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Child of God

By James Franco

He was of German and Irish bloods.
His name was Lester Ballard,
a Child of God, much like yourself perhaps.
All right, folks, come on up
and gather around here now.
Jessie's gonna sign you up for
some silver dollars.
We're gonna have a drawing here in a minute.
Gonna have a little music for you.
We're gonna sell this place here after a while.
Yeah, doc, the way we're gonna sell it,
we're gonna divide it up into three parcels,
and then we're gonna lump it all together.
Now, you know this land goes way
back up on the mountain there,
all the way across the creek
up on the other side.
Some timber over there been cut 10,
15 years ago, but it's done grown.
You know, land,
you can't go wrong buying land.
Back in Denver, you lay down in bed
at night directly on that pillow and...
I'm gonna make you money.
Look at that house.
Look at them chimneys.
Fireplace is in there.
Why, golly, that's a great house.
Nowadays, dollars just don't buy anything...
Look, my brother bought that
place down the road.
They said he's crazy.
Paid 19,500 for it.
Gave it a while, made \$38,000 on it.
Now, that's real money.
All right, boys,
it's time to go to sale time here.
What do you say for it?
How many dollars you able to go?
What do you say, for starters,
a couple of thousand clams?
\$2,000, give me 2,000.
2,000 we got.
Now 2,000.

Will you go 2,500?
\$2,500.
3,000. Now 4,000.
Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!
This is not your property!
Move! Move! Move! Move! Move!
Move! Move!
You're on my property!
You are not welcome here!
What are you...
What's the matter with you?
What do you want?
I done told you, I want you to get
your goddamn ass off of my property!
And take these fools with you.
Hey, Lester, watch your language.
There's ladies present.
I give a fuck who is present, okay?
This ain't your property.
This ain't your property!
This ain't my property?
The hell it ain't.
Yeah, you done been locked up
over this once already.
You wanna go again?
I don't give a good goddamn
if I been locked up or not.
I want you sons of bitches off
my goddamn property.
They gonna lock you up and
put you in that rubber room.
Now, this is not your land.
Fuck. All right?
What are you gonna do, Lester, shoot me?
Get off the truck!
I've been commissioned to
sell this piece of property.
It ain't yours no more.
- You know that!
- Get off the truck!
I ain't getting off no truck.
Get down!
Get off the truck.
- I'm gonna sell this land today.

- Okay. Get off...
Go ahead, shoot me.
I'm not going.
Call the sheriff.
Get the sheriff out here and
let's get this man out of here.
Get over there and call the sheriff.
Got poor, old Lester here,
we're gonna get him some help.
We'll get this sale going here in a minute, folks.
You all just stand there and...
This is my father's property!
This is not your property!
Ugh, fuck.
Fuck.
Damn.
Damned if I didn't even know them.
Fuck.
Hallelujah.
I don't know.
They say he never was right
after his daddy killed hisself.
They was just the one boy.
The mother had run off.
I don't know where to or who with.
Me and Cecil Edwards was the
ones who cut him down.
He come in the store and told it
like he'd tell it was raining out.
we went up there and walked in
the barn, and I seen his feet hanging.
We cut him down, let him fall on the floor,
just like cutting down meat.
He stood there and watched,
never said nothing.
He was about nine or ten years
old at the time.
The old man's eyes was running
out on stems like a crawfish,
and his tongue blacker than a chow dog's.
I wished if a man want to hang
his self, he'd do it with poison
or something so folks wouldn't
have to see such a thing as that.

Come on, girl.

Come on.

Hey.

That's what I said. That's what I said.

That's right.

Come on.

Hey, yeah, yeah.

You sumbitch.

I don't need a god damn dog.

You go home then.

Drinkers going to Kirby's would
see him on the road by night,
slouched and solitary,
the rifle hanging in his hand
as if it were a thing he
could not get shut of.

My presence ain't even known.

- He'd grown lean and bitter.

- Yeah, what you want?

Don't slow down now.

Some say mad.

Y'all son of a bitch!

Hey.

Okay, you gonna be my friend.

You gonna be my friend.

My friend.

Where you at now, you bastard?

I'll tell you another thing he did one time.

He had this old cow to balk on him.

Couldn't get her to do nothing.

He pushed and pulled and beat
on her till she'd wore him out.

Well, he went and borrowed
Squire Helton's tractor and went
back over there and threwed a
rope over the old cow's head and
took off on the tractor as hard as he could go.
When it took up the slack,
it liked to jerked her head plumb off.

Broke her neck and killed her where she stood.

Ask Floyd if he didn't.

What is all this?

Oh, shit.

The hell do you want,

you son of a bitch?
Where your clothes at?
What the hell is it to you?
You son of a bitch.
Look at me.
You better put down that rock.
You make me.
I said put it down.
No!
Don't move!
Don't move!
You start, I'll break your back!
You get on outta here!
I knowed you'd do me this way.
You stinking drunk bastard!
You get on outta here!
I'll get you back!
You sumbitch!
I'll kill you!
I'll stab your bones, fucker bastard!
Morning, sheriff.
Hey, how are you?
Morning, sheriff.
Let's go get the little fucker.
Me and bill parsons was gonna
go bird hunting this morning,
but I don't reckon we will now.
Bill Parsons, eh?
He's got some good dogs.
Yeah, he's always got the best dogs.
I remember a dog he had name of Suzie.
He said it was a hellacious bird dog.
He let her out of the trunk.
I looked at her, said, "I don't
believe Suzie's feeling too good."
He looks her over, feels her nose
and all, says she looks okay to him.
I said, "uh-uh."
I just don't believe she's real well today."
We set out, hunted all afternoon,
killed one bird.
Started walking back to the car,
and Bill says to me...
He says, "You know, it's funny

you spotting how Suzie wasn't
feeling too good today,
how you noticed it right quick."
I said, "Suzie was sick today."
He says, "I know it."
I said, "Suzie was sick yesterday."
Suzie's always been sick.
Suzie'll always be sick.
Suzie is a sick dog."
God...damn it.
My motherfuckers.
What the hell?
God damn.
God damn.
Let's go.
Where to?
That gal up at the turnaround, Lester.
What gal?
That was found up yonder,
had on a nightgown.
Yeah, I seen her.
I ain't got nothing to do with her.
She says you did.
Well, she's a lying sack of green shit.
Get your ass off that porch.
Okay, you got it all.
Man of leisure like yourself,
you oughtn't to mind helping us
workers unscramble
a little misunderstanding.
Fuck.
- This way, mister.
- This way.
They's a path if you didn't know it.
No, sir.
Not for two weeks.
Well, of course I will.
That was...
I done ask him.
I don't know.
Whatever you say.
Sheriff.
Yeah, I'll call you back.
Shut the door, cotton.

This son of a bitch?
Shit.
Where the hell'd you find him at?
He not the one?
Well, yes, he's the one.
The one!
It's them other two sons of
bitches I want jailed.
This son of a bitch here, shit.
I ain't done...
I ain't done nothing.
I ain't done a damn thing.
You want to make charges
against this man or not?
Hell yes, I do.
What do you want us to charge him with?
Rape!
Fucking rape!
Sheriff, I ain't done nothing.
Salt and battery too,
you son of a bitch.
Sheriff, she ain't nothing
but a goddamn old whore.
-Fuck!
- Hey, hey.
Fuck!
You son of a bitch!
You a goddamn little whore.
That's all you is!
Son of a bitch.
I ain't afraid of you.
- All right, that's enough.
- Let me at him!
Didn't your mama leave you in the river,
you fucking piece of shit?
Get your goddamn restraints!
Shut up!
Flying home
I'm flying home
I'm flying home
I'm flying home
Flying home
What your name?
John.

Nigger John.
What you in for?
What? What you say?
I said, what you in for?
I cut a motherfucker's head
off with a pocketknife.
I was supposed to have raped the old girl.
She nothing but a goddamn whore anyway.
White pussy's nothing but trouble.
I'll remember that.
But I mean, yeah, I guess it is.
I guess it is.
- I ain't never...I never heard it put that way.
- Flying home
Fly like a motherfucker
Flying home
I'm flying home
Flying home, huh?
I like that song.
Flying home Flying home
All right, John, why don't you stand
up and face that wall right there?
Face that wall.
Put your hands on the back of
your head, interlock your fingers.
Flying home
Flying like a motherfucker
I'm flying home
Yeah, you'll be flying home all right.
Home to your maker.
- Flying home
- Hey, john.
John.
I'm flying home
- Take it easy, John.
- Flying home
John, you take it easy.
I'm flying home
John, you hear me?
Yeah, I hear you.
I'm flying home
Flying home
I'm flying home
Like a motherfucker!

So what's your plan?
Go home.
What then?
What sort of meanness have you
got laid out for next?
I ain't got any laid out.
You might could give us a clue,
keep it more fair.
Let's see, failure to comply
with a court order,
public disturbance, assault and battery,
public drunk, rape...
I guess murder's next on the list.
Or what things is you done we
ain't found out yet?
I ain't done nothing.
You just got it in for me.
You get your ass on home, Ballard.
These people here in town
won't put up with your shit.
I ain't asked nothing from nobody
in this chickenshit town.
You get your ass on home.
Ain't a goddamn thing keeping me
here except you going on at the mouth.
He had that rifle from when
he was almost just a boy.
He worked for old man whaley setting
fence posts at eight cents a post to buy it.
Told me quit midmorning right in
the middle of the field the day
he got enough money.
I don't remember what he get for it,
but I think it come to over 700 posts.
I'll say one thing,
he could by god shoot it.
Hit anything he could see.
I seen him shoot a spider out of
a web in the top of big red oak
one time, and we was as far from
the tree as from here to the road yonder.
Step right up, folks. Step right up.
Test your skill, win a prize.
How about you, young man?

What do you have?
On the card, shoot out the
red dot in the middle.
You have five chances in which to do it,
and you pick any choice prize in the house.
Wow.
All right.
And, uh, the elbow rest is permitted.
Oh, is that right?
I don't need no rest.
Let me have that there tiger.
All of the red must be
removed in order to win.
You mean that there?
All the red must be removed.
Why don't you go and hand me
that there tiger?
Mm-hmm. Looks right.
- There it is.
- You have a nice day, sir.
Step right up!
Step right up and test your skill.
You stay right where you is.
I ain't done firing yet.
Look at all those bears he won.
Mix it in a little bit, all right?
It's real simple.
Know what I'm saying?
This is y'all's your home.
I'm making more food for us all tonight.
We're gonna celebrate.
Be our first night together in our new home.
Yeah, that's what it is.
Oh, Bobby. Oh, Bobby.
Oh, Bobby. Oh, Bobby.
Oh, god.
Oh, Bobby. Oh, Bobby.
Let him come. Come on.
Oh, fuck.
Oh, shit.
Motherfucker.
You better run, you son of a bitch!
Okay.
There wasn't none of 'em any

account that I'd ever heard of.
I remember his granddaddy.
Name was Leland.
He was getting a war pension as an old man.
Died back in the late '20s,
was supposed to have been
in the union army.
It was a known fact he didn't do nothing
the whole war but scout the bushes.
They come looking for him two or three times.
Hell, he never did go to war.
Old man Cameron tells this, and I
don't know what cause he'd have to lie.
Said they come out there to get
Leland Ballard, and while they
was hunting him in the barn
and the smokehouse and all,
he slipped down out the bushes to
where their horses was at,
cut the leather off the sergeant's
saddle to halfsole his shoes with.
No, I don't know how
he got that pension.
Lied to 'em, I reckon.
Sevier county put more men in
the union army than it had
registered voters,
but he wasn't one of them.
He was just the only one who had
brass enough to ask for a pension.
That's right.
Hey.
God almighty.
It's small.
You know I want to come.
That's what you like, isn't it?
God!
Okay, okay.
Okay.
We're almost there.
It's a little temporary.
It's a nice spot though.
Okay, almost there.
We made it.

Man...

Okay.

Okay, there.

The hell?

No!

Run!

Get out of here!

Move!

The hell you doing here?

What's your goddamn problem?

- Get the hell outta here!

- We thought we could hunt here.

You can get on and hunt then!

You don't hunt in no goddamn cat.

- Come on, Aaron.

- You get on and hunt!

You lying sack of goddamn shit
what you is.

I'm gonna keep my eyes on you two,
two little motherfucking kids.

My cousin'll be coming for you,
you fucking loon.

I'll be waiting for your cousin and
you two little motherfuckers too.

You bet...you...

Okay.

Right.

Okay, I got to put you somewhere else.

Come here.

Okay.

Okay, okay.

I'm sorry.

I got to move you.

Hallelujah.

Okay, okay, that's okay.

God damn.

Can I help you?

How much is that there
red dress out front?

Mm...\$5.98.

Yes.

- \$5.98?

- \$5.98

Okay, well, \$5.98.

What size you need?

Size?

I don't know what size she takes.

Oh.

Well, how big is she?

I don't believe she's as big as you.

Um, you know how much she weighs?

I say...she weigh about

a hundred pound, I bet.

Well, this here's...

Oh, wow.

This here's a 7.

Okay.

I think it would fit her.

Oh, yeah, okay.

Unless she's just teensy.

All right.

Well, she wanted some stuff to go with it.

What all does she need?

She needs some drawers.

That what she need.

- Well, they's all...they's all there.

- Oh, they in there?

Okay.

Okay.

No.

Mm.

You ain't got them..you don't

have any drawers in red, have you?

Hmm.

Cold enough for you?

Oh, yeah, yeah.

Yeah.

Radio says it's going down

to 3 degrees tonight.

That pretty cold.

I'm just gonna leave it here.

Oh, I got my beans...sausage.

That shit smell no good.

And a half pound.

What about that boy they found up

there in that car yesterday evening?

What about him?

Damn shame.

\$2.05.

Here we go.

Goddamn frozen bitch.

Now, you and I have a big date tonight.

Okay.

Oh.

Hello.

Hi.

It's my pleasure.

I say, I know you waiting.

Something kept me.

Of course I certainly know.

It's chilly.

I might have to say,
that's the most beautiful dress
I've ever seen in my life.

Thank you.

It would be lovely to sit down with you.

I'm a little nervous.

I have a small confession to make to you.

Yes, I do.

You might be the most beautiful
woman I ever seen in my life.

I'd be very honored if
I could have one kiss.

Oh, yes, yes, I'm man enough.

I mean, of course I'm in love
with you then.

I didn't think you'd come out
that strong with it.

That's all I'm saying.

Oh, my god.

Oh, god.

God damn.

Oh, my god.

Oh, my god.

You might be the most aggressive
girl I ever meet in my life.

Okay.

If that's the way you want it,
then that's the way it's gonna be.

I ain't nervous at all, no.

All right.

I'm gonna help you, okay?

Okay.
Let's go.
You...you talk dirty, you know.
You want nasty things done to you, huh?
That's the way you are.
That's the way it is, huh?
Oh, okay.
I'm gonna be an entire gentleman.
It's our first date.
It's our first date, huh?
Okay.
You been asking it.
I know it is.
I'm gonna get you now.
Oh, god.
Oh, my god.
Oh, my, you bad girl, huh?
Oh, my.
Oh, I love you.
I love you.
Oh, I love you.
I love you.
I love you so much.
I love you.
I love you.
Oh, my god.
I love you so much.
God damn.
Oh, shit!
Oh, god.
Oh, my god.
Oh, shit!
Okay, okay.
Oh, god!
I'm coming.
I'm coming! I'm coming!
I'm coming, I'm coming.
Come on.
Oh, god!
No! No!
No!
This our new home.
I know you don't like it.
Neither do I, god damn it.

That's the way it is.
Fucker.
Howdy!
Hey!
What you doing?
I ain't doing nothing.
You're Ballard, ain't ye?
No, I ain't him.
You ain't Ballard?
Lester Ballard?
I told you, I ain't him.
Well, whoever the hell you are,
this here's private property.
Private property?
That's right!
Okay.
I'm sorry.
I didn't mean nothing.
My goddamn property!
You fucking probably ain't even seen.
God, I'll put a fucking bullet in ye.
You wanna fuck with me?
God! Your property!
Get out of my property here!
It's not your property.
It's somebody else's property.
It's somebody else's...
Fuck!
God damn!
God damn, you see how I did!
Get off my property!
Get off my goddamn property!
It ain't your goddamn property!
That's my home!
Drop the rifle, Ballard.
Boy, you better stick it in the ground.
Do it!
Turn around.
Come on over here.
Come on over here.
Damn.
Stop.
Now, you just stand there a minute.
I leave my rifle back there.

Someone gonna find it.
I'll worry about your goddamn rifle.
I ain't done nothing wrong.
How come you scouting around
here in the woods?
What...for nobody can find you?
Because I know how they do it.
Throw you in jail.
Hmm?
Beat the shit out of you.
Deputy, this man ever been
mistreated up here?
No, he knows better than that.
Deputy says you cussed him.
Did you?
- What you looking over there for?
- I...I'm just looking.
Just looking.
He ain't gonna tell you what to say.
Well, he might tell me what not to.
Is it true you burnt down
Mr. Waldrop's house?
No, I haven't.
You was living in it when it burned.
I wasn't done it.
I left outta there a long time
'fore that happened.
Lester, you either gonna have
to find some other way to live
or someplace else in the world to do it in.
Where we going?
That's for me to know, and you're
gonna find out exactly where we're going.
That's for sure we never been there,
don't get mad at me.
All right.
God damn, let's work.
Okay, then that's it.
One last chance, okay?
I'm gonna put it down for one second.
God damn it, don't you lie to me.
You should've said that back then.
Okay?
That's a fucking lie.

I know what you two been talking on,
conspiring against me,
betraying me after what I did for you.
Don't you cry.
Don't look at me like that, okay?
You ain't my friend.
I carried you.
I talk to you every night,
and you two stand there,
and you talk to yourselves without me.
I come back and something's different.
You're a fucking liar!
You ain't my friend.
Out here...
I hear everything.
Everything you doing...
Fucking hear what you doing,
talking to me and whispering on me,
and goddamn fucking betraying me!
Supposed to be family!
And you goin' and you're laughin'.
Now it's your turn.
Now it's your turn.
Yeah, I'm gonna teach you exactly...
exactly what they taught me.
It was right there.
I goddamn warned you.
Let's go.
Too bad we didn't get here a few days ago
before the rain washed all the tracks away.
Check the glove box.
There ain't nothing.
Check in up under them seats.
I done checked.
Well, check some more.
I found something.
What's that?
Bottle cap.
All right, let's get this turtledeck open.
If you was down here, wanted to
get up to the road, which you
would if you was here,
how would you go?
I'd just go right through

that little gully right there.
So would I.
Where do you reckon they is, Sheriff?
I don't know.
How long did you say her old
lady said they been gone?
Since last sunday evening.
Well, they might have just
run off together.
They weren't in the car.
Oh, they wasn't?
Nope.
Well, how'd it get down here?
I believe somebody shoved it
off down in here.
Well, hell, they might of just
run off through the woods together.
You oughta see how much he owed
on that car and see if that's
not how come it's down here
and he's gone.
I done have it.
It's paid for.
Well, where do you reckon
he got off to?
I reckon he's got to the same
place that gal's got to was
supposed to be with that boy
we found up here.
Well, she's supposed to be going
with that blalock boy we talked to.
Yeah, well...these youngsters
keep pretty active, some of 'em.
Come on.
Oh, shit.
Let's see your driver's license.
You ain't the law.
I'll be the judge of that.
What you was doing up here?
Well, we was just sitting here.
You was fixing to screw, wasn't you?
You better watch your mouth.
You wanna make me?
Put down that rifle and I will.

Any time you feel froggy, jump.
Watch your goddamn mouth!
Now, I told the fool, didn't I tell him?
Huh?
I don't know why people just
don't wanna listen.
Oh, god.
Yeah, that's right.
Why don't you just come on out there?
Come on.
Come on out of there.
What are you gonna do?
That's for me to know and
for you to find out.
Get on out.
Now, turn around.
What are you gonna do?
Just never mind.
Turn around.
I gotta go to the bathroom.
You ain't need to worry about that.
Turn around.
Okay.
Okay.
Okay.
Okay.
This your new home.
This your new home.
Okay.
Come on.
We almost there.
We almost there.
Okay.
There you go.
Fuck.
Fuck!
Oh.
Oh, fuck.
Sheriff.
Where's them bodies, Ballard?
I don't know nothing about no bodies.
Yes, you do.
How many other people you kill?
I ain't killed none of them.

Bullshit.
You killed that lane girl,
and you killed all them folks in
them parked cars up on Frog mountain.
I never done it.
Get up, Ballard.
I ain't allowed up.
Get up.
Get those sheets off.
Now get up.
Stand up, Lester.
Where we going?
- We're going to your funeral, motherfucker.
- Shh, quiet.
- My...
- Is that the only thing you got to wear?
- I don't know.
- Put these on.
Here.
Help him.
He ain't got but one arm.
Hold on to him.
Step into that, Lester.
We best get going if we gonna go.
Earl's likely gone to get the sheriff.
Watch him.
Thank you so much for helping me like that.
All right, let's go.
Come on, Lester.
Just walk.
Just walk.
- Okay, gentlemen.
- Be quiet.
- Y'all gonna be my new friends.
- Move it, Ballard!
Shh, quiet.
Let's go, come on.
Come on, Ballard.
You reckon we oughta tie his hand?
Tie his arm to his leg like a mule.
No, take him, Mike.
Bring him over.
All right, Ballard, we're gonna
let you make this easy on yourself.

You tell us where you put them bodies
so we can give them a
proper burial, and we'll put you
back in the hospital, let you
take your chances with the law.
You got it all.
Where's them bodies at, Ballard?
I know nothing about no bodies.
You son of a bitch.
Is that your final say?
It is.
You got that rope, Fred?
- Sure do.
- You sorry sack of shit.
You have to tie that arm.
Ask him about that, Ernest.
Yeah, Ernest.
What you want with them dead ladies, huh?
Was you fucking 'em?
You know he was.
Go on, take him down, Mike.
Make sure he ain't drugged. I want him
to know what's happening to him.
He's alert enough.
Okay, I'ma tell you.
I'll tell you right, then.
What's that?
I'll tell you, god damn it.
Tell us what?
I'm gonna tell you where they at,
them bodies.
You said if I told you,
you were gonna turn me loose.
Where they at?
They's in caves.
Caves?
Mm-hmm.
I put 'em in caves.
Can you lead us to 'em?
Oh, yeah, I know where they at.
Tight this way, gentlemen.
It ain't not much further.
A little way.
Now watch your step.

It's kind of steep right here.
Most their clothes is off.
Their clothes is off.
Move it, Ballard.
All right.
Come on, boy.
I'm moving.
God damn, you ever see
anything to beat this?
I used to run around in these
old caves when I was a boy.
Yeah, so did I.
I never knowed about this one.
Okay.
It's right this way.
Hurry it up, Ballard.
Okay, right this way, everybody.
Everybody just watch your step.
This is a nasty path.
Oh, it's real steep.
Move it, boy.
It is a little bit up here.
Watch him.
Watch him.
Oh, it's right this way.
It's right this way.
Hey, hold on.
Hey!
Ballard!
Ballard!
Get on up in there, Tommy.
I'm going.
- Get after him.
- Fuck!
Is he there?
- Oh, shit!
- What?
Ballard! Ballard!
Where is he?
Where is he?
That little son of a bitch!
He's fucking gone.
Go get up there then!
Go!

- I can't get through the hole!

- Oh, shit!

Who's the smallest?

Fred, I reckon.

Fred, get on up in there.

Come on, come on, come on.

Go, go.

Can you see him?

Can you see his light?

Can't see not a goddamn thing!

Somebody go get Jimmy.

He can get up in there.

Jimmy!

Ballard!

Ballard!

Okay.