A desert landscape with a dirt road winding through the foreground. A large wooden wagon wheel is positioned on the left side of the road. The background features rugged, rocky hills under a sky filled with large, white, fluffy clouds. The overall color palette is warm, dominated by browns, tans, and blues.

An unlikely pair,  
an impossible journey

# PARADISE

All that separates a girl from her father... is everything

**Definitive Films**

www.definitivefilms.com  
contact@definitivefilms.com

**Bruce Spargo**

bruce@definitivefilms.com  
786.200.0252



definitive**FILMS**

# Feature Film

Proposal

## **Paradise**

*Written for the screen by David Stenstrom*

**Prepared for:**

Studio Consideration

Proposal Issued:  
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### **Confidentiality/Disclaimer**

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# Synopsis

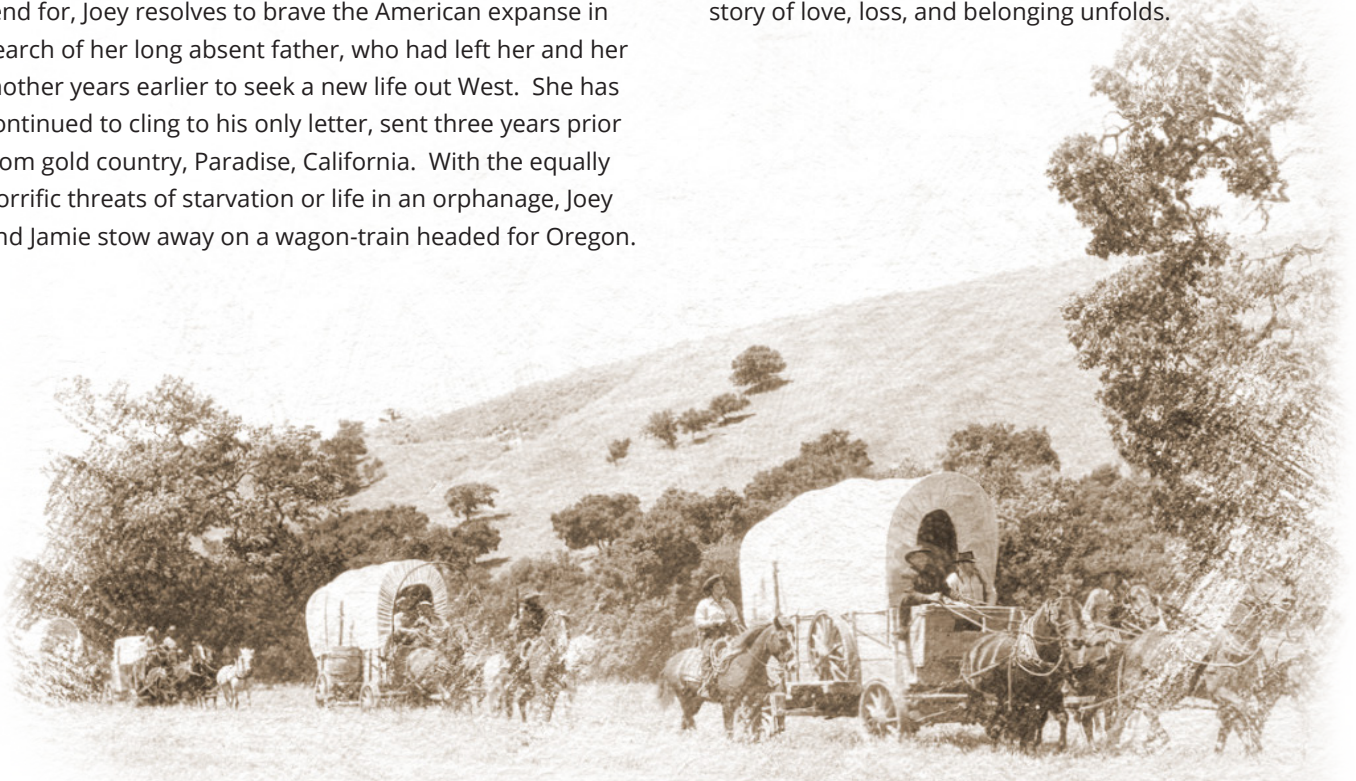
*It is 1876 in Independence, Missouri, the starting point of three great westward trails. For many, these well-worn roads bring the promise of a better day, for others they bring the end of their dream, and for some... they bring both.*

In a whirlwind of desperation and determination, two children have jumped headlong into an epic adventure through the late 19th century American frontier; one that will shape, and perhaps even take, their young lives. A fireball of a 12-year-old girl, and daughter of freed slaves, Joey has become a surrogate mother of sorts to the son of a white seamstress who had taken her in when she became homeless following the death of her mother. In a tragic twist of fate, the young boy's mother has also fallen ill and Joey makes her a deathbed promise that she will care for him no matter the cost.

Once again homeless, and now with an additional life to fend for, Joey resolves to brave the American expanse in search of her long absent father, who had left her and her mother years earlier to seek a new life out West. She has continued to cling to his only letter, sent three years prior from gold country, Paradise, California. With the equally horrific threats of starvation or life in an orphanage, Joey and Jamie stow away on a wagon-train headed for Oregon.

It doesn't take long to realize the gravity of their situation as they are still without food and are now forced to evade capture by fellow travelers who would send them back to Independence. Forced to go it alone, their troubles are only beginning as their journey will test them to their limits, pitting them against the forbidding landscape, hostile wildlife, and nature's fury. Along the way, they will encounter a cast of colorful, as well as nefarious characters, and must learn who, and when, to trust.

The high adventure of this thrilling and emotional tale is set against the vast, barren yet beautiful wilderness creating a cinematic backdrop upon which a truly heartfelt story of love, loss, and belonging unfolds.





# Setting

*The film opens in the bustling little town of Independence, Missouri where the Oregon, Santa Fe, and California trails commence. Throughout the 1800s, Independence served as a rendezvous point and final supply stop for thousands of Americans before heading westward into the unbridled American frontier. Our travelers follow the Oregon trail through the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, visiting several forts along the way, and ultimately taking the California trail southward through the Sierras to Paradise, CA.*



## Audience

Planned for wide release, the film targets a broad audience as an adventure/historical drama with themes of family, loyalty, loss, and perseverance. Featuring an ethnically diverse cast and children in prominent roles, including a strong, young female lead, the film is positioned to draw interest across a large demographic.

It is anticipated that the film's setting, sentiment, and subject matter will resonate with audiences of all ages, including families as well as adventure/period film buffs.

## Opportunities

- ▶ The market for feature films starring children in expansive adventures is relatively underserved. Add to that a late 19th century setting and Paradise uniquely fills a neglected niche.
- ▶ The epic nature of the story offers the opportunity to capture breathtaking visuals and panoramic vistas of the American frontier following our young adventurers on their journey.
- ▶ A majority of the film can be shot throughout New Mexico, where production can be centered, taking advantage of any available tax incentives.



## Joey

Joey, short for Johanna, is a tomboyish, but pretty, 12-year-old daughter of freed slaves. The untimely death of her mother, and separation from her father who had gone to California years earlier, left her homeless until she was taken in by Jamie's mother Abigail. What she lacks in maturity, she makes up for in bullish grit; and while tested in the wilderness, she discovers an inner strength that begins to chip away at her somewhat pretentiously rough exterior.

## Jamie

A well-mannered and impressionable child, James Albert Newcomb is charitable by nature, though he can become feisty when pushed. While his mother's death is difficult for him to bear, he walks in the strength of her example. She has raised him well and her influence is obvious.





## Tom Hyser

A straight-shooter with a strong sense of duty, Tom is a white Captain commanding a patrol of Buffalo Soldiers of the 10th Cavalry and the unofficial leader of a trio of soldiers who have partnered together to raise a homestead just outside of Oroville, CA (about 20 miles south of Paradise). He and his partners have just six days of service remaining when we first meet them.

## William Jefferson Xander

Extremely guarded, slow to warm up to others and even slower to open up about himself and his past, William is an African-American, freed slave and First Sergeant of the 10th Cavalry. He is a member of, and equal partner with, the trio of Buffalo Soldiers heading west to Oroville.



## Dave

A middle-aged teddy bear of a man, graying and bearded, Dave is deeply superstitious, loves playing his harmonica, and develops a great rapport with the children, especially Jamie. He is a white scout in the 10th Cavalry and also one of the three Buffalo Soldiers travelling to Oroville.

## Abigail

A widowed seamstress in her 30s with pale skin and strawberry blonde hair, Abigail has worked tirelessly to support her son Jamie, as well as Joey, whom she has loved like a daughter since she took her in. Tragically, her frail body has finally given in to pneumonia; and, always thinking of others, her dying moments are spent ensuring the children will be cared for.



## Red Sky

An Indian brave and leader of a Sioux raiding party, his band of marauders has been relentlessly pursued by the Buffalo Soldiers. However, after a deadly skirmish in an Indian camp resulting in the death of Red Sky's son at Dave's hand, the Indian warrior becomes set on revenge and the hunters become the hunted. Stoic and fierce, his humanity is on full display when he realizes the life of his son has been taken, and he will stop at nothing until he avenges the death.

## Mountain Man

A lone backwoodsman wearing skins and pulling a mule, Joey and Jamie encounter the nameless mountain man while traveling through the foothills of the Colorado Rocky Mountains. Despite his unkempt appearance and boorish manner, he has a certain charm about him and his advice proves to be helpful to the young travelers.





## Elvira

A half-crazed woman whose home the travelers seek shelter in following a flash flood, Elvira is extremely hospitable, though she lapses in and out of delusions, anxiously awaiting the return of her long dead husband and children.

## Dana

Owner of the Oroville Mercantile general store, as well as the county clerk, Dana is an attractive woman in her thirties who welcomes the weary travelers when they finally arrive at their new home in California.









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