

SOUTH OF HEAVEN

By Bob Schaller and Tom Groneberg

Writer's Note:

In every episode there is an unspoken undercurrent that carries the real truth of the storyline. Example: By talking (episode 103) to Jakob—a fresh-faced young Amish man—about his impending arranged marriage, Summer, the main character, understands that even though she was married for a dozen years, she doesn't know the first thing about love. Despite wanting to be independent and build a new life for just herself, Summer has trouble fighting her attraction to Chance, the sad, handsome cowboy whose great grandfather founded the town of Heaven, Montana. So it can be a parallel or dichotomy, depending on how the common theme affects different characters. Occasionally, it's a nod of understanding or an awkward silence that captures the real essence of the episode.

Some story arcs will carry across multiple episodes, while other aspects of each episode will have closure at the end of each hour. The show's A-Plot will deal with the nuts and bolts of what's going on in Summer's life, and in the lives of those around her: building a cabin, crashing cars in a demolition derby, dealing with the death of a parent. The B-Plot will echo the A-Plot, in that this sub-plot will deal with the emotional lives of the characters. This is not just metaphorical, this is real work that is taking place in the inner lives of the characters. This is the heart of the story where building a cabin is actually building a life for yourself, where crashing cars is trying to determine your own wrecks in life, and where burying your father means burying a part of yourself. The characters of Heaven will be quirky, colorful, and funny. Deep down, they will be as open and as generous and as beautiful as the landscape.

Season One Episode Abstracts

Pilot: Uncovering her husband's infidelity, Summer Bentley heads from her seemingly perfect life in New York City to small town Montana, searching for answers. She discovers that her marriage is over, that her life is in tatters, and that the hole in her heart is slowly being healed by the residents and the beautiful surroundings of an odd little town called Heaven.

Episode 101: The Four Corners of Heaven

Summer seeks work at the Four Corners Café and settles into the rhythm of small-town life. She learns that a national women's magazine might be interested in publishing her

dispatches about healing a broken heart in the wild west, her unique views on being a woman starting over.

Episode 102: Exorcise –Feel the Burn

The volunteer fire department, made up of all the local townspeople, burns down Summer's damaged cabin. She sets about rebuilding the cabin, and rebuilding her life.

Episode 103: Jakob's Ladder

While helping Summer build a log home on the burned-down cabin's foundation, Jakob seeks out her advice on his future as an Amish man. Summer's own life is in reconstruction, and her magazine column that month concerns her theory that a woman at her age, mid-30s, is in many ways more vulnerable than a 16-year-old girl's shaky life.

Episode 104: Small World

Summer and Chance share their most intimate secrets. But when Chance disappears, Summer knows she moved too fast. After swearing off men in general, and Chance in particular, she learns that his father passed away unexpectedly.

Episode 105: Miss Montana

Summer gets her first paycheck from the magazine and, when she heads to the big city of Billings with Alice, Summer pays to get Alice made-over at the Rim Rocks Beauty Academy. Summer is finding her way still among the great land that is Montana, but she's still carving out her own place – how does she fit in, and how does she *have* to fit in, to call this place her own, or to be called one of its own?

Episode 106: Cars, Scars & Powder Puffs

Summer gets over her fear of crashing vehicles at the Founder's Day Powder Puff Demolition Derby, and she reconnects with Chance, both agreeing they should take it slow. She realizes life crashes at times, that without hitting the gas and moving forward, that she will stall, either literally, or on the road of life. And she realizes once and for all that if she lives life looking at it through the rearview mirror, she'll miss all that awaits in front of her – in her future.

Episode 107: Wireless Heaven

Mac's negligibly successful, but mostly bungled real estate concept for an e-colony "Homes@Heaven.com" brings Internet porn industry characters to Heaven after he botches the online ad, placing it among XXX advertisements. Chance jumps to conclusions when he sees Summer helping out a stranger. On her own home front, construction of her new log home – on the cabin's foundation – is practically complete. She moves into her "new" place and starts the "first day of the rest of my life," she writes in her column.

Episode 108: Falling

Summer wants to fit in with the locals. She wonders how long you have to live in a place to be accepted. She enters a betting pool at the Stockman's Bar and gets lucky in more ways than one when her and Chance let down their guards.

SOUTH OF HEAVEN: Season One Extended Episode Descriptions

Pilot: (Enclosed in package):

Summer Bentley's carefully planned life is spinning out of control. While her "Life Calendar" shows she should have a 18-month old girl by now with a baby brother on the way, Summer can't seem to get pregnant, though her bill of health shows her ripe for cashing. Her job as buyer for a chain of department stores is in jeopardy after a corporate restructuring and she's just discovered that her husband's twice yearly fly-fishing trips out West were nothing more than covers for his trysts at the cabin in Montana. Mara, Summer's life coach, convinces Summer that the only way she'll ever get over the betrayal she feels about her husband's infidelity is for her to go to the cabin in Montana and confront the reality of the place.

101: The Four Corners of Heaven

Summer needs money, needs to know where she stands with Randy, her husband. She confronts him and he lays it out on the line, says their lawyers will decide, but they signed an iron-clad pre-nup. There's a bad storm, the roof in the motel room she is renting is leaking, she's miserable, needs to move to a better place or leave and go somewhere else. She gets in touch with Mara who tells her that another client of hers edits *She!* magazine and is impressed with Summer's writing ability and thinks Summer's predicament is tantalizing. There is no firm commitment from *She!*, but Mara tells Summer to keep writing. Desperate, Summer goes to the Four Corners Café and gets a waitress job. On her first day at work, Summer is nervous, not very good at taking orders from others. In walks Randy followed by his lover. They seem rattled. Randy's boyfriend goes to bathroom and Randy is making snarky comments to Summer, saying if he knew how servile she was, maybe they could have had a chance together. Finally, he tells her he'll give her the deed to the cabin and the property, that he's done with it. Later, after her shift is over, Summer takes her Styrofoam container of food from the café and goes out to the cabin. A huge, 100-year old cottonwood tree was blown down in the storm the night before. The concrete foundation appears to be solid, but like her life, Summer's cabin is in pieces laying at obtuse angles, useless to the naked eye. She will rebuild here, she decides, even though clearing the cabin's debris – and the debris of her own life – will be messy at first.

101: Exorcise – Feel the Burn

Summer is determined to make a go of life in Montana in spite of Randy. She is hired by *She!* magazine to write a column and starts sending off her correspondence from the town library's computer. Slowly, she starts to meet the rest of the residents of Heaven, and she can't help but smile as she listens to kids excitedly going through books around her while she files her column on the library's one Internet-accessible computer. Even though she has the extra income, it's not a blank check, and she still needs to work at the café – again, another place where she gets to meet the relatively warm but often quirky residents, and hear the history of the town, in particular how it has evolved from Theaven to a little "slice of Heaven" according to local real estate broker Mac McCaslin. Jakob is sawing up the cottonwood tree that fell on Summer's cabin. He tells Summer that the volunteer fire department can get some good practice, burning the rest of the cabin down and putting it out. He explains that, out here, if you don't do it yourself (police, fire, etc) no one else will do it. It's about self-reliance and independence. Summer takes the lesson to heart, decides to rebuild on the cabin's foundation. Chance comes out with the fire department. Summer makes a comment about a man in uniform and sparks fly between them. Libbie, Summer's co-worker at the café, is a firefighter as well. The whole town comes out to watch the live burn exercise. There are guys in lawn chairs, beer coolers, etc. Someone asks Summer, "Do you think maybe that tree falling on the cabin was God telling your husband he's a sinner?" "No," she says, "I think it was God telling Randy that he's an ass and he better watch his back." She watches the cabin go up in flames.

103: Jakob's Ladder

Jakob helps Summer start rebuilding a log home on the burned down cabin's foundation, and he asks for her advice on his future with his Amish family. Jakob comes to Summer with a problem. He's been doing this "rumspringa" thing, where Amish families look the other way when teen boys sow their wild oats for a few years before they settle down and join the church and live the righteous life. But Jakob's been doing it for awhile now and he needs to settle down with a girl his family has picked out for him or figure out a different plan. He wants Summer's opinion, since she's been out and seen the world. Summer says she has seen the world, but she's here now, and she envies him for knowing the land, knowing the stories, knowing what the weather will do, how the animals behave, etc. Since her own choice of a mate was so wrong, Summer wonders if the arranged thing might not work. She asks Jakob about the girl he is supposed to marry and in hearing himself describe her, Jakob makes his decision. Like the cabin, Summer's own life is in reconstruction and her magazine column that month concerns her theory that a woman at her age, mid-30s, is in many ways as vulnerable or even more than a 16-year-old girl.

104: Small World

Chance brings Summer an Airstream trailer so she can live in it while rebuilding, says it was his parents' and they never took any time off from the ranch for a vacation, so it's never been used. As thanks, Summer takes Chance out to eat at the Stockman's Bar. When they enter the bar, there—sitting on a bar stool downing shots—is John, a midget cowboy. Chance tells Summer to take a booth and he buys John a round and talks to him. When he comes back to the booth, Summer asks him, "You know him?" Chance

shakes his head and says, "No, but I have a horse for him to ride." That night, in the Airstream trailer, they share intimate thoughts and desires. Summer asks Chance about his folks and he tells her they are both in a nursing home, both doing poorly, and—since land is the most precious commodity in the valley—he is under a lot of pressure to subdivide the family ranch in order to make ends meet. He asks Summer about her husband and marriage, about her hopes and desires. Innocently, they fall asleep in each other's arms. When Summer wakes up, Chance is gone. She calls Chance and leaves a humiliating phone message, makes an ass out of herself. At the café, Summer asks Libbie, "What do you do when you get pissed off?" Summer and Libbie cutting down big trees. Summer is covered in sap, dirty. She goes to Chance's ranch. A pony is in the corral. A bimbo in a white tank top and cowboy hat pulls up in new pickup and she's looking for Chance. Summer finds Libbie again and asks her, "What do you do when you're really pissed off?" Summer and Libbie at a gravel pit, shooting high-caliber handguns. Summer calls Chance again. John the Midget picks up the phone in the barn, says he's saw Chance take off earlier, and that he picked up the phone because he thought it might be Chance calling to tell him what to do with his son's pony. Summer finds Libbie, asks, "What do you do when you're so mad you can't see straight?" Libbie takes Summer to the car she got from Jakob, hands her a helmet, says, "I was saving this car for the Founder's Days demo derby, but if need to use it, go on and crash it into something. Just be sure to put it into neutral before you hit, so that you don't break the driveshaft." Summer says she can't do it, that her father died in an accident, that she's scared to drive. Libbie says, "Well then you also know what it's like to lose your father." Summer asks what she means, and Libbie says, "Chance's dad passed away last night." And the whole time Summer thought he was afraid of getting too close to her. At the funeral, Chance is stoic, the cowboy bimbo is his sister, their mother is frail and in wheelchair. Summer doesn't know how to help Chance, but she knows that—despite all the sadness—it's better to have love and lost a loved one, than to never have loved at all.

105: Miss Montana

Summer decides to cool it with Chance, which is not hard because she's working on getting her house in shape and staying within her budget, writing her column, even working on a meeting with a literary agent (arranged through her editor at *She!* magazine). Slowly, Summer's life is, like her log cabin home, starting to take shape. As she stares down on the living room from her home's unfinished loft, she ponders the unlikely path that has landed her in her present circumstances. "If someone would have told a year ago that I'd be giving up an NYC apartment and housekeeper for an end of the road cabin, I'd have laughed them into the ocean," Summer writes. "Little did I realize that getting evicted from my marriage was actually, for me, a new lease on life." She goes to Billings (Montana's biggest city) with Alice, shopping for used books for the library. Alice is fretting that after five kids, she doesn't turn her husband on anymore. She asks Summer for advice. Summer tries to find a salon in Billings and the best she can do is the Rim Rocks Beauty Academy. Summer just got her first paycheck from the magazine and she should put the money toward building materials, but she can't help herself. Alice and Summer exchange cultures, learn from each other about life. Alice tells Summer that Chance was married before, has a young son, that the ex is remarried and living in Bozeman. Summer pops for the make-over – she only has money for one,

though, so she glosses over that by telling Alice that Summer just doesn't have time to get one for herself. And frankly, Billings doesn't rank up there with Mr. Patrick's Salon in Soho, so she treats Alice. Alice says she feels as pretty as Miss Montana. Summer keeps helping others in this recurring theme of giving of herself when she's still struggling to pick up the pieces of her own life and get herself in order and back on track.

106: Cars, Scars, & Powder Puffs

At the annual Founder's Day Rodeo, there is a tribute to Chance's father, a memorial belt buckle for the all-around rodeo cowboy. Chance and Summer meet up and are awkward around each other. Libbie is in the demolition derby, competing against the men in her pink "*The Bitch*" car that she got from Jakob. Afterwards, there is a Powder Puff demolition derby, just women and high school kids. Chance can't believe it when he hears Summer's name called as a driver. Summer, trying to get over her fear, enters the Powder Puff derby and spends the entire race running away from everyone in a wood-paneled station wagon. She wins the contest after everyone else wrecks, waiting them out. Chance comes over to her at the end to congratulate her. He looks over the car and says, "Not a scratch on her." Summer says, "The same can't be said of me. I have scratches, I have scars, but I'd like to start slow if you'd be willing." He agrees.

107: Wireless Heaven

Mac asks Summer to help him run his real estate/land speculation office, that he's got this huge idea to turn Heaven into the first ever "e-Colony," that it will be a prototype for rural communities that want to keep from blowing away. The e-Colony concept, Mac explains, is that those who work at home and are self-employed can live "anywhere, so why not live somewhere where their mortgage is \$500 a month for a 3,500 square foot house instead of paying two- or three-grand monthly for a place half the size in a big city?" This will be a boost to the economies of small towns and also the school districts, giving them more students so they don't have to close the local schools or even consolidate – the latest trends – with other nearby towns' school districts. Summer says that she can't work with Mac, that she's committed to the café and her magazine column and, privately, she's committed to not turning the place into a futuristic trailer park. Mac goes off on his own and botches the ad and an interview, makes the place sound like it's courting the Internet porn industry. The next week, the town gets an influx of "businessmen" in cheesy moustaches and gold chains with well-endowed women hanging on their arms. At the Stockman's Bar, Summer helps out a member of the adult internet industry who is drunk and about to get his ass kicked. He's wearing a cowboy hat and picking fights. Chance sees Summer driving the guy back to his motel and gets jealous, saying, "Had no idea you were nothing more than a 'Buckle bunny'" – western vernacular for rodeo groupies. Summer goes to Mac and tells him that she still can't work for him, but that if he wants to run things past her, she can help prevent another porn fiasco, but he can't let Chance know about it. Mac asks if it's because she likes Chance, and she admits she does. "Maybe you can help me talk to him about selling off the Purdy Place," he asks. She tells him he's pushing his luck. Later, she's paranoid that Chance found out about this, but he's mad about the porno cowboy, that she's only

interested in cowboy hats and not who's wearing them. She reassures him that's not the case.

108: Falling

Halloween. Summer wears an orange poncho she found in the old Jeep that Jakob lent her, and she wears it everywhere out of fear that she is going to be mistakenly shot by a hunter. She enters the Stockman's Bar and people are dressed up for Halloween. Jakob is there, dressed as a black and white dairy cow, a pink udder sticking from his stomach. Summer convinces him to dance with her. "It's like dancing with four horny teenaged boys," she says, the teats on the udder poking into her. And Chance is there. He dances with her. "What are you supposed to be, Pancho Villa?" And she laughs. "You know," Chance tells her, "his dying words were, 'Don't let it end like this. Tell them I said something.'" And she uses this in her journal entry. *Say what you mean. Say something, anything.* Summer wants to fit in with the locals, so she takes part in betting pool centered around when the first snowflake will fall. Secretly, Summer doesn't want to win and take the local folks' money, so she signs her name to the first available day, November 1st, as there is no chance it will snow in the next day. Chance asks, "You feeling lucky, huh?" She can't believe he uses such a corny line. They get drinks in to-go cups, go up a mountain to the site of an abandoned fire lookout, spread out a blanket, get cozy. Millions of stars in the sky. It starts snowing. It's after midnight, she wins the betting pool. *It's okay if it ends like this, she says, it's only just beginning.*