwestern town on a dreary black and white kind of day.

Across the street, a van with 70s RCA logo pulls away parting like a curtain. A store front radiates with warm light, a contrast to the area.

Store owner, BARBRA DONAVAN (38), one hand on her fancy hat, glowing like a lamp shade, positions a 1971 RCA XL-100 color television console in the window.

INT. GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

A bakery case leads to a counter. Behind it cigarettes and magazines try not to hide. Produce hangs in the shadow behind a TEA TABLE where the VILLAGE LADIES, jealous of each other, each with an agenda, pretend to get along.

KATE RODGERS (44), a guarded housewife, hair curlers peeking from a plaid blue scarf, stops short of opening an envelope.

KATE

Barbra, you know there ain't a person in this village that can afford a color television.

BARBRA

(perturbed)

Come New Year, if it's still sitting there, I'll be gazing at the Rose Parade in living color... instead of vacationing in Florida.

MARY ANN BAKER (17), astute radical, pushes her bangs back, noticing Kate clutching the mail piece.

MARY ANN

Why so shocked, Kate?

KATE

I've been selected-- to be a
Nielson household.

BARBRA

Jiminy Cricket, Kate will be
needing an upgrade to color. Right,
Mary Ann?

MARY ANN

(snatches the letter)
Nielson? TV ratings Nielson?

SAMANTHA GOLD (46), frail for her age, fumbles through her
green striped purse, yanking out a letter.

SAMANTHA

I got one too, yesterday.

MARY ANN

Kate, Samantha, it's just a trial
offer. They're only going to select
one home.

BELL RINGS on the back of the door when--

REVEREND EVAN SMITH (40), athletic, yet nerdy, always first
to help out, enters the store, straightens his tie.

He's ignored by Barbra, GREETED by the others. He collects
his mail from the boxes. Lagging behind, his son--

DAVID SMITH (9), mischievous, but well-meaning, sifts through
the candy section.

KATE

Well, I'm doing it. I could use the
extra money with three boys.

MARY ANN

Nielsen wants to know what us WOMEN
think. This is OUR decade.

Evan notices a similar envelope in his mail, folds it in half
and hands it down.

EVAN

David, you can throw this one away.

Taking the piece to the trashcan, David investigates. Seeing
what it is, he hides it in his pants.

KATE

Pastor Smith, did you get an invitation from Nielsen ratings?

EVAN

They wouldn't want us. I only watch ten minutes of news once a week.

SAMANTHA

What about Loretta and the kids?

Evan picks up a beer bottle.

EVAN

Barbra, what is this--

BARBRA

It's non-alcoholic, Reverend. Far enough away from where the children browse for candy.

EVAN

Let's keep Salem a dry village, Barbra. Especially near the church.

Evan puts the bottle back, facing its label away. He grabs David's hand, leads him out.

BARBRA

He doesn't watch TV and won't drink a beer. One helluva visionary.

KATE

Would you prefer a minister that burns books?

BARBRA

My duty is to move Salem forward and save it from THAT church.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. SALEM CHURCH - NIGHT

Through a hazy sky, moonlight outlines a darkened building and distinct steeple.

INT. SALEM CHURCH, AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Behind a spot lit table, shadow blankets pews and stained-glass windows. Evan sits, centered.

WARREN RODGERS (45), constable, fireman, removes his hunters cap striped as straight as his personality. Hands a cake to--

LANCE SINGER (40), balding, farmer, and church youth leader.

LANCE

Thanks, Warren. Kate's apple cake?

WARREN

No fasting tonight, Lance.

LANCE

Did you see the paper? A Billy Graham Crusade is coming to the Pontiac Silverdome. We oughta take a church bus-- for a couple nights.

Samantha's husband, ALEX GOLD (42), accountant with a well-groomed beard, scoots his chair forward, from the shadows.

ALEX

Should we put it to a vote?

Lance presents a news article on the crusade to Evan. He ponders over it for a moment. It seems like an eternity.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DETROIT HOUSE - DAY

1947. News papers piled everywhere. YOUNG EVAN (16) is slapped around by his drunk father, AMOS SMITH (44). TWO YOUNGER SISTERS (10,12) cry, crouched in a corner.

YOUNG EVAN

But dad, the Detroit Times even reported it.

Evan shields another blow as his father tumbles into a chair.

AMOS

I work there. All lies. Just once I
wish they'd print the truth.

INT. GRAND RAPIDS, CIVIC AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

1947. The auditorium bursting, YOUNG PEOPLE crowd into the
isles and push along the walls.

ANNOUNCER

Youth for Christ and Calvary Church
are proud to present our main
speaker Billy Graham.

Young Evan approaches the back door with a COUPLE BUDDIES.

USHER

All five-thousand seats are taken.
Stand where you can.

YOUNG EVAN

Go ahead, I'll meet you guys later.

EXT. GRAND RAPIDS, CIVIC AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

Evan sits on the steps leaning against a tall square column,
one of many. He looks up the pillar, reaching toward Heaven.
An ORANGE STAR twinkles.

YOUNG EVAN

God, you've got to get me outta
that house. Please, save me from
this nightmare. I don't know how to
defend my sisters from his drunken
fits any more. I need you. Do this
for us and I promise you...

Glancing down, he notices a flyer tumbling by. Evan grabs it:
"GREAT DAYS. YOUTH FOR CHRIST. BILLY GRAHAM."

YOUNG EVAN (CONT'D)

Save our family from him, and I
promise I will bring your word to
as many people as Billy Graham.

USHER (O.S.)

(echo)

All five thousand seats... FIVE
THOUSAND seats are taken...

INT. DETROIT HOUSE - DAY

Amos plops onto a beat-up sofa. The drunk father grabs his stomach in pain, releasing his grip, a GLASS BOTTLE BREAKS.

INT. DETROIT CHURCH - DAY

A casket closes.

BACK TO PRESENT (1971):

INT. SALEM CHURCH, AUDITORIUM

BART BAKER (51), a Navy vet settles into a folding chair with coffee, stores his cane.

Handing the paper back to Lance--

EVAN

Not to rattle anyone's cage, but the meetings are in Pontiac. That's eighty miles round trip.

ALEX

Forty, one-way. Not so far that--

EVAN

Alex... Everyone would want to go and we'd end up having to take both buses. And the one, it barely makes it round the village.

WARREN

Evan's got a point. Certainly wouldn't want church folk stranded in a corn field middle the night.

EVAN

On a Saturday-- People would get home too late to make church the next day.

BART

Very logistical point, Reverend.

Evan takes a piece of cake, carefully cutting it, conserving, placing half back onto the platter.

EVAN

I picture church sponsored events as being more local... community driven... We're a small town.

(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

If we extend our resources this week-- Next year, someone will want us travelling to that new place that's opening in Florida...

ALEX

Disneyworld?

LANCE

Evan... You're usually on the band wagon for adventures like this.

EVAN

Lance, Graham comes into town like one of those Hollywood celebrities and people flock to his events. Are they going-- Are WE going-- to nurture our hearts? No, we're going to see the circus.

Standing with passion--

LANCE

So what. People are going and people are getting saved. I bet some of the villagers, who might not set foot in this church, would get on that bus to go up there and hear Graham.

Lance sits down again.

Evan folds his arms in deep thought.

EVAN

These crusades-- What if down the pike, Sunday services turned into a rock concert in a mega stadium. They would gobble up all the small churches that are so important to local communities like ours.

LANCE

That's ridiculous.

Lance storms out.

EXT. SALEM CHURCH, PARKING LOT - NIGHT

The first glimpse of a colorful stained-glass window is cut short when the lights inside switch off.

Alex bids the others a good night as they exit. He lingers in thought, plotting... he's always plotting.

LANCE

Pssst! Alex... Alex, over here.

Turning, Alex notices Lance in his truck, window half open.

LANCE (CONT'D)

Just wanted to apologize... for such an abrupt exit. Didn't mean for the ole temper to get--

ALEX

No need, Lance. You have a valid point. People would love to go.

Stepping out of the vehicle--

LANCE

Just can't put my finger on why Evan is so set against it.

ALEX

Are we thinking that maybe we need to replace him, already?

LANCE

(lowers voice)

I was kinda hoping of organizing a group to go anyway. If some of us car pool... drive there on our own... What can he say about that?

ALEX

Maybe he'll have a change of heart. Why is this so important to you?

LANCE

I'm thinking about our youth. You have two girls. I want my son to be able to say, "I was there the night Billy Graham came to our town."

Lance STARTS the ignition, turns on the headlights.

EXT. PARSONAGE - DAY

The morning sun streams spotted rays on a white 1900's farm house updated with black shutters. Through an open window, the SOUND OF TELEVISION--

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
*And now here is a man who will show
you how to feel better, look
better, Jack LaLanne.*

INT. PARSONAGE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dressed in fashionable culottes and a blouse, LORETTA SMITH (40), energetically talks on the phone as her beehive hairdo bounces with each word.

LORETTA
Ain't that a bite. I'll fill in
Evan later tonight.

She hangs up the phone, returns to exercising with--

JACK (O.S.)
*Up down, up down, leg to the right.
Up down, up down, leg to the left.*

Evan comes in as a laundry dryer in another room BUZZES.

EVAN
Hi honey.

He's ignored--

EVAN (CONT'D)
Sweetheart-- A kiss for the ole
husband?

JACK (O.S.)
*Up down, up down, leg to the right.
Up down, up down, leg to the left.*

EVAN
Loretta? I think I heard the dryer
buzz a second ago.

Still exercising, breathing heavily--

LORETTA
Trying to be more attractive for
you. Commercial break's soon.

EVAN
Sometimes I wonder if you love me
or that television more.

LORETTA
(between breaths)
Pastor Regis-- from Novi phoned.
(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Wanted-- to warn you-- about an
Evangelist-- Was asking also-- if
church was going to the Billy
Graham crusade--

EVAN

Pretty long drive...

LORETTA

Mentioned that-- It's going to be
televised anyway.

EVAN

Televised?

His HEART BEATS like Ringo Star hitting the drums. Evan
nervously paces, fidgets. Worried, he grabs his briefcase and
heads out.

INT. GOLD HOME, TV ROOM - DAY

A vintage 1960s black and white console broadcasts a rerun of
The Flintstones. ("No Help Wanted" air date 10/21/60.)

BARNEY RUBBLE

(cartoon on TV)

*You like your TV set don't you
Fred...?*

FRED FLINTSTONE

*You're right, I'd rather lose my
right arm than miss my TV programs.*

Pigtails bouncing, SUSAN SMITH (7), tosses popcorn at TAMMIE
GOLD (7). It lands on a booklet on the coffee table.

SUSAN

Wasn't trying to hit-- That's kinda
small for a book.

TAMMIE

It's our Nielsen ratings log.
Didn't you get one?

Susan shakes her head, examining the booklet.

TAMMIE (CONT'D)

My mom thinks they'll pick her to
do it regularly.

SUSAN

They'd never send us one. My dad doesn't watch TV. What do you have to write down?

TAMMIE

Just fill in the blanks every time we watch a show. And they pay for doing it.

SUSAN

Wish we could do that too.

A knock on the door. Popping in, holding up a booklet--

DAVID

We are! I, you're supercool, yet humble big brother...

TAMMIE

Humble? You D-mutt?

DAVID

...have secured a copy of the great *Encyclopedia of Nielsen* commanding us to enter ratings each day-- and paying us.

Susan runs over. David whips the booklet out of reach.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But only if you promise not to tell dad. He wanted to throw it away.

SUSAN

I promise-- I promise-- Now let me see it, skuzz bucket.

David gently hands the booklet down.

INT. SALEM CHURCH, OFFICE - DAY

Large desk with a 50s style typewriter sets before a wall of books. An old radio on the center shelf looks out of place.

Evan stares at a mostly blank page in the typewriter: "EVAN'S SUNDAY SERMON."

He sneaks out the BILLY BOOK, a pictorial review of the Billy Graham ministries, titled: "20 YEARS UNDER GOD."

EVAN

You're everywhere Billy. Can't let them discover what I borrow...

He turns up the radio as Billy Graham preaches in a rerun from 1968, "Hour of Decision, Three Kinds of Hell."

BILLY GRAHAM (V.O.)

The Bible teaches that there are at least three kinds...

Evan returns to the typewriter, pecking the keys: "*THREE TYPES OF HELL.*"

BILLY GRAHAM (V.O.)

First there is hell in the heart. This is where it all begins...

Copying the radio, Evan types: "*1. HELL IN THE HEART.*"

A KNOCK at the door.

Like a kid caught stealing candy, Evan quickly switches the radio off, grabs the BILLY BOOK, pretending to read it.

EVAN

Kate, Mary Ann, come in...

KATE

We were wandering this way and... well, Mary Ann had this really snappy idea.

MARY ANN

Something everyone should dig... find groovy.

Evan gestures that he's receptive.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)

We were thinking that maybe one evening you could have a TV night here at the church. We'd talk Barbra into loaning that new color television set.

EVAN

Television in color? Here in church? Is that even appropriate?

MARY ANN

We could do it one of those nights Billy Graham is on.

Evan's heart jumps TWO BEATS.

EVAN

Won't most people want to watch
their favorite program then?

KATE

Reverend we would never miss Billy
Graham when we can catch the
regular shows on a rerun. I'm
planning on tuning into him every
single night.

MARY ANN

It's TV rating sweeps week too.

KATE

Going to log every minute of my
viewing time right here.

She pulls out her Nielsen ratings booklet to show.

EVAN

Yes every night. All week... Except
that... We've already planned an
event here at the church.

KATE

What event?

Evan glances down at the BILLY BOOK where a black and white
photo of Graham's 1949 tent meeting catches his eye.

EVAN

Special meetings. A revival... A
tent meeting... Yes... We're having
an old-fashioned tent revival right
here in the parking lot. Special
speaker too.

MARY ANN

Who?

EVAN

Uh, um... A pastor... Reverend
Regis recommended him.

KATE

Regis filled in as minister at this
church years ago. If Pastor Regis
recommended him, he must be good.

MARY ANN
(blurting out)
Barbra has gone to great lengths to
allow the set to be loaned--

Awkward glances freeze the moment.

EVAN
Barbra? What's she got to do--
(presumptuous)
I'm sure she wasn't arranging to
loan us that TV so she could try
and pawn it off on our members?

MARY ANN
Come on Kate... Nothing's changed.
Church doors are always locked
whenever I try them.

The exterior door SQUEAKS shut after they leave.

INT. SINGER HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Run down and ancient, the patched furniture in this farmhouse
CREAKS like its floors.

NICK SINGER (20), buff guy wearing bellbottom jeans, leans
back in a chair drinking milk. Back turned away from the red
barn outside the window, his eyes glue to a television in the
adjacent room.

Nearly 85 years old, presenting a home-baked cookie--

GRANNY
Best not be watching that thing.
Your pop be yelling at me that I
was hindering your chores again.

NICK
Lighten up Granny...

At the sound of a DISTANT TRACTOR, Nick jumps up, chugs the
milk and is out the door with the half-eaten cookie.

EXT. SINGER FARM - CONTINUOUS

The well-kept farm contrasts with the decrepit home.

Nick swoops next to the chicken coop and grabs a wire pail of
eggs as Lance parks the FARMALL DIESEL.

LANCE
Have a minute Nick?

NICK
Just finished gathering.

LANCE
What would you think about rounding
up some of the youth group at
church and taking them to the
Silverdome?

NICK
The Pontiac Silverdome?

LANCE
Billy Graham's speaking. Think
anyone would be interested in
replacing the usual game night with
another sermon?

NICK
It's the Silverdome! Everyone will
want to go-- you know they will.
Its the largest indoor football
stadium-- over 80,000 seats.

Nick tries to imagine a crowd that size, looking up toward
the clouds.

EXT. SALEM AIRPORT - DAY

A small Cessna clears the top of a blue painted farmhouse
turned airport office.

Evan follows the plane to a spot of sun. Jerking his head, he
encounters a sign: "SALEM VILLAGE POP. 310."

A SQUAKING RADIO giving landing directions dissolves into--

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. DETROIT HOUSE - DAY

1949. Stacks of books and papers strewn, better organized
than before. Young Evan fine tunes the RADIO NEWS:

BILLY GRAHAM (V.O.)
(from radio)
*Jesus said, "I am the way the truth
and the life..."*

RADIO NEWSCASTER (V.O.)
Billy Graham and his "Canvas Cathedral" in Los Angeles have been extended for another three weeks. It's estimated that more than 100,000 people have attended the event to date.

YOUNG EVAN
 A hundred-thousand... I can reach that many. I have to.

INT. WHEATON COLLEGE, CENTENNIAL GYM - NIGHT

1959. A stormy night outside, forces everyone indoors. COLLEGIATE EVAN (28), drenched, takes a seat. DR. IVANS (55), at the podium--

DR. IVANS
 ...alumnus who has preached to more than a million people and needs no introduction, Dr. Billy Graham.

Dr. Ivans steps down, settling into a seat. A shoulder tap turns his head--

COLLEGIATE EVAN
 Dr. Ivans, did you say Graham has preached to over a million people? How can I reach a million?

DR. IVANS
"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."
 God gives us small tests before moving us up.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY (1971):

EXT. SALEM AIRPORT - DAY

Looking away from the "SALEM POP. 310" sign, Evan catches site of Alex exiting the airport office.

ALEX
 Evan, stop by early on a Saturday morning and I'll take you up. Bring David along too.

EVAN
 Really?

ALEX

I'm a man of my word. Aren't you
too, Evan?

EXT. SALEM CHURCH - EVENING

Determined to reach Salem's 310 residents, Evan hurries
toward the building, colorless, below a dark blue sky.
Pausing on the steps, he looks up at the steeple towering
toward Heaven. A tiny ORANGE STAR winks.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. SALEM CHURCH - DAY

Looking down from the majestic steeple, the glass cover of an outdoor letterboard sways.

Evan balances a box of plastic letters. He completes the slat: "*TENT REVIVAL - EVANGELIST PARASOL.*"

A bicycle zooms by. Mary Ann RINGS the BELL on the handlebar.

Startled, Evan knocks the box of letters. They tumble across the lawn.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Mary Ann settles in at the TEA TABLE as Barbra prepares baked goods behind the counter.

BARBRA

Keeping your Nielsen log to-date?

MARY ANN

Not into all the mainstream apple pie jazz.

BARBRA

Mine has been properly completed. And I didn't watch but one show.

MARY ANN

You're cheating your way--

BARBRA

Equivocating. I might be open to a partner... To help foil the others.

MARY ANN

A lot of work for two bucks. What are you really up to?

Bringing a tray of colorful cookies closer--

BARBRA

I'd set up a voting box here in the store. Let people pay a nickel a ballot to vote for their favorite weekly shows.

MARY ANN
Another profit making scheme...

BARBRA
Don't you think that would give a
better representation of the town?

MARY ANN
You know how I feel about
materialism.

BARBRA
What's your take on free baked
goods in exchange?

MARY ANN
Not sure how I could help.

BARBRA
Keep tabs on the others. Make sure
they don't complete their logs.

Mary Ann ponders, eyeing the cream filled cookies Barbra
places in the showcase. Extending a hand--

MARY ANN
Free goodies... plus half of what
Nielsen pays you. Oh and a box of
those coconut chocolate chips-- For
the perfect guy to help me out.

The BELL JINGLES on the door as Kate arrives. She sets her
purse and Nielsen booklet on the table before shopping the
isle beyond.

KATE
Where can I find the tarter sauce?

BARBRA
Back shelf, toward the corner.

Mary Ann snatches Kate's booklet which has her name clearly
written across the cover. She pretends to read it.

BARBRA (CONT'D)
Mail came. Already sorted.

Entering, Samantha and TIZIANA DANIELS (26), African-American
and church pianist, quickly settle into chairs as Mary Ann
slyly sneaks Kate's guide into her bag.

Evan arrives, grabs his mail.

EVAN

Barbra, we have a guest minister coming in next week. Was wondering if an apartment might be available?

BARBRA

(checking ledger)

We could possibly arrange for a discount if you'd work in a mention about the fine new color television set here.

EVAN

You'd have to work any "mentions" out with Evangelist Parasol.

MARY ANN

Parasite? He doesn't sound like the type to get down and boogie.

TIZIANA

How can I do a TV ratings book if I have to play piano for a revival?

EVAN

Is television more important than church? I'll see what I can suggest so Reverend Parasol finishes before primetime starts.

KATE

Have you guys seen my Nielsen log?

Kate looking for the missing book, starts emptying her purse. The ladies look around searching.

SAMANTHA

Mary Ann, weren't you looking at it earlier, when I came in?

MARY ANN

How clumsy of me, I must have stuck it with my things by mistake.

Caught, Mary Ann hands the guide back. Barbra looks on, satisfied that she is up to the task of helping her scheme.

EXT. GOLD HOME, FRONT - DAY

Large trees and an awning over the porch almost hide the front door.

DOOR BELL sounds. Tucking in his shirt, Alex greets Evan.

EVAN

Reminding everyone about the tent revival meeting next week--

ALEX

Next week? I don't recall...

EVAN

It snuck up on all of us. Speaker is on his way already. I'm having to ask board members to give verbal votes for approval.

ALEX

Of course, we'll all vote. About next week-- Don't want you to be caught off guard, but Lance is planning on taking some of the youth to that crusade.

EVAN

How can he do that?

ALEX

Now Evan, calm down. They're going separately and in their own vehicles. And I support that.

Speechless, Evan's jaw drops.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Most youth wont stay here in Salem when they come of age. Shouldn't we help plant things in their heart that they can build upon when they're out there in the big city?

EVAN

I was expecting Lance would be leading the singing. He's never missed a service.

Evan grimaces. As he departs, Mary Ann sneaks out from behind a shrub. She heads toward--

EXT. GOLD HOME, SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Mary Ann climbs a tree and starts hanging tinfoil balls. She spots rabbit-ear antennas inside a window.

Quickly, she starts tacking up aluminum foil to the sides of the window.

INT. GOLD HOME, TV ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Samantha takes notes as *JULIA CHILD* whips up a dish on the television set. The TV signal bends, flips.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: Mary Ann attaches a final piece of foil. She ducks when--

Samantha gets up and starts adjusting the rabbit-ears. The picture doesn't cooperate.

Samantha discovers that if she holds the antenna toward the adjacent DINING ROOM, the signal comes back. She grabs a chair and positions the rabbit-ears there.

JULIA stabilizes.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE - DAY

Quiet afternoon looking down Six Mile Road. A vehicle stops. CLOSE ON a MAN'S (PARASOL) legs stepping out. His suit pants oddly short. The taxicab reflection in a polished shoe is cutoff when a large suitcase plops down.

The taxi departs with a whirl of dust.

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE, PARK, GAZEBO - CONTINUOUS

Under the roof, KELLY GOLD (16), pretty and petite settles on the bench next to ASHTON HARPER (17), wearing a Daytona 500 t-shirt, hair similar to Pete Hamilton.

THE MAN'S SHADOW approaches, stops at the steps.

Ashton makes a move on Kelly, starting to kiss her. She pushes him away.

ASHTON

What now?

Softly, hoping no one will hear--

KELLY

You know. It's past my time.

Stomping out a cigarette with his shoe--

ASHTON

We got a plan to handle it,
already. Stay cool.

KELLY
I've got to tell someone.

ASHTON
Hell you do. Don't flip your lid.

Finally seen--

PARASOL
(backside)
Sorry to interrupt, is this Salem?

ASHTON
(flippant)
Can you read the sign there?

Parasol turns away.

ASHTON (CONT'D)
Stick with the plan, Sweetie...

Kelly shoves him, runs away.

TWO BOYS whip by almost knocking Parasol down.

BANG! BANG!

BOY ONE (10) shoots a cap pistol at the other.

BOY ONE
(pretending)
Slow down partner or I'll catch ya
when yur at the saloon drunk.

Parasol maneuvers his way across the street to--

EXT. GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

TV GUIDE is on display next to the color television, the
September 25th issue: "*WHAT'S NEW IN COLOR SETS.*"

PARASOL'S BACK overtakes the window. He turns back--

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE, PARK, GAZEBO - CONTINUOUS

Mary Ann settles on the bench next to Ashton. Spotting the
cookies she holds, he reaches for a--

ASHTON
Coconut chocolate chip. Groovy.

Snatching the box back for a second--

MARY ANN
Only if you help with the foil...

Forcing his way to a cookie with the other hand feeling her leg up--

ASHTON
Foil? I can help with a lot more than just foil.

MARY ANN
Heart smasher. Whatcha playing around with Kelly all about?

Ashton rolls his eyes. Mary moves into position to start making out.

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
If ya weren't hotter than the flame in that lamppost...

ASHTON
Maybe I shouldn't kiss you. You might get burned...

Ashton eyes Parasol, goes at it with Mary Ann.

Parasol places a hand on the DRAGON LAMPPOST, burning bright. He lingers, watching.

INT. PARSONAGE, BASEMENT - DAY

Just short of reaching the top shelf, Loretta stretches with a canning jar of tomatoes. She hears a DOOR OPEN.

LORETTA
Evan. Evan could you give me a hand down here?

EVAN
Sure, honey. What do you--
(hurrying downstairs)
I got it.

He places the jar on the upper shelf.

LORETTA
Wanted to ask you about the tent revival. Don't you think some folks might be counting on watching the Billy Graham Crusade?

EVAN
He'll still be on when they get
home afterward.

Evan takes a couple more jars, helping to fill the shelf.

LORETTA
Test the lid. See if it's sealed.

EVAN
(thumbing lid)
Nothing's getting outta these jars.

LORETTA
Was wondering how such a thing got
scheduled the same week... and why
I didn't have it on any of our
calendars?

EVAN
I was asking myself those same
questions. So many activities...

LORETTA
Is there some reason you don't want
people to hear Billy Graham? Could
you be jealous--

EVAN
Jealous? You know I dated his
sister when I was at Wheaton
College. Twice. If anyone should be
jealous I'd expect it would be you.

Stepping back, she inspects the jars--

LORETTA
Something is just not in order on
that top shelf.

EVAN
Gotta run. Parasol should be here
any moment. And Kelly is here to
see you.

Evan heads upstairs as Kelly comes down.

LORETTA
Hi Kelly, what's happening.

In tears she runs into Loretta's arms--

KELLY

I didn't know where to come. I'm such a dipstick.

LORETTA

Now, now.

KELLY

You can't tell anyone. Promise.

Loretta nods.

INT. PARSONAGE, KITCHEN - LATER

Loretta pours two cups of tea.

KELLY

I can't believe I'm going to have a baby. I'm pregnant.

LORETTA

And you are absolutely sure?

KELLY

Kinda. No. Yes, pretty sure. I am just burning up in love for this guy, but...

Interrupting the pause--

LORETTA

Sounds like quite the passionate affair. Have you seen a doctor?

KELLY

I have an appointment at University of Michigan. They're doing clinical research for a two-hour test. But I need someone to drive me there.

LORETTA

So your parents don't know?

She shakes her head.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

We're going to have to tell them. Do you need my help?

KELLY

I know, I know. Please don't blow your cool. Just give me a few weeks... Until I find out for sure.

Loretta nods, looking at her watch. Match shot--

INT. PARSONAGE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

KENNY COUNTDOWN'S TV WATCH.

A black and white television shows *The Jetsons: Elroy's Mob*.
(Airdate: March 3, 1963. At 00:05:00.)

FRED FLINSTONE
Yabba dabba doo!

ROSEY THE ROBOT
*Kenny Countdown, how many times
have I told you, No TV in the
classroom. What have you to say for
yourself... yourself... yourself...*

Susan joins David on the sofa, each behind a TV tray set up
like a miniature "American Idol" judges' bench.

Dressed in a suit, wearing glasses with a plastic mustache
attached, imitating Gene Shalit--

DAVID
*I'll say that this show is too
repetitive... repetitive... Though
I'd sure like a TV set on my arm.*

He gets up to change the channel.

In a wig, red dress, looking like Abigail Van Buren--

SUSAN
*You'd get cancer if you had a
television that close. Daddy says
so-- Popeye. Popeye is on.*

Peeking from behind a doorway, Loretta watches as the kids
crank the channel knob back and forth.

DAVID
*Pow! Bop! Click! Sorry Susan, It's
Batman time.*

SUSAN
I'm writing Popeye in the slot.

DAVID
They'll know you're lying.

As tension builds, Loretta comes in.

LORETTA
Hey kids. What's with all the--

SUSAN
David said I could help and now he
won't let me watch anything.

LORETTA
David?

DAVID
We're doing the Nielsen ratings and
Susan agreed to help by watching my
shows... Since I'm giving her some
of the money.

LORETTA
How much does this pay?

SUSAN
A quarter.

Picking up the booklet, thumbing through it--

LORETTA
Out of two dollars I see.

DAVID
But I organized the whole thing.
And it was me that rescued the book
from the trash...

LORETTA
Who was the book intended for?

Putting his hands in his pocket, looking away, mumbling--

DAVID
Uh... Dad...

LORETTA
Then why was it in the trash?

DAVID
Because dad told me to throw it
away there.

LORETTA
Swell. So you kept the booklet your
father told you to throw out, then
created a bogus situation to take
control of the television set?

Sticking her tongue out--

SUSAN
That sounds real mean.

DAVID
Everyone else in town is doing it.

LORETTA
Put a lid on it, David. Does that
change the rules in our house?

DAVID
(hanging head)
Party pooper...

LORETTA
You need to ask your father
permission. Then you and Susan can
take equal turns being in charge.

David snatches the log back and rushes out the door.

INT. PASTOR'S STUDY - DAY

Two windows. Drapes drawn across one, darken half the office.
Evan prepares coffee on the lighter side.

EVANGELIST KENNETH PARASOL (37), in a gray suit, gesturing
with a pen in hand, gives the office a critical lookover.

PARASOL
When my own father told me that he
already knew about her affair...
That everyone does it because it's
on TV... That was when I felt God
calling me to ministry.

EVAN
(quoting Graham)
Out of pain and problems have come
the sweetest songs.

PARASOL
(bitter)
Christians are so programmed by
their TV sets. They expect a sixty
minute service with a commercial
break between the singing and
minister's sermon.

EVAN
Can one put a time on God's
inspiration?

(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)

I'm hoping our villagers will focus on the revival here, instead of rushing home to watch Billy Graham afterward.

INT. CHURCH HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

David arrives with TV rating book in hand, ready to beg favor. Stopping at the doorway, he listens.

PARASOL (O.S.)

Graham. Any preacher on television has to be hanging around with them Hollywood types...

EVAN (O.S.)

Hadn't thought about that.

PARASOL

I suspect most anyone watching television, supporting Hollywood, will wake up in hell.

Jaw dropped, David turns, ready to retreat. But he stops, stuffs the guide in his pocket. Boldly he marches into--

INT. PASTOR'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

David proceeds to the side of the desk as Evan puts the coffee pot back.

DAVID

Hey dad, remember that junk mail I was supposed to throw out? I accidentally stuffed it in my pocket and later we found this rating log that everyone in town is doing. Mom thinks it might be a good idea for us to participate.

EVAN

Not that Nielsen thing for TV?

DAVID

That's the one. If we don't do it, they'll never know there are families here that watch so "little" TV, like ours.

EVAN

Fine. What can that hurt?

Departing, jumping for joy--

DAVID

Cool beans. Thank you Dad.

Evan walks over to the window, looks outside while listening.

PARASOL

Most of them Hollywood types are drunks and adulterers-- promoting that lifestyle on TV. The way I see it... Salem is a small town. Should be easy to save the family unit. I am passionate about ridding this town of THAT evil.

(refocusing)

Just want to make sure you're with me on this. One-hundred percent?

Evan pulls the drapes closed completing an eerie darkness about the room. He sits down at the desk, folds his hands in a "here's the church and steeple" formation. Contemplating--

EVAN

Anything to pry these folks away from their TV's for the...

PARASOL

I believe, by week's end not a soul in this town will want to see the light of television again.

Evan switches off the desk lamp, preparing to leave.

EXT. RODGER'S HOME - NIGHT

Near a clump of trees, Mary Ann sits on the bike, motioning for Ashton to hurry.

His SHADOWY FIGURE climbs up a side trellis onto the roof, roll of foil under his arm.

EXT. SALEM CHURCH - NIGHT

A 1970 Ford pickup truck snags the last parking spot front of the church. Warren and Kate Rodgers get out and rush up the front steps.

Noticing the sign--

WARREN

Plumb forgot. The meetings around back, in the tent.

KATE

Slow down. I'm in heels.

They walk around toward the back lot.

HYMNS FROM AN ORGAN help announce the giant white tent.

PARISHIONERS stream from their vehicles into the canvas covered area, a glow of light emerging from the dark lot.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Lively light floods a stage where a wooden music stand plays "pulpit" between a piano and organ. The interior mimics the sanctuary with flags, crosses and a communion table.

Handouts on tables wall off the back area where--

TIZIANA

Kate-- Surprised Warren could pry you away from your Nielsen duties.

KATE

Fifty-five minutes. That's all I'm staying. The second the closing hymn starts, we're sneaking out.

Stopping Evan on his way to the front--

TIZIANA

Pastor Smith, this is quite an impressive set up.

LANCE

(hurrying by)

Reminds one of how Billy Graham started out.

VILLAGERS push in, outfits ranging from what one wore on the farm earlier to another's "Sunday best."

TEENAGERS settle into the back row. Ashton wanders in alone. Rev. Parasol places a hand on his shoulder, he turns.

PARASOL

Couldn't help but hear your dilemma earlier today. Sometimes it can be easier to confide in a stranger from out-of-town.

ASHTON
I don't think your prying ears
heard much-- the whole story.

PARASOL
I'm sure your a decent person.
You'll do the right thing with that
girl in the park.

Ashton barely acknowledges.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
The first girl I saw you with...

ASHTON
Sure, Preach.

Ashton is taken back, he settles into a seat by himself.
Folding his hands, he looks down at the floor. In anguish, he
nods, he thinks about what he has to do.

Clutching her purse, Samantha plops next to Alex who sits by
his daughters Kelly and Tammy. Kate scoots next to Warren.
Tiziana arranges sheet music at the piano as Lance hops on
stage to lead the opening hymn.

Rev. Parasol leans softly toward Evan.

PARASOL
Not accustom to coloreds assuming
such a footing in the service.

Tiziana quivers a lip, raises her head, shows her talent.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT, WOODWARD FENCE - NIGHT

Barbra spies on the event as Mary Ann parks her bicycle.

MARY ANN
Aren't those Samantha's binoculars?

Noticing the offering bucket passing around--

BARBRA
Just look at all those customers
giving their money away like that--
when they could be buying a new
color television set.

MARY ANN
You're a step closer to being
chosen for Nielsen.

(MORE)

MARY ANN (CONT'D)
Fixed up Kate's antenna. She won't
be logging any shows for a couple
days or more.

Pleased, Barbra gives a sly nod.

Mary Ann grabs the binoculars, she scopes out the crowd,
focusing in on Ashton.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Replacing Lance on stage, Evan takes the microphone.

EVAN
It is my pleasure to introduce to
you a fine new evangelist. Let's
give a warm Salem welcome to
Evangelist Kenneth Parasol.

The CONGERGATION stand to their feet with ample applause.

Rev. Parasol motions for them to sit down.

Taking stage, organizing his Bible and folder of visual aids--

PARASOL
Tonight I am going to speak to you
about a familiar topic...

MEMBERS pull out their Bibles.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
...your television set.

Kate's eyes widen.

A dull whisper sweeps across the section.

CALVIN BAKER (18), long hair, whispers to Nick.

CALVIN
Did he say *television set*?

PARASOL
How many of you own a television?
How many of you WATCH television on
a daily basis?

Most of the hands go up.

Evan hesitantly raises his hand.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
How many of you are going to hell?

All the hands drop, quickly.

Eyes shift restlessly as no one moves.

Evan grimaces, unsure where Parasol is headed.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
Television is captivating, right?
(reading Bible)
"See to it that no one takes you captive according to the elements of the world." This week I am going to outline what Satan's greatest invention is doing to us. Besides stealing your children away from their chores and homework-- Under the guise of entertainment-- It is secretly programming and brainwashing all of our minds. To prove my point, the cover of TV GUIDE magazine in 1967 stated it was coming to brainwash.

Pulling it from his folder, he holds up a copy of the June 17, 1967 issue with Ed Sullivan on the cover.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
Your teenagers are great. Well mannered, dressed... and for school too. In another town not far away, I asked a girl why she adorned such a skimpy outfit. She replied,
(mimics girl's voice)
"Don't be silly. Why Jeannie wears the same thing on TV."

TEENAGERS in the back row LAUGH.

The ADULTS shift uneasily.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
The enemy has packaged his agenda into a tiny little box. It whispers suggestions that its okay to cheat on your husband. The Devil's rock music is cool. He calls one group "The Monkeys," a direct reference to Darwinism. They kinda look ape-like with that long hair.

Parasol exhibits the Jan 28, 1967 issue of TV Guide.

Calvin Baker rolls his eyes. He pulls out an earplug from beneath his shirt. A transistor radio peeks out from his untucked shirt.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

The Devil has even laid out encouragement on how to become a witch... Giving instructions in his popular show "Bewitched."

Calvin whispers to Nick.

CALVIN

That's Mary Ann's favorite show.

PARASOL

When Second Corinthians tells us that "Satan disguises himself as an angel of light," we can see this is talking about that box beaming its rays of light into you like a hypnotic spell. Let's call it for what it really is. This is not a television... No, this thing is a HELL-E-VISION.

The entire room sits stiff, eyes wide, as if they were in shock from a bomb that had just dropped.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

(with passion, fire)

The HELL-E-VISION brings divorced actors into your living room. The HELL-E-VISION opens your door to drunks and sexually immoral characters. The HELL-E-VISION is the Devil's gateway to destroying your family. At all costs we must resist this HELL-E-VISION.

Ashton sits back, folds his arms. His eyes throw daggers.

Warren nods in agreement, one of few.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

VILLAGERS file from the tent toward their parked vehicles. The quiet procession could be mistaken for a funeral.

Evan stands near the back tables ready to shake parishioners' hands-- but no one offers.

Samantha pauses, slaps her purse to Evan's leg.

SAMANTHA

He's more divisive than Jane Fonda.

Stopping, shifting the weight of his Bible and hymnal--

LANCE

You already know my past. Some folk
might not be back tomorrow. I'd be
one of 'em if ya weren't expectin'
me to lead the singing.

Lance gets in his vehicle, pulls away.

Dwarfed by the large tent, Evan stands alone.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. RODGER'S HOME - DAY

In a spacious living room with bay windows, Kate watches "*Let's Make A Deal*."

The television picture suddenly goes crazy, then fuzzy.

Kate gets up, hitting the box.

She flips channels. Nothing tunes in.

KATE

Warren! Warren I need you to fix the antenna.

WARREN (O.S.)

I was just leaving to go help with the church bus. Can't it wait?

KATE

It's sweeps week. I'll never get the gig if my booklet is empty.

EXT. RODGER'S HOME - DAY

Warren climbs off a ladder onto the roof. A large piece of foil RATTLES in the WIND, mangled over the TV antenna.

Popping out of a window and calling up to him--

KATE

Try pointing it south.

WARREN

(mumbles)

Question is, *do I want to fix it?*

Warren pulls the foil off, crumpling it into a ball.

He pauses and looks out across the way. Beyond the railroad tracks the HAUL-A-WAY LANDFILL climbs. He's certain he knows the origin of their misery.

WARREN (CONT'D)

(calling down)

Some trash blew in from that darn dump. Caught in the element.

A puff of black smoke bursts from the distant mound.

INT. GARY'S GARAGE - DAY

A church bus pokes from the garage, hood open. Tools scatter about. A dim work light sways.

Emerging from under the hood--

BART

Ole sparkplug's looking a tad worn.

In greasy overalls, GARY (70), takes the plug holds it up to the light.

WARREN

Good thing we didn't let Lance take her outta town, else they'd be calling a tow truck about now.

BART

Don't see why they can't watch him on the tube.

WARREN

Thought Kate was the only one foolish enough to turn the TV on after that sermon last night.

Stepping in with a couple new sparkplugs--

EVAN

Never did like that thing. Seems like I'm always competing with the TV for Loretta's time.

WARREN

My three boys-- Instead of doing chores, they're always inside watching that thing. Have to do most the yard work myself.

GARY

Can't you just tell 'em to get their butts outside and help?

WARREN

Do all the time. Then Kate comes to their defense that they're in the middle of a show. That they'll come out after...

BART

(under hood)

So, ya wait a few extra minutes. You do have THREE boys.

WARREN

They never come out. And if you don't catch them exactly on the hour between shows, then they've started the next one and can't do anything until that one's over.

GARY

Listen to yourself. Who runs your house? You or Kate?

EVAN

It's that hell-e-vision that's running things now.

WARREN

Its turning them into *Mama's Boys* too. Reverend Parasol couldn't have come around at a better time.

Bart motions to Evan to hand him another sparkplug.

EXT. GOLD HOME - DAY

The porch door swings open as Samantha hurries out.

SAMANTHA

Kate, hold up.

KATE

Was going to wait until tea time to tell the story, but you aren't going to believe what happened...

SAMANTHA

Tell me--

KATE

Earlier, my television signal stopped working. Apparently a large piece of foil had blown in from that dump. It was all mangled into the antenna.

SAMANTHA

How much damage?

KATE

Warren fiddled it into working.

SAMANTHA

I've been having signal problems of my own. Had to move the rabbit-ears to the dining room.

KATE

Did you check for trash that may have blown in?

Samantha motions for Kate to follow her.

EXT. GOLD HOME, SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Foil balls dangle from the tree, obviously placed on purpose. Additional tinfoil surrounds the window.

SAMANTHA

I think someone is sabotaging our TV viewing.

KATE

Best to keep this to ourselves until we find out who has declared war on our Nielsen efforts.

Samantha nods.

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Barbra holds the door open for an exiting--

WORKMAN

I'll get you a quote. Gonna need another breaker put in too.

A NOTICE FOR APPLICATION TO SELL ALCOHOL covers the window, eye level. Barbra tears it down, CRUMPLES it.

Brining a foil kite and string to the register--

MARY ANN

Aren't you supposed to leave that notice up for thirty days?

BARBRA

You honestly think I'll get approved if Evan or any of those CHURCHIES see it?

OPENED BACK DOOR: Barbra grabs a couple empty boxes tosses them in the dumpster, adding the CRUMPLED NOTICE to the pile.

RETURNING INSIDE Barbra sorts the mail. Noticing Mary Ann behind the counter already bagging up her items--

MARY ANN
(explaining)
For our undercover efforts.

Stepping away from a shelf, Parasol sets a package of biscuits on the counter as Barbra comes around.

PARASOL
I must apologize, I forgot to greet you at the meeting last night.

MARY ANN
She doesn't go to church.

PARASOL
Perhaps no one extended a proper invitation. I think you'll find it very inspirational--

BARBRA
"Television" is inspirational. Have you seen the new color one that just came in?

In the background Mary Ann shakes her head and mouths words trying to warn Barbra to stay quiet. But--

BARBRA (CONT'D)
I was trying to come up with a coupon where people could bring in their old black and white set and get a credit toward a color one. Then give the old sets to the poorer folk.

MARY ANN
(doubting)
Give?

PARASOL
(realizing)
So if someone got rid of their set, someone else would get it?

BARBRA
Everyone in Salem should have a TV. Don't you agree?

Parasol GRUNTS, deeply disturbed at this revelation. He exits as Samantha and Kate arrive.

MARY ANN
He's against television, Barbara.

SAMANTHA
Did you hear what he called it? Why
I'm afraid to even repeat it.

BARBRA
What are you talking about?

Mary Ann joins them, concealing what's in her bag.

MARY ANN
The man has got some serious
issues. Surprised he didn't spew
fire on you.

SAMANTHA
What I don't get is that he says TV
is sinful because they cuss on
it... yet his special name for it
is a cussword.

MARY ANN
Sounds like *Parasite* is just
another hypocrite.

BARBRA
Out with it, already. What does he
call the thing?

KATE
He calls it--
(lowering voice)
The *hell-e-vision*.

Taken back, palming her chest--

BARBRA
Oh my... Samantha, your husband
Alex is church treasurer...? I'd
start whispering suggestions for
his board to start looking for

BANG! A SHOT! A GLASS WINDOW BREAKS.

Barbra and the Tea Ladies run outside--

EXT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

Stopping at the puddle of glass, the LADIES see the broken
window in the upper apartment.

Running down the side stairway, and approaching--

PARASOL
Is everyone alright?

BARBRA
Just a little shaken. What about
you? What happened?

PARASOL
Not the first time something like
this has occurred. I just trust the
angels above for protection.

BARBRA
I'll call Warren. He'll find who
did this.

INT. GENERAL STORE - LATER

An ELECTRICIAN wires up a power box attached to the gutted
back wall.

MARY ANN
What's with the remodel.

BARBRA
Making room for the whiskey and
wine shipment next month.

MARY ANN
Unless the church finds out...

Warren CLEARS HIS THROAT holding a .38 Caliber bullet. BARBRA
looks up from her ledger.

WARREN
Found this lodged in the wall. Mind
if I check around out back? See if
things are in order there?

Barbra waves him toward the back door.

EXT. GENERAL STORE, BACK SIDE - CONTINUOUS

Exiting, Warren stops, takes a deep breath. He notices a
dumpster, lid ajar. He investigates.

Bundled trash bags and folded boxes look in order. BUT--

The CRUMPLED NOTICE catches his eye. He fetches it, inspects
the piece. Folding it up, taking it, he leaves.

INT. PARSONAGE, DINING ROOM - EVENING

A delicious pot roast dinner with all the trimmings spreads across the table. Fine linens, glasses and silverware indicate important guests visit occasionally.

At the far end of the table--

PARASOL

Which is why I think Salem can be an exemplary town... a model to preserving our values.

Parasol passes the plate of meat to David who reaches for a piece with his hand.

EVAN

David, where's your manners?

LORETTA

Use the fork, Honey-boy.

David picks up the fork from the platter to complete the task as others pass dishes around.

EVAN

Could not agree more about keeping our values intact.

PARASOL

(eyeing TV in next room)
Villagers need to remove their televisions before it influences them into cheating-affairs and divorce. These sets are more destructive than *Playboy* magazine.

LORETTA

(snickering)
How's that?

PARASOL

It allows the devil to come into our homes and snatch away the very heart of our children.

Interrupting the tense moment--

SUSAN

Do I still have my heart, Mommy?

LORETTA

You're fine Susan.
(rebuking)
(MORE)

LORETTA (CONT'D)

We do have a set, as you can see.
Before you go getting all bent, we
supervise what the kids watch. You
won't find your list of rusty
programs in our house.

DAVID

Mom always makes us turn the volume
down when rock music jams on the
Partridge Family.

Evan and Loretta laugh.

LORETTA

If it wasn't for the *Jack LaLane*
show, you might be sitting here
criticizing me for gluttony.

Parasol chuckles.

David takes another biscuit and passes the basket to Parasol.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

My observation is, bad things
typically come from within a
person, not from inside a box.

PARASOL

A Pandora's box of temptation out
in the open waiting for a child's--

Looking at his watch--

EVAN

Wow. Time flies. We need to be
getting things set up for the
service already.

Evan gets up and the rest of the family starts clearing the
dishes away.

EXT. TENT - SUNSET

Evan, a silhouette against the orange and blue sky, walks
inside the tent.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Evan turns a light on, stops at the piano.

He steps toward center isle, looking out at the empty chairs. The space gives him a sense of accomplishment. He's a notch closer to that ever eluding goal.

EVAN

I'm doing it. Starting out just like you did, Billy.

He steps up on the stage, paces. The reality of the events creep into his mind and question his ability.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Seemed so easy... when looking at a photo in a book.

EXT. RODGER'S HOME - EVENING

A quarter-moon silhouettes the chimney and TV antenna.

A SHADOW dances across the moonlit driveway.

A FOIL KITE makes its way toward the antenna. First its too low, then too high.

At the end of the string, Mary Ann directs the operation. Her attempt to tangle it in the antenna misses.

Kate and Samantha pop up behind, catching her in the act.

KATE

What the pray tell is this?

Mary Ann jumps, starts reeling the kite in.

MARY ANN

Uh, was just out flying my kite.

SAMANTHA

At night?

MARY ANN

Well... I didn't want anyone to see me... because I'm not really good at it... Why I've almost crashed it into your house Kate. Good thing you came out to help.

Kate and Samantha fold their arms in disbelief.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - TIME LAPSE

As the sun sets, a yellow glow from lights inside the tent brighten. Less than half the parking spaces fill.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Rows of chairs in the back of the tent sit unoccupied. The closer rows look sparsely populated.

Warren intensely listens. Next to him, Kate restlessly squirms, body turned sideways. She stares off at the distant night beyond.

PARASOL

I am so glad that you my strong
Christian brothers have returned.
Tomorrow night is Thursday. While
we worship, some our neighbors...

Alex Gold, his arms folded, skeptically frowns. Samantha stares down at her purse.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

...may be home watching their hell-
e-vision. Some, tuned into that
dreadful show, Flip Wilson.

Parasol holds up TV GUIDE from Jan 23, 1971 with Flip Wilson.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

A man who dresses up as a women.
Truly an abomination to God's
nature. But their hell-e-vision
will add a laugh track and
subconsciously tell them that this
is okay-- it's funny-- its fun!
Men, you are the ones whom God has
called to stand up against this
HELL-E-VISION. Will you take a
stand? Deacons and any man here--
If you are a man of God, the head
of your house, and willing to take
a stand, stand up right now. Go
ahead-- STAND!

Warren leaps to his feet. Evan stands too. Lance, Bart, others slowly get up. Alex finally joins.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

We will take a final stand against
the hell-e-vision and remove it
from our households.

(MORE)

PARASOL (CONT'D)

Bring in your evil hell-e-vision
and place it here on this alter. We
will smash them with a sledgehammer
of righteousness. We will rid this
evil from Salem. Tomorrow night we
will smash every HELL-E-VISION we
can find.

Kate tugs at Warren trying to get him to sit back down. The
others deflate back into their seats again.

In silence, their frozen faces stab daggers.

Lance quickly takes to the stage.

LANCE

Thank you Reverend Parasol.
(glaring)
Evan?

The congregation stands like obedient robots, singing the
second verse of "Guide me, O Thou Great Redeemer."

LANCE (CONT'D)

(singing)
Open now the crystal fountain...
Whence the healing streams do flow.

EXT. PARSONAGE - NIGHT

Evan approaches the house as a call turns his attention.

PARASOL

Evan! When you assured me you were
one-hundred percent on board, I
knew you were a man of your word. I
am pleased that I can count on you.

Evan acknowledges, continuing toward the front porch.

Emerging from a shadow near the door--

TIZIANA

Reverend Smith. The town is in
turmoil. Kate is talking about
divorce, Samantha is demanding a
new television set, and one of the
Henway kids has run away from home.

EVAN

Calm down, Tiziana. Come sunrise
they'll all come to their senses.
You'll see...

INT. PARSONAGE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Evan marches in as David and Susan rush to the television set, holding arms out blocking him. Loretta rushes in as they PLEAD to save their set.

LORETTA

Kids go on upstairs. I'll talk to your father.

DAVID

But Mom-- We just have to keep our set. Else how will I ever learn things for my future?

LORETTA

Hop to it.

David and Susan make their way up the stairs, but peek down.

LORETTA (CONT'D)

Evan-- My mom gave us this set. What are you going to tell her?

EVAN

Obviously everyone in the family has taken up against me. That alone has me questioning that maybe Parasol has a point.

LORETTA

I get it... You bring in a minister and then don't do what he asks.

Loretta turns the set off.

EVAN

See you can be reasonable.

LORETTA

This man will be gone next week. Those who get rid of their TV set-- They're the ones who can afford to buy a new one. For us, it would cost a year's grocery budget to replace this.

EVAN

Who respects a man that doesn't keep his word? I promised Parasol I'd back him up.

LORETTA

I know you don't believe this TV is evil. Where do you think David gets all the ideas for his puppet shows in Sunday School?

Evan grabs his BRIEFCASE and heads out the door--

EXT. PARSONAGE, PORCH - CONTINUOUS

The revival tent across the street swallows the view. In anguish Evan paces, tormented by the discord. He KICKS the BRIEFCASE. Popping open, papers fly.

Sitting on the edge of the porch, he gathers the sermon notes. He's caught by one page: *"THREE TYPES OF HELL. HELL IN THE HEART..."*

BLACK.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. GENERAL STORE - DAY

The TEA TABLE BUZZES with CHATTER about the previous night's tent revival.

Behind the counter, on the phone--

BARBRA

A bit pricy. How much would a smaller piece of bulletproof glass cost? Can you deliver today?

MARY ANN

Bulletproof glass?

BARBRA

(hanging up receiver)

That gunshot could've been some overzealous church-goer aiming to smash my new TV. I'd protect your sets ladies if you want--

Checking her face--

SAMANTHA

Mary Ann, is my lipstick even? I'm trying to talk Alex into getting us that new color TV.

MARY ANN

To replace the old one you're taking down to that circus tonight?

SAMANTHA

Alex would never participate in such a spectacle.

(smug, reminding)

Our black and white one has a history of signal loss. Plus, I've been careful to fill in my log with shows that are in color.

MARY ANN

I suspect that THRONG will be coming to smash the TV of whomever Nielsen selects anyway.

Warren enters with a dime for the local paper.

WARREN

Heard some members are going to propose to the City Council an ordinance. Then I can start writing citations for folks watching TV.

BARBRA

Are you forgetting who heads the City Council?

SAMANTHA

Really, you'd go bang on everyone's doors? What's next an inspection of our purses?

MARY ANN

What does Kate think about all this, Warren?

WARREN

Kate... She'll... We'll be bringing a television set down to the tent tonight if I have to pry it away. And don't go sayin' nothing to tip her off.

Warren hangs his head, worried, departing.

BARBRA

I'd be protecting your set if I were you, ladies.

OUTSIDE THE WINDOW: The CHURCH VAN rolls by.

PARASOL (O.S.)

(on loud speaker)

Bring your TV down to the church tonight. We will be smashing all hell-e-visions at the tent revival. Seven-PM tonight.

Mary Ann and Samantha jump up and race out the door.

EXT. HAUL-A-WAY LANDFILL, SCALE HOUSE - DAY

Dump trucks coming and going circle. Dust everywhere. Warren's truck pulls next to a weigh lane with a tiny shed.

A moment later a college-aged PORTER emerges.

PORTER

Never heard of someone payin' for some'ton that don't work no more.

WARREN

Don't go tellin' nobody or I'll be
comin' to get my five bucks back.

Taking the cash, Porter picks up a television set and places it in the bed of the truck.

INT. VARIOUS HOMES - DAY

MONTAGE

- Samantha places a blanket over their console television.
- Mary Ann buries their TV in the laundry basket.
- Kate moves a television set into the pantry.
- Samantha adds plants to the top of the covered set.
- Kate brings in more canned goods to hide the set.
- Barbra places a sign reading "Bullet Proof" in the window. Then checks a security chain around the color television.
- Tiziana hides her set behind a curtain.
- Samantha adds a bowl of fruit to her arrangement. Spotting the Nielsen log, she snatches it, buries it in her purse.
- Tiziana places a lamp where the TV was, switching it on.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HARPER FARM - DAY

Ashton is under the hood, working on his broken down 1967 Plymouth Barracuda. Exiting the house with a TV set--

ALAN

(grumbling)

If only he'd worked on the farm as
much as that car.

ALAN HARPER (48), unkempt beard, rough farmer, overalls with broken strap, loads a TV set into the back of the pickup.

ALAN (CONT'D)

(calling)

Hey Ashton! Drive this thing up to
the church now. Don't want to make
a spectacle of bringing it later.

Heading inside, Alan throws the truck keys at Ashton.

ASHTON

Right Pops. Like we can't go next door and watch TV there.

Ashton puts his tools away in the SHED.

INSIDE SHED: Ashton notices a wooden box, painted with the word "KOREA." He opens it.

KOREA BOX is filled with papers, dog tags, and a 1950 .38 Caliber Army Revolver.

Ashton conceals the revolver.

BY THE TRUCK: Ashton pulls out the revolver, aims at the set.

BANG!

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE, CHURCH AREA - NIGHT

HORNS HONK.

A traffic jam, perhaps the town's first. TWO MEN try directing cars with large flashlights.

SHOUTS and HONKS from VILLAGER'S VEHICLES liven Six Mile Road as they press toward the church building.

Leaning out a car window--

CALVIN

Yeah, they're going to smash all of 'em-- with a giant sledgehammer.

DRIVER

How many?

CALVIN

Heard Warren's gonna arrest anyone who don't bring in their set.

DRIVER

Don't tell me you brought yours?

CALVIN

Heck no. But don't go sayin' nothing to nobody about it.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Vehicles park so close together that some people have to climb out of their car windows.

A SWARM OF PEOPLE parade toward the tent. Many press together at the perimeter to get a glimpse.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT, WOODWARD FENCE - NIGHT

Barbra watches with a calculating finger to chin.

MARY ANN

Barbra, why not just come on in with me. No one will even notice. All their eyes will be gawking at "Parasites" sledgehammer.

BARBRA

And risk getting hit by a fragment? My villagers watch TV. You think they're gonna let an outside nitwit jerk them into giving up what they love? I'll stay here and count.

MARY ANN

Count?

BARBRA

Four hundred dollars a smash.

MARY ANN

Ohhhh... You're thinking--

BARBRA

A week. Two at best. They'll be purchasing a brand new one. And upgrading to color this time.

Barbra raises binoculars, refocusing.

Behind a LARGE TREE: Ashton makes sounds to get Mary Ann's attention. She sneaks over.

MARY ANN

Thought you'd be down there with the ruckus.

ASHTON

When I could be here... Making fireworks with you?

The two begin to passionately make out.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

A full house. PEOPLE shuffle together in the side isles and some sit on the floor. Parasol looks pleased with the turnout. Evan appears ecstatic.

TEENAGERS in their usual back row, crowd together. They fuss over a Panasonic transistor radio and single earpiece Calvin has snuck in under his shirt.

Carrying a television set, a MAN pushes from the back through the CROWD. Calvin notices him and starts--

CALVIN
Warren... Warren... Warren...

CROWD
(chanting)
Warren... Warren... Warren...

Sitting near Tiziana, Kate turns--

KATE
How did he find it?

Making his way to the front, Warren sets the TV next to two others already there, including the Harper's with a bullet hole in it.

TIZIANA
Kate, that's not your set.

Kate looks up, confused but relieved.

Warren takes a seat next to her.

KATE
Who's set is--

WARREN
Hush and be quiet if you wanna keep
the one you've hidden.

ON STAGE:

Lance opens a hymnal as Tiziana begins to play.

LANCE
Blind Faith.
(directing, singing)
*When I can not see, I remember
when. What You've always done, You
will do again...*

Evan steps up.

EVAN

Thank you all for coming tonight.
This is a dream come true for me.
If only Sunday mornings were this
crowded. Perhaps all 310 villagers
are here tonight.

A SHOUT from the back--

SHOUTER

We're from Northville!

EVAN

Without further ado, I present our
special speaker-- Evangelist
Kenneth Parasol.

With applause the AUDIENCE CHEERS. Some TEENAGERS BOO.

Evan takes a seat next to Lance.

Before taking the stage, Parasol paces in front of the three
television sets. He bends down inspecting one with a frown.

Warren SWALLOWS hoping he hasn't been caught.

Finally, Parasol steps up to the podium.

PARASOL

Your applause, my fine Villagers,
is not for me. It is for the three
courageous families who have
decided that God was more important
than this evil hell-e-vision.

APPREHENSION sweeps across the audience.

A GIGGLE from the teen section.

PARASOL (CONT'D)

Hell is not a funny thing. I am
disappointed. DEEPLY DISAPPOINTED.
I could just go... Leave you on
your journey to where your HELL-E-
VISION is leading you. But I'm not
going to do that. I'm not,
because... because God called me--

A BREEZE flaps at the tent as Parasol doubts his mission.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
 I'm pretty sure... HE called me to
 come and bring you this message.
 (soft whisper)
 Are you listening to God?
 (loud yell)
 Are WE listening to God?

He looks to the ceiling, perhaps waiting for a sign.

Evan, torn between supporting the evangelist or his family,
 gazes at Loretta. She hugs her children closer to her side.

David tears free running up to the front. From his pocket he
 pulls out a folded Nielsen rating log and sets it on top of
 Warren's set. Then runs back to his seat.

Evan recognizes the booklet, looks to Loretta. She shrugs.

Parasol steps down, looking at the pamphlet. He's not sure
 what it is.

PARASOL (CONT'D)
 David has given up his TV journal.
 What a fine example.

Offended, Kate mockingly mouths the words "TV Journal?"

PARASOL (CONT'D)
 What will you give up tonight? I am
 going to take a *ROLL CALL*. I'm
 going to ask each of you, "*Do you
 still have a HELL-E-VISION sitting
 in your home right now?*"

Anger crosses most faces. Smirks twitch at others.

Evan gets up from his seat and stands at the side isle.
 Loretta has an eye on him.

Stepping back onto stage--

PARASOL (CONT'D)
 I am going to ask Lance to lead us
 in some songs. We are going to sing
 for fifteen minutes. Fifteen
 minutes to give each of us one last
 chance to reflect on our soul. If
 you feel led-- NOW is the time to
 go home and get that hell-e-vision
 and join the other brave three who
 know what God wants.

Lance eagerly steps up, almost pushing Parasol off stage.

LANCE
(announcing song)
When the Roll Is Called Up Yonder.

Loretta looks toward Evan-- He's gone. She places Susan's hand into David's and gets up, chasing after him.

EXT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Coming from the parsonage across the street, Evan carries the small family set. Its cord dangles behind on the ground.

Making his way between closely parked cars he stops when Loretta steps out from behind Warren's pickup truck.

LORETTA
Evan--

EVAN
Did you see David? What kind of a father am I? What kind of minister?

LORETTA
David's just a child.

Evan rests the TV on Warren's truck, catching his breath.

EVAN
If I don't do this, no one will take me seriously.

LORETTA
So you're going to feed the monster you created just to save face?

EVAN
Sometimes one has to do unpleasant--

LORETTA
What happened to the man I married? The one who believes in doing the right thing?... Even when the stars at night fall?

Distant singing from the tent speaks--

CONGERGATION
(singing)
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend; Even so, it is well with my soul...

Projecting his own struggle on the crowd--

EVAN

Look at all these people... How'd things get so messed up? Perhaps I tampered with things I should've left alone. Somehow I've got to make it right... make it well with all our souls.

Evan grabs the TV, looks up to the stars. The ORANGE TWINKLE is absent.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Lord, give me the words to speak.
The right ones this time...

Tearing away from the tent, stopping--

SAMANTHA

You're supporting that crazy man?

OTHERS follow, starting to get in their vehicles.

EVAN

Folks. FOLKS! Please! PLEASE GO
BACK INSIDE. We'll finish up. All
will be well.

GRUMBLING, most of them turn around to return.

INT. REVIVAL TENT - NIGHT

Lance directs the pianist to stop as all eyes turn toward Evan carrying the family television set.

CALVIN

Evan... Evan--

Standing behind his chair, Bart slaps him on the head. The chant fails.

Parasol nods, pleased.

Taking place at the podium--

EVAN

(opens Bible)

When TV takes over our house and prevents us from being a family, we have an addiction. I applaud those who decided to give up their addiction tonight.

(MORE)

EVAN (CONT'D)
Psalm 119:37 says, "*TURN my eyes
from looking at worthless things..*"
We have a "TURN" rule in our home.
When this little box plays a show
and they cuss... We TURN the
channel. When there is violence we
TURN the knob. When there is
adultery we TURN the station.

Evan demonstrates with the dial on the set.

Spotting Calvin in the back--

EVAN (CONT'D)
Calvin, would you come up here for
a second?

Surprised and questioning, Calvin points to himself. He
starts to set his radio down.

EVAN (CONT'D)
No, bring that thing with you.

Once up front, Evan motions for Calvin to give up the radio.
He hands it over, hanging his head, thinking he's in trouble.

EVAN (CONT'D)
This was also once considered an
instrument of evil. Yet today, over
25% of radio broadcasts are
religious in nature. Millions of
people have received the gospel
through this device.

Calvin perks up pointing a thumb at himself and nodding.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Evangelist Parasol is also right.
Evil is broadcast on all of these
things. But that evil starts here.
(points to heart)
If we can not turn our eyes or ears
away from evil things, then yes we
need to rid our house of them.

Evangelist Parasol jumps to his feet, standing by to engage.

EVAN (CONT'D)
One of our church board members
long ago used to come home drunk...
so badly...

Taking over the mike, completing the story--

LANCE

...that his wife left him. One night he was down and out. A preacher on a TV special appeared and presented the gospel... And this soul would not be here with you this day if it were not for that man on a television set...

The seriousness of the reveal has villagers looking at their own hearts. A nervous face gesture. A clenched hand.

Parasol sits down again, fidgets.

EVAN

This box which can be a source of addiction for one home, might bring salvation for someone else. A few of you may have come tonight to see, well, a show. We're not going to smash these things.

A few MOANS from the crowd.

EVAN (CONT'D)

Instead, we need to focus on changing our hearts.

The somber moment brings agreement amongst the crowd. Even Parasol appears to accept the message.

EVAN (CONT'D)

When we turn that dial away from evil things, those ratings go down. And I know you all know about TV ratings in this town.

A CHUCKLE from many in the audience.

EVAN (CONT'D)

If we change our habits here and honor the Lord in our hearts, then one day things may change out there on the radio waves and television signals and whatever other boxes the future creates.

The CONGREGATION considers the message. Parasol lifts his pen to his chin.

Calvin looks up at the ceiling.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Under moonlight, people begin to exit with quiet chatter.

WARREN

(announcing)

There will still be the smashing of television sets for those who wanted to give them up anyway-- And so no one leaves disappointed.

The TEENS and a SMALL CROWD follow him off to the side.

INT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Parasol gathers his book of visual aids as Evan hands him another piece.

EVAN

Hadn't really planned on taking over the service like that.

PARASOL

No apology. Evan, you presented a viewpoint worthy of consideration.

Lance gathers sheet music from the piano, heads out stopping at the back table for a moment.

EVAN

(lowering voice)

I'll confess, but please don't tell anyone. I was afraid that if the whole congregation heard Billy Graham, they'd discover that sometimes I borrow my sermon outline from him.

PARASOL

Now Evan, that's hardly a confession... What preacher hasn't done that?

EXT. TENT - CONTINUOUS

Lance catches up to Alex who is giving the tent a lookover.

ALEX

What did this whole set up run? And all his Labor Day festivities coming up...

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

We've got to start reigning in Evan's events, less the church goes bankrupt. I'd support you as the new chairman of the board, if I can be assured you'd always vote my-- the right way on financial matters.

LANCE

After this whole debacle, we ought be able to get Bart's vote too, especially with a budget crisis.

ALEX

I'm working some other angles too.

After stepping back, Alex's startled demeanor recomposes into his usual thoughtful plotting.

Running to the doorway, dropping a broken television--

WARREN

Reverend Smith, You did want your TV smashed, right? I hope so...

The Smith's TV set smolders at his feet.

END ACT FOUR

TAG

EXT. SALEM AIRPORT - EVENING

A Cessna takes off.

EVAN

Thank you for arranging a quick flight to get our Evangelist on his way out of town.

The sunset casts shadows as lights pop on along the runway.

DAVID

Can we go for a ride? Can we? Please, Mr. Gold.

ALEX

See those lights David? When they glow, its a reminder that we have to stay grounded for now.

In the sky above, lights pulse from a distant jumbo jet.

DAVID

How come that plane over there gets to fly at night?

ALEX

Much more to learn before getting certified to climb in the dark. And those jumbo planes cost a lot of money-- way to big for a tiny airport like Salem.

The three guys head into town--

EXT. GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Barbra places a "SOLD" sign over the color television set.

ALEX

I will see you gentlemen later.

Alex enters the store as Evan and David continue, passing--

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE, PARK, GAZEBO - CONTINUOUS

Store side of the street, David stops stares at the DRAGON LAMPOST, it's flames roar.

DAVID

I think he's a hiding something.

EVAN

What makes you say that?

DAVID

He's chicken to fly his cool plane at night.

Evan takes notice of the same sign on the post: "SALEM POPULATION 310."

EVAN

Come on, son, we have a bundle of hearts to focus on, here in Salem, Michigan.

As father and son walk, lights pop on in various homes.

INT. GENERAL STORE - CONTINUOUS

Alex signs paperwork on a clipboard Barbra has prepared.

BARBRA

Congratulations on your new color set. Surprised anyone, especially a board member would buy, after that hoop-dee-doo. What do plan on doing with the old black and white one?

ALEX

Too many of Evan's events seem to be moving Salem backwards.

BARBRA

The more educated... money driven people should be running this town. You're the church treasurer...

ALEX

And you're a smart business woman, chairman of the town council.

BARBRA

I see Salem's progress is in both our interests.

ALEX

Still, we want to keep Salem manageable, local, where we can control it.

BARBRA

Amen to that. Certainly don't want outsiders, the kind of people from Detroit, running us over.

ALEX

Not a word to anyone about this. That old TV, I think I'll give it to Evan. Maybe it'll be a daily reminder about his Hell-e-vision revival failure. Can't wait for the day he moves out.

BARBRA

Together, we might just be able to save Salem.

Alex departs, walking home--

EXT. SALEM VILLAGE, PARK, GAZEBO - CONTINUOUS

Under cover of shadow, a shirtless Ashton is feeling Mary Ann up in all the wrong places.

MARY ANN

What about Kelly?

ASHTON

Kelly who? Oh that cold corpse, not even in my thoughts tonight.

Mary Ann engages, unzips his pants.

NEXT DOOR, GOLD HOUSE: Kelly watches from a window, mostly hidden behind the drapes.

FADE OUT.

END OF SHOW