

## GET GOOD

HOPE

When I was a little girl, I remember our neighbor came to my Daddy to ask for help.

LEONARD CHAMBERS

I hate to ask, but... I don't have much choice. My hay it'n ready to come out of the field... If I could just borrow some for a couple of weeks, I'll replace every bit of it.

HOPE

My daddy gave him what he could, but it wasn't much, so the man went to my Uncle, who had a gigantic barn full of hay, and asked:

LEONARD CHAMBERS

If I might be able to just borrow a little. Just until it's time to harvest. Otherwise I'm gonna lose the whole herd.

HOPE

But my Uncle wasn't so generous.

UNCLE P

I reckon you coulda planned a bit better. I can't give you none of my hay. I've gotta take care of my own first.

HOPE

And so the man left. To ask somebody else. And that very night a thunderstorm came up an lightning struck my uncle's barn. Everybody came to help try to put it out. There were people running buckets from the creek, but by the time it hit that hay, there was nothing they could do, but watch it burn. My Daddy pulled all of us young ones aside and said:

"Now this is something I want y'all to always remember... You do good, you're gonna get good. You do bad, and it's gonna come back to you.

By the next morning, my Uncle was alone... watching the last bits of his barn smolder into blackness. The barn was gone, the equipment, the hay. And, lo and behold, here comes Leonard Chambers.

UNCLE P

I suppose you're here to gloat.

LEONARD CHAMBERS

No, sir. I don't revel in any man's misfortune. I just thought you could use a hand.

HOPE

Here was Leonard Chambers, a man my uncle had refused to help and what's worse—humiliated the day before. He could have been smug. He could have been angry, but no, he was there with a hammer. And wood. And nails. And neighbors.

And while the men began raising walls on a new barn, the women sat by the water—catching fish, cleaning 'em, frying them up. Making hushpuppies and watching the children play.

*(FAITH taps a youngin' in the water with the tip of her fishing pole.)*

FAITH

Hey, now. Y'all don't too far out. A gator might get you!

HOPE

And when all the fish were fried... and the Mamas looked around, they didn't know if it was going to be enough. There was practically a whole town to feed

FAITH

It'll be close.

TRUE

There just ain't no way.

HOPE

So they scuttled to their gardens to see what they had.

HARMONY

I've got some tomatuhs.

JOY

I've got some peas.

LITTLE KID

I've got a frog.

MERCY

Whoa, now! How 'bout a carrot.

LOVE

And some onion.

PATIENCE

How do y'all feel about okra?

*(The women start chopping up vegetables to put in the stew. And one by one start adding their contributions.)*

HOPE

And they put together everything they could spare and threw it in a big old pot. Now that wasn't the first time I ate swamp gravy... and it certainly wasn't the only time I saw our neighbors cook it up and help one another.

But looking back, I can't help but marvel at the how everybody was willing to give all they had to help this man who only thought about himself. How they were willing to go without to help everybody they could.

*(She starts dishing out the Swamp Gravy and handing it out.)*

We don't just make swamp gravy 'cause it tastes good. We make swamp gravy, because we need to. Cause when everybody throws in what they have to offer, a little goes a long way. Because when everybody's doing their part, we can take care of one another. We can feed everybody's soul.

We make swamp gravy—to remind ourselves that even when we are apart, help is just a stone's throw away. A friendly face. A phone call. A wave.

We make swamp gravy to know we aren't alone. Because we aren't, even when it feels that way.

We make swamp gravy to remember.

And to *know* that sometimes, it's humanity that shows us the real meaning of grace.

It don't ever hurt to be reminded.