

Perpetual Gloom

Synopsis

Riding on the tail of the great American depression, JC HORNBECK and his wife MARTHA rob a bank in Missouri to create a better life for themselves and their young family. However, JC's dreams of making it big by growing cotton on a newly acquired plot of land are soon dashed when he realizes that his smallholding is nothing more than an unworkable pile of rocks.

With six children and nothing in the pan but failed dreams, JC and his eldest son, MONROE, drive to a nearby town to seek charity from a relief station. It's not long after joining the line, however, that JC gets into an altercation with some of the locals who accuse him of being a communist for refusing to salute the American flag due to his fanatical religious beliefs.

Learning of JC's subsequent arrest, Martha sends Monroe down to Hot Springs to look for their neighbor, SOD, a former U.S. Marshal who once served in Missouri. Sod's own reputation has ruffled more than a few local feathers while doing side work for the infamous Chicago mobster, Lucky Luciano. Nevertheless, Sod and JC have a special understanding, so Sod procures a lawyer for JC and arranges for his trial to be moved to a one room schoolhouse.

When the day of the hearing arrives, Martha and the whole family descend on the makeshift courthouse to support JC. As proceedings get underway, JC's lawyer delivers a deftly articulated defense, which ultimately acquits JC of the charge of being a communist, leaving him guilty of the lesser charge of causing a riot.

As spectators empty the schoolhouse, the mood turns ugly against the Hornbecks. Moments later shots ring out from the crowd. JC is hustled away, and Martha and the family make good their escape from the immediate area.

After a short period of incarceration, JC eventually returns home, but his celebratory meal is tarnished by a realization that it's time to face the facts about their future and the growing restlessness of his eldest sons. Reluctantly JC decides to give up his dream, his land and ultimately, his pride.