

Destiny's Call

By

Janice N Chapman and Anthony D Farr

Adapted from the story by Janice N Chapman

FADE IN:

EXT. FIELD- AFTERNOON

BRAD ANDERSON, a strapping 22 year old man, rides his horse across his family's field spying a group of cattle nearby. He rides up on them.

BRAD

What're you all doing here? You don't belong to us? You look like Mr. Mossier's cattle. Don't you fret, I'll drive you home.

As he drives the across the field HOWARD ANDERSON, his father, rides up. Howard is a tough looking man. Brad waves to him, but his Howard doesn't respond but rides away looking angry.

CUT TO:

INT. KITCHEN- EVENING

Brad sits across the table from Howard. Howard looks angry and Brad looks annoyed. Howard slams his hand down on the table.

HOWARD

Damn it, son. I cannot believe you rustled those cattle.

Brad stands.

BRAD

I swear I didn't, Pa. I promise you. Why don't you believe me?

Brad storms out of the farmhouse.

CUT TO:

EXT. YARD- EVENING

Brad exits the barn riding his horse. His father stands at the door to the house staring him down.

HOWARD

You'll be sorry you left here young man!

Brad rides away into the growing dusk.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD- NIGHT

Brad rides at full speed not looking back as the lights from the farmhouse fade into the darkness. He stops when his horse grows tired and grazes.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD- MORNING

Brad lays on the ground beneath a tree. He wakes when his horse noses him. He groggily stands and pats his horse.

BRAD

Okay, boy. I'm up. Must be somewhere round ten o'clock.

He stretches and yawns then mounts his horse.

BRAD

I reckon Palmer is just off to the south east. I think we'll find some work there.

He sets his horse in the direction of Palmer and rides off.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD- MORNING

Brad rides up on PHILLIP WINTHROPE heading the same direction. He matches pace with Phillip's horse and nods at him.

PHILLIP

Hey, Brad, you're a long ways from home aren't you, kid?

BRAD

I've left home. On my way to Palmer to find a job.

Phillip nods knowingly.

PHILLIP

I might know someone that can use a hand. Maybe he'll be in town today. I heard recently old Crosby Leonard needed some help.

BRAD

I hope so, I could use a job about now.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALMER- DAY

The town of Palmer isn't much. It has a Mercantile, a Café, Saloon, Dress Shop, Barber, Boarding House, Sheriff's Office, Livery, and a large set of corrals at the north end of town.

A new church is being worked on in a vacant lot off the main thoroughfare of the town. A few buckboard buggies are parked outside of the Mercantile and a couple of horses are tied in front of the saloon.

Brad and Phillip pull up to the Café and hitch their horses after dismounting.

PHILLIP

Let's grab a bite to eat.

BRAD

I don't have the money to eat on.

PHILLIP

Well then I'm buying. A man can't work when he's hungry.

CUT TO:

INT. CAFÉ- DAY

They sit at a table eating steak, biscuits, brown beans, and coffee. The WAITRESS passes by and Phillip grabs her elbow gently.

PHILLIP

I'm wondering, have you by any chance seen Crosby Leonard lately.

WAITRESS

It's been about 3 or 4 days, but I haven't seen him since.

Phillip gives her a coin for her troubles.

PHILLIP

Thanks, dear.

He looks back at Brad.

PHILLIP

Eat up, my boy. You'll need your strength.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- DAY

Phillip and Brad ride up to the Leonard Ranch. It looks empty.

BRAD

Nice place. Bigger than my dad's.

Phillip nods.

PHILLIP

I wonder where Crosby is.

He looks around again.

PHILLIP

We might as well get down and stay awhile. Ole Crosby will be home by dark. Maybe before that.

He dismounts, hitches his horse, and Brad does the same. Phillip sits on the top step of the front porch and motions for Brad to do the same. Brad joins him.

BRAD

How much land does Mr. Leonard own here?

PHILLIP

Not sure. It's enough to run cattle on. He bought this land some 30 years ago when it was dirt cheap.

BRAD

Family? Anyone to help out?

PHILLIP

He's had some hands on the farm, but never married. No children.

BRAD

What about you, Mr. Winthrope? What caused you to move out here?

PHILLIP

It's Phil, I came from over Missouri way. Just sorta strayed until I found a place I liked and decided to settle down. I run a few cows. Mow a little hay along. I raise a few chickens for eggs and eatin'.

And do a little huntin' now and again.

BRAD

Did you ever get married?

PHILLIP

I married me a sweet little gal one time, but I guess the loneliness of being so far away from civilization got to her. She got up one morning, got her horse and a few of her things and left. Nothing I could say could stop her from going. It's beautiful country, but women need more than just country I guess.

Phillip stands and shades his eyes against the sun as he looks out into the distance. Brad stands and peers out as well. Eventually, HAL COOPER rides up on the far side of the field. His features cannot be made out at that distance.

BRAD

How'd you know there was someone out there?

PHILLIP

I don't know. Instinct I guess.

BRAD

You think that's Mr. Leonard?

PHILLIP

Maybe, but I don't think so. But whoever he is, he's coming this way. Better tighten down your cinch again.

Brad and Phillip tighten the cinches on their saddles. HAL is closer now, but still undiscernible.

PHILLIP

That's not Crosby Leonard.

BRAD

How do you know that from this distance?

PHILLIP

By the way he rides, and besides the horse is the wrong color.

BRAD

Oh.

Hal rides up and stops a few feet away from Brad and Phillip. He tips his hat at them. He is dressed for the time period and is a bit more robust than Brad.

HAL

Name's Hal Cooper. Is there some place I can water my horse?

PHILLIP

I'm Phil Winthrope and this here is my friend Brad Anderson. There's some water in that tank nearby.

He rides over to the tank, dismounts, hitches his horse as it drinks, and walks back over to Phillip and Brad.

PHILLIP

You just passin' through?

HAL

No, I had heard a man named Crosby Leonard was looking for help for a spring roundup.

PHILLIP

Crosby isn't here right now, but he should be here before long. Where you "coming" from?

HAL

Just driftin' right now. I was working for an outfit out in the Oklahoma panhandle, but the boss came down sick, and his kids sold the place. So, I have been "driftin." Then I heard Mr. Leonard may need some help. So, I came to check it out.

PHILLIP

Brad here is looking for work, too. So, maybe Crosby can use both of you.

Hal rolls a cigarette.

HAL

Want one?

Phillip and Brad both shake their heads to decline.

HAL

You boys from around here?

PHILLIP

I have a small spread a few miles northwest of Palmer.

BRAD

My dad owns a spread a little further on out from Phil's place, but I thought it was time I strike out on my own.

HAL

Sometimes ya just got to do that.

BRAD

You got a wife and kids?

HAL

No.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- EVENING

CROSBY LEONARD rides up to find the three men still waiting for him. Crosby is in his late 50s. He dismounts and lets the horse wander by itself over to the water tank. He looks from one man to the other.

CROSBY

Howdy, ya'll been waitin' long?

ALL THREE TOGETHER

No.

PHILLIP

Heard in town you might be looking for hands to help with the spring roundup. These two young men are both looking for work.

Crosby looks to Brad.

CROSBY

You look familiar.

He looks to Hal.

CROSBY

You don't.

He looks to Phillip.

CROSBY

They got names?

Phillip gestures to Brad.

PHILLIP

This here is Brad Anderson. Brad here is striking out on his own. Finally breaking away from that bastard everyone knows his dad to be-

Then he gestures to Hal.

PHILLIP

-and Hal here used to work on a ranch out in the Oklahoma panhandle until it sold out. He's looking for a job, too.

Crosby looks from one to the other.

CROSBY

I take it both of you know cattle?

They both nod.

CROSBY

Well, around here it's up early and may be well after dark before you get to turn in. The trail to market is long, hot and dusty. Food is whatever is served- good, bad, or otherwise. Bed is apt to be the ground with your saddle for your pillow. Guns are used only to provide food or put down an injured animal or to kill a rattler. The first time you get into a fist fight, you're both gone. And last, but not least, I'm the boss- first, last and always. What I say goes, even if I make a bad decision about something. You boys might want to think about it before you decide to sign on with me.

He walks to the front door and turns back.

CROSBY

I'm going in and clean up a bit and see about fixing some supper. You boys are welcome to stay and eat with me. You, too, Phil.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM- EVENING

All four men sit around the table with thick steaks and boiled potatoes on their plates.

CROSBY

Best I could do on short notice.
Let's eat.

HAL

Looks good.

Brad takes a bite.

BRAD

Taste good too.

They all laugh and Phillip and Hal nod as they eat.

CROSBY

Where out in the panhandle did you work, Hal?

HAL

I worked with the Cross W for several years while Wilford Ellis was alive and owned it. But he came down sick and his kids sold the ranch and let the help go.

CROSBY

Then, you're no stranger to hard work and long days.

HAL

No, sir. Hard work, long days, and I are pretty good friends.

They all laugh. Finished with his meal, Brad pushes the plate away.

BRAD

Mr. Leonard, that steak was amazing, sir. You should be proud of it, and I must say that I would be proud to ride for you, sir.

Crosby rises up and shakes hands with Brad.

CROSBY

I'm glad you feel that way, son. I

was hoping you would give me that answer.

HAL

Count me in.

He rises and shakes hands with Crosby too.

HAL

I'll be right proud to be working with young Brad. I'm sure we'll get along just fine.

Crosby smiles.

CROSBY

Well, then, tomorrow we'll clean out the bunk house and you two can fill a couple of the bunks.

He looks to Phillip.

CROSBY

Looks like I got me a couple of good hands, thanks to you.

PHILLIP

Well, I hope they work out well for you Crosby. I know young Brad is a good worker, and I'd not be surprised that Hal Cooper is, too. I'll be going now. It will be late when I get to my place as it is.

CUT TO:

INT. BUNKHOUSE- NIGHT

Brad and Hal prepare their bunks. There are ten bunks in total in the sparse bunkhouse. Through the window, Crosby can be seen walking back to the main house with a lantern. A single oil lantern illuminates the bunk house.

Hal rolls a smoke and light it before sitting on his bed.

HAL

Man, this ain't too bad. I've slept in a lot worse places than this.

Hal pulls a deck of cards out of his pack.

HAL

Wanna play poker?

BRAD
I ain't got no money. Sorry.

HAL
Just a few hands for practice then.
What do you say?

Brad nods and sits across from Hal.

BRAD
Sure. Why not?

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- LATE MORNING

Crosby walks up on the two men finishing cleaning out the bunkhouse. He carries three empty metal coffee cups and a carafe of steaming coffee. He pours cups and hands them to Brad and Hal, keeping one for himself.

BRAD
Thanks again for that breakfast this morning.

CROSBY
I should be thanking you two for what you did on this bunkhouse this morning. You boys did a good job of cleaning that old bunk house.

They both raise their coffee cups and take a sip.

COSBY
Rest up this afternoon and let your horses rest. Tomorrow will be time enough to check the fences and corrals.

Brad squints and looks into the distance as ROBERT ELLIS rides up.

BRAD
Looks like we got company.

Robert stops just short of the three men.

CROSBY
What can I do for you, young man?

ROBERT
They said in town you're hiring men for an up coming roundup.

CROSBY
I am that. You got a name?

ROBERT
Robert Ellis.

He dismounts and shakes Crosby's hand.

CROSBY
You worked somewhere before?

ROBERT
Just came in from Wyoming. Been working with the Bar O ranch. But the boss laid off some of us recently. So, I lit out to find some place to call home.

CROSBY
I take it that's a cattle ranch.

ROBERT
Yes, sir. Cattle and horses.

CROSBY
Rules here are that I'm the boss. Even when I'm wrong, I'm right. Can you abide by that?

Robert smiles.

ROBERT
Yes, sir, I don't think I'll have an issue with that.

CROSBY
Then welcome aboard. Here are your fellow ranch hands. Brad Anderson and Hal Cooper.

They shake hands in introduction.

CROSBY
Put your horse in the corral, find yourself a bunk, and come join us for some coffee.

Robert nods and guides his horse toward the corral.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- LATER

Robert walks out of the bunkhouse and takes a cup of coffee from Crosby. He sits on the steps of the bunkhouse with Brad and Hal.

CROSBY

You got here just in time. We will check the fences and corrals tomorrow morning. After that we'll look for strays. This will be just like any other ranch you boys have worked on. We'll gather strays, rope 'em, brand 'em, and put them with the rest of the herd. Shouldn't take us more'n three or four days at the most.

HAL

Probably got some new calves, too.

Crosby nods. He turns and walks to the main house.

CROSBY

I'll get supper started. You boys fill your time. You'll be busy enough tomorrow and every day after that.

After he's gone, Hal turns to Brad.

HAL

Brad do you know how to rope and heel a cow?

BRAD

I know how to rope, but I've never had to learn now to heel.

HAL

How about you, Ellis?

ROBERT

I've had to heel a couple in my time, but I'm not too good at it.

Crosby comes back out, but hangs back listening to the boys talk. They don't realize he's there listening.

HAL

Well, if we happen onto some calves we need to brand or cut you and Brad can catch up the head of the cow and I'll take the heels. Some of those old mosey backs can get pretty mean, and my horse is used to it. We have a couple or three days until we start

rounding the cattle and herding them up. So, Ellis why don't you and me teach young Brad how to do the heeling? It won't take but a few tries until he will get it down and we may need him to know that once we start gathering.

Robert nods.

HAL

We'll see if we can find a cow to train on in the morning then.

CROSBY

If you three are through talking, come on in and eat supper, and I'll help you find that practice cow tomorrow.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- MORNING

The sun rises over the fields as the four men ride their horses away from the ranch.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD- MORNING

The men ride up on a group of 30 heads of cattle. Hal points to one that had been dehorned and nods his head. Brad readies his lasso and tries to rope the cow.

His misses the first few throws but finally manages to hit his mark. Ellis tries and misses but eventually has luck as well. Hal pats him on the back.

Crosby hangs back and looks on at the three men with pleasure.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS- MID DAY

They are still out in the fields. Brad rides up to Hal.

BRAD

How do you rope the way you do? You never miss.

HAL

I expect I've had a few more years of

roping than you've had Brad.

BRAD

Can you show me how you do it?

HAL

Sure, Brad, but first I'd like to see how you're holding your rope.

Brad opens the loop on his rope and holds out.

HAL

You rope with your whole arm-

He shakes his own rope out.

HAL

-It's all in the wrist. If you want to try roping by holding your rope this way and using your wrist to swing it and release it, it might help you.

Robert rides up to join them.

HAL

If you want to practice a bit, we'll cut another cow. That okay with you, Ellis?

ROBERT

Sure, Cooper. The kid needs to be able to rope the right way. His own life may depend on it along the trail.

The ride off to rope another cow to practice.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELDS- DAY

The next day the four men ride up on a mixed group of horses and around 400 cattle.

CROSBY

You fellers start hazing this bunch toward the bunch you practiced on yesterday. I'm going to ride on out a little further and see if I can find the rest of the horses.

BRAD
Can I come along?

CROSBY
Hal and Robert need your help here.

BRAD
Okay.

Cosby rides off.

HAL
Let's start at the far end.

He points across the field.

HAL
You two spread out over that way, and
we'll haze them on into the others.
Move them slowly so as not to spook
them.

They nod and move into position. They slowly drive the cattle forward. After a while, a horse breaks loose and bolts taking some of the other cattle with it. Within moments, Hal ropes it while Robert and Brad drive the strays back to the group.

The horse fights Hal, but he manages to get it under control with the help of Robert. After the horse tires out they guide him back to the herd. Brad is managing his side of the herd deftly.

HAL
Thanks for the help.

ROBERT
No thanks needed, partner. Looks like
young Brad is holding his own with
the cattle so far.

HAL
Yep, he's a good kid. Just needs
some training. But, thankfully, he
tends to learn quickly, and that's
good for all of us, especially when
we get on the trail with these
cattle.

Robert nods.

CUT TO:

EXT. LEONARD RANCH- AFTERNOON

All four men drive the cattle slowly into the pens. They all look tired from a day's work. Sheriff ORIN TAYLOR waits for them by the homestead, he is dressed similar to them, but has a shiny star on his chest and revolvers in his holsters. He waves at them as they dismount, hitch their horses, and approach them.

CROSBY

Howdy Sheriff Taylor. What brings you this way?

ORIN

Thought I better check in with you, Crosby. Everybody knows you're fixing to do a trail drive to Abilene with your cattle before long. Word in town says you have Brad Anderson working with you.

CROSBY

That's true, Sheriff, and what's wrong with that? Anderson's a good kid and he's getting along well with the men.

ORIN

Crosby, I guess you haven't been to town lately. Old man Anderson came in and swore out a warrant against his son. Claims the boy stole some of Homer Mossier's cattle, and stole a horse from him as well.

Crosby turns to Brad.

CROSBY

Is any of that true, Brad?

BRAD

No, sir, Mr. Leonard. I found some cattle belonging to Homer Mossier on my Pa's ranch and rounded them up and hazed them back to Mossier's pasture where they belonged. When my Pa got upset at me and wouldn't listen to reason, I up and left. Figured I couldn't be there with him anymore.

ORIN shakes his head.

ORIN

Well, that doesn't constitute cattle rustling.

BRAD
I've never stolen anything in my
life, Sheriff.

ORIN
What about that horse? That belong to
your dad?

Brad looks worried.

BRAD
I didn't think about that. This
palomino does belong to him, I guess.

ORIN
I guess I'll have to take you in
then, because if the horse belongs to
your dad, then son, when you left
your dad's place on him, whether you
meant it to be, or just didn't think
about it, that was stealing. And
your dad has sworn out a warrant for
horse stealing against you.

Crosby walks closer to Orin with his palms up.

CROSBY
Sheriff Taylor, I can give Brad a
horse and let him work it off.
There's no sense in taking this boy
to jail over a temper tantrum his dad
threw in your office.

ORIN
I wish it was that easy, but his old
man took out a warrant on him. So
I've got to take him in. And
stealing a horse carries some serious
consequences.

CROSBY
Orin, just take the horse back with
you. I can give Brad a horse for the
round up. I need him here, and I
don't believe he intended to steal
anything from his old man.

ORIN
I wish I could, but it just doesn't
work that way when there's a warrant
involved.

He looks to Brad.

ORIN
Anderson, let's go.

Brad turns to the other men and looks at Crosby.

BRAD
I'm sorry, Mr. Leonard. I didn't think about it being stealing when I rode out on the gelding.

Crosby pats him on the shoulder.

CROSBY
No apologies needed, my boy. I'll be in town in a few days. I'll see what I can do then.

Orin and Brad mount up and ride off. After they are gone Hal shakes his head.

HAL
Anderson's old man must be a real bastard.

ROBERT
Really. What kind of a man would take out a warrant on his own son? Isn't stealing a horse a hanging offence or at least long term prison round here?

Crosby shakes his head.

CROSBY
Yes, it is. You don't even want to know what goes through the elder Anderson's mind.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD- AFTERNOON

Orin and Brad ride down the road away from the Leonard Ranch.

ORIN
I'm sorry I have to take you in Anderson, but it's the law when a warrant is involved. I don't know why your dad swore out the warrant, but he did, and I have to enforce it.

BRAD
You don't have to apologize Sheriff. My old man thinks the world owes him

a living, and that he's Lord and God over all of it. He thinks whatever he says is law no matter how wrong he is. And when he gets something set in his mind a stick of dynamite couldn't change it.

ORIN

Yeah, I know. In fact, most of the people around here know how he is. There just isn't anyone brave enough to stand up to him.

CUT TO:

EXT. PALMER- NIGHT

Orin and Brad dismount outside the sheriff's office. As they dismount, Brad hands the reigns of his horse to Orin.

BRAD

Can you take care of my horse, Sheriff?

Orin nods.

ORIN

I'll make sure your horse is well taken care of. Hitch there, and I'll manage the horses later. Let's go inside and rustle up some grub.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Brad sits inside of the unlocked cell eating a meager soup. Orin sits at his desk eating the same soup. A lamp illuminates the inside of the office.

Brad finishes and sets his bowl down. Orin walks over and picks it up.

BRAD

That was a good supper, Sheriff.
Thanks.

Orin nods, then he locks the door to Brad's cell.

ORIN

Glad you enjoyed it. I hope you know,
I'm only locking your cell to protect
you from your old man.