



Based on Andrew Ward's epic "Dark Midnight When I Rise," *Steal Away* is the legendary true story of **Ella Sheppard** and **The Fisk Jubilee Singers**, a spectacular choir of young former slaves fighting the KKK's reign of terror against their schools not with bullets or bombs but sensational songs of faith and freedom. *Steal Away* follows the choir's titanic rise from the darkness of slavery to the glittering ballrooms and throne rooms of Europe as they conquer the world... and must then conquer their own demons.

One of the most breathtaking stories ever known, *Steal Away* will feature a spectacularly diverse international cast, the strongest African-American female lead ever onscreen, and an epic soundtrack by multi-Grammy winning composer **Billy Childs**.

For Script, Sides, and Director's Notes, visit StealAwayMovie.com

MYRON SHEOLGATE

Caucasian, 25-30, supreme leader of the Knights of the Southern Cross.

Once a sweet wide-eyed boy who deeply loved the enslaved woman who raised him as a mother, Myron's cruel father - a brutal slave-owning preacher - beat him mercilessly to train him to hate. Today as a young man, his once-boyish face riddled with abusive welts and his blue eyes blistering with hate, Myron is a hellfire preacher and supremacist leader.

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Myron should not be read as a purely evil, two-dimensional, utterly unlovable monster. He's also a viciously abused victim and bears the scars to prove it. We sense there is good in Myron; beyond his veneer of hate, we glimpse in his tortured eyes the aching grief of a small boy whose youth and heart were cruelly stolen.

We hear HOWLS OF FURY, then CUT INSIDE to --

START →

INT. CHURCH OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

-- a furnace of supremacist rage. We PAN PAST pews of rabid faces to the Bishop's Chair. Enthroned on it is BISHOP SHEOLGATE, Ella's former master. Bishop hawk-eyes the pulpit, and we follow his glare over to the volcanic preacher. To our shock, it's none other than MYRON, Bishop's brutally battered son. Now 25, his boyish face is marred with abusive welts, and his blue eyes blister with hate.

MYRON (continuing)

Now we got these tar-loving missionaries soiling our land with their so-called "schools"! *Schools, for savages!* Friends, you educate a dog, you get an educated dog - even God-on-High can't make mongrels men! Yet these kennels are breeding them to *completely* take over our world! The Southern Cross is under siege, and the flower of her people defiled! Once virile and proud, we've been brought to our knees, stripped, and ravaged by a godless enemy!

(SLAMS the pulpit)

BUT OUR CROSS SHALL RISE! SAY RISE!

CONGREGATION

RISE!

MYRON

And it shall destroy God's enemies in the great winepress of heaven's wrath! For the Lord says, *"I am raising an army, O Babylon, a mighty and dreadful army, and I will strike you down for the wrong done my people! I will wipe you from the Earth!"*

(SLAMS the pulpit)

SONS OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS, WE ARE THE LORD'S ARMY, HIS BATTLE-AXE AND SWORD! FOR HE WARNS EVERY ONE OF US: *"CURSED IS HE WHO HOLDS BACK HIS SWORD FROM BLOODSHED!"* SOON AND VERY SOON, BY GOD'S RECKONING AND OUR OWN, THOSE DOGS WILL BE PUT DOWN! THE DAMNED FEAR THE APOCALYPSE; THE FAITHFUL BRING IT ON!

END →

Thundering AMENS! Sweating, young Myron looks to his father for approval; Bishop nods it. As the pews ROAR, we --

CUT TO:

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ELLA
I know, right? *Whoosh!*

WHITE
Well, after tonight, guess it's back to the old desk. Thank you, Sam, for following an old fool.

ELLA
(winks)
When Moses calls...

His eyes go misty at the affirmation. Then, reading his mind...

ELLA
Yes, she'd be proud. So proud.

He chokes up... then turns it back around.

WHITE
So will *she*. And of course *he'll* be there tonight.

ELLA
And so will *she*... and you will give her a chance.

White groans. Just then, FLASHING LANTERNS appear in the window. The Odd Man YANKS the emergency brake.

SCREEEECH! The train LURCHES TO A HALT, jolting the choir awake.

The doors BLAST OPEN. A HOODED MOB barges in, nods to the Odd Man, then brutally SEIZES the choir.

They FIGHT and SCREAM as the attackers HAUL them off the train.

CUT TO:

EXT. DARK CLEARING - JUST AFTER

SC 2

START → A BONFIRE rages. A FLAMING SOUTHERN CROSS flickers savagely. The Jubilees have been dumped into an ASSEMBLY OF HOODED SUPREMACISTS, fronted by their SUPREME LEADER.

WHITE
Please! They're just kids! We're on our way to the --

SUPREME LEADER
White House, honorees of President Ulysses S. Grant. Only you had a little *setback* en route. Meaning you were *cremated* from these beams.

He means the enormous CROSSBEAMS suspended over the bonfire. He thrusts his bare hand into the flames and pulls out one of the Jubilee songbooks that fuel it.

SUPREME LEADER

"The Jubilees Conquer America." You think you staved off the apocalypse; you just fanned the flames.

(then, to the mob)

EZEKIEL 9:7 - *"Slaughter them as I've commanded. Fill the courtyards with their twisted bodies."*

The singers SCREAM as the mob starts LYNCHING their necks.

As the Supreme Leader hovers over Ella, she glimpses his eyes.

ELLA

I know you.

He rips off his hood.

MYRON

Hello, Ella.

It's Myron, Bishop's son. His cavernous eyes are sulfured with hate.

ELLA

So tonight's your rite of passage.

MYRON

Something like that.

ELLA

Don't cross over; you can't take this back!

MYRON

Take back?! I've waited for this my whole life.

ELLA

You're no murderer. You're angry, but not at us.

MYRON

Quiet!

ELLA

You were a kind boy until your fath--

MYRON

SHUT UP! It's *you people* I've always hated!

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ELLA

Not true. You loved Momma and she loved you, remember? *Remember??*

CLOSE ON MYRON - His face goes pale at mention of Sarah. Suddenly flustered, for the briefest moment hate fades from his eyes as his gaze travels back in time. We FLASH BACK to Sarah in the sweatbox looking incredulously at young Myron as he gunblasts Ella off the plantation, then CUT BACK to Myron recalling it now. Deeply shaken, as the harrowing memories return, so do a young boy's pained eyes.

MYRON

(his eyes transfixed)
Time and youth blur the mind, but
I'll never forget that day... the
look in Miss Sarah's eyes as I drove
you out of her life... the way she
looked at me from then on... she
never touched or held me again.
That day stole her from us both.

Deep longing haunts his eyes.

ELLA

What happened to her?

MYRON

Huh?

ELLA

Momma. Is she alive?

Her question snaps him back. His eyes reblaze.

MYRON

Hang them!

BOOSH!! The attackers intensify the bonfire. The choir SCREAMS as the mob starts hoisting them to the crossbeams. Just then --

A voice RINGS OUT:

MINNIE

Fix me Jesus, fix me...

It's Minnie, singing for all she's worth.

MINNIE

*Fix me for my home on high,
Fix me for the by and by.
Fix me Jesus, fix me...*

The wind lifts Minnie's voice. The strains of a distant choir seem to join her, filling the air with piercing, otherworldly power.

The attackers halt.

MYRON
I SAID HANG THEM!

But incredibly, as the singing intensifies, the men cover their faces... then one by one break into weeping.

Sensing a chance, the choir joins in.

JUBILEES
*Fix me for my starry crown,
Fix me for a higher ground,
Fix me Jesus, fix me...*

As a stunned Myron looks on, the attackers begin releasing the lynches then back away from the clearing until only he is left.

CLOSE ON MYRON - Bathed in the spiritual, he glares incredulously at the choir, fists clenched as if fighting off an invasion, quaking as if some war were raging inside. Then at last, he too relents. He backs off... scans the wind... then disappears into the night.

←END

Spared their lives, the Jubilees sing on, and we

MATCH CUT TO --

INT. WHITE HOUSE - EAST ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

-- the choir closing out a scorching performance for the President, congressional leaders, and ambassadors from around the world.

JUBILEES
Oh fix me Jesus, fix meeeeeee.

Rapturous applause, standing ovation!

AFTER - GALA RECEPTION

A high-powered global affair. Senators and foreign diplomats trip over themselves praising the Jubilees as heroes. Freshly scarred and shaken, the singers paste on smiles and press the flesh.

ANGLE ON ELLA AND WHITE

Ella introduces White to Julia Hayden and her four Cutie Pies.

ELLA
Mr. White, you've met Julia Hayden.

WHITE
Of course. How are you, Miss Hayden?

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