



NCCA
ENTERTAINMENT INC.



CONTACT INFO: KELLY R. TENNEY
EMAIL: NCCAENTERTAINMENT@GMAIL.COM
PHONE: 910.262.9307

GENRE: Southern Gothic / Psychological Thriller

Format: Television Movie (Lifetime Original)

Tone: Eve's Bayou meets Chinatown by way of Greenleaf — a brooding, poetic thriller laced with gospel, guilt, and generational trauma.

Setting: Small-town Georgia — rich with religious ritual, Southern charm, and secrets buried beneath stained glass.

LOG LINE

When gospel superstar Harmony Wells returns to her Georgia hometown after her grandmother's mysterious death, she uncovers a decades-long web of abuse and corruption hidden within the church that raised her — and discovers the shocking truth about her own origin.

SERIES TONE & STYLE

- Voiceover-heavy noir narration delivered by Harmony (e.g. Funny thing about devils... they always smile like pastors.)
- Moody cinematography: candlelight on stained glass, shadows in sanctuaries, slow jazz and blues underscore gospel rituals.
- Stylized visual motifs: torn hymnals, flickering neon crosses, blood on white gloves, water as both salvation and secrecy.

THEMES

- Silence as complicity — The cost of protecting institutions at the expense of victims.
- Spiritual hypocrisy — The collision of sacred spaces and systemic abuse.
- Legacy and identity — A woman learning that her very birth was an act of violence... and deciding what to do with that truth.
- Female resistance — Women across generations breaking silence and reclaiming truth.

THREE ACT STRUCTURE

ACT ONE: Voices in the Walls

- Harmony Wells, a rising gospel star, returns home to bury her grandmother, Mother Wells, only to be met with suspicion and false piety.
 - The local church — Salvation Temple, led by Pastor Cross — gives her a grand welcome, but Harmony senses something sinister beneath the service.
 - She finds a hidden note from her grandmother warning her that truth don't rest easy.
 - Strange gaps surround Mother Wells' death — her cremation was sudden, with no autopsy.
 - Harmony begins snooping — and finds financial discrepancies, whispers of abuse, and hints of a darker secret: her own paternity may be tied to Cross.
-

ACT TWO: Sanctified Lies

- With help from Faith, Harmony discovers a secret ledger of laundered donations and evidence of sexual misconduct going back decades.
 - Tensions flare with her mother, Blessed, whose silence protected the church for years. Blessed finally admits Harmony's birth followed a rape by Cross.
 - The FBI, led by Agent Vance, pressures Faith and Harmony to bury the abuse to protect a larger federal money laundering investigation.
 - The town becomes divided — protests, town halls, media coverage — as Harmony and others speak out.
 - Harmony is attacked in a parking lot. Faith is abducted. They survive, but the danger is real.
 - Despite threats, Harmony finds a tape of Cross confessing and photographs implicating him in her grandmother's death.
-

ACT THREE: The Reckoning

- On Easter Sunday, Harmony interrupts Cross's sermon and exposes the truth from the pulpit — including that he is her father and her mother's rapist.
- Other victims stand and testify. Federal agents arrest Cross mid-sermon. The town explodes in grief, rage, and chaos.
- A power vacuum forms in the church. A new pastor steps in — smiling, smooth... familiar.
- Harmony and Faith resist government efforts to silence them. They vow to publish the truth — regardless of political cost.
- Marcus, in rehab, begins seeking redemption.
- The final scenes — a candlelight choir service led by survivors, Harmony launching a stripped-down, truth-fueled tour, and a haunting final image of the church doors closing behind another smiling man in a suit.

LIFETIME FIT AND APPEAL

- Topical and urgent: Addresses clergy abuse, corruption, and survivor courage — highly resonant for Lifetime's audience.
- Strong Black female leads: Multi-generational drama with emotional, layered women at the core.
- Moody thriller pacing: Combines character drama with a dark investigative engine that pulls viewers toward explosive reveals.
- Standalone resolution: The film closes with emotional clarity and community consequence — while suggesting cyclical danger.

ONE-SHEET: DIVINE DECEPTION NOIR

They called her back for a funeral. She stayed for the reckoning.

Format: Lifetime Original Movie

Genre: Southern Gothic Thriller / Noir

Tone: Eve's Bayou meets Greenleaf meets Double Jeopardy

Runtime: Approx. 90–95 minutes

Target Audience: Women 25–54, BIPOC viewers, fans of **Secrets of a Marine's Wife, The Clark Sisters, and The Stranger She Knew**

THE HOOK

When gospel superstar Harmony Wells returns to her Georgia hometown for her grandmother's funeral, she uncovers a web of lies, laundered money, and generational abuse hidden beneath her church's holy facade. The deeper she digs, the closer she comes to discovering that the man she's feared her whole life — the town's beloved pastor — is not only a criminal, but her biological father and her mother's rapist.

CASTING IDEAS

HARMONY WELLS — Gospel star with a haunted past, brave but wounded

- Tier 1: Keke Palmer, Chloe Bailey, Dominique Fishback
 - Tier 2: Ryan Destiny, Lex Scott Davis, Imani Lewis
 - Wildcard: Sierra McClain (if music performance is key)
-

FAITH CROSS — Pastor's conflicted daughter, holding secrets and guilt

- Tier 1: Teyonah Parris, Meagan Good
 - Tier 2: Chantel Riley, Ebony Obsidian, Jasmine Cephas Jones
-

PASTOR JONATHAN CROSS — Charismatic and controlling, a serpent in silk

- Tier 1: Courtney B. Vance, Giancarlo Esposito, Blair Underwood
 - Tier 2: Russell Hornsby, Elvis Nolasco, Mykelti Williamson
-

BLESSED WELLS — Harmony's mother; devout, damaged, and silently complicit

- Tier 1: Angela Bassett, Lynn Whitfield
 - Tier 2: Tina Lifford, Vanessa Bell Calloway, Adina Porter
-

AGENT PATRICIA VANCE — FBI agent with ambiguous motives

- Tier 1: Regina King, Nia Long
- Tier 2: Erika Alexander, Judy Reyes, Anika Noni Rose

DIVINE DECEPTION

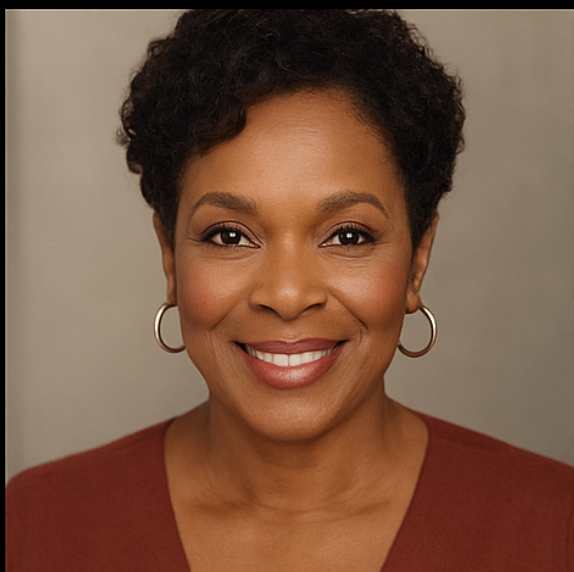
CAST LOOKBOOK



RAVEN GOODWIN



CLIFTON POWELL



VANESSA BELL CALLOWAY



WENDELL PIERCE

LIFETIME

DIVINE DECEPTION

CASTING LOOKBOOK



AMANDA SCHULL



KEITH ROBINSON



LORETTA DEVINE



DANNY STRONG

Lifetime

CONCEPT

Divine Deception is a Southern gospel noir — a lyrical descent into power, silence, and the cost of truth. Set in a small town just outside Atlanta where the church is king, the film explores what happens when the cornerstone of a Black community — its spiritual home — is revealed to be a sanctuary for secrets.

At its heart, it's about women who survive behind closed doors... until one finally opens them.

Director Match Suggestions

- **Tina Mabry** (*Queen Sugar, Mississippi Damned*) – Southern storytelling with emotional and visual weight.
- **Christine Swanson** (*The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel*) – Strong track record in faith-rooted drama with mass appeal.
- **Dawn Wilkinson** (*Greenleaf, Step Up: High Water*) – Known for balancing layered character work with stylized visuals.

THEMES

- Institutional betrayal & religious abuse
- Mother-daughter survival & silence
- Power, corruption, and Southern legacy
- Female-led reckoning in a male-dominated system

MARKETABILITY

- **Topical:** Reflects real-world church abuse scandals and political cover-ups
- **Thrilling:** Pacing mixes noir investigation with high-emotion family reveals
- **Cinematic:** Southern Gothic visuals (stained glass, graveyards, gospel music)
- Culturally specific, broadly resonant: Faith, family, justice, and identity

Lookbook or Mood Reel References

- **Greenleaf** (OWN) – For its Southern Gothic church politics and family secrets.
 - **Eve's Bayou** – For its lush, poetic visual language and intergenerational trauma.
 - **Double Indemnity** meets **Gospel Noir** – A blend of shadowy visual storytelling and spiritual reckoning.
-

Marketing Hooks & Promo-Ready Taglines

- *"Not every sin can be washed away."*
 - *"When the choir stops singing, the truth starts screaming."*
 - *"In this church, redemption wears a mask."*
 - *"Faith, family... and fraud."*
-

Target Audience & Market

- **Primary:** African-American women 30–65, faith-based audiences, Lifetime viewers.
 - **Secondary:** Fans of prestige Southern dramas, true crime, and psychological thrillers.
-

Core Audience

- Viewers of *Greenleaf*, Tyler Perry's *The Haves and the Have Nots*, *The Clark Sisters*, *Delilah*, and *Eve's Bayou*.

- Church-going communities and Black Southern cultural enthusiasts.
 - Lifetime's loyal fanbase seeking emotional, high-stakes storytelling rooted in family and betrayal.
-

Why It Sells

- **Genre Blend:** Southern Gothic, faith-based drama, and noir thriller in one.
 - **Lead Role for a Powerful Black Actress** – A strong showcase for rising or legacy talent.
 - **Timely Themes:** Explores corruption, generational trauma, and reclaiming voice amidst power structures—deeply resonant post-#MeToo and in an era of reexamining institutional trust.
 - **Tight Budget Friendly:** Church/community settings allow for high emotional impact with low logistical footprint.
 - **Built-in Community Buzz:** Naturally marketable to gospel communities, church networks, and regional Southern circuits.
-

Comparable Films & Series

- *Greenleaf* (OWN)
- *The Clark Sisters: First Ladies of Gospel* (Lifetime)
- *Delilah* (OWN)
- *Eve's Bayou*
- *A Fall from Grace* (Netflix)
- *Saints & Sinners* (Bounce TV)

Story & Hook – Why This Story Matters Now

Divine Deception holds a mirror up to the institutions we trust the most—church, family, and fame—and dares to ask what happens when those pillars collapse. It's a gripping noir about reclaiming voice, legacy, and truth in a community where silence has been survival.

In a media landscape hungry for **emotionally resonant stories centered on Black women**, this film delivers catharsis, suspense, and righteous fire.

Demographics

- I. **Age:** 30–65
- II. **Gender:** Predominantly female
- III. **Region:** Southern U.S., urban centers with large African-American populations
- IV. **Lifestyle:** Churchgoers, fans of Lifetime/OWN dramas, gospel music audiences, true crime podcast listeners, cultural critics



DIVINE DECEPTION BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS

BUDGET: \$1.5 MILLION

Schedule:

- 15 Day prep
- 15 Day Shoot
- 5 Day Wrap
- 6 Week Post

Writer:

- Budget assumes \$92,153 Writer fees with WGA
- Budget assumes \$20,000 Production bonus

Producer:

- Budget assumes \$350,800 Producer Fees

Director:

- Non-DGA Director \$45,000

Cast Assumptions:

- Cast Lead #1 \$125,000
- Cast Lead #2 \$125,000
- Supporting cast sag scale

Production & Creative Assumptions:

- The budget assumes filming on location in Atlanta, GA
- Local D.P.
- 2 Stand-ins ROS
- 75 BG
- Shot on Stage/Location

Post Production:

- Allowance for 1 Editor and 1 Assistant Editor
- Composer \$10,000

Tax Credit & Financial Assumption:

Georgia State Tax Credit \$375,000