

EXT. TRAIN YARD - DUSK - 1917

ELLEN BROOKS (21) a beautiful, free spirited wanderer wearing mud caked overhauls, with her long hair tucked into a straw hat, races to catch a train.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
Throughout my life wanderlust would
rise up and get the better of me.

She latches on, just barely making it. Her legs dangle trying to catch on to the ladder.

MARICOPA SLIM (40s) the meanest yard bull in the country, moves from the shadows of the train car and smiles down at Ellen with the full anticipation the pain he is about to inflict. Slowly he lowers his foot over the side.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
I was fearless.

Maricopa Slim places his heel on Ellen's hand and begins to grind. Ellen SCREAMS and tears her hand loose.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
I didn't care about the dangers.

She now dangles by one hand. A BRAKIE nearby YELLS. Ellen's hat is torn off with the rushing wind and her long hair rolls out. Maricopa Slim falters upon seeing she's a girl, and is pushed by the Brakie. The men tussle.

EXT. TOWN

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
There was just so much I had to see
and know.

Ellen rides a motorcycle with a young man. She throws back her hands enjoying the thrill of the ride.

EXT. MUDDY STREETS

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
And Sometimes I was in the mood for
trouble.

Ellen is fist fighting two other girls. They SCREAM and claw and pull hair and punch. THREE MEN stand on the sidelines and cheer.

INT. BAR - DAY

A drink slides down the bar and into Ellen 's hand.

BARTENDER
You a sporting girl?

ELLEN BROOKS
Hell no! I want to own my own
place.

INT. ELLEN 'S HOUSE - DAY

Ellen swings the door open.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
I sure didn't plan on becoming the
most prosperous Madam in the west.

We reveal behind Ellen some lovely ladies ready for action.

ELLEN BROOKS
Well hello, there.

Men walk inside.

EXT. DESERTED ROAD

Ellen stands in front of a brand new Buick. A Sheriff moves from the shadows of a nearby shack. They stare each other down. She throws him the keys to the car. He nods.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
And there'd be times when I'd never
want to make another fix with the
law...

EXT. WHOREHOUSE - DAY

A PIMP SLAPS his girl across the face in front of Ellen. She recoils.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
...or deal with a pimp...

INT. WHOREHOUSE PARLOUR ROOM - DAY

Men and women party drunkenly.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
...or see another whorehouse again.

Ellen stands by looking half amused and half bored then turns and looks out the window at a tall tree.

ELLEN BROOKS
But I've lived the way I had to...

EXT. OKLAHOMA - SOUTH BANK OF THE NORTH CANADIAN RIVER - DAY

TITLE: 1905, OKLAHOMA

We pan down a tall tree.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
...and my rebellious spirit had
been bred into me from 'way back.

Now a young girl (age 7) Ellen sits HIGH on a branch and uses a pocket knife to scratch her name into the bark.

Her brother RORY (13) calls up to her.

RORY
Carol. Wanna play tag?

Ellen agrees and dangles precariously from one limb to the next as she makes her way down.

Her FOUR BROTHERS, ranging in age from 8 to 16 are at the rivers edge rough-housing.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY

The children all race through the brisk November field, past an idyllic farm house towards home - two tents and two pair of horses. Losing interest in the game, Ellen pauses outside one of the tents and peers in.

INT. SUPPLY TENT - DAY

Supplies and tools are set neatly on the wooden floor. On top of the table at the room's center are jars of fruit and some coffee. Ellen 's Pa, COLE, (30s) is hunkered down by the cookstove holding his jackknife in one hand while he flips the blade open and shut with his thumbnail. His long mustache droops dispiritedly over the corners of his lips. Ellen 's Ma, MAY (30s) gives Ellen a look to keep her mouth shut.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

We all knew to keep our mouths shut when Pa was in that position because he was considering a problem. Generally, that the farm we'd been on was worked out and we'd have to pack up and move to another one.

The knife blade flashes clean in the light of the stove's wood fire. CLICK...CLICK ...CLICK... Mrs. Brooks moves about the tent quietly pretending to be absorbed in her own work making dinner, but is actually watching and measuring her husband.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

This might go on for days if his problem was a difficult one. For while Pa was long on considering he was short on deciding.

The sound of Cole Brooks's knife fills the small space. CLICK...CLICK ...CLICK. May Brooks sets down her work and places herself directly in front of her husband.

MAY BROOKS

Cole.

COLE BROOKS

May?

MAY BROOKS

It's time to do something.

Cole SIGHS heavily, puts his knife in his pocket, and heaves himself erect.

COLE BROOKS

I reckon. You and the younguns stay here. I'll hitch up the team and go see about things.

EXT. WAGON - DAY

Cole loads things into a surrey hitched to two horses as the entire family is gathered to see him off. He kisses May, steps into the surrey, waves to his kids and drives away.

Ellen watches the wagon until it become small in the distance.

EXT. TENT - DAY

HANK (16) LARRY (15) and Rory use rocks as hammers to nail the tent securely to the wooden floors as Ellen and May and BOBBY (8) wash and hang clothes that are made of linsey.

EXT. TENT - DAY

The weather is harsher out. Winter is close. Hank, and Larry bank the tent with Earth as Ellen and May mend clothes, and in a distance, Bobby and Rory trek towards them with a bundle of firewood.

EXT. GRANARY - DAY

The land is lightly dusted white with snow. May Brooks carries a broom and basket. She waves to a FARMER in the distance and heads into:

INT. GRANARY - DAY

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

Food was our big problem, but Ma solved it by going to a nearby granary and getting permission to sweep the floors for the kafir corn that spilled on them.

May sweeps and gathers the corn into her basket.

INT. SUPPLY TENT - NIGHT

The wind outside is strong and howls through then tent. May dollops out a mush of kafir corn from a large kettle to each of the children for their dinner. They are huddled close together at the table. The boys are joking and being silly.

LARRY

What's for dinner? Corn. What's for lunch? Corn?

HARRY

Would you like some corn with your corn?

RORY

What's for breakfast?

BOBBY

(raises his hand)

Oh. Oh. I know!

LARRY

Yes, Bobby?

BOBBY

Corn.

Larry musses Rory's hair. Everyone Laughs.

LATER INT. SUPPLY TENT - NIGHT

All of the them sit in a circle around the cook stove, snug to each other, tacking rugs.

MAY BROOKS

Oh, but Your Pa loved those Ozark mountains. And he knew how to work them. We had of the most prosperous farms anywhere about. The only trouble, we was borrow poor. All your Pa's relatives kept wanting to borrow everything and your Pa never was one to turn kin away. So I made him move, I made him leave the mountains and come here to Oklahoma.

INT. SLEEPING TENT - NIGHT

The three boys sleep on one bed together and Carol, Bobby and her Mother sleep in another bed. Sheets of bleached flour sacks that have been sewn together cover them.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

That we were poor Okies never occurred to us. It was a word used by outsiders. And If a feeling of difference is psychologically bad for children, this is one scar the Brooks clan never developed. Wasn't this how everyone lived?

EXT. TENTS - NIGHT

It's a full moon and the land is covered with deep snow. The wind whips against the tent.

The shot transitions from winter to spring.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Everyone busies themselves planting corn.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

Most of the mountain people were moonshiners, and so were we. Pa had a still hid up in the woods, and the enemy was any man who wore a badge.

EXT. TENT'S - DAY

Ellen sits in front of the tents, warmed in the sun, watching the patterns a breeze makes in the high grass that grows alongside the nearby road when suddenly she sees the top of the wagon! Ellen jumps up.

ELLEN BROOKS

Pa's coming home! Pa's coming home!

She races down the road to greet him.

ELLEN BROOKS (CONT'D)

Pa's coming home!

Out of the woods and fields the Brooks clan comes running. Hank, Larry, Rory and Bobby, all head down the trail to greet their Pa, JUMPING and DANCING and YELLING alongside the wagon until Cole Brooks pulls to a stop near the tent.

May walks slowly towards her husband trying to read his expression.

COLE BROOKS

May, children.

Cole looks around at the tent and the ragged clothes on his children and wife, his body trembling slightly at what he's about to say. He throws up his hands.

COLE BROOKS (CONT'D)

We're rich!

There's a disbelieving pause.

COLE BROOKS (CONT'D)

I mean it, we're rich! We own a whole cattle ranch. Twelve hundred acres of land, four hundred head of cattle, twenty horses, a big white house, and a big red barn, and corrals, and bunks ... all clear... all ours. Now, what do you think of that?

Larry throws his hat in the air and let's out a WHOOP! CHEERS follow. May rushes to her husband and he folds her into an embrace. The children jump up and down pushing in on the hug.

EXT. TENTS - DAY

Cole and the boys cut strips off the tents and throw the piles of ribbon onto the fire as May and Ellen pack things into the wagon.

COLE BROOKS

I'd sold the surrey, the horses and everything I had to get a stake. Soon everyone dropped out but a rancher named S. N. Star. Then I won all his money too. And he said, "Well, You've got every body's money, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I own a cattle ranch, a good place, and I'll play you that ranch, lock, stock, and barrel, for what you got off us." And I said, "All right.

Cole turns to his family.

COLE BROOKS (CONT'D)

Thar ya have it.

EXT. TENT'S - LATER - DAY

They all pause for a moment as the second tent collapses and the fire grows wild with another bundle of strips.

COLE BROOKS

We ain't never gonna live in a tent again.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

The whole family is piled into the wagon heading to their new home. May is seated next to Cole, the children are in back.

MAY BROOKS

Tell me about the house.

COLE BROOKS

It's all white and has got a lot of bedrooms and is furnished real nice. And, May, in the parlor there's something you've always wanted—an organ.

MAY BROOKS

An-an organ! Cole, you're sure?

He solemnly raises his hand.

COLE BROOKS

I swear to ya, an organ that plays.

Tears come to May's eyes and buries her face in Cole's neck.

COLE BROOKS (CONT'D)

One more thing I got to tell ya. After the poker game was over, Mr. Star says to me, "Cole, I'm glad you won that damn ranch. It's a white elephant. Mebbe I shouldn't have pulled this on ya, but there's a neighbor out there I ain't never been able to get on with, and you won't neither, lest you kill him. His name is Ray Lane. He's crazy jealous and mean as a rattlesnake."

MAY BROOKS

Land sakes!

COLE BROOKS

I told Star I figgered I could handle Ray Lane without too much trouble. But—

Cole turns in his seat to face the children in the back of the wagon.

COLE BROOKS (CONT'D)

You younguns air to leave him alone, stay off his land and don't never pester him. Hear?

EXT. A DISTANCE FROM THE NEW FARMHOUSE - DAY

Cole stops the wagon down the road from the farmhouse and the whole family stares, stunned into silence.

The house is white with green trim around the windows and a red roof. It sits high on a hill, commanding all the other buildings. Behind it is a blacksmith shop and a windmill. Just to the north of the house is a pole corral and beside it a bunkhouse for the cowboys. Behind it all is a majestic barn over a hundred feet long, two stories tall, and with great double doors on one end extending the full height. The doors stand open to reveal a loft spilling over with golden hay.

MAY BROOKS

Oh, Cole ... Cole...Cole.

Cole flushes and slaps the reins on the horses rumps and they ride towards their new life.

EXT. NEW FARMHOUSE GROUNDS - DAY

We follow Ellen as she runs past all of the buildings, her brothers weaving in and out of frame as they do the same. Larry races to the top of the windmill and down. Ellen jumps onto a pasturing horse, Rory does the same and they gallop the horses around. Ellen slides off hers as she approaches the house.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Ellen skips towards the front door.

INT. FARMHOUSE - PARLOR - DAY

When Ellen bursts into the parlor, her mother is seated on the bench in front of the organ. Her hands move with reverence over the keys and then stop at the scrollwork of the music rack. Ellen moves over to stand next to her Ma.

MAY BROOKS

Ain't it beautiful, Ellen?

ELLEN BROOKS

Ma, can you play it?

MAY BROOKS

Play it? Oh, no, I can't play it.

INT. ELLEN 'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ellen leans on the window ledge observing the expanse of stars from this new perspective on the second floor of her new home. She turns to face her room. It appears large and empty and lonely.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

That night I slept in a bed by myself for the first time in my life. How strange it was, how lonely.

EXT. MR. LANE'S FARMHOUSE - DAY

People mill around outside talking. Mrs. Lane greets May with a big smile. May hands her a pie that she baked. Ellen 's brothers scatter. The family moves inside.

INT. MR. LANE'S FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

The room is full of SEVERAL DOZEN men and woman mingling. Ellen runs in from outside, Bobby on her tail. She crashes into her Pa.

COLE BROOKS

Whoa, whoa!

ELLEN BROOKS

Pa, where's that mean old Ray Lane we gotta look out for.

The man next to Cole, RAY LANE, (40s) frowns. Cole Knuckles Ellen on the head.

COLE BROOKS

Git!

Ellen and Bobby take off GIGGLING.

LATER

A SMALL BAND plays a fiddle and a banjo. All of the kids and the young married folks clap and dance in the front room. Ellen dances with her Ma. Rory dances with Ray Lane's daughter, HANNAH (14).

Through a french door in the back of the room is the kitchen where the most of the men are now gathered at the poker table, ruffling cards.

When the SONG ends, Ellen looks overheated. She pushes through the crowd and into:

INT. MR. LANE'S FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Eight players are focused on their game of poker and a few more are there to spectate. Ellen squeezes past Mr. Lane heading towards the water bucket but she pauses noticing the tip of a card peeking up from Mr. Lane's celluloid collar, mostly hidden under his long hair. Ellen reaches over and pulls it out.

ELLEN BROOKS

Mr. Lane, here's a card you forgot.
It's the ace of spades.

The room goes quiet for a second and then a POKER PLAYER, tips over the table and SENDING EVERYTHING CRASHING to the ground.

The men break into a fight, rolling all over the small kitchen.

MRS. LANE (20s) bursts into the kitchen with a SCREAM OF ANGER that shakes the walls. She is carrying a hefty rolling pin and begins to lay about with it cracking one skull after another. Pretty soon the men forget to fight each other and spend their time fending off her furious blows. Singlehanded, she drives everybody out into:

INT. MR. LANE'S FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - NIGHT

Men stream into the front room. The MUSIC stops. Everyone scatters as Mrs. Lane swings the rolling pin wildly about.

EXT. MR. LANE'S FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Ellen walks back home in silence with her family. Her Pa has a nosebleed that her Ma tends to with a handkerchief. Rory shoots a mournful glance back and the house where Hannah stands in the window, then disappears.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

We never set foot on Lane land
again, for that was the beginning
of our feud.

INT. FARMHOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

May runs through a dark hallway. Ellen peeks out of her bedroom and follows.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)
What happened next showed that Ray
Lane was a little touched in the
head.

INT. FARMHOUSE - AT WINDOW - NIGHT

May and Ellen peek out the window. Lit by moonlight, a ghost moves about the yard MOANING and SHOUTING. At first it's terrifying and then it CRASHES into something in the yard and falls, revealing the mechanism behind the mystical event. This is no ghost, this is a drunk Ray Lane, wearing a sheet.

MAY BROOKS
Go out the back and get your
brothers. Quick now.

Ellen turns and runs.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

Hank and Larry FIRE, aiming high so as not to hit "the ghost." It works, and he promptly hight-tails it down the road.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Ellen is feeding the chickens as Cole rides up from the range, his face set in hard lines. He dismounts and heads towards the house. Ellen follows.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Cole walks over to a chair and then sags into it. Ellen stops at the door frame to listen. May turns from the stove.

MAY BROOKS
What is it Cole?

COLE BROOKS
Forty head of cattle died on me
today. Thirty-five yesterday. The
salt licks has been poisoned by Ray
Lane. I'm a gonna have to kill him.

MAY BROOKS

No, Cole! You don't want his blood
on your hands!

COLE BROOKS

Danged sight better than mine on
his'n. And that's the way it's sure
to be one or t'other.

Cole shoves back his chair and marches out, Ellen trails him.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Cole stands at the head of all of Ellen 's brothers and a few
ranch hands.

COLE BROOKS

The next time you catch Ray Lane on
our land, shoot him.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

There's tension in the air. SEVEAL RANCH HANDS / GUARDS
patrol near the cattle.

ELLEN BROOKS (V.O.)

Our ranch became an armed camp. But
nobody caught sight of the enemy
for several weeks.

INT. FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Ellen and Bobby are helping their Mom chop vegetables when
they hear SHOUTING outside. They look out the window. Then
turn back as Cole, Hank, Larry and Rory burst in, each
grabbing guns from he rack on the wall.

RORY

Ray Lane is down in the cornfield
and says he's gonna kill us all!

They all race out of the room, Ellen and Bobby trail after
them.

MAY BROOKS

Cole! Carol! Bobby. Get back here.

COLE BROOKS

Lane, you made yer last threat
against us!

EXT. CORNFIELD - DAY

SHOTS rattle back and forth between the Brooks's and the Lane's. Pigs SQUEAL retreating farther from the noise. Ellen is hunkered down in the grass a safe distance away with Bobby. Most of the shots go high or bite off pieces of corn stalk.

Hank throws his rifle aside. He takes out his pearl-handled 32 pistol. He drops to one knee and takes careful aim across the top of his hand. He pulls the trigger.

CLOSE ON RAY LANE

Across the corn stalks Ray Lane can sense the bullet coming and freezes like a deer that knows its last moment. As it penetrates his skull he let's out a SCREAM and flies four feet in the air. When he lands, he runs off through the cornfield with blood streaming down his face.

ON THE BROOKS FAMILY

Cole motions for everyone to hold their fire.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

The Sheriff stands at the front porch surrounded by the entire Brooks family.

SHERIFF

They're operating on him right now.
Doc says he's gotta put in a silver
plate to cover the hole. He says
that one of the Brooks gang got
him.

Cole speaks to Hank more than the sheriff when he takes the heat for his son.

COLE BROOKS

It was me, I shot him.

Hank looks down, overcome with emotion.

SHERIFF

I'm gonna need to take you in for
attempted murder Cole.

Cole squeezes Hank's shoulder and turns to face the Sheriff. He nods. Bobby and Ellen clutch their mother.