

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD

by

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based on the book by Thomas Hardy

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EXT. AMERICAN WEST - DAY

*Super - Summer, 1898*

A train chugs across the vast flat lands of far Wyoming. A black plume of smoke fades in its wake. Beside the tracks, telegraph poles stretch to the horizon, and dense flocks of crows perch along the wires.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Sitting in a passenger car filled with cigar smoke is beautiful, aristocratic KATHERINE EVERDENE (26). Her hair is pulled back from her face and gathered at the back in a complicated knot.

She holds a fancy hat box in her lap. The MEN look up from their papers or crane their necks around to sneak glances at her. She merely looks out the window.

Outside, she sees a buffalo scratching itself against the telegraph poles. As it passes out of her view, she catches the eye of the MAN behind her.

MAN

You don't see many of those anymore.

Katherine turns around without a word, but he will not take the hint. His speech is laced with lascivious suggestion.

MAN

The ranchers killed what was left.  
Didn't want them breeding with  
their cattle. Makes them too wild,  
hard to tame.

The other men perk up. The would-be suitor stands to move into the seat beside Katherine. She smoothly sets the hat box in the seat before he can plant himself.

MAN

You traveling alone, ma'am?

KATHERINE

Yes.

MAN

You want a little company?

Katherine locks his eyes with a icy glare.

KATHERINE

No, thank you.

The man switches quickly from fake charm to real anger. As he bends over to get his case from under the seat, he hisses under his breath to her.

MAN

People got to learn to go along to  
get along out here.

She turns back toward front as the man stomps away to another car.

LATER:

Katherine wakes from a light sleep when she hears the whistle. She rubs the sleep from her eyes and looks out the window.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

PEOPLE bustle about and make ready for the train's arrival at the station platform. Behind the station is the main street of a small town with a few brick buildings and dusty streets.

Opposite the platform stands a vast network of cattle pens where cowmen can be heard swearing and angry cattle braying. Beyond the station, the track does not continue. This is the end of the line.

Katherine stands in the doorway of the car looking out at the heat shimmers in the distance. Suddenly, she is lifted at the waist and set on the ground below. She spins to see her failed suitor tip his hat to her.

LATER:

Katherine stands beside a pile of luggage on the platform. She fidgets with her dress as she waits on someone. Just then, she grabs the sleeve of a young man running past.

KATHERINE

Excuse me. Do you know how far to  
the Everdene ranch?

The young man, GEORGE, suddenly takes off his dirty hat. He has never seen a beautiful woman, and he is stunned speechless.

GEORGE

I... I.. I...

But his stammering is cut short by another voice.

OAK

George, get a move on, boy.

George slams his hat back on, and runs past a man on horseback at the edge of the platform. This is GABRIEL OAK (30).

Oak is thin and tall; handsome, but not excessively so. He lingers on her a moment, and she nearly speaks, but he tips his hat to her and turns his horse away.

Just then, LIDDY SMALLBURY (28), squeals from the end of the platform.

LIDDY  
Are you Katherine Everdene?

KATHERINE  
(curt)  
Yes.

Liddy runs over and hugs Katherine.

LIDDY  
Thank Jesus. You just don't know how thankful I am that you've come.

Liddy, an awkward, emotional creature, bursts into spastic uncomfortable tears.

LIDDY  
I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I'm just so glad you're here.

KATHERINE  
Let's just get these things and leave the station, shall we?

LIDDY  
Silly me. I'm so stupid. Of course.

Liddy scrambles to pick up as many cases as she can.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Liddy and Katherine ride in a wagon along a pitted road. Katherine holds her hat on with one hand.

LIDDY  
Now, when you see the shape of things, don't get scared and run away. Things have gotten a bit run down is all. Everyone thought for sure we'd all be put out and the whole ranch sold off. But it'll clean right up! You'll see. Mr. Everdene was good to everyone.  
(MORE)

LIDDY (CONT'D)

He was like a father to me, even though he wasn't really. Everything has just gone wrong since he passed. Everyone run off except for Mr. Pennyways. When I got your letter that said you was going to keep the place, it was like a prayer being answered.

KATHERINE

Who's looking after the cattle?

LIDDY

They looks after themselves mostly. Your letters didn't say anything about a husband...

KATHERINE

I'm not married.

LIDDY

I'm a widow. My husband died working on the railroad.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry to hear that.

LIDDY

Well, don't you worry none. You'll get lots of offers out here.

KATHERINE

I don't care. I'm not interested in being married. Liddy, I may as well tell you, all I know about cows I learned in the past few months in Philadelphia. I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm going to make a go of it. Will you help me?

LIDDY

Me? Oh, yes! I'll help you. Everyone thought the whole place would be sold to Mr. Boldwood, but now, there'll be an Everdene on the land again. It'll be fine, you just watch and see.

Suddenly, Oak and George thunder past the wagon on horseback, kicking up a choking cloud of dust. Oak glances back at Katherine for an instant, which she notes before he disappears into the dust cloud.

KATHERINE

Who was that?

LIDDY

That's Gabriel Oak. He has a little spread nearby.

Katherine covers her mouth with her hand to keep out the dust.

KATHERINE

He has terrible manners.

EXT. EVERDENE RANCH - DAY

Liddy stops the wagon and points into the distance.

LIDDY

Well, there it is.

Katherine stands to see better. Amidst the rolling hills sits the large, homey Everdene ranch house. It is a two-story house, very civilized, with wide porches all around.

Katherine's face softens for a moment. This is the house she has been dreaming of for months. This is where she will call home.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Katherine sits at her Uncle's messy desk pouring over the ranch books. It is an enormous task determining the state of things; Uncle kept chaotic records.

Outside, she hears cursing. She stands and goes to the window. By the bunkhouse she sees a heavy-set man loading saddles, ropes, and other ranch equipment into the back of a wagon. This is MR. PENNYWAYS (45).

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - MORNING

Katherine crosses to where Pennyways has loaded a wagon.

KATHERINE

Good morning.

He turns a languid eye to her.

KATHERINE

My name is Katherine Everdene. You must be Mr. Pennyways.

MR. PENNYWAYS

What do you want?

KATHERINE

This is my ranch now. I've come to run it. What are you doing with those things?

Pennyways snorts.

MR. PENNYWAYS

Come to run it, have you?

KATHERINE

That's right.

MR. PENNYWAYS

I heard you come out to sell the place. I'd be an interested party to that.

KATHERINE

You heard wrong. I'm not interested in selling. Now,  
     (referring to the  
     things in the wagon)  
 what are you doing with all of that?  
 That belongs to the ranch.

Pennyways climbs into the wagon seat.

MR. PENNYWAYS

You're in over your head, Miss. Go home, before you get hurt.

Pennyways urges the horse on and rides away. Katherine fumes.

EXT. RANGE - DAY

Oak and George, both on horseback, are stopped at a long strand of barbed wire. Beyond the barbed wire is a stand of trees and a shallow stream. Behind them; Oak's small herd of longhorn cattle.

Oak is not happy to see the barbed wire which blocks his herd's path to the life-giving water. A sign nailed to one of the fence posts reads 'Property of the Great Northern Pacific Railroad.'

GEORGE

What you going to do?

Oak pulls a pair of wire cutters from his saddle and hops down.

OAK

Nobody owns the water, or this land.

He cuts the wire. It makes a pinging sound when it breaks.

OAK  
Bring them through.

George turns his horse back towards the cattle. Oak yanks the sign off the post and throws it down. He knows this will mean trouble.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Katherine is sitting at her Uncle's desk, pouring over the books again. Liddy enters carrying a tray.

LIDDY  
I brought you some coffee.

Katherine nods and Liddy sets the tray down.

LIDDY  
Can I sit in here with you? It's so quiet in the rest of the house. I won't bother you.

Katherine nods and Liddy sits.

KATHERINE  
I think Pennyways is trying to sell the ranch piece by piece. It's hard to tell anything from these books, though. Uncle kept terrible records.

LIDDY  
Oh, Mr. Pennyways is mean! Your Uncle hired him after he was sick and couldn't take care of things no more. He didn't know how Pennyways treated people. He wouldn't have stood for it. Not at all!

KATHERINE  
Well, I won't either. Come on. We're going out there to the bunkhouse and tell him to clear out.

Katherine stands but Liddy grabs her skirt.

LIDDY  
No! He's a bad man. I saw him hit man with a branding iron once.

KATHERINE  
Liddy, we're in this together, aren't we? We're friends, you and I?

Liddy is nearly crying again, but she nods.

KATHERINE

Then I need you to trust me. We'll be fine. We'll run him off, and hire all new men. This is our home, our place. Isn't it?

Liddy nods again, dries her eyes, and summons all the courage she can.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A light rain is coming down as Liddy and Katherine step out of the house.

INT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Liddy and Katherine approach and enter. The bunkhouse is a long room with several single beds in a row, a bit like a barracks. None of the beds have linens anymore. It is dark inside.

KATHERINE

Mr. Pennyways?

At the far end of the room, Katherine sees the red glowing eye of a cigar. From there, she hears, and just barely sees Pennyways.

MR. PENNYWAYS

What do you want here? This is my bunkhouse. I don't come into your house, you don't come into mine.

A cold fury resides in Katherine's tone.

KATHERINE

This bunkhouse belongs to me, along with the barn, the house, and every inch of the land. And I want you off it. So pack your things and go.

Katherine throws an envelope onto a table.

KATHERINE

There's two weeks pay. That, plus what you stole, is enough.

MR. PENNYWAYS

I been here three years. When your Uncle was laid up in bed, I kept this ranch going. I made it work, lady, and I am owed.

KATHERINE

You were paid and paid well. And now, you are owed nothing. In the morning, you're to leave, and then I never want to see you around here again.

Katherine takes Liddy by the arm and leaves.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Liddy and Katherine walk back towards the house.

LIDDY

He's mad. Why did you have talk to him like that? He'll come into the house in the middle of the night and do who knows what!

KATHERINE

Liddy, stop being such a ninny. If we don't stand up for ourselves, who will? Huh? Look at me! Who? And don't you dare start crying again, do you hear?

LIDDY

Yes, ma'am.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

Oak is kneeling at a creek washing his face when he hears horses hooves crunching through the leaves. He sees Katherine coming through the trees on the other side of the creek. She does not see him.

Suddenly, she reclines back in the saddle with her arms dangling to both sides and brings her feet up to the saddle horn. With her flowing dress and hair, she is like a Monet painting. She is hot in the long dress, so she lifts the folds of fabric and lets the cool air blow across her bare legs.

Oak holds his breath as she passes just a few yards away. A tree branch drags her hat from the back of the saddle, and after she has gone, he walks through the creek and picks it up.

EXT. THE RANGE - DAY

It is later in the day. Oak is on a small ridge looking after his cattle when he sees Katherine returning along the road below. She is riding into the sun and since she no longer has her hat, she shields her eyes with her hand.

Oak holds the hat in his gloved hands. He rides down the hill to the road and catches up to her.

OAK

Hi there. I found your hat.

Katherine eyes him warily, looks at the hat he holds out. This is the first real cow man she has met.

KATHERINE

How do you know it's mine?

Oak takes a split second to realize his blunder. She sees the flicker of panic in his eyes.

OAK

I, uh, I just figured.

Katherine takes the hat back and puts it on.

KATHERINE

Where did I drop it?

OAK

In that grove of trees over there.

She takes a moment to remember what she was doing, then spurs her horse to get away from him. Oak curses himself for not being more clever. He is annoyed at her reaction, however, and he catches up to her.

OAK

Round here, when someone does you a good turn, it's customary to thank them. You're new, maybe you didn't know that.

Katherine softens a bit.

KATHERINE

You're right. Thank you, Gabriel Oak.

OAK

How do you know my name?

KATHERINE

Liddy told me. I know you're a local farmer as well.

OAK

I'm a rancher, ma'am, not a farmer. You must be the new Everdene, come out to sell the place.

KATHERINE

I didn't come to sell. Everyone seems to think it, but it isn't true. I came here to run the place. This is my home now. I'm a rancher, too.

OAK

Well, welcome. Best to you.

Katherine smiles at his friendly acceptance of her goal. She spurs her horse again.

KATHERINE

Thank you for my hat.

OAK

What's your name?

KATHERINE

(as she rides away)

Ask Liddy!

Oak stops and watches as she rides away.

INT. LIDDY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Liddy sleeps in a small spare room just off the kitchen. She wakes with a start when she hears a little rock thrown against her window. Liddy looks out the window. Standing in the moon light, she sees MAE ROBINS (22), a lovely, slight, blonde girl.

MAE

It's me! Come on out!

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Liddy steps onto the porch as Mae comes up.

LIDDY

What are you doing?

MAE

Liddy, I run away! I just come by to say goodbye! I'm getting married!

LIDDY

What? Go home! You best be getting back before Mr. Boldwood finds out you gone.

MAE

I don't care what Oldwood thinks.  
I'm not going back. Liddy, didn't  
you hear me? I'm getting married!

LIDDY

(skeptical)

To who?

MAE

I can't say, because it ain't  
official yet. But I am! I'll miss  
you. You're the best friend that  
I've ever had.

LIDDY

Well... When? When are you coming back?

MAE

I don't know. I'm going to meet him  
now. I don't know when I'm going to  
be back. Maybe never. That's why I  
come to say goodbye to you.

LIDDY

Stay here.

Liddy hurries inside, and in a moment later, comes back out  
with a few pieces of bread.

LIDDY

You take this, and here's a bit of  
money, too. And you take good care  
of yourself, do you hear me, Mae?  
You be careful. Do you hear me?

MAE

I will. I love you, Liddy. Bye!

Mae reaches up and hugs Liddy hard, and then runs away into  
the night.

EXT. OAK'S RANCH - TWILIGHT

Oak kneels on the wooden porch of his ramshackle one room  
ranch house. At his feet is a tiny kitten, and Oak is  
pouring out a bit of canned milk from a tin for the kitty.

He hears the sounds of hoofbeats and looks up. Headed his  
way are several MEN on horseback. They are led by a burly  
RANGE DETECTIVE. Oak steals himself and steps off the porch  
just as they arrive.

RANGE DETECTIVE

Gabriel Oak, you have ten minutes to clear off this land. You're trespassing on Northern Pacific Railroad property.

OAK

This land doesn't belong to the railroad. This is free range. I got a right to work it like every other man.

RANGE DETECTIVE

Not no more. I got a deed here says The Northern Pacific Railroad owns this land. So you got to clear off it!

OAK

This is free range. Has been for as long as anyone knows. No one has the right to own it.

RANGE DETECTIVE

You're using up valuable time standing there. Now get your things and get going.

OAK

I have the same right to work this land as any other. You all know it.

Oak pleads with the other men.

OAK

Jim, we worked together at the Bar O. You and me rounded up all over this land. You know this is free range. Binny, I remember you talked about how you wanted to get yourself a stake, get a little bunch of cattle, just like I have here. Little Paul, Smith, Jackie, we all worked this land. I'm just trying to make something of myself! By the sweat of my brow, I'm just trying to have a little in this world! This is my home, those are my cows, my fences, my horses. I got a right to be here!

The other men look at the ground in shame. The detective takes out a pistol and points it at Oak.

RANGE DETECTIVE  
Mister, your rights end where this  
thing begins. Now get moving.

BANG! The detective is shot in the hand and he drops the  
pistol. From the side of the house, George comes out  
shooting with a lever action rifle.

GEORGE  
Get out of here! Go! Go!

OAK  
George, no!

George steps out, cocking and firing the rifle without pause  
to aim. After a chaotic moment, Oak sees George react to his  
first wound, and shortly after, he is struck several more  
times as the men return fire.

In just a few seconds, it is over, and George lays dead. Oak  
walks over to him and kneels.

RANGE DETECTIVE  
Run that cattle off, and the horses  
too. Get up on the porch and pull  
the house down. If he tries to stop  
you, shoot him down.

The men split in several directions. Some head towards the  
cattle that are grazing in a tight herd. They start firing  
and the cattle slowly start to disperse, then finally break  
into a run.

Another man rides over to Oak's corral and opens the gate.  
He fires as well, and Oak's horses flood out and head the  
same way as the cows.

When another man rides onto Oak's porch, the kitten runs  
away in fear. The men rope the support beams and tie off on  
their saddle horns. On signal, they have their horses back  
away, and the beams begin to give way. The first wall falls.  
The range detective rides over to Oak.

RANGE DETECTIVE  
Get moving, Oak! Go on!

Oak spins, and in one smooth move, he yanks the range  
detective off his horse, and starts to beat him. In no time,  
the other men are off their horses, and Oak is subdued. The  
range detective stands and hits Oak in the eye.

RANGE DETECTIVE  
Tie him up to that tree there.  
We'll whip this son of a bitch good!

But the other men don't move. BINNY speaks.

BINNY

Man's lost enough. You ain't taking his dignity too, mister.

(To Oak)

Sorry, Gabe. You knew it had to end someday.

But Oak doesn't want to talk. He shakes them off and walks into the woods.

EXT. OAK'S RANCH - MORNING

The sun rises on the remains of his house. There isn't much. The men pulled down all the walls and all his corral fencing and anything else that would have allowed him return.

Under a shady tree, Oak has dug a hole. He kneels and touches George's face. His kitten plays around his feet as he speaks.

OAK

I'm sorry. I don't even know your last name. Don't know where you're from. I just know you were a good boy, with a good heart. It's a merciless hard world, and you're better off where you are. Lord, you took him. Be good to him.

Oak stands, drags George by the arms until he falls into the hole, and starts to cover him up.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Katherine and Liddy are at a window watching the bunkhouse. They can see Pennyways staggering around inside.

LIDDY

He doesn't look like he's getting ready to go anywhere.

Katherine can take no more. She spins on her heel and leaves the room.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Katherine stands before a gun cabinet. She opens it and takes out a double-barreled shotgun. Liddy has followed her.

LIDDY

You're going to shoot him?

KATHERINE

If I have to. Where are the bullets  
for these things?

Liddy opens a drawer on the cabinet and takes out the shells.

KATHERINE

Do you know how to fire one of these?

Liddy, very uneasy with this latest idea, picks up a handful  
of shells.

LIDDY

Well, you take these and you shove  
them in here like this.

Liddy opens the breach and slides the shells into both barrels.

LIDDY

Then you close it up like this, and  
you pull back these hammers. After  
that, you just got to pull the trigger.

KATHERINE

Give me some more.

Katherine puts several more shells into the pocket on her  
dress and heads for the door.

EXT. EVERDENE RANCH - DAY

Katherine comes out the door with the huge shotgun cradled  
in her arms. Her face is a dangerous blank mask of anger.

INT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Pennyways is drinking from a whiskey bottle at his table  
when Katherine walks in. He regards her passively until she  
raises the shotgun, then pushes away from the table just in  
time. BOOM! Katherine fires and blasts the table to bits.

KATHERINE

Get out! Now!

MR. PENNYWAYS

Woman! You crazy?!!

Yes, she is. Katherine fires again, this time blowing out  
the window behind Pennyways. Katherine opens the breach, the  
hot shells eject, and she digs out two more and loads them.  
With an evil 'chunk' she closes the breach and raises the  
gun again. Pennyways calls out from under a table.

MR. PENNYWAYS

OK! OK!

Katherine steps away from the door as Pennyways, his facial hair dripping with whiskey, crosses and goes out the door. She follows with the rifle raised.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Pennyways is walking quickly away as Katherine comes out the door.

KATHERINE

Run!

She raises the shotgun and fires into the air. Pennyways starts running for his life. When he is nearly out of sight, she exhales, lowers the gun, and clutches her arm. Liddy rushes out to her.

EXT. RANGE - TWILIGHT

Oak walks along a road holding the kitten. He is still in shock at what has happened to his ranch and his dreams.

He becomes aware of a man running towards him. It is Pennyways, running away. He passes without a word. Then Oak becomes aware of a clanging, and slowly recognizes it as the sound of a fire bell. He raises his eyes and in the distance, sees a flickering light. Something is on fire.

EXT. RANCH - TWILIGHT

Oak arrives to see Liddy ringing the fire bell on the porch. She is wild with hysteria! A light flickers from inside the barn.

LIDDY

She's in there! She's in there!

Oak runs into the barn.

INT. BARN - TWILIGHT

Oak sees Katherine swinging a blanket at flames that are climbing up a stack of baled hay.

OAK

Go close the back doors! Go!

Katherine doesn't question him. She runs to the back doors and closes them, thus trimming the rising wind. Oak pulls the bales down. There are several burning, but they are not touching each other.

OAK  
 There's a pump by the bunkhouse!  
 Get a bucket of water, bring it back!

Oak swats and stomps at the flames as Katherine runs out.

EXT. RANCH - TWILIGHT

Katherine comes out of the barn and yells at Liddy!

KATHERINE  
 Help me!

She and Liddy run to the pump and find the bucket, already nearly full. Katherine takes it back to the barn.

INT. BARN - TWILIGHT

Katherine comes back with a bucket of water and hands it to Oak. He has already gotten most of the fire extinguished.

OAK  
 Get another!

EXT. BARN - TWILIGHT

Katherine exits for another bucket, but Liddy has brought a full one to the doors. They exchange buckets and Katherine heads back in.

INT. BARN - TWILIGHT

Oak has the fire out now. He takes the bucket and pours it in a few more smoking spots. The emergency has passed.

OAK  
 It's out. It's over.

He and Katherine exit the barn.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Oak is sitting on the steps of the house, when Liddy and Katherine exit with a lantern. Katherine hands Oak a glass of water, and takes note of the blood on his face.

KATHERINE  
 I'm sorry, but this is all we have.

OAK  
 It's fine. Thank you.

LIDDY

You saved the barn, Gabe! I thought she was going to burn up in there, but you saved it, thank the Lord....

KATHERINE

Thank you, Liddy. Can you get me a wet rag please?

Liddy goes inside. There is a quiet moment.

KATHERINE

Thank you.

OAK

You're welcome.

KATHERINE

I didn't introduce myself before. My name is Katherine Everdene.

OAK

Pleased to meet you.

Liddy returns with the rag, and Katherine takes it.

KATHERINE

Thank you Liddy. Good night.

Liddy is stung, unsure why she is being dismissed, but she sets the lantern down and goes inside. Katherine sits down beside Oak and moves to wipe the dried blood away from his face.

KATHERINE

What happened?

Oak looks away. She stops for a moment, but then goes back to cleaning his face.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry. It's none of my business. Do you still have a ranch?

OAK

No, ma'am. Everything's gone.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry.

She gets the blood off his face, being careful around his swollen eye.

KATHERINE

I need men to work this place. Do you want a job?

Oak says nothing, but his sadness is evident. Katherine, so angry in other circumstances, is gentle with him, sensing that his dreams have been shattered.

KATHERINE

You can move into the bunkhouse tonight. In the morning, you can take one of the horses and go spread the word that I'm hiring.

She stands.

KATHERINE

Good night, and thank you again. You can take the lantern with you.

Katherine goes back inside. Oak's kitten finds him again and crawls into his lap.

INT. PORCH - MORNING

Katherine and Liddy have set up a table on the porch of the house. There is a wooden box on the table, and Liddy fusses with a vase full of fall flowers set out as well. Katherine paces back and forth nervously.

KATHERINE

How long ago did he leave?

LIDDY

At least a couple of hours ago.

KATHERINE

Take those away  
(meaning the flowers)  
I don't want those here.

LIDDY

Oh, but they're so pretty.

KATHERINE

They make us look weak. That's what they'll think anyway. Flowers will only serve to confirm it.

Katherine opens the box and takes out a pocket watch. Liddy sees the tidy pile of cash inside.

KATHERINE

Take a good look. This is all we have to get us through. It's not as much as it looks. I sold everything I owned, and this is all I could raise.

Liddy notices someone coming.

LIDDY

Look! Here comes someone!

A man is approaching on horseback.

LIDDY

Oh, it's Mr. Boldwood. I told you about him. He has a big ranch with a huge house on it. He doesn't have a wife.

Katherine cuts Liddy a look.

KATHERINE

Not a word, Liddy.

MR. BOLDWOOD arrives. He doesn't get off the horse, but rides to the edge of the porch. Boldwood is a handsome man, forty or so, somewhat stern in appearance.

BOLDWOOD

Good morning.

KATHERINE

Good morning.

BOLDWOOD

Liddy.

Liddy looks to Katherine; she has just been told not to speak. Katherine gives her another exasperated look.

LIDDY

Good morning, Mr. Boldwood.

BOLDWOOD

(abrupt)

You the new owner?

KATHERINE

Yes. My name is Katherine Everdene.

BOLDWOOD

Hmm. Liddy, have you seen Mae? She's gone again.

LIDDY  
 (stricken)  
 No, sir.

BOLDWOOD  
 Well, let me know if she turns up.

Liddy nods. Boldwood tips his hat to Katherine, turns his horse around and leaves.

KATHERINE  
 Who's Mae?

LIDDY  
 She was an orphan that your Uncle took in. Mr. Boldwood took her on as a housekeeper. He's a good man in that way, but not in others.

KATHERINE  
 What do you mean?

LIDDY  
 Everyone thought he'd marry her after a while, but he didn't. Didn't even look twice at her and she cooked and cleaned to high heaven. She pined away for years. Poor Mae never had a family of her own and she wanted one so bad...

Several PUNCHERS are approaching on foot, led by Oak.

KATHERINE  
 (nods towards  
 approaching men)  
 Well, here it goes.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

A rough and tumble group of cow punchers have assembled in front of the house. Katherine address them from the porch.

KATHERINE  
 My name is Katherine Everdene. I'm looking for hands. I know it isn't common for a woman to run a ranch, but it won't be the first time either. I'll be fair, but don't think you can run me down. Now who wants to go to work?

One of the more scruffy punchers speaks up.

PUNCHER  
Where's Pennyways?

KATHERINE  
I fired him.

PUNCHER  
Well, who's going to be your foreman?

KATHERINE  
I won't have one. You'll answer  
directly to me.

This doesn't set well with the majority of the men. SAM, one of the two black men present, steps forward.

SAM  
I'll work for you, ma'am.

KATHERINE  
Fine. Who else?

OAK  
Where have you worked?

Katherine glances at Oak, not appreciating his intrusion.

SAM  
I worked my way on the railroad out here. Before that, on my farm, in Mississippi.

Oak looks to Katherine; Sam has no experience. But she given her word and will not go back. The other black man, DREW, seeing that blacks are welcome, raises his hand sheepishly.

DREW  
I'll work for you.

KATHERINE  
Where have you worked?

Drew looks down. He doesn't want to answer the question.

KATHERINE  
Have you worked on a cattle ranch before?

Drew shakes his head.

PUNCHER

Ma'am, you want yourself some first class punchers, me and my brothers here have worked at the Bar O, the Mitchell Brothers, the Chesters. But we ain't gonna work with no Negroes, first off, and you going to need yourself a foreman. I'd like to volunteer for the job.

Katherine takes a moment, then goes into a rage.

KATHERINE

You get the hell off my land! How dare you tell me who I can hire, if I need a foreman or not! You and your brothers go!

PUNCHER

Miss, you just don't know nothing about cattle or Negroes neither, now...

KATHERINE

Go! And every other one of you that think you can run me down.

The puncher and his scruffy brothers turn and go, along with several other men who do not wish to work for an uppity woman. Other than Sam and Drew, only two remain.

KATHERINE

Well, what about you two?

The taller of the two, MCFARLANE (28), takes off his hat. He has a heavy Scottish accent.

MCFARLANE

Aye. I'll doo me best fur ya, ma'am.

No one understood what he said, and he can tell. He speaks again; same accent but slower.

MCFARLANE

I said, I'll doo me best fur ya, ma'am.

KATHERINE

OK. What about you?

The other, BUSTEMANTE (23), sees he is being addressed and takes off his hat. Since he speaks very little English, he just smiles and nods.

KATHERINE

Where have you worked?

BUSTEMANTE

No se. Pardon.

Katherine looks to Oak, who looks away. This is not a dream crew for a ranch.

KATHERINE

Your pay will be five dollars a week. Liddy will make you breakfast and dinner each day and bring it to the bunkhouse. Your food will be good, your pay regular. If you're square with me, I'll be square with you. Do we have an understanding?

The men smile and nod, including Bustemante when he sees the others.

KATHERINE

You can move into the bunkhouse right now if you like. I'll have Liddy bring you out some breakfast.

Each man gathers his things and walks towards the bunkhouse.

KATHERINE

Mr. Oak?

Oak comes back to her.

KATHERINE

I'll need someone I can call on from time to time. Not a foreman. Just someone to help with the other men. Will you be that man for me?

OAK

You just sent away the most experienced men still pushing cattle around. These men... I don't even know if they can ride.

KATHERINE

They're all we have.

Katherine reaches into the strong box and hands him an envelope. 'Thank You' is written on the front in her flowery formal script.

KATHERINE

That's an advance. Go buy yourself whatever you need.

Oak nods, takes the money, and walks away.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

When Oak reaches the bunkhouse, he finds McFarlane standing at the door looking in. McFarlane's bag is still outside.

OAK  
What's the matter?

McFarlane nods at Sam and Drew, who are unpacking their things.

MCFARLANE  
I never lived with those before.  
Look at the size of those black bastards!

OAK  
They're the same as anyone. If you don't like 'em, go back to wherever you come from.

Oak brushes past. McFarlane shrugs his shoulders and picks up his bags.

MCFARLANE  
Sorry, mate. Jaysus!

He takes a deep breath and enters.

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

In a dank hotel bar, handsome SGT. FRANK TROY (29) raises his glass to make a toast. He is in uniform, as are his two sidekicks, DAVIS (23) and MCDUGALL (25). Hanging off his arm is a cheap BAR GIRL.

TROY  
Here's to dirt in your britches and flies in your food.

DAVIS  
Here, here!

They drink.

MCDUGALL  
Here's to underwear that can stand on its own, and 10 cent whores that can't.

TROY  
I'll have you know that this is the finest whore 10 cents can buy, and she can drink either of you under any table! But here, here!

They drink more.

MCDUGALL

You're going to miss the Army. When it's gone, you'll miss it all.

TROY

I have other plans, friend. Much bigger plans. That's the difference between you and me. I have plans! I have abilities that the Army could never use!

McDougall rolls his eyes. He's been hearing about Troy's plans for years.

DAVIS

What are you going to do, Sarge?

TROY

Race horses. I'm going to be a gentleman, and raise the fastest horses in the country. Big, fast horses that win races and make me very, very rich.

Troy gets a bit sentimental as he describes the life he has been fantasizing about.

TROY (CONT'D)

I'll have a drawing room and library, and I'll sell to only the richest men. I'll smoke cigars and have a butler. After a while, I'd like to maybe run for office...

Troy glances at McDougall and Davis and sees their blank faces spread into grins, and then break into snickers.

DAVIS

I'd buy a horse from you, Sarge. If you'd let me.

Troy turns dark and lunges at Davis.

TROY

Don't you dare laugh at me!

MCDUGALL

We're not laughing at you...

But Troy's notorious temper has flared, and he grabs McDougall by the coat.

TROY  
Don't you dare laugh at me!

While Davis and McDougall struggle to calm Troy, Mae enters and sees them. The bar girl skulks away when she sees Mae.

MAE  
Frank!

MCDUGALL  
Thank God. Mae, he's off his head again.

Mae takes Frank by the shoulders. Her presence begins to calm him immediately.

TROY  
You're ignorant, both of you. Even the Army is too good for you!!

MCDUGALL  
Yeah, right Sarge. We're ignorant, and you're a genius.

MAE  
Come outside with me, Frank. OK?  
Will you come outside with me, please?

Troy scowls at Davis and McDougall but follows Mae outside.

EXT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

Troy and Mae exit. He is still fuming. She kisses him on the mouth, and he kisses her back, but with little enthusiasm. Still, she is beaming to see him, and in spite of himself, he smiles at her as well.

MAE  
I missed you, Frank.

TROY  
How did you get here?

MAE  
I walked. And it was a long way, so you should be very glad to see me.

TROY  
You ran away from the old man?  
He'll starve, the coot! Ha!

MAE

I wouldn't care. I ran away to be with you, Frank. I ran away so that this Saturday, we can get married like you said.

TROY

This Saturday.. What on earth are you talking about?

MAE

You said you would marry me as soon as you were out of the Army. And on Saturday, you're out. You told me so.

Mae steps close, her voice a sultry moan.

MAE

Do you remember when you promised me, Frank? Do you remember how much you liked it? If we marry, we can have that all the time. Just you and me. Do you remember?

TROY

Yes.

MAE

You'll marry me, won't you? We've been together our whole lives, haven't we? Since we were kids?

TROY

All our lives...

Troy tilts her chin up to him and smiles.

TROY

Would that make you happy, little bird?

Mae nods. She is like a little girl in his hands.

TROY (CONT'D)

Then we'll do it. We'll get married! We'll get married and take a honeymoon and have 20 kids!

MAE

This Saturday?

TROY

Why not this Saturday??!!

MAE

Oh, Frank!! We'll be so happy together! I have a dress and everything! I'll arrange everything, you'll see! I'll have everything ready.

TROY

OK. You'd best get started. Go right away. Go get everything ready!

MAE

I will! I will! At the church at noon, on Saturday. You'll be there, right?

TROY

Noon, the church, Saturday. I'll be there.

MAE

Oh, I love you, Frank. I love you. I'll see you then!

Mae walks away waving and smiling at Troy, who waves and smiles back. As soon as she is out of sight, his smile goes away, and he goes back into the bar.

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

Troy walks back up to the bar and picks up his drink.

MCDUGALL

Were's Mae?

TROY

She ran away. She's dim. We need another round here!

EXT. RANCH - DAY

Katherine and Liddy are in the wagon headed for town. Inside one of the corrals, Oak and the men are struggling to saddle the horses. The horses haven't been ridden in a long time, and they are bucking and churning under the saddles.

Sam mounts one, and it starts to churn, knocking everyone back. Sam hits the dirt hard. Oak is mounted, however, and he rides over to the fence.

KATHERINE

(cheerily)

Everything going well?

OAK

These men ain't punchers.

Katherine watches as Sam gets right back up. McFarlane helps him on. She sighs.

KATHERINE

Look at them. They may not have experience, but they have heart. Don't look so glum, Gabe.

Katherine smiles at him and he cannot deny her. He smiles back and shakes his head. After a new round of churning, Sam hits the dirt again.

OAK

I best get back.

He turns his horse and heads back to work.

INT. MERCANTILE - DAY

Katherine and Liddy are standing in the Mercantile, looking at fabric.

LIDDY

This would make into a fine wedding dress, don't you think?

Katherine glances at what she is holding up, but says nothing. Her gaze settles on some fancy greeting cards that are stacked on the counter.

LIDDY

Oh, how pretty.

KATHERINE

I was thinking of sending one to my father. He'll be worried about me.

LIDDY

I know what you should do! Send one to that stupid old Boldwood and let him stew about who sent it.

KATHERINE

Liddy! That's cruel.

LIDDY

He thinks every woman pines away for him. Come on! It will be fun!

KATHERINE

Well.. OK. You can. Here.

Katherine takes a pencil off the counter and picks a card, then holds it out to Liddy. Liddy looks at the pencil then at Katherine, then at the pencil... She can't write, and her lip begins to quiver.

KATHERINE

Oh. It's fine, I'll do it. What should I write?

LIDDY

How about 'Marry Me'.

KATHERINE

You are cruel!

In her most formal calligraphy, she writes 'Marry Me' on the card. Liddy is smiling again.

LIDDY

He'll go nuts trying to figure out who sent it.

Katherine and Liddy giggle, link arms and walk away.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Katherine enters holding her letters, including the one to Boldwood. She holds the one to her father, debating whether to send it or not. She looks up and sees the MAIL CLERK leering at her. He has bad teeth.

MAIL CLERK

Hi there! You must be the new Everdene!

She gives him a tight smile and hands her letters over, then hurries out.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

It is Saturday. Mae Robins sits alone in a pew. She has a bouquet in her hands and wears a simple white dress. Nearby sits a PREACHER, who makes a stark contrast to her in his black suit. He silently reads from the Bible, but glances up to her every now and then.

Suddenly, Mae bursts into tears that quickly become loud wracking sobs. She knows Troy will not be coming, and she has been left at the altar. She stands, covers her mouth, and runs out the back of the church.

EXT. RANGE - MORNING

Round up has arrived. Oak, Katherine, and the men are mounted and lined up on a bluff over a shallow river.

Below, about 100 cows are watering and gnawing at the grasses along the bank. The men have toughed up and each appears to have settled in to the saddle.

KATHERINE

They're beautiful!

OAK

Got a lot of brands out there. We'll go down that ridge there, start pushing them back this way. Nice and simple.

SAM

Won't they scatter?

OAK

Cow is a herd animal. Once the leaders start heading our way, the others will join in. But we got to keep them moving the way we want to go. We get them moving, you two  
(points to Drew and McFarlane)  
stay to the sides, you two stay behind, I'll be out front. Don't get too close. Any strays, let them go. You fall, get out of the way or they'll run you down. OK?

The men nod, each unsteady, but determined to get the job done.

OAK (CONT'D)

(to Katherine)

Stay by me.

EXT. THE RIVER - MORNING

From up on the ridge, the men descend on the cattle. Right away, the cows start to collect and move away.

OAK

Hi-ya! Move on!

The other men hear Oak calling out to the cows and do so as well. Oak has a whip, and he rides into the water to get the slower cows moving. Excitement is written all over McFarlane's face. He follows his horse into the water, but his horse shies at the cold and stops.

MCFARLANE

Go on then!

He drills his shoes into the horse's sides, and it stands back, throwing him off.

The horse trots onto the bank where Oak catches the reins. McFarlane troops out of the water, soaked and fuming.

OAK  
You all right?

MCFARLANE  
Bloody bitch! I'm soaked through!

Oak throws him the reins.

OAK  
Ain't no time for complaining!

Oak and Katherine ride off as McFarlane speaks to his horse.

MCFARLANE  
You're right proud of yourself, aren't you? Come on then! We'll see who's boss by days end.

McFarlane goes to mount, but the horse steps around, making him chase the stirrup.

EXT. RANGE - DAY

The cattle come over the river bank and start to move as a group across the land. Bustemante has already positioned himself at the front right, and Oak and Katherine catch up to Sam and Drew, who are all smiles.

OAK  
Look over there.

He points to some other cattle along the range that have seen the group and are moving to join it. The herd instinct in cattle is irresistible.

DREW  
They rounding themselves up!

OAK  
Sam, you hold back until Scotty catches up. Drew, don't let them head back towards the water.

DREW  
You got it, boss!

Drew cuts left as Oak spurs his horse to catch up with Bustemante. He casts an appraising eye towards the cows, sensing their level of anxiety, their willingness to cut and run. There is no place in the world he'd rather be than in a saddle, pushing cows around. He reaches Bustemante.

OAK

Hang back a ways, don't let them  
squeeze out behind you!

Bustemante nods, but Oak doesn't believe he understands him. He waves his hands back, to indicate that Bustemante is to fall back. Bustemante gets it.

BUSTEMANTE

Si! Yes.

Bustemante falls back. Just then, a cutter (runaway bull) shies away from the herd. Oak sees it, and with Katherine at his side, he chases after.

Oak reaches the renegade. Katherine watches as he uses his horse to deftly steer the bull back towards the herd. The horse follows the bull's movements, not letting it get any further away. The bull gives up and blends back in.

OAK

Stay back with the Mexican.  
Dangerous leading!

KATHERINE

I want to stay with you!

Oak shakes his head. He spurs his horse and heads for the front of the herd, but Katherine has stuck with him.

By the time Oak and Katherine reach the front, a nice tight band of cows has assembled. He looks over his shoulder and estimates about 150 cows are rumbling along behind them. They are kicking up a dust cloud, and he can't even see Sam at the rear. Oak must yell over the sound of hooves beating.

OAK

Go back. Go! They'll run you right  
down!

KATHERINE

These are my cattle, Oak! Don't you  
worry about me!

But Oak doesn't have time to argue. He sees one cow has emerged as the leader, so he falls back until he is right in front of the cow and here he stays so he can regulate the herd's speed.

EXT. CORRALS - DAY

Liddy is standing in the back of the wagon and she can see the dust cloud blooming on the horizon. She jumps down and runs to the fence behind her and climbs up.

This is the most exciting part of ranch life; watching the men drive the cows in.

From her perch on the fence rail, she watches the mass come into focus. Oak and Katherine are the lead, and the cattle have picked up speed and numbers. Now about 200 cows are rumbling as a fleshy mass towards the gates.

Oak is at the most dangerous moment in the round up. If he was to fall, or his horse was to stumble, he would fall in front of the cattle and be dead in seconds. Katherine watches as Oak shadows the lead cow.

When they are barely 50 yards from the gates, and Oak knows that even the lead cow cannot stop or swerve the bunch quick enough to keep them from going on into the corral, he spurs his horse to Katherine's and both move out of the way.

The cattle thunder past the gate and into the huge corral. Katherine jumps down off her horse and runs to the fence. It is all as if it was happening in slow motion for her. Here they are; her cattle, her fortune, her dream. The dust cloud wash over her, and with it, the smell of 200 dirty wild beasts. She breathes deep, drawing in the dusky animal smell. Now it is hers to know.

Oak, Sam, Drew, and Bustemante prod the last irregulars into the corral.

OAK

Get the gates!

Sam and Drew run to the wide gates that are pushed back. As Oak and Bustemante guard the entrance, Sam and Drew drag the gates out and touch them together, thus sealing the cattle inside. It is done; and Katherine can see her cattle for herself.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Under a bright starry sky, they celebrate. A fire crackles as giant chunk of meat on a spit drips fat. Everyone is celebrating the round-up. McFarlane helps Bustemante with his English, while Sam and Drew wolf down hearty pieces of beef.

Everyone is quiet but happy. Oak takes a piece over to Katherine, who is sitting on the porch with Liddy. Katherine is at peace. She smiles when Oak holds out more beef steak.

OAK

Go on. You earned it.

KATHERINE

No. I can't have another bite.

Oak nods and turns back, but Katherine stops him.

KATHERINE

Gabe... It went well, didn't it?

OAK

About as well as any round up I  
seen. Can go either way with cattle.

KATHERINE

Those men respect you, Gabe, for  
what you know. So do I. Thank you.

Oak looks down, unused to such flattery. Pushing cows around  
is the same as breathing air for him. Is this a romantic  
invitation, he wonders?

No, he thinks. Best to let it go... The smile fades from her  
face as he heads back to the bunkhouse.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Weeks have passed and the weather has turned colder.  
Boldwood, bundled up in a heavy coat, enters the Post Office.

MAIL CLERK

Mr. Boldwood. Morning. Ain't seen  
you in a long time.

He hands Boldwood a few letters.

MAIL CLERK

Say, I got a stack of letters for  
that new woman that runs the  
Everdene place. You seen her?

BOLDWOOD

I've seen her.

MAIL CLERK

She's a fine looking woman, ain't she?

Boldwood pauses a moment, like he hadn't thought of it. The  
clerk hands Boldwood his mail.

MAIL CLERK (CONT'D)

Got a few things here for her, too.  
You mind running these here letters  
on out to her? Give you a chance to  
talk to her, get to know her better!

The clerk is smiling, thinks he's doing Boldwood a favor.  
But Boldwood just picks up both stacks of mail and exits.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Boldwood steps out and looks at his mail. He sees the letter from Katherine, and opens it up. Inside is the card, and the big inscription, 'Marry Me'. He gazes at it for a long moment, perplexed, then starts to walk away.

But then he looks at the letters for Katherine, and on top is the letter to 'Robert Everdene'. 'Return to Sender' has been scrawled across the top. Boldwood takes the 'Marry Me' card and places it next to the 'Robert Everdene' letter. Katherine's handwriting is unmistakable.

INT. BOLDWOOD'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Boldwood sits in front of a roaring fire, turning the card over and over in his hand. He is transfixed.

EXT. RANGE - DAY

Katherine watches as Gabe and the men tend to the feeding herd. Oak rides over to her.

OAK

Gonna snow soon. We'll have to start moving South to keep them in grass.

KATHERINE

How far?

OAK

You're blocked in by Boldwood and the railroad now. We can run them through to the free range, but can't tell where that starts anymore.

Katherine thinks about this as Oak rides away.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Katherine comes back towards the house from the barn when she sees Boldwood waiting for her on the porch.

BOLDWOOD

Good afternoon.

Katherine smiles stiffly.

KATHERINE

Good afternoon, Mr. Boldwood.

BOLDWOOD

Please call me Will. I brought you your mail.

Katherine smiles and takes the letters. The returned letter from her father is right on top. Her face falls. When she looks up at Boldwood, she sees a terrified smile plastered to his face. His gruff manner has been replaced by a jittery nervousness. His voice practicably quivers when he speaks.

BOLDWOOD

Well, I'm no good at small talk, so I'll get right to my point. I've come to accept your proposal. I'm forty-one and I never thought of myself as a family man. Now I can't think of anything else. Ha. I'd be honored to have you as my wife.

KATHERINE

Proposal?

Boldwood takes out the card and hands it to her.

BOLDWOOD

This is your writing, is it not?

Katherine takes the card and winces.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry. This was a foolish thing to do. Sending this card, I mean. It was only... a prank, really. I'm sorry.

BOLDWOOD

Don't say you're sorry. Maybe you meant it with a part of your heart that even you don't know. Don't be sorry.

KATHERINE

No, I am. I wasn't thinking, I was...

BOLDWOOD

Well, think about it now. If we marry, we'd have the largest ranch in the state. You'd never lack for anything. You have the best land, but I have the water. We could have a partnership, if you like. I've been thinking about you every minute for days, and...

He sinks to one knee.

BOLDWOOD

Please marry me, Miss Everdene. Please!

KATHERINE

Stop it. Get up right now!

He does.

KATHERINE

I want you to leave me alone. I can't think straight. I didn't expect this. I'm very sorry if I made you suffer.

BOLDWOOD

Just say you don't refuse. Say you'll think on it. I'll come by again, later.

KATHERINE

I can't think now. I need time.

BOLDWOOD

I'll come by tomorrow after you've had some time.

KATHERINE

No! I need more time than that.

Katherine pushes past him.

BOLDWOOD

More time, OK. But you'll think it over?

KATHERINE

Yes, I'll think it over.

BOLDWOOD

I'm happier now. Thank you. Thank you.

Boldwood gets on his horse and rides away.

INT. BARBER'S - DAY

Troy is at the barber's getting a hair cut and a shave. He still wears his uniform. The BARBER shaves Troy's face while Troy reads a newspaper. He glances up and sees Katherine walking across the street. The barber sees his paper drop and looks to see what he is staring at.

BARBER

That's the woman who took over the  
Everdene place. Quite a looker,  
isn't she?

Troy yanks the bib from around his neck and uses it to wipe  
away the remaining shaving cream.

BARBER (CONT'D)

I'm not finished yet!

TROY

Brilliant! You're an artist!

He hands the Barber some coins and rushes out.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Troy follows at a distance as Katherine makes her way to a  
post office. It is notably colder outside, as winter is fast  
approaching.

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

Troy watches her through the window. Katherine takes out a  
letter and looks at the front. It is a new letter to her  
father. She looks at it for a long time, then tears it up  
and puts it back into her pocket. When she turns to head for  
the door, Troy backs away from the window.

EXT. POST OFFICE - DAY

When Katherine exits, Troy lifts his boot up just high  
enough to cause his spur to catch in her long dress, yanking  
them both back towards each other.

TROY

Oh, excuse me, Madame.

Katherine looks up from her dress and sees Troy smiling at  
her. She tugs at the hem trying to pull free.

TROY (CONT'D)

Careful, now. You'll tear it.

KATHERINE

That's OK. I'm in a hurry.

Troy turns his leg in such a way that causes the dress to  
wrap even tighter around the spur.

TROY

Oh, no. Bad luck.

Troy kneels and begins to slowly unwrap the spur. He looks up into her eyes.

TROY (CONT'D)

Thank you.

KATHERINE

For what?

TROY

For that beautiful, beautiful face.

KATHERINE

I don't show it to you willingly.  
You're making it worse. Come on now...

TROY

I'm not. But I should. Just to lay eyes on you a bit longer. I have to say, ma'am, that I have never laid eyes on so beautiful a woman in all my life. You can take offense if you like, I don't care. It's the truth, and I won't deny it. If only this was the knot that can't be untied.

Troy untangles the knot and stands. He bows politely.

TROY (CONT'D)

Sarge Francis Troy at your service.

Katherine is flustered. His flattery has appealed to her and she doesn't like that. She hurries away without a word.

Troy smiles. He keeps his eyes on her as she crosses the street, waiting for her to turn around and look. Finally, she does. He waves at her. Katherine's head snaps back forward.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Katherine sleeps in a giant four poster bed covered with quilts. She wakes when Liddy enters.

LIDDY

Wake up! Wake up! You have to get up and see what's happened! Come see what's happened!

Katherine stirs.

KATHERINE

What are you talking about?

LIDDY

It's Christmas morning and you have  
to see what's happened! Come look!

Liddy goes to the window. Snow has built up outside, and she struggles to get it open.

Katherine gets out of bed and reaches the window just as Liddy gets it open. She sees Sam, Drew, Bustemante, and McFarlane gathered around a wagon full of saddles, ropes, hitches, and for the men, new hats, boots, chaps, coats, and other proper cow hand gear. The men are happily pulling on the boots and trying on the hats and coats.

LIDDY

There was a note on the front seat  
when I went out this morning. Read  
it! Read it!

She hands the note to Katherine who opens up the note.

KATHERINE

It's from Boldwood.

(reading)

'Dear Miss Everdene, Merry  
Christmas. I hope these few things  
will bring a bit of cheer in this  
most holy of seasons. Anxiously  
anticipating the happy outcome of  
your deliberations, William  
Boldwood'. Liddy, we can't accept  
all these things. It isn't right.

LIDDY

Oh, but look at them. They've been  
freezing in their old clothes. They  
would never complain, but they were.

Katherine looks out at them. Each man, so far away from whatever they call home, is pleased. Katherine calls out.

KATHERINE

Where's Oak?

MCFARLANE

Don't know. He left before the sunrise.

Katherine looks back down at the note. It was a wonderful gift to her and her men, she cannot deny.

EXT. OAK'S OLD RANCH - CHRISTMAS MORNING

In the grove of trees where he buried George, He gazes at the land that was once his dream.

Where his house stood, only a slight bump in the snow stands out. He has a handmade cross with him. He finds the spot where he buried George and uses a small club to drive the cross into the ground.

EXT. THE RANGE - DAY

*Super - SPRING, 1899*

The winter has passed. New growth pokes up through the barren ground. Snow is still on the mountains, but the trees are starting to grow new leaves.

Spring means another round-up, but a spring round up includes the newborns. Oak and the men have built a make-shift corral on the range that is now full with braying dusty cattle. The time has come to brand the newborns, and a small fire has been built to heat the branding irons.

McFarlane stands by with the brands as the others cut a calf out of the herd. To pry a calf away from mama is a real task, but Bustemante, on horseback, rides between the mother and the calf. Oak stands by with the lariat. He rushes forward, expertly ropes the calf, then he, Sam, and Drew throw it down.

OAK

Get it over here!

While Bustemante keeps the mother away, McFarlane runs over with the brand. When the brand is burned in, Oak takes out a small knife and notches the ears to further mark the cow as Everdene property.

Liddy has a wagon nearby, and she is cooking a meal over another low fire. Katherine arrives on horseback and watches. As usual, Oak is in command of everything that happens.

LATER:

Liddy serves the men out of the back of a wagon. Each man eats in silence; they are exhausted. Several yards away, Katherine relaxes in the shade. Oak stands and crosses to her.

OAK

You got 42 newborns in there.  
That's a good yield.

KATHERINE

The little ones are so precious. I know that's something a woman would say, but I feel good, and I don't mind if you think of me as a woman right now.

Oak smiles and shakes his head. This woman is always saying the strangest things.

KATHERINE

It will be a shame to sell them.

OAK

You don't sell the newborns. That's your stock for next year.

KATHERINE

No, we're selling them. We need the money. And, we're going to get a new breed in here. We'll get a big bull, and we'll breed him with the largest of these. Then we'll have a bigger cow to take to market.

OAK

They won't get but so big out here, ma'am. These longhorns are made to live on this land. They can eat anything, only need water now and then.

KATHERINE

Yes, they're like camels. But the market pays by the pound now, not by the head. What we need is a heavier cow.

OAK

That's what I'm telling you. They won't stay heavy out here. They just can't find enough to eat.

KATHERINE

We'll feed them. We'll feed them on grain. We'll grow what we can, buy the rest. That railroad brings everything out here now, including rich feed. We'll get more cow out of each acre of land with a heavier breed, and that's the key.

Katherine stands and pulls on her gloves.

KATHERINE

But feed takes money, so I'm bring a buyer out here tomorrow. We're going to sell all but the biggest females.

OAK

We got to separate them first. You got several brands mixed in out there.

KATHERINE

Yes, I saw. But I don't care. They're on my land, that makes them my cattle.

OAK

Oh, no. You can't do that.

KATHERINE

I can and I will. And that's another thing. When we're done, I want you to get some posts and some barbed wire. We're putting up fences. That should settle the matter of other people's cattle once and for all.

OAK

No. I won't do it.

KATHERINE

Don't be silly, of course you will.

OAK

I won't do it!

Katherine is shocked at Oak's outburst.

OAK (CONT'D)

This land ain't meant for fences. It goes on and on. You go fencing all of it off, with damn barbed wire, then it's over. It's all over!

KATHERINE

What's over?

Oak makes a grand gesture at the cows, the range, the men on horseback, the sky...

OAK

This!

Katherine gets it. He is talking about a lifestyle built on freedom of motion across a limitless plain. She speaks very gently with him.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry, Gabe. I am. I'm just trying to save my ranch.

Katherine walks away to her horse and rides away.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Oak is washing his shirts by the pump when he sees two well-dressed English CATTLE BUYERS come out of the house. Katherine is all smiles as she shakes hands with them. Oak has never seen her so demure, and it is clear that they have been charmed by her. The buyers mount and ride away.

KATHERINE

Gabe!

Oak crosses to her.

OAK

You look like the cat that  
swallowed the canary.

KATHERINE

I did it. I sold them all and I got  
\$200 a head for them. They didn't  
even weigh them.

Katherine opens up a satchel. Several layers of neat bills are stacked in it. Oak smiles ruefully; this was the payday he was looking for before his cattle were run off and his home destroyed.

OAK

Congratulations.

KATHERINE

There's an auction in the morning.  
Prized Angus bulls for sale. I'm  
going to town to buy us a bull.

Oak glances at the case stuffed with cash. He is worried about her.

KATHERINE

I'll be fine.

OAK

OK, then.

He turns to go, but she reaches out and stops him. She starts to thank him, but remembers his discomfort with emotional moments.

KATHERINE

We did good.

OAK

Yes, ma'am.

Oak turns and heads back to work.

EXT. RANCH - EVENING

Oak is taking the saddles off the horses. He turns when he hears Katherine calling out to him. Coming down the road is Katherine on horseback, and Liddy behind her in the wagon. Something is following behind the wagon.

When they reach him, he sees the black mass that was following. It is a huge, meaty, thick headed, neck-less black Angus bull. It's rippling fat and muscle continues to quiver after it halts in front of Oak.

KATHERINE

This is Pennyways. What do you think?

OAK

He'll eat everything we have.

KATHERINE

We'll manage.

Oak follows alongside the huge bull as Katherine heads for the house.

INT. OFFICE NIGHT

Katherine sits at her desk, now thoroughly organized, and counts out the remaining cash. Just then, Liddy knocks at the door and enters.

LIDDY

Mr. Boldwood is at the door to see you.

KATHERINE

Ask him in, put him in the parlor and tell him I'll be there in just a bit. And offer him some tea.

Liddy nods and exits.

INT. PARLOR - NIGHT

Boldwood is smelling the tea in the cup when Katherine enters.

KATHERINE

Mr. Boldwood, what a surprise. Please have a seat.

Boldwood sits and starts watching her closely to see what one does with a cup of tea.

BOLDWOOD

I'm sorry to be by so late. I just wanted to have a word with you.

Katherine pours herself a cup and sits. Boldwood starts to imitate how she holds the cup, how she sips.

KATHERINE

You're a welcome guest in this house, you know that.

She sips her tea and he does the same, but his expression gives away that he does not like the taste at all. He stands and nearly drops the saucer from his lap. He catches that, then moves to put the cup and saucer back on the server, but nearly pulls the whole thing off the counter. When he stands to catch that, he knocks his chair over. The poor man is like a bull in a china shop. Katherine watches, amused.

BOLDWOOD

I'm so sorry.

KATHERINE

That's quite all right.

Boldwood rights his chair and carefully sits down, hoping not to upset anything else.

BOLDWOOD

This house shows the touch of a woman. Something mine could surely use. You're such a fine, well-bred woman, Miss Everdene. You're more woman than I ever met out here.

KATHERINE

You're too kind.

BOLDWOOD

It's the truth. I've been watching you, and everything I've seen has just made me more...

(starts to stutter)

...hopelessly in love with you. It's hard to say but it is true.

KATHERINE

Thank you. I was wondering if I might ask you something.

BOLDWOOD  
Of course. Anything.

KATHERINE  
What bank do you use?

BOLDWOOD  
Bank?

KATHERINE  
Yes. Which one do you use?

BOLDWOOD  
I don't. Don't trust banks. Don't  
trust bankers. Neither should you.  
I keep my money in a safe in my house.

KATHERINE  
Oh. I see.

An awkward moment follows. Boldwood screws up his nerve.

BOLDWOOD  
Miss Everdene, I've come to see if  
you've thought about what we talked  
about back when we were talking and  
it was back in the fall I think  
when we talking about something  
that I wonder if you've thought  
about it since we talked....

Boldwood realizes he is talking nonsense.

BOLDWOOD  
Have you thought more about us  
getting married?

KATHERINE  
I have, Mr. Boldwood. I've given it  
a great deal of thought. And I will  
try to fall in love with you, and  
if I think I can make you a good  
wife, I will marry you. But, I'm  
not promising anything. Just that I  
will think about it. I'm not good  
at love. I never have been. But  
I'll try. That's all I can say tonight.

BOLDWOOD  
Of course! Of course!

Boldwood stands to leave. Already having gotten more than he  
thought, he wants to get out before she can ruin his evening  
with any discouraging news.

BOLDWOOD

You need time. Time to think, and time to... well, to fall in love with me like you said. That's enough. It's more than I could have hoped for. I'll give you some time now. Thank you. Thank you.

Boldwood awkwardly puts out his hand.

KATHERINE

Well, good night then.

BOLDWOOD

Good night. Good night to you.

She steps forward and lightly kisses him on the cheek, then turns and leaves the room.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Oak and McFarlane are at the pump washing the day's dust and dirt off themselves when Boldwood exits the house, jumps on his horse, and rides away. McFarlane notes Oak's keen interest in this.

MCFARLANE

Do ya supposed the deal is done then?

OAK

What deal is that?

MCFARLANE

Ha. Gabe, you know cows, but you'd best not play poker.

McFarlane laughs and goes back inside.

EXT. RANCH - MORNING

Oak is up and with his morning cup of coffee. He is observing the new bull when he hears Liddy calling to him from the house.

LIDDY

Mr. Oak! Yoo hoo! The misses wants to see you.

INT. OFFICE - MORNING

Katherine is sitting at her desk when Oak enters. She is wearing a long dressing gown, and her hair cascades down her back. Oak has never seen her so informally, and it causes his mouth to go dry. She is happy this morning.

KATHERINE

Good morning.

OAK

Morning.

KATHERINE

I knew you'd be up. Please have a seat.

Oak sits in one of the tiny chairs by the desk. He is not used to this kind of sit-down meeting and is uncomfortable.

KATHERINE

Gabriel, I have something I need you to do. It's very important.

OAK

I'll do my best.

She takes the money from the sale and places it on the desk.

KATHERINE

I need you to take this money to Cheyenne and deposit it in a bank. But I want you to go to each bank and find...

Oak lowers his head and rubs his brow; his common gesture when he is displeased with something. She has come to know it well.

KATHERINE

What is it now?

OAK

Don't like banks. Or bankers.

KATHERINE

Well, I have news for you. My father is a banker, and there is nothing wrong with that. Now, I want you to take this money and deposit it in a bank, but I want you to go to different ones and find the one that will pay the best interest.

Oak stands and starts to leave.

KATHERINE

What now?!

OAK

That ain't right. There's a word for it. It's called user-ry. Only Jews do that.

KATHERINE

The word is usury. A better word, however, would be bigotry. Do you know what that means?

OAK

I know what it means.

KATHERINE

Oak... Gabe, please sit down.

Oak shuffles back to his seat. She speaks gently to him.

KATHERINE

If I'm going to expand, I'm going to need loans from a bank. There's nothing wrong with that, just like there is nothing wrong with putting up a fence. It's just a different way of doing things than you're used to. This money is all I have in the world, and I'm trusting you with it. Do you trust me enough to accept that what I'm asking you to do isn't wrong?

OAK

It's your money.

KATHERINE

Yes, it is. Be careful.

He stands, takes the money and leaves.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - MORNING

POV is through the round circle of a spyglass. Oak is seen on horseback addressing the men. The viewer is too far away to hear what is going on. Oak turns on the horse, and starts riding towards the viewer.

EXT. BRUSH - MORNING

The spyglass is lowered by Francis Troy. He is in the brush by the road that leads to the house. He ducks down as Oak passes right by him.

Still in his uniform, complete with saber, Troy has changed little.

His hair has gotten longer, but he still maintains the spit shine of someone long accustomed to military life. After Oak passes, he raises the glass again and focuses it on the house.

Through one of the windows, he can just barely make out Katherine's shape. He smiles; this is the one he remembers.

EXT. THE RANGE - DAY

The men have begun to put up the fences around Katherine's land. A wagon full of posts and huge coils of barbed wire is at the end of the first long line of fencing. The men, Drew, Sam, Bustemante, and McFarlane are spaced out along a line, each digging post holes.

But there is a fifth person the farthest out. It is Troy and he is helping them. Katherine rides up to the wagon and addresses Drew.

KATHERINE

Who's that?

Drew looks in the distance at Troy.

DREW

He come along and volunteered to help. We sure didn't see any harm in that.

Katherine gallops past the men to where Troy is working. As she rides closer, he looks up. He has taken off his uniform tunic and hung it over a fence post, along with his saber. He leans on his shovel when she stops.

KATHERINE

Who are you? This is private property.

As she looks closer, she recognizes him. He smiles, knowing she remembers.

TROY

Miss Everdene. I've heard a great deal about you. We met once before but you probably don't remember.

KATHERINE

I remember. You were very rude.

TROY

I see I made a hole with my tongue that my heart will never mend. All I said was that you are beautiful.

KATHERINE

I like to hire my own crew, not for them to hire themselves.

TROY

Oh, I'm not looking for a job. Just looking for some good honest work to do. Keeps a man fit. My name is Sgt. Francis Troy. At your service.

Katherine lets ever so tiny a smile escape.

KATHERINE

Yes, you said that before.

TROY

Ah, you remember.

KATHERINE

I remember you tore my dress. And you were presumptuous.

TROY

Well, you are beautiful, and I have the satisfaction of knowing I'm right even if it is presumptuous to say so. I thought it, and I said it. I couldn't help myself. I'm like that!

Her smiles translates into a laugh.

KATHERINE

You sure can talk.

TROY

You're the most beautiful woman I have ever seen, or let me fall dead right here and now. You make an idolater out of a good Christian man, you're so handsome.

KATHERINE

Handsome, am I?

TROY

Yes, ma'am. But, if you don't want to hear about it, I'll just stop now.

Troy lifts his shovel to dig.

KATHERINE

I won't pay you.

TROY

I'll tell you what. I'll put in five hundred fence posts if you'll forgive me for being so presumptuous with you. Even though I'm right, and you're the single most beautiful woman in this entire state, I'll dig post holes for as far as the eye can see. Deal?

KATHERINE

Deal.

TROY

And you forgive me?

KATHERINE

I said you have a deal.

Troy lifts the shovel and drives it into the earth.

TROY

I got to get busy then!

Katherine smiles, turns her horse and gallops away.

EXT. A GROVE - AFTERNOON

Katherine has her wagon under a pear tree, pulling pears down and throwing them into a basket. Troy spots her at a distance, and walks over. He has his service rifle across his shoulders. He reaches her just as she is straining to reach a pear in a high branch.

TROY

Can I help you with that?

She looks over to him, and smiles.

KATHERINE

Could you? It's just out of my reach.

Troy sets his rifle on the seat, jumps into the wagon, and stretches up to reach the pear.

TROY

Here you are. That's a fine one there.

KATHERINE

Are you finished with the post holes, or did you stop wanting forgiveness?

TROY

Oh, I completed them. My debts are clear. Watch. I bet I can bring the best ones down for you.

He picks up the rifle, cocks it impressively, then shoots a pear from one of the high branches down. It falls into the wagon. Katherine grins.

KATHERINE

You're quite a marksman.

TROY

I was the top in my regiment. And that saying something, because I was the cavalry. I'll tell you what...

He picks up a large pear from the back.

TROY

Take this pear, walk out there a few paces, and throw it into the air.

KATHERINE

OK.

She takes the pear and climbs down from the wagon. As she walks away, Troy cocks the rifle again and takes aim in her direction. When she is several paces away, Katherine turns and holds the pear up in her hand.

KATHERINE

From here?!

But just as the words leave her mouth, Troy fires, and the pear explodes in her hand; he's shot it right out of her grip! The pear mush drips off her face, and she is so shocked she can't speak. Troy bursts out in laughter. He hops from the wagon and runs over to her.

TROY

Oh, you fell for the oldest trick in the book! Look at you. You're a mess.

He takes out a hanky and wipes the pear off her face.

KATHERINE

I can't believe you did that! You could have killed me!

TROY  
 Never. Never in a million years.  
 You were as safe as a kitten. I  
 never miss.

Katherine's emotions run amok as he laughs and wipes her face. She is both angry and amused.

KATHERINE  
 You're a crazy man. You should be  
 locked up!

TROY  
 And you are even more beautiful  
 when you're angry, Katherine Everdene.

Then he kisses her, sweetly, on the mouth. At first she pulls her arms back, but then she lets them rest lightly on his coat. He pulls back and smiles to her; she is now in an even greater state of confusion and shock. Has Katherine never been kissed?

KATHERINE  
 Go away.

TROY  
 Meet me at the creek at sunset.

KATHERINE  
 No, please, just leave me alone.

TROY  
 I'll be there, waiting for you.

Troy starts to kiss her again, but she pushes him away. He smiles and walks away.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Katherine enters the door and closes it, then leans back and takes a breath. She is flushed with the day's events. She heads upstairs just as Liddy enters.

LIDDY  
 There you are. Mr. McFarlane was  
 looking for you.

KATHERINE  
 What did he want?

LIDDY  
 I don't know. He talks so funny  
 that I can't...

But Katherine hasn't stopped to listen.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Katherine bursts into her room and sits at her tiny desk. She takes out a piece of paper and picks up her pen. She writes 'Dear Mr. Boldwood' then stops and starts to hyper-ventilate

KATHERINE

(to herself)

What am I doing? What am I doing?

She goes to her bed and lays down, and begins to weep.

LATER:

She wakes. Sundown is approaching, and with it, a decision. She gets up and returns to her desk.

KATHERINE

(speaking as she writes)

Dear Mr. Boldwood, I cannot accept your kind offer of marriage. I simply do not love you. I hope you'll understand. Respectfully...

She signs her name, blows on the ink until it is dry, and puts the note into an envelope.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Katherine comes down the stairs. Liddy has been polishing silver, but is now asleep in a huge chair.

KATHERINE

Liddy.

LIDDY

(waking with a start)

What? What!?

KATHERINE

I have a letter here for Mr. Boldwood. I'd like one of the men to take it to him right away. Will you see to it?

LIDDY

Yes, ma'am. I surely will.

KATHERINE

I'm going for a walk.

LIDDY

I'll see right to this letter.

Katherine exits.

EXT. CREEK - DAY

The sun is low in the sky as Troy stands up and sees Katherine approaching. When she reaches him, he leans in and kisses her again. After a moment, she steps away.

TROY

I'm so glad you came.

KATHERINE

I can't stay long. So much to do back at the house....

TROY

Please sit down.

From the arrangement of things on the ground, it is clear Troy has been camping at this spot. He has a ground cloth and other things scattered about. She sits.

TROY

I have something for you.

Troy begins looking through some things.

KATHERINE

How long have you been out here?

TROY

Only a few days. I've been in Chicago. When I came back out here, I wanted to be out in the open, sleep under the stars again, like I was used to.

KATHERINE

Oh, Chicago. I would love to go there again. There are streetcars and restaurants and theaters.

TROY

Yes, I can imagine you would miss those things being a woman of refinement. It must be hard for your type to live out here. Oh, here it is!

Troy hands her a long strand of silk ribbon.

TROY

I've been waiting for just the right person to give this to. And you are the one, I'm sure.

He hands it to Katherine, who runs it through her hands.

KATHERINE

It's so soft. Thank you. Did you get this in Chicago.

TROY

No, In Cuba. I was there, you know. With Teddy Roosevelt. The Rough Riders. There was a Spanish general, whose wife was.... an acquaintance. She gave me that to remember her by. She said it was the ribbon that linked our souls. But you have erased my memory of every woman now. You have my heart, so I want you to have it.

KATHERINE

You shouldn't say such things. You shouldn't use such words. It isn't right.

TROY

It is. It is right. Since I saw you... Why do you think I came back to this place? I couldn't forget you.

KATHERINE

It isn't true.

TROY

It is. It is.

Troy kisses her, and this time, she responds. In moments, they are lying down, and he is feverishly kissing her. Before he can remove her clothes, she stops him and stands.

KATHERINE

I don't want this. I'm going. You're very clever, but I want you off my land.

TROY

I'll go. I'll go to the Wilkinson Hotel in Cheyenne. That's where I'll be. And I'll stay there until you come there for me.

KATHERINE

Don't tell me. I won't come there.  
I won't. Now go. Go!

Katherine, nearly in tears again, runs away.

TROY

The Wilkinson Hotel. I'll be there,  
waiting for you.

He watches her walk quickly away, the ribbon clutched in her hand.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It is dark when Katherine reaches the house. As she steps onto the porch, Boldwood stands. She did not see him in the dark, but he has been waiting for her. As he steps closer, she is able to see his face in the light from inside. He is manic.

KATHERINE

Mr. Boldwood. You scared me.

BOLDWOOD

Are you afraid of me now? It's funny, that look on your face is so different than what I feel for you. It's as strong as death. No letter could change that.

KATHERINE

I wish you didn't feel that way.  
Good night.

BOLDWOOD

Is it really over? Darling?

KATHERINE

Yes. I'm sorry.

BOLDWOOD

Please. I'm begging you. I'm begging mercy. Have mercy on a lonely man, please don't toss me aside now!

KATHERINE

I never had you to begin with.  
Please, Mr. Boldwood, I'm very tired.

BOLDWOOD

There was a time when you drew me to you with your letter. I didn't even notice you. I didn't want you, and I was fine.

KATHERINE

It was a joke; a bad one, I now know, but a joke none the less. I'm very sorry.

BOLDWOOD

I thought it was real. You were so close! That night, inside, you were so close.

KATHERINE

I promised you nothing. I said I would think about it and I have.

BOLDWOOD

You were nothing to me and I was happy. I wish you had never taken me up if you were just going to throw me back down.

KATHERINE

I did not take you up! Now, good night.

BOLDWOOD

You've found someone else. A soldier. Frank Troy.

Katherine's eyes light up. How did he know?

BOLDWOOD

Oh, yes. I know him. He's from this area. He used to work for me, before he joined the Army. I gave him a home. He's been staying down by the river for days. Why did he have to come and take my treasure? It is him, isn't it?

Katherine confirms with her silence.

BOLDWOOD

People will laugh at me. My good name will be gone, and I'll never get it back.

KATHERINE

Your good name is not my doing! Now please, I said I was sorry. I never promised you anything. Good night to you.

But suddenly, Boldwood's mood turns on a dime.

BOLDWOOD

He'll pay. I'll see to it. I'm sorry, dear. I was blaming you. But it isn't you at all. It's him, and he will have to answer. He'll have to pay.

And with that, Boldwood walks away.

INT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

McFarlane stirs when he hears the sound of a horse whinnying. It comes from the barn. He sits up, as does Sam and Drew. When he hears it again, this time more insistent, he pulls his boots and heads for the door, Drew and Sam right behind.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

McFarlane, Drew, and Sam creep up to the barn door and look in.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Inside, they see Katherine in a small pool of lantern light trying to hoist a heavy saddle onto one of the bigger, faster horses. They enter.

MCFARLANE

Can we help you, Miss?

She is not happy to see them.

KATHERINE

It's all right. You can go back to bed.

But she drops the saddle as she says this, and it is clear she will never get it onto the horse. The men enter and start to help her.

MCFARLANE

We'll saddle him up for you, if you like.

She is too tired and upset to complain.

MCFARLANE

Late at night to be going for a ride. Do you need any company?

KATHERINE

I do not. I have urgent business to attend to. Mr. Oak will be back soon. You can take your orders from him.

MCFARLANE

Aye, ma'am. That we will.

As Drew cinches the saddle tight, Katherine climbs up. McFarlane tries to help, but she will not accept it.

KATHERINE

Open the door!

Sam runs to the barn door and swings it open. Katherine bolts through on the horse and is gone into the night.

SAM

Now what kind of urgent business does she have to attend to at this time?

MCFARLANE

I don't know, but I wish Oak was here.

SAM

Wherever she headed, we all going there with her.

MCFARLANE

You've got that right, friend.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

Katherine has been riding for several hours straight and she is tired. Black clouds boil overhead. The horse is walking with a profound limp now. Just then, to make matters worse, it begins to rain. She kicks the horse and starts it to running again.

INT. THE WILKINSON HOTEL - EVENING

Katherine enters the hotel and goes to the CONCIERGE. She is soaked to the bone, and the concierge makes a great fuss over her. She speak to him, but her words are not heard.

INT. TROY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Troy is drinking, looking out his window when he hears a knock at his door. He crosses to the door and opens it to see Katherine standing there. She is tired, wet.

TROY  
Darling. I'm so... Katherine.

She falls into his arms.

TROY  
I love you. God, how I love you.

He takes her into his arms and lifts her, then lays her on the bed. She gives into his care completely and allows him to begin removing layer after layer of her wet clothes.

LATER:

In the darkened room, as the rain starts to fall again, Troy makes love to Katherine.

INT. TROY'S ROOM - MORNING

Katherine wakes and looks around. Her clothes are laid over a chair to dry. She wraps a sheet around herself and goes to the window.

Outside, Cheyenne. It is a ramshackle collection of dirty buildings, a few made of brick and stone, but most thrown up with irregularly cut wood. The rain has stopped, but the streets are muddy ditches. Miners and a few punchers stagger around in the streets, yelling at each other.

She leans out to see further, but spots Oak headed down the street on horseback. Instinctively, she pulls back into the window, hoping he has not seen her.

She peaks back around the curtains and sees him pass below. After a moment, she gets back into bed with Troy and lays her head on her chest.

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Life continues on the ranch. Oak has the men threshing the tall grasses to feed to the new super bull. He looks up when he hears horse sounds, but it's only Boldwood riding by some distance away. McFarlane, now a good friend, notes all.

MCFARLANE  
She owns the place, Gabe. She'll be back.

Oak is clearly worried, but he goes back to work.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Oak has purchased many sacks of oats and corn. He and the men are loading the sacks into the barn when he hears a window open on the upstairs. It is Liddy airing things out.

OAK

Have you heard anything?

Liddy shakes her head. Oak reluctantly goes back to his work.

EXT. YARD - EVENING

Oak has just finished his work and is walking off towards the bunkhouse when he sees Katherine arrive in a carriage. Liddy runs from the house and hugs her.

LATER:

Oak knocks on the door, and Liddy answers.

OAK

I seen Miss Everdene. Need to have a word with her.

Liddy pauses. She knows something but won't say.

LIDDY

She... I... Its...

Liddy gets so flustered that she slams the door in his face.

INT. SALOON - EVENING

Troy is laughing and drinking with McDougal and Davis. A view around the bar shows a few other punchers, and at the back, alone at a table with a near empty bottle, is Boldwood, whose bloodshot eyes have settled on Troy. He gets up, walks right past Troy, and out the door.

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Troy rides along under a bright moon on a new giant black horse, humming merrily to himself, when Boldwood steps into the road to speak with him.

BOLDWOOD

Francis Troy.

Troy stops, focuses his eyes. When he speaks, his words are slurred.

TROY

Yes?

BOLDWOOD

You don't remember me. I'm William Boldwood.

Troy tenses in the saddle.

TROY

Boldwood. I worked your ranch. I'm surprised you remember me.

BOLDWOOD

I remember. You were too young to work. I gave you a home anyway. But that's not what I come out here for. We're going to talk about a woman you wronged.

TROY

This could take a while!

BOLDWOOD

I know about you and Mae Robins. Some of my men told me. She's a good girl, or at least was. I've helped out, tried to teach her a thing or two, watched her grow up. You ought to marry her.

TROY

Can't do it.

BOLDWOOD

Why not?

TROY

Too poor! I'm just out of the Army.

BOLDWOOD

Right. Well, I'm not here to discuss right or wrong with you. You don't know the difference. I'm here to talk business.

TROY

I'm all ears.

BOLDWOOD

Before you came along, I was engaged to Miss Everdene...

TROY

Hold on, hold on. She says you weren't.

BOLDWOOD

As good as engaged. Before you came along and confused her. Yes, we were! She knows it! But that isn't the point. All you can hope is to take advantage of her. She's too good for you. But not Mae, who you could make a life with. I'll make it worth your while. I'll give you 1000 dollars right now to turn and leave. I'll give 1000 to Mae to prepare for the wedding and then 2000 on the day of the wedding. Four thousand dollars. For a soldier, that's a lot of money. Here.

Boldwood takes an envelope stuffed with cash and throws it on the ground.

TROY

Pretty confident I would take you up.

BOLDWOOD

I know your type.

TROY

You're pretty smart. But, there's a hitch.

BOLDWOOD

What? You want more? Four thousand dollars isn't enough for you. I'll pay more.

TROY

I bet you would. But there's the matter of Katherine's... honor. How much is that worth?

Boldwood quakes with rage.

TROY

I'm a bad man, as you say. And it was goooooood.

Boldwood draws a pistol. Before Troy can move, Boldwood drags him off the horse and presses the barrel into Troy's nostril.

TROY  
(desperate)  
Hold on, there. Careful.

BOLDWOOD  
You're not fit to walk this earth  
with her!

TROY  
Now just wait a minute!

BOLDWOOD  
May God damn you!

TROY  
Hold on! Like it or not, she loves  
me. Me, not you. If you kill me,  
you'll take from her what she loves,  
and she'll never forgive you.

Troy watches as Boldwood's resolve crumbles. He pushes Troy  
back.

BOLDWOOD  
You have to marry her. You can't  
dishonor her. I won't allow it.

TROY  
How much?

BOLDWOOD  
I'll pay you double.

TROY  
Do you have it with you?

BOLDWOOD  
I can get it. In the morning, we'll  
go to the bank together, then the  
church and make arrangements.

TROY  
And you wouldn't tell her about  
this business?

BOLDWOOD  
Never. Not a word.

Troy suddenly boils over with laughter.

TROY  
Friend, I want to show you something.

Troy pulls a paper from his pocket. It is a newspaper clipping. He hands it to Boldwood and strikes a match so Boldwood can read. It is a newspaper wedding announcement. Troy and Katherine were married two days earlier. Boldwood lowers the paper.

TROY

Four thousand to marry Mae, more to marry Katherine. You old fool. I may be a bad man, but I am not so bad that I would offer money to arrange a marriage. You say you love her, but on my word alone, you believe she's a whore. You don't love her. Now go!

Troy kicks dirt at Boldwood, whose gun arm is now at his side and his eyes cast to the ground. Troy hops back on the giant horse and rides away, leaving Boldwood in his wake.

EXT. YARD - MORNING

Oak and McFarlane are standing at the fence to the corral looking at the new horse. The giant stallion is grazing and still has the saddle on it. Behind them, Troy leans out the upstairs window. He is shirtless.

TROY

Yoo hoo, men!

Oak turns around, stunned to see a man at the window where normally he sees Katherine.

TROY

Which one of you is Oak?

Troy asks this while looking right at Oak. He knows who Oak is, but wants to set the parameters; Troy asks, Oak answers.

OAK

I'm Oak.

TROY

What do you think?

Troy nods at the corral.

TROY

That's our new breeding stallion. We're going to be raising the finest race horses in the Western US. So I want that horse to be treated like the Prince of Wales.

(MORE)

TROY (CONT'D)

Get that saddle off him, get him watered and brushed down. You got that, Oak?

OAK

Where's ...

Oak stops, unsure how to address her now.

TROY

Mrs. Troy is asleep. But don't you worry about her. You'll be working for me now.

Oak lowers his head and looks away.

EXT. HOUSE - MORNING

Liddy is serving breakfast on the porch. As she hands Oak his plate, he looks in the house and through the thin curtains sees Katherine and Troy having a huge breakfast at the dining table inside.

EXT. BARN - DAY

Oak comes in off the range after checking on the cattle. He sees the men emptying the barn and stacking the stockpiled grain outside the door.

OAK

What's going on?

DREW

That man told us to empty the barn.

TROY

There you are.

Oak turns to see Troy approaching from the house.

TROY

Get on down and help these men empty this barn. We're going to have a barn dance tonight, and everyone is invited. You too, Oak.

OAK

We got work to do out there.

TROY

It can wait. We got some celebrating to do. You look like the kind of man who could use a bit of celebrating.

OAK  
Where's Mrs. Troy?

Troy tenses and explodes.

TROY  
It don't matter where Mrs. Troy is!  
You work for me now. If you don't  
like it, you can ride right off  
this ranch right now. Got it,  
mister??  
(To the other men)  
Now go on, all of you, get this  
barn cleaned out.

The men look to Oak to see which direction to go. He gives them a very subtle nod, and they go to work.

OAK  
This here is still a cattle ranch,  
and someone has to work, dance or  
no dance.

Oak heads back out to work.

EXT. RANGE - DAY

Oak is struggling to right a cow that has fallen down. By himself, it is quite a job, but with some pushing, Oak is able to get the beast to stand and rejoin the herd.

As he dusts himself off, he looks to the distance and sees lightning flashes. A storm is coming.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Oak approaches the barn. He hears music coming from inside. He passes piles of grain and threshed grasses on the way in, all of which has been moved outside to accommodate the party.

The trees around the house have begun to sway with a increasing breeze and the horses in the nearby corral have started to stir. The weather will break soon.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Oak enters to see a barn dance underway. A fiddle BAND has been set up at one end, and it pounds out a square dance. Most of the audience is composed of soldiers who are in uniform, but there are a few punchers lined along the walls, warily eyeing the soldiers. Liddy is the only single woman present, and she is glowing at the attention she is getting.

Katherine and Troy are sitting on the bandstand, greeting people and accepting congratulations. Troy revels in this atmosphere. Upon seeing Oak, Katherine smiles, climbs down and makes her way over to him

KATHERINE

I'm glad you're here. This must all come as a surprise to you.

OAK

I can't say it was expected, no...

Before he can get another word out of her mouth, the music has stopped and Troy is calling her.

TROY

Katherine! Come here!

Everyone has their eyes on her as she walks back to the bandstand. Troy slurs his words as he speaks.

TROY

We must drink to my beautiful new wife. Do we drink to her health, men?

A cheer raises up, and all lift their bottles and cups.

TROY

There's plenty more where that came from! Go on, men! Drink up!

The music starts up again. Oak walks over to where his men are gathered. They are outnumbered by soldiers five to one.

OAK

Come on, we got work to do.

But before the men can follow him out, Troy is there.

TROY

Oak! Where have you been? Get a drink.

Katherine watches the exchange, out of earshot.

OAK

There's a storm coming. We got a lot of grain out there that needs covering.

TROY

You old stick, Oak. You worry too much! Look at the lines in your face. You're an old mother hen, I can see it. Now get a drink.

OAK  
There's work to be done

Troy flashes anger. He grabs Oak by the shirt.

TROY  
I am the owner of this ranch now,  
and I'm ordering you to have a drink!

Oak sees this is futile, so knocks Troy's hand away and leaves.

INT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

Oak watches the barn from the bunkhouse door. He can hear yelling, and what sounds like a brawl breaking out. He sees a man tossed out, then stand and run back in.

Moments later, Katherine and Liddy exit and run back to the house. The celebration has become a riot.

EXT. BESIDE THE BARN - NIGHT

Oak is dragging huge sheets of canvas tarp from beside the barn to cover the grains. It has gone quiet inside. As he sets about his work, he sees a candle light in Katherine's window, and her dark form behind it.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

Now the lightning is coming in huge white sheets across the sky. Oak is leading a blind-folded a horse that pulls a wagon.

When he reaches the fences, he drives a stake in the ground with a hammer to hold the horse in place, then he starts grabbing the saddles that are lined along the railing and throwing them in the back of the wagon. In the next flash of lightning, he sees Katherine running across the field.

OAK  
You shouldn't be here.

KATHERINE  
What can I do to help?

OAK  
Get all that tack that's lying on  
the ground there. We don't have  
much time.

Oak takes down the saddles two at a time, while Katherine starts to pick up the many blankets and bridles that are on the ground and put them in the back of the wagon. Just then, lightning strikes a tree nearby. The horse tries to break free.

KATHERINE

Oh, God. Oak!

Instantly, he is by her side.

OAK

I think you should go inside now.

KATHERINE

Where are all the others?

OAK

They would be here if they could, I know.

KATHERINE

But they can't because they're in the barn, dead drunk with my husband. You must wonder what happened.

OAK

It's none of my business, really.

KATHERINE

I care what you think, so I want to tell you what happened. I went to Cheyenne with the intention of ending the whole thing, but.. I was alone, and the horse was lamed along the way. I was scared. When I saw him, he was nice. We went out for walks, and for a picnic. He told me he loved me, I needed to hear it. I did. He said I was beautiful, and I needed to hear that, too. It's shameful to confess it, but it's true. He said he couldn't be faithful unless we married. So I did it. I was so lonely, Gabe. I was lonely.

OAK

I think you should go in.

KATHERINE

Only if I can't be more help.

OAK

I can manage. You've done a good job.

KATHERINE

I know you're doing your very best for me.

OAK

Go on.

Katherine turns and hurries away just as the rain begin to fall. Oak goes back to his work alone.

EXT. RANCH - MORNING

It is a wet, drizzling morning as Oak sets out from the bunkhouse to check on things. As he passes the barn, he sees the men are trickling out, each holding his head, viciously hung over.

EXT. FIELDS - MORNING

Oak is checking on the herd when he sees Boldwood on foot, coming over the hill. Oak rides over.

OAK

Morning.

BOLDWOOD

Morning. It's a wet one.

OAK

Yes, sir. Are you OK?

BOLDWOOD

(instantly on the defensive)

What do you mean?

OAK

I've never seen you out of the saddle.

BOLDWOOD

(like he has just noticed he is walking)

Oh. I wanted to walk a ways. Good for a man sometimes.

OAK

Did your men get all tack in before the rain?

BOLDWOOD

I let them go.

OAK

You let all your men go?

BOLDWOOD

Yes. I just didn't want to talk to anyone. Things have not gone well for me lately, I might as well own up to it. I guess I'm the joke of the county.

OAK

Not that I know of.

BOLDWOOD

Oak, I don't know how much longer I can go on. I know you want to be a foreman. You can be mine if you want.

OAK

Can I still... be in her employ?

BOLDWOOD

I guess so. I used to believe that there was a God who looked down and protected me, but since I lost that woman, I don't think so anymore.

Oak starts to speak, but suddenly, Boldwood's funk seems to pass, and he sets off on his way.

BOLDWOOD

Come by later, we'll work out a deal. And don't you worry about me! I'm fit as a fiddle. Morning!

EXT. RACING TRACKS - DAY

Katherine and Troy stand at the white rails looking down a straight horse racing lane with a gate at one end. OTHERS, mostly men, are gathered as well. Davis and McDougal are beside Troy, their faces knotted in concentration.

Just then, the gates at the end of the track open, and three horses come barreling down the lane. One of the horses is Troy's giant new stallion. The horses thunder through the mud. As as they get closer to the finish line, everyone starts to yell and scream. Katherine sees Troy's knuckles whiten as he grips the railing.

The horses pass. Troy's stallion comes in dead last.

TROY

Damn! Damn all to hell!

MCDUGALL

Oh, come on Sarge. Don't be a poor sport.

TROY  
That jockey doesn't know horses! He  
didn't push at all.

The tiny JOCKEY on his horse arrives.

TROY  
(to Jockey)  
Get down! Get off that horse, you  
dwarf! You don't know a damn thing  
about horses!

Troy yanks the jockey down before he even has a chance to get off and throws him in the mud. Davis and McDougal laugh as the jockey, who is actually just a kid, gets up and tries to brush the mud off his colorful uniform. Troy mounts the horse.

TROY  
Double or nothing on this race.  
I'll show you how a race horse is  
to be ridden!

DAVIS  
You're deep in now, Sarge.

TROY  
(to Katherine)  
Give him the money.

KATHERINE  
Frank, no. You weigh twice as much  
as the other riders.

Troy nearly goes white with rage.

TROY  
You know nothing about horses. Now  
give him the money!

MCDUGALL  
Oh, there he goes.

TROY  
Give him the money!!

Katherine looks Troy in the eye, but hands Davis a wad of cash. Then she spins on her heel and walks back towards a line of carriages.

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Katherine watches as the new races begins. The first two horses thunder past the finish line a full four lengths ahead of Troy, who starts cursing again.

EXT. ROAD - LATE DAY

Troy and Katherine are riding home in the carriage. The exhausted race horse is led along behind. Troy is humming a tune, and seems to have forgotten all about the losses at the track.

TROY

It's the rain. Too much muck in the hooves. She's a winner. Rain's the ruin of all bettors. Every knows that.

KATHERINE

Everyone but you.

TROY

Come on now. You didn't have fun?

A huge tear rolls down her cheek.

TROY

Oh, there you go. Just like a woman.

KATHERINE

Tell me you won't go back there.

TROY

As a matter of fact, I was thinking of going back next week, and I was thinking of taking you.

KATHERINE

Never. I'll never go back there.

TROY

Well, that's a pity, because you have 100 dollars riding on the first race. I placed the bet already.

KATHERINE

You didn't.

TROY

I did. And don't go getting all glum on me. You've lost all the sass you once had. If I'd known what a chicken you were going to become, I'd have never...

Katherine cuts him another gaze, and he looks away. His eyes land on a woman who is crouching in the brush by the road. It is Mae Robins. Troy looks straight ahead, alarmed now. He waits until the carriage is 100 yards ahead, then stops.

KATHERINE  
What are you doing?

TROY  
I saw a woman back there. I think she may need help.

Katherine turns and looks. She can see Mae's blond hair in the brush. She starts to get out, but Troy stops her.

TROY  
Stay here. I'll see to her.

KATHERINE  
I'll help you...

TROY  
Stay here!

Troy steps from the carriage and runs back.

TROY  
Where have you been? Have you been OK? Little bird, I've wondered what happened...

When Troy reaches her in the brush and can see the rest of her, he sees that she is pregnant.

MAE  
I was afraid.

Troy gawks at her condition.

TROY  
Where have you been?

MAE  
Moving around. I cooked for a rail camp for a while, but they let me go. I didn't have anywhere to go, so I headed back here.

Troy is stunned at the sight of her. He takes some coins from his pocket.

TROY

Here. It's all I have. I can get more money tomorrow. Meet me behind the hotel. I'll get more money. We'll get you a room. OK?

Mae nods. She is not well.

TROY

I have to go. Tomorrow! Behind the hotel. You'll be there, right?

MAE

Yes. Frank, I...

TROY

I have to go. I'll see you there.

Troy runs back to the carriage and climbs in.

KATHERINE

Who was it?

TROY

I don't know. She's fine.

Troy puts the whip to the horse and it takes off.

EXT. BARN - SUNSET

Troy and Katherine arrive at the barn just as Oak and the men are turning out the horses.

TROY

Oak, see that these horses are brushed and fed and watered. I don't want them mixed in with the rabble.

MCFARLANE

How did you do?

TROY

We won every race!

Oak looks to Katherine for confirmation, but she just turns away and goes into the house.

EXT. ROAD - SUNSET

Mae has lain down by the road. She struggles to get up and move on the way Katherine and Troy went. She manages to get up and start moving, but after taking a few steps, a rivulet of blood runs down her leg, then more.

She cries out in pain and sits again. Finally, she lays down on her back.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Troy is dressed and pulling on his boots. Katherine is sitting at her vanity, combing her hair, trying to be cheerful, although the mood between them is tense.

TROY

I need some money.

KATHERINE

What for?

TROY

What difference does it make? I need it.

KATHERINE

Stay in with me today, please? Let's stay in bed together and read. Or we could go out together and do something.

TROY

Can't. And the money isn't for any gambling if you must know.

KATHERINE

What's it for then? I think I might ask a little if I pay.

TROY

Well, you've asked, now pay. Good God, woman. You'll regret trying to shackle me.

KATHERINE

I have regrets already.

TROY

Such as?

KATHERINE

That the romance has gone from my marriage already.

TROY

Romance ends at marriage. Didn't you know? Now come on. I'm late.

Katherine crosses to Troy and touches him tenderly.

KATHERINE

Please stay here with me. Remember how we lay in bed together in Cheyenne, for hours. It was so nice. Stay here with me, please.

The competing priorities in Troy boil over!

TROY

No, damn you woman! NO!

EXT. CORRALS - DAY

Oak is saddling up an he hears this outburst. He just shakes his head.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

KATHERINE

Fine! Go then.

She takes a wad of bills and coins and throws them at him. Troy slowly, furiously, picks up the money and leaves.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

It is later in the day. Katherine gets up off her bed when she hears hoof beats. Out the window, she sees Boldwood has ridden over to speak with Oak. Even from this distance, Katherine can tell something bad has happened.

EXT. PORCH - DAY

Katherine comes out on the porch as Oak arrives.

KATHERINE

What is it?

OAK

Girl named Mae Robins was found this morning. She's dead. She was raised here..

KATHERINE

I know who she is. What happened?

OAK

Don't know. Someone found her out on the road this morning. I'm going to go get her at the sheriff's and take her back to Boldwood's.

KATHERINE

Oh, God. She has to have a service. Take the wagon and wash it very clean. Get some flowers on the way, and some evergreens, and bring her to the church. We'll hold a service for her.

OAK

Yes, ma'am.

KATHERINE

Had she been there long?

OAK

I don't know.

Oak turns to go.

KATHERINE

What color hair did Mae have?

OAK

Light. Yellow hair.

Katherine goes back inside.

INT. HOUSE - MORNING

Liddy is just coming down the stairs. Katherine is stunned and her mind is working quickly.

LIDDY

Good morning.

KATHERINE

Liddy, I have terrible news. Mae Robbins is dead. They found her this morning.

Liddy takes a moment to soak this in, then starts to wail. Katherine heads upstairs.

EXT. BACK OF THE HOTEL - DAY

Troy waits for Mae behind the hotel. There are stairs in the back that lead to the prostitutes that work the rooms above. As Troy waits, a man (JIM) comes stumbling downstairs.

JIM

I know you. Hey, I know you!

TROY

Go on. You're drunk.

JIM  
We growed up together. What the  
hell is your name?

TROY  
I told you, old man. Go on!

JIM  
Francis Troy! I'll be dog damned.  
You're Francis Troy! It's me, Jim. Jim!

Troy looks around. Still no sign of Mae. His guilt is  
alleviated for the moment.

TROY  
Of course, Jim. Buy me a drink, Jim,  
for old times sake?

JIM  
Damned right I will. Come on!

They head inside the hotel together for a drink.

EXT. SHERIFF - DAY

Oak arrives in a wagon. He finds Boldwood speaking with the  
SHERIFF. At their feet is a pine coffin. Oak climbs down.

OAK  
Sheriff.  
(to Boldwood)  
I'm to take her to the church.  
Miss... She wants to have a service.

Boldwood nods.

SHERIFF  
You better have it soon.

The sheriff picks up a piece of chalk and writes across the  
top 'Mae Robins and child'. Oak and Boldwood glance at each  
other, each suspecting who the father might be. But  
wordlessly, they place the coffin in the back of the wagon.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Oak pulls the wagon up to a simple wooden church on a low  
hill. He jumps down and tries the door, but it is locked. He  
knocks loudly.

OAK  
Hey. You in there, preacher?

He looks down the side of the building. He can see the headstones behind the church, but no preacher. So he gets back in the wagon and leaves.

EXT. YARD - EVENING

It is near sundown when Oak pulls into the yard with the body in the wagon. Liddy is standing on the porch, and when she sees the coffin, she bursts into tears and runs into the house. Oak moves on to the barn.

INT. BARN - EVENING

Oak brings the wagon into the barn. He climbs over the seat into the back and using his sleeve, he wipes 'and child' off the coffin so it reads just 'Mae Robins'. He leans back and sits on the rail for a moment, weary with this latest job.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Oak enters. Katherine sits by a single candle in the corner. She is oddly still and quiet.

OAK

Ma'am?

KATHERINE

What is it?

OAK

I brought her back. Wasn't anyone at the church. She's in the barn. I'll take her back first thing.

Nothing. Silence.

OAK

Did you hear what I said, ma'am?

KATHERINE

Yes.

Oak senses something powerfully wrong.

OAK

I'll be in the bunkhouse.

KATHERINE

Have you seen my husband?

OAK

No, ma'am.

Oak backs out and walks away.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

It is a windy, clear night. One can feel the dark feeling hanging over the place.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Liddy enters carrying a candle. Katherine turns, and her face is puffy from weeping.

LIDDY

Do you want me to wait up with you?

KATHERINE

No. I don't need anything.

Liddy is unsure what to do.

LIDDY

Are you waiting for Mr. Troy?

KATHERINE

Yes. But I won't wait much longer.  
Thank you.

LIDDY

Well, good night.

KATHERINE

Liddy, did you know her well?

LIDDY

(holding back tears)

We was like sisters. Then she went  
to work for Mr. Boldwood, and I  
hardly ever seen her anymore...

Liddy sinks away in tears, leaving Katherine in the dark.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Katherine exits the house with a lantern in her hand. The wind tosses her hair about. She walks to the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Katherine enters with a lantern, and looks at the coffin still sitting in the wagon. She approaches it slowly, fearfully. She steps up on the running board and looks at the chalk marks. She steps back, unsure about her next move.

EXT. BARN - NIGHT

Katherine exits and walks towards the bunkhouse.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

From outside, Katherine can see Oak inside, reading by a candle light. His kitten, now a cat, is curled up on the table in front of him, dozing. Oak looks so peaceful, so simple and contented. She starts to enter, but then turns back to the barn.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Katherine enters, this time determined to know what has happened. She sets the lantern down on the back of the wagon and gets a crow bar from the wall. She climbs on to the wagon, and shuts her eyes.

KATHERINE

Dear God, forgive me for what I am  
about to do.

She uses the bar, and pries the wooden lid back. Then she picks up the lantern and peers inside.

There lies Mae, pale and shriveled in death. Her blond hair shines in the lantern light. And beside her, wrapped in blankets, a tiny child, still as the moon.

Tears begin to fall silently from Katherine's eyes as she looks. She then kneels and offers a prayer, but her heaves become greater with each moment.

Her sobs are suspended when she hears the sound of a horse riding up to the doors outside. She watches the door as she listens to the rider dismount. She knows the sound of her husband's voice as he soothes the horse, and then there is Troy standing at the door. He takes in the scene.

TROY

What in God's name is the matter  
now? Who's dead?

KATHERINE

I want to go outside!

Troy stops her. The first inkling of who may lie in the coffin creeps into his mind.

TROY

What have you done, woman?

In a flash, Troy is on the wagon. He looks down into the box.

KATHERINE

Do you know her?

TROY

Yes.

Troy undergoes the strangest transformation. Like Boldwood who never experienced love, and then became overwhelmed by it, Troy now experiences guilt for the first time. His knees buckle from its awful weight.

TROY

Mae? Oh, please... Get up now.

KATHERINE

Is it yours?

TROY

Of course it's mine! It's mine, you evil, stupid woman!

Katherine watches as Troy leans forward, so slowly she can barely see him move. He continues until he has leaned into the coffin and placed a tender kiss upon Mae's cold lips.

KATHERINE

No, Frank! Don't kiss her! I am your wife! I love you better than she did. Kiss me, too, Frank. Kiss me, too.

Frank pushes her arms away and stands.

TROY

No.

KATHERINE

But... Why not?

Troy never takes his eyes off Mae.

TROY

Because this woman is more to me, as dead as she is, than you ever were, are, or can be.

Katherine puts her hand over her mouth.

TROY

You're nothing. You're nothing to me.

Katherine staggers away. She sees Troy clearer than Oak and Boldwood combined.

EXT. RANGE - MORNING

Katherine is curled up at the base of a tree. She wakes to the sound of morning birds. She looks around, remembering how she came to be there, then hears Liddy's voice.

LIDDY

There she is! There she is!

Liddy slides off the back of Oak's horse and runs over to her.

LIDDY

I went in to see if you wanted breakfast and you wasn't there. You spent all night out in the cold. You'll catch your death!

Katherine can barely speak. Oak dismounts and kneels beside her.

KATHERINE

Is he still there?

OAK

He left early this morning. He took the wagon and left.

Katherine shuts her eyes and turns away.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry. I've made a mess of everything.

OAK

No, ma'am. That ain't true. It wasn't your fault. Now let's get you back.

Oak takes Katherine by the arm and lifts her up, and she leans on Liddy as they walk back towards the house.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Troy has put on his best dress uniform and rides the wagon through the town. He is stiff, and the weight of the night's events is still evident on his face. Words has spread, and people stop in the street and stare at the wagon passing.

EXT. MASONS - DAY

Troy is talking to a stone mason. He hands the mason some money and a small slip of paper and leaves.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Troy is digging a grave at the church. He is only about a foot down when the preacher sees him and comes over.

PREACHER  
What are you doing? Who are you?  
Stop doing that.

Troy gives the man a withering look but the preacher doesn't get it.

PREACHER  
Stop that digging here!

Troy swings the shovel and hits the preacher in the head. The preacher falls. Blood pours from the cut over his ear.

TROY  
You sit there nice and quiet or  
I'll put two under today. I'm going  
to need your help soon.

The preacher does as he is told.

LATER:

Troy and the preacher carry the coffin from the wagon and put it beside the hole Troy has dug.

TROY  
Say some words.

PREACHER  
I don't know who this...

TROY  
Say some damn words!

PREACHER  
Dear father, we commend this person  
back to thee. Ashes to ashes, dust  
to dust... May God have mercy on  
her soul.

TROY  
That's enough. Mae. Oh, God Mae!!

Troy lets forth with a wail and throws himself on the box. The preacher doesn't move. Troy suddenly composes himself and stands. He straightens his uniform, then grabs the back of the box and pushes it into the hole. Then he pushes the other end in and the box lands in the hole with a thud. Troy picks up the shovel and starts to fill in the hole.

TROY

Go away.

As the preacher heads back into the church, he sees the stone mason's wagon arriving.

LATER:

Troy has planted flowers all around Mae's grave, and the headstone is up. He is kneeling by the headstone, praying.

The skies have clouded up, and thunder is heard in the distance. Troy moves under the eaves of the church and sits. Then he shuts his eyes to rest. As Troy slumbers, a light rain begins to fall.

INT. BEDROOM - LATE DAY

Katherine looks out her window as the rain starts to fall. She sees Oak riding in after the day's work. Oak never tires.

EXT. CHURCH - SUNDOWN

Troy wakes to the sound of a small waterfall. He opens his eyes, and then sees that the rain has cascaded off the roof of the church right on Mae's grave, thus destroying his flower arrangement. All his work is ruined. Troy stands, looks at the mess, and walks away.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

Katherine wakes, and sees that it is overcast and gray outside.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Liddy has made a huge breakfast and has it all laid out when Katherine enters.

LIDDY

Oh, look at you. You look so much better. How do you feel?

KATHERINE

Better, thank you. Has he been here?

LIDDY

No. No one's seen him since yesterday. Oak came along just a while ago, said he was going on to the church. I suppose to see to Mae's service.

Katherine pauses on the mention of Mae.

EXT. CHURCH YARD - DAY

Katherine sees Oak from a distance in the church yard. He appears to be planting something.

When she gets closer, she sees that he is at Mae's grave. Oak is trying to re-set the flowers that were buried in mud. Katherine can now see the engraving on the headstone, which reads 'Erected by Francis Troy in Beloved Memory of Mae Robins'.

She kneels to help him with the planting. They work together in silence. Behind her, it can be seen that Oak has extended the rain gutter so that water will flood down on Mae no longer.

EXT. A CANYON - DAY

Troy stumbles along a river bank. He is like a zombie, wandering with no direction at all. The river is brown and swollen from the rains.

He sits down on the bank, watching the water rush by. Just below him, the water funnels into a thin part of the canyon, and rapids can be heard.

Suddenly, he stands and takes off all his clothes, and walks into the water. He faces the shore, raises his arms out to his sides like he has been nailed to a cross and falls backwards. The current grabs him and bears him away.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Katherine is kneading a batch of dough when she sees the sheriff riding towards her house. She opens the door when he steps up on the porch. Liddy has seen him from upstairs and come down to see what he wants. The sheriff has some clothes in his hands.

SHERIFF

Mrs. Troy?

KATHERINE

Yes.

SHERIFF

Mr. Troy ain't here, is he?

KATHERINE

No.

SHERIFF

Are these his clothes?

KATHERINE

Yes, I think so.

SHERIFF

Ma'am, your husband likely drowned.  
A man saw him fall in the river. We  
found these upstream.

Liddy starts to whimper. Katherine waits a moment, then slumps to the floor. Her eyes are open, but she is overwhelmed. Liddy bolts out the door as the Sheriff kneels next to Katherine.

LIDDY

Mr. Oak! Mr. Oak!

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

Oak putting up some new fencing with Boldwood when he hears Liddy's wails from far away. He watches as she gets closer.

LIDDY

Mr. Oak! Mr. Oaaaaakkkkk!

BOLDWOOD

What on earth has gotten into her?

Liddy arrives.

LIDDY

Mr. Oak! Come quick! She passed out  
right on the porch. A sheriff come  
and said that Mr. Troy was dead.

Oak runs towards the house with Liddy. Boldwood's expression is inscrutable, but news of Troy's death has made an impression on him.

*Super - November, 1899*

EXT. RANGE - DAY

It is the time of the fall round-up again. The men have created a huge series of corrals with barbed wire and fence posts. In the largest, several hundred head of long horn cattle have been penned. They low and moo and mill about.

Two bulls have started to fight, but mostly, they wait in the autumn sun. As a testimony to the greater effectiveness of the men, this round-up has produced twice as many cows as the previous years.

In another corral, a team of wild mustangs have been penned, and here, McFarlane, Sam, Drew, and Bustemante are breaking in some new horses. Sam, on horseback, cuts one of the ponies away from the pack.

McFarlane, on foot, expertly ropes the pony and starts to pull it center, where he can rope off on a post.

Oak arrives on horseback and watches as the men go through this ritual without any help or advice from him. Oak looks different. He has a new coat and hat and has put on some weight. He is no longer the rail thin, scruffy cow hand that first came to the ranch.

Once McFarlane has the pony roped off, Drew and Bustemante rush out with a saddle. Working together, they have the pony saddled before he has a chance to resist too much. They back away and let the pony kick and churn, until he subsides. Now someone must ride him. McFarlane sees Oak watching.

MCFARLANE

Care to take a turn?

OAK

No, thanks. I just saw a bunch due west, down Boxer Canyon. We're going bring them in next.

McFarlane nods, and Oak rides off.

DREW

Don't that man never rest?

MCFARLANE

That man's running two ranches for owners that don't want to leave their houses. And he's not just the foreman for Boldwood. He's a partner.

BUSTEMANTE

Hey, we a gonna talk or we a gonna work?

In a snap, Bustemante is on the horse, McFarlane lets the rope go, and Bustemante rides the beast until it comes under his control.

EXT. RANGE - DAY

Oak rides up to Liddy's wagon, where she is cooking on a small fire.

OAK

You can head on back. We'll be in by sundown.

LIDDY

OK.

Oak takes a piece of paper out of his pocket and hands it to Liddy. It is a handbill for a tent show.

OAK

A man in town handed me that.  
There's a show coming. Wild Bill  
Cody. Why don't you see if you can  
get her to go. She ain't been  
outdoors since summer.

LIDDY

Wild Bill Cody! Oh, that would be  
fun! I'll ask her. Oh, I hope  
she'll do it!

OAK

How.. is she?

LIDDY

She don't say much. She reads, but  
she don't hardly ever talk.

OAK

Well, we'll be in by sundown, and  
hungry.

LIDDY

I'll be ready.

OAK

You do a good job, Liddy.

Liddy blushes, then starts to, typically, tear up.

LIDDY

Nobody ever said that to me before.

OAK

Well, someone has now.

Oak smiles at her and rides away.

INT. BARN - DAY

Liddy has pulled the wagon in and is getting her things from  
the back when she turns and nearly runs in to Mr. Boldwood,  
who has been watching her.

LIDDY

Mr. Boldwood. You scared me.

BOLDWOOD

I'm sorry. I've come to check on Katherine. I never see her out of the house.

Liddy knows that she is not to discuss matters with Boldwood.

LIDDY

Oh, she's fine. She leaves things up to Mr. Oak mostly, but she gets out all the time.

BOLDWOOD

Liddy, can I ask you something. Does she ever mention me. In any way?

LIDDY

Well, sometimes, in passing. I guess she does. Not in a way like... she has mentioned your name I guess, but... Hey, look at this!

Liddy takes the handbill out of her pocket and shows it to Boldwood.

LIDDY

Wild Bill Cody is having a show!

BOLDWOOD

Katherine might be going?

LIDDY

Maybe. I don't know if she will. Mr. Oak thought it might be good if she got out some.

Liddy realizes this contradicts what she had just said.

LIDDY

I got to go now.

She takes the handbill and goes inside.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Katherine is lying in bed reading. Liddy knocks.

KATHERINE

Come in.

Liddy enters timidly. She has the handbill.

LIDDY

Mr. Oak give me this. There's going to be a show coming. It's Wild Bill Cody's Western Show, it says here. Mr. Oak thought you might want to go, get you out of the house.

Katherine looks at the flyer. It shows a scene of soldiers fighting Indians and a herd of buffalo in the background.

KATHERINE

Wild Bill Cody.

LIDDY

Come on! Let's go tonight. We'll get all dressed up, and show these folks around here who the real beauties are! Come on. You can't lay here forever. If you don't mind me saying.

KATHERINE

Do you want to go?

LIDDY

I do. I surely do!

KATHERINE

Ok, then. For you, I'll go.

LIDDY

Oh, grand! I'm going to pick out our dresses!

Liddy rushes to the closet and starts pulling out dresses.

LIDDY

Oh, look at this one! Can I wear this one?

KATHERINE

Of course you can.

Katherine climbs out of bed.

EXT. THE SHOW - NIGHT

There is quite a turnout for the show. A CROWD is gathered around the entrance to a tent, Katherine and Liddy walk through the crowd arm in arm, dressed to the nines. Men all tip their hats to them, and Katherine's presence seems to have created a new buzz.

LIDDY

Look! That man is selling candied apples. Oh, let's have one, please!

KATHERINE

Go ahead.

Liddy rushes away to get the apple. Katherine stands for a moment by herself.

Just then, she sees a man looking at her, and after an instant, recognizes Oak. He has cleaned up and put on a new shirt. And he wears no hat. He walks over to her.

KATHERINE

I didn't recognize you. You look so different.

OAK

I don't feel right.

Katherine smiles, then speaks involuntarily. Her words are more intense and sincere than even she intends.

KATHERINE

It's so good to see you.

Oak is surprised, but his face shows that he returns her feelings. But before he can speak, Liddy returns with Boldwood beside her.

LIDDY

(forced)

Look who's here.

KATHERINE

Mr. Boldwood. What a pleasant surprise.

Boldwood is overdressed in a tuxedo.

BOLDWOOD

Good evening, everyone.

KATHERINE

How have you been?

BOLDWOOD

Never better. Never better. You've come to see the show? Look, I have a whole block of tickets. The best seats. Would you like to join me?

There is no saying no to this offer, so Katherine extends her hand, and Boldwood leads them in.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

WILD BILL stands center ring in his buckskins. He speaks in exaggerated tones, leaning in to his words. Katherine is sitting beside Boldwood, up front and center. Boldwood sneaks glances at Katherine and she is aware of him watching her, but she is enjoying the show.

WILD BILL

You're going to see tales of tough men and tougher times. You're going to see tales about brave men and wild injuns!

A boo and hiss spreads across the audience at the mention of Indians.

WILD BILL

And we're going to start with the bravest of the injun fighters. The handsomest and smartest of them all. General George Armstrong Custer!

Just then, a man rides out dressed like Custer. Custer rides to the center of the ring and rears his horse back, draws a pistol and fires heroically into the air.

WILD BILL

But Custer had a lesson coming his way!

Wild Bill starts his intro to the battle of Little Big Horn.

EXT. BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

The man playing Custer rides off stage and quickly dismounts and gets ready for the next part of the show. There are lots of ACTORS dressed as soldiers, Indians, etc. getting ready as well.

But when the Custer actor takes off his hat, he pulls his hair off as well. When the mustache comes off, Custer is seen to be Francis Troy! He walks to a tent flap and peaks back at the audience.

He eyes Katherine, who is smiling and enjoying the show. Troy's eyes burn as he notes Boldwood watching her and not the show. Troy doesn't look the same, however. He has a scar across his forehead. When one of the show girls comes up to him and places her hand on his chest, he roughly shoves her away. He cannot take his eyes off Katherine and Boldwood.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

Boldwood, Katherine, Liddy and Oak exit the tent with the other PEOPLE. Boldwood is energized.

BOLDWOOD  
That was fantastic, wasn't it? The best show we've ever seen, don't you think?

KATHERINE  
It was good.

BOLDWOOD  
The best show, yes. Mrs. Troy, would you do me the honor of letting me ride you home? It's been so long since we had a chance to even speak. We're neighbors and we haven't spoken in far too long.

Katherine hesitates, but then gives in to the idea.

KATHERINE  
Of course. Gabe, can you see Liddy home?

OAK  
Yes, ma'am.

BOLDWOOD  
Wonderful!

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Katherine and Boldwood are riding home in his carriage. Boldwood is enjoying being so close to her. It is a clear night with a huge moon.

BOLDWOOD  
Are you cold? You must be freezing! Here, I'll give you my coat...

KATHERINE  
I'm fine, no. Just fine.

Quite suddenly, Boldwood stops the carriage.

KATHERINE  
What's wrong?

BOLDWOOD  
Katherine, may I talk with you, just a moment?

Katherine stiffens; she does not want an intimate moment with Boldwood.

BOLDWOOD

Do you think you'll ever remarry?

KATHERINE

I don't know. I try not to think about those kinds of things.

BOLDWOOD

I can understand that. But your husband has been dead for many months now.

KATHERINE

That was never proven.

BOLDWOOD

Yes, but a man saw him swept away... I have never forgotten how you were almost mine, before he came along. But I know you never liked me.

KATHERINE

I did. I was and am sorry for what I did to hurt you. I wanted to make it better, but I just couldn't.

BOLDWOOD

If you were to have proof that you are, in fact, a widow, would you make it up to me by marrying me?

KATHERINE

Mr. Boldwood, I don't know.

BOLDWOOD

If six years go by, and your husband isn't back, you'll marry me?

KATHERINE

Mr. Boldwood, six years? Where will we all be then?

BOLDWOOD

Please! After what I've been through, it's such a small little thing. Just make me this one promise; that if you marry another man, you'll marry me!

The force of his outburst makes Katherine fearful of denying him.

KATHERINE

OK. If I marry again, it will be you. But...

BOLDWOOD

Then we'll let things stand like that. We'll not say another word. In six years, barring no acts of God, you'll marry me. You'll keep your word this time, right?

KATHERINE

That's why I don't want to promise anything. I don't love you, and I have little love left for anything. If you value the word of such a woman, I guess I'll consider it.

BOLDWOOD

Good. You think about it. And at... New Year's Eve, you'll give me an answer, OK?

KATHERINE

New Years?

BOLDWOOD

Yes. We'll say no more about it. Until New Year's Eve.

Boldwood clicks at the horses, and starts the carriage again.

EXT. BUNKHOUSE - DAY

Oak is wrapping new patches of leather on the old saddles. Katherine sits on a fence rail.

OAK

He's not likely to forget you. You know that.

KATHERINE

I know. The worst thing is, I only agreed to it because I thought if I said no, he'd go crazy right there in front of me. I'm sure of it. And that's not vanity on my part. I don't want this. I don't want responsibility for that man's fate.

OAK

He's a blank now when he isn't thinking of you. Probably is best to tell him what he wants to hear. Six years... But you can't marry him if you don't love him.

KATHERINE

Love is a miserable worn-out old thing to me now. From him or anyone else.

In some tiny way, this hurts Oak, and it shows.

OAK

Well, the fact that you don't love him is the only thing that takes the harm away from making this kind of agreement. Give him what he wants, see what time brings.

KATHERINE

I just can't get off my mind that I hurt that man through a joke.

OAK

Maybe you should go see the preacher.

KATHERINE

You're the only person I trust with a question of morals.

OAK

I'm just your business man. And it isn't a question of morals, it's a question of love. Whose advice do you trust on that?

KATHERINE

No one.

OAK

Not even your own?

Katherine lets this sit for a moment then gets off the wagon and walks away. Oak continues with his work as he watches her walk back towards the house.

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

*Super - December 31, 1899*

Oak is at the bar making a deal with several CATTLE BUYERS with strong English accents.

BUYER 1

You do drive a hard bargain, Mr. Oak. A hard bargain indeed.

OAK

Man's got a make a living. I'll see you in April, then.

They shake hands, and Oak exits. The buyers start talking amongst themselves. On the other side of them, one can see that Pennyways! has been listening. He finishes his drink and heads upstairs.

INT. HOTEL - DAY

Pennyways comes down the hallway and knocks on a door. After a moment, it cracks open, and Troy peaks out.

PENNYWAYS

He just left.

Troy lets Pennyways enter.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Troy crosses to the window and looks out. He sees Oak mount his horse and leave.

PENNYWAYS

Oak's in charge of everything. From what I hear, Boldwood don't hardly ever leave the house.

TROY

He looks different. What about the party?

PENNYWAYS

It's on for tonight. He ordered all the liquor he could buy. Invited everyone.

TROY

Including her?

PENNYWAYS

People is saying it's mostly for her.

Troy gives Pennyways a few dollars.

TROY

Thank you. Come see me tomorrow. You'll be the new foreman.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Katherine is sitting before a mirror trying to get herself ready for the big party. She is wearing her black dress. Liddy places more candles on her table and turns to leave.

KATHERINE

Wait, Liddy, don't go. Liddy, what am I going to do?

LIDDY

I ... I... I don't know.

KATHERINE

I keep thinking he'll come to his senses, but now this party... We'll go, say hello, have a cup of punch, then come back quickly. Will you help me?

LIDDY

I guess. Don't you want to wear something lighter?

KATHERINE

Oh, no. I want to look like a grieving widow. I want to be as unappealing as possible.

Katherine heaps on white face powder.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Boldwood, dressed to the nines, is checking on the final preparations for the party. An enormous spread of food and drink has been laid out. HELPERS scurrying about trying to get more things ready. Boldwood is orchestrating the whole event like his life depended on it.

BOLDWOOD

We need more light here. In the hall. Henry, we need more light here in the hall! I want it to glow when she enters.

Oak enters.

BOLDWOOD

There you are! What do you think?

Oak looks around at all the decoration, but has no opinion.

BOLDWOOD

What do you think about this suit?

Again, Oak is without opinion, but Boldwood's eager face demands a reply.

OAK  
Looks good.

BOLDWOOD  
Come here.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Boldwood leads Oak into the huge dining hall. In a giant punch bowl is an ice sculpture that reads '1900'.

BOLDWOOD  
Well?

OAK  
That's a lot of ice.

BOLDWOOD  
Yes. Do you think she'll like it?

OAK  
Yes. I do.

BOLDWOOD  
Excellent. I want this to be a night that no one will ever forget. Now you go on and get ready.

OAK  
I come to tell you that I made a deal with some buyers for the spring. 1000 head minimum. We got an advance...

BOLDWOOD  
Yes, I'm sure it's fine. Now go get ready. Go on!

Boldwood hurries off to take care of a new detail.

INT. BUNKHOUSE - NIGHT

McFarlane is sitting on his bunk talking with the other men. All have dressed up for the party.

MCFARLANE  
It's all over town. People have seen him.

SAM  
Who says?

MCFARLANE

Boldwood sent me to the hotel for more liquor, and the bartender told me. Says he seen him clear as the day.

DREW

He was sure it was Mr. Troy.

MCFARLANE

Aye. He was sure.

SAM

What are we going to do? We going to tell her?

MCFARLANE

Tell the poor woman that her husband is back from the dead to run her ranch, her life, back into the ground? I wouldn't have the heart.

BUSTEMANTE

We tell Mr. Oak. He will know what to do.

MCFARLANE

He won't be no more happy to hear about this than she will.

Just then, Oak enters. The men dummy up.

OAK

What's wrong?

MCFARLANE

Oh, nothing. We was just getting ready to go to the party.

OAK

Well, go on. Boldwood's going to bust open if this thing don't get under way soon.

As the men begin to get ready, Sam approaches Oak.

SAM

Can I ask you a question, Mr. Oak?

OAK

What?

SAM

Is Mr. Boldwood... Well, is me and Drew going to fit in at this party?

OAK

I'm the foreman at Boldwood's ranch. If I say you're welcome, that's the end of it. Anyone says different, they'll answer to me. Now get ready.

(Sam smiles)

Is that what all the moping round here is about?

SAM

(smile fades)

I guess so.

Oak turns away and starts to get ready himself.

EXT. BOLDWOOD'S - NIGHT

The house is lit up with hundreds of torches and candles. Lines of buggies and wagons are along the paths, and boys have been left to tend the horses. Throngs of people are seen along every porch, hanging out the windows, packing the doorways. Boldwood has indeed invited everyone for miles around.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

People are packed in, mostly men. The rooms have filled with smoke. People are dipping their glasses straight into the giant punch bowl and passing in and out of the room.

On the landing at the top of the stairs is Katherine. She sits, sipping a drink, with Liddy close at her side. She and Oak look at each other with anxious eyes, both knowing that Boldwood could put them in an uncomfortable position at any moment.

Boldwood enters, sees Katherine, then stops to speak to Oak.

BOLDWOOD

I heard she was here.

Boldwood smiles and waves to Katherine, and she smiles slightly and waves back.

BOLDWOOD

Just seeing her here makes me feel so much better. I feel like a long night is passing and the morning almost here. Oak, do you think women keep their promises?

OAK

Some of them. Sometimes.

Boldwood laughs.

BOLDWOOD

You need a wife, Oak. You're becoming bitter.

Boldwood moves on to greet more GUESTS that are arriving, all the while glancing up at Katherine.

LATER:

More people have packed into the rooms, but not much fun seems to be had by anyone. People have lined the walls and are not-so-subtly watching Katherine and Boldwood. They all want to be spectators in the great drama they hope will soon unfold.

Boldwood moves around the room, pressing the flesh, generally making people uncomfortable. When Boldwood leaves the room, Katherine nudges Liddy, and both stand to leave. Oak sees this. As Katherine comes down the stairs, a PARTY GOER looks at his watch and notes the time. It is nearly midnight.

PARTY GOER

Hey, folks. It's only one more minute to midnight.

An excited rush fills the room. Oak looks to Katherine, who has come down the stairs. She reaches him, but says nothing. As the people rush around, and the countdown builds, she just looks at Oak, and he back at her.

Crowds jostle passed them, trying to get to the nearly empty punch bowl to get a cup of booze before the big moment. She tries to say something, but he can't hear her over the noise.

OAK

What?

She just smiles. It doesn't matter. What could be said? In each other's gaze, they can see their own reflection. Both have achieved much that they sought; her a ranch of her own, him the respect that comes from being a first rate cowman.

In that moment, they are able to acknowledge the other's basic loneliness.

KATHERINE

I'm sorry for what I've put you through!

OAK

I can't hear you!

But then the countdown begins.

CROWD  
Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!

As the final seconds of the 19th Century tick off, Oak and Katherine gaze into each other's eyes. He leans in. To speak, or to kiss her?

CROWD  
Happy New Years!

Then the singing starts. Boldwood pushes his way through the crowd before Oak can reach her. He shoves his face to Katherine's ear and asks her something. Oak sees as she nods, looks down, and heads back up the stairs with him.

INT. UP STAIRS LANDING - NIGHT

The landing is covered with holly and flowers. The sounds of people mangling 'Auld Lang Syne' are heard from below.

BOLDWOOD  
I've been wanting to talk to you all night. Maybe you know what I want to say.

KATHERINE  
I think I know.

BOLDWOOD  
Do you give it? Will you marry me after six years?

KATHERINE  
I'm an unhappy woman, Mr. Boldwood. Why you should wish to marry such a woman, I can't possibly know.

BOLDWOOD  
Say it! It's just a business arrangement between two people is all.

Katherine looks around, hoping someone will enter and relieve her.

BOLDWOOD  
Just say the words. After five and three quarters years you'll marry me.

Katherine is defeated by his insistence.

KATHERINE  
And you'll leave me alone? You'll not bring it up every day from now till then?

BOLDWOOD  
I'll leave you be. I promise.

KATHERINE  
If my husband doesn't come back at  
the end of six years, I'll marry you.

BOLDWOOD  
And say you'll take this from me.

Boldwood grabs her hand as produces an engagement ring.

KATHERINE  
NO! Mr. Boldwood, I can't wear a  
ring. This will have to be a secret  
between just you and me. No, please...

BOLDWOOD  
Just for tonight, then.

Boldwood slips it on her finger.

KATHERINE  
OK, just for tonight, now please  
let me go home. I don't feel good  
at all. Good night.

BOLDWOOD  
God bless you, woman. Now I'm happy.  
God bless you!

Katherine nearly runs down the stairs.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Oak sees her descending the stairs. She grabs Liddy by the  
arm and heads for the door.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

More MEN are collected in the hall by the front door. She  
and Liddy grabs their coats and start to put them on. Oak  
comes around and starts to speak to her, but she looks away,  
too upset to speak.

Just then, the door bell rings. One of the men opens the  
door. There stands a man. He removes his hat, and looks up  
to the light; it is Troy.

The color drains from Katherine's face. Oak is stunned as  
well. Is it a ghost? When he moves to enter, it is clear he  
is real.

Katherine backs up until she has withdrawn into the dining hall. Troy brushes past Oak, and enters the dining hall, where his presence ends all conversation.

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Katherine has moved backwards as far as she can. She is now flat against the wall. Boldwood, who has been laughing and smiling, sees Troy. He freezes. It just can't be.

Slowly, everyone turns to Troy. His presence offers a level of drama no one could have dreamed. Troy lets the moment settle, then speaks.

TROY

Katherine, I've come for you.

She cannot move, think, or speak.

TROY

Come home with me, now!

He crosses to her and grabs her arm.

TROY

Do you hear me, woman! Now.

OAK

Let her go.

TROY

This is between a man and his wife!

OAK

(to Katherine)

You don't have to do this.

Troy takes note of the ring.

TROY

What's this ring? Boldwood, are you really so ridiculous that you'd propose to a married woman?

BOLDWOOD

I.. You...

OAK

Mae alone is grounds for a divorce. You don't have to go with him.

TROY  
Oak, you're fired.  
(To everyone)  
This is my wife! Mine! Legal and  
clear. And she's coming home with me.

Before he can drag her away, Oak stops him with a forearm placed on his chest. While he holds Troy still, he speaks to Katherine.

OAK  
You don't have to do this! You've  
worked too hard, come too far.

TROY  
Stand down, Oak.

OAK  
Just tell me what you want to do.

Now Katherine looks at Oak as if he has just joined this parade of lunacy. She is a portrait of terror, panic, and indecision. Troy can take it no longer.

TROY  
Enough of this. She's coming with me!

Troy shoves Oak backwards and yanks her arm. She cries out in a small shriek.

Just then, there is a deafening shotgun blast! BOOM! Boldwood is seen across the room lowering a double barreled shotgun that he took from the mantle, smoke curling out of the barrel. Troy has been pushed by the blast into the wall. There is blood and burns at his mid-section.

A room full of people involuntarily recoils back! Her mouth hangs open as Troy slides down the wall. No one moves further until Oak notes that Boldwood has lowered the stock of the gun to the floor and is kneeling in front of it; he is about to blow his own head off.

Oak cross the distance with three great hops and leaps, knocking the gun back just as Boldwood pulls the trigger. The blast goes into the ceiling. The rest of the men pile on to Boldwood trying to wrestle the gun from him.

Katherine slowly sinks to the floor beside Troy and takes his head into her lap.

KATHERINE  
 (zombie-like)  
 Mr. Oak, could you send for a  
 doctor? Mr. Boldwood has shot my  
 husband.

OAK  
 Yes, ma'am.

Oak kneels by Katherine, and gently coaxes her up.

OAK  
 There's nothing you can do for him now.

KATHERINE  
 Have Mr. Troy brought home, will you?

OAK  
 Yes, ma'am. I'll see to it myself.

Katherine takes Liddy on her arm and walks from the room.  
 Oak kneels by Troy and closes his lifeless eyes.

EXT. RANCH - DAY

*Super - Summer 1900*

As with every summer, the green returns, the birds sing, the  
 grass grows. But there are some differences at the Everdene  
 ranch.

The corral fences, once limited and bare, have been expanded  
 and painted. Inside the corrals, cattle are lined up at long  
 troughs. Windmill powered pumps have been dug, and water  
 stands in small ponds in the middle of some of the corrals.  
 The calves gathered around the ponds are darker and denser;  
 the first evidence of Katherine's breeding program.

McFarlane, Drew, Sam, and Bustemante have loaded a wagon  
 with hay bales to spread around the corrals. McFarlane hears  
 the sound of hooves, and looks up to see Oak approaching.  
 Liddy has heard as well, and she steps out of the house. Oak  
 dismounts; his eyes are bloodshot, and he has not slept.

MCFARLANE  
 Well? Will they hang him?

OAK  
 Judge ain't ruled yet.  
 (To Liddy)  
 You'll tell her?

LIDDY

I'll tell her, but it's not what she wants to hear. If they hang that man, they may as well kill her, too.

Liddy heads inside. Oak starts to take his saddle down.

MCFARLANE

Did you see him?

OAK

I sat up with him all night.

MCFARLANE

Is he gone mad?

OAK

Hard to tell. He doesn't say much. I want you to go back and wait. The judge could rule at any time. I don't want her to have to wait any longer than she has to.

MCFARLANE

Aye. I'll go right away. You get some rest.

Oak is too tired to protest, so he lets McFarlane finish with the saddle, and he walks away to the bunkhouse.

LATER:

Oak comes outside when he hears McFarlane yelling. McFarlane is yelling up to Katherine, who is in the window of her bedroom.

MCFARLANE

They're going to let him live! They won't hang him, ma'am! He'll never roam the earth again, but they won't kill him!

Oak and Katherine briefly meet eyes, then Liddy appears by her, and they hug. Oak turns back inside to go back to sleep.

EXT. CORRALS - DAY

Oak and the men are breaking a new set of horses. They work together like a well-oiled machine. Sam ropes a horse and ties it off; Drew and Bustemante rush forward with the saddle and slowly place it on the horse.

Oak watches from a fence, when suddenly, Katherine, dressed in a light, summer dress, climbs up on the fence beside him.

The other men take notice as well.

McFarlane gets up on the horse after a moment, and it bucks and churns, but McFarlane will not be thrown. After a moment, he has total control over the animal. Katherine smiles and claps. McFarlane tips his hat to her. When she looks to Oak to share this moment, she sees he has already spun off the fence and is walking away.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Katherine is sitting on her porch reading when Liddy comes outside.

LIDDY

Are you hungry, ma'am?

KATHERINE

No. Liddy, you have to stop feeding me every hour. I'm fine. Please, just sit and be still.

Liddy sits.

LIDDY

Oak came by earlier and gave me this for you.

She hands Katherine a note from Oak. It has no heading, no signature. Just some general ranch business.

KATHERINE

He never comes by anymore. Have you noticed? Just notes now and then.

LIDDY

He's got Boldwood's whole operation to run.

KATHERINE

It's not that. Remember when he would come to the door, and not even knock? He would just stand there and wait until someone saw him. He's changed. I think, Liddy, for the first time in my life, I'm actually despised.

LIDDY

By Oak? Oh, never! Never!

But Katherine is not convinced. She signs 'OK' on the note and hands it back to Liddy, then goes back to her reading.

EXT. PORCH - NIGHT

Oak knocks on the front door. After a moment, Katherine answers with a bright candle in her hand. There is an odd tension between them, never present before.

KATHERINE

Good evening.

OAK

Good evening. I... come to tell you that I'm leaving. End of the week.

Katherine is stunned. For his part, Oak seems stunned to hear himself say the words.

KATHERINE

Where are you going?

OAK

Up North. There's still some free range up there. Montana, Canada. I worked out an arrangement with Boldwood's stock holders, got me a little stake. Think I might like to try to be my own rancher one more time.

KATHERINE

Well, you'll be missed.

OAK

Any one of the men can take over as foreman now. They're all good men.

KATHERINE

Yes, thanks to you. We'll be fine, I'm sure.

An awkward moment follows, and Oak turns to go. He stops at the bottom of the stairs and struggles out these final words.

OAK

These were good times. The best I've ever had. But... I got to go out on my own.

Katherine watches as he crosses back to the bunkhouse, then she quietly closes the door.

EXT. CORRALS - MORNING

Stars still twinkle in the lightening sky as Oak mounts his horse. His bags are packed and laid over the saddle. No one is up yet, not the men, not Katherine.

He looks at her darkened window, takes a deep breath, and rides away.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

*Super - Fall, 1910*

In the first ten years of the 20th Century, modernity came to America. In the town, more stately brick buildings line the streets, which are graded and graveled to make way for the first automobiles.

One of those early automobiles is parked in front of one of a new bank building. McFarlane, clearly taken with the new machine, is polishing the fenders as he waits.

INT. BANK - DAY

Katherine sits at a long table with three portly BANK OFFICERS. They bow and scrape before her shamelessly. By their demeanor, and Katherine's newer, elegant clothes, it is clear she has prospered.

BANK OFFICER 1

Mrs. Troy, there is nothing, and I mean nothing, that we won't do to make sure you stay with us. You're our favorite customer. Is there anything else we can do for you?

KATHERINE

I have some bulls that need castrating.

The bank offices smile, nod, and look around at each other.

KATHERINE

I'm kidding.

Katherine stands and pulls on her gloves. The men start to laugh.

BANK OFFICER 1

Of course! Of course! You're one of a kind, Mrs. Troy. One of a kind!

Katherine turns to go. She never cracks even a hint of a smile. Though successful, she is now hard.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Katherine comes out of the building, and McFarlane jumps behind the wheel. She gets in.

MCFARLANE

Well?

KATHERINE

They approved.

MCFARLANE

So you bought it?

(Katherine nods)

How does it feel to be the largest  
rancher in the state?

KATHERINE

Tired, Andrew. Makes me feel tired.

McFarlane starts the car and drives away.

EXT. BOLDWOOD'S - DAY

Katherine watches as Sam and Drew take down the sign over Boldwood's gate. She mounts her horse and rides away toward the house.

INT. BOLDWOOD'S - DAY

Katherine enters the front door and looks around. All the furniture and carpets are gone.

Katherine makes her way into the den where her husband was killed. There is still a hole in the ceiling where the shot Boldwood meant for himself went in. Where Troy fell, there is no trace of blood.

Katherine makes her way over the the stairs and sits. She listens; all is quiet in the old house. After a long moment, she folds her hands across her knees, lays her head down, and start to cry.

EXT. CANADA - DAY

Snow drifts down over the Canadian Rockies. Along a frozen river, a low shelter is seen. This is a cowboy line camp. A blanket has been hung over the door in a futile effort to keep out the cold.

The blanket comes down, and Oak pokes his head out. He has let a long beard grow, and his hair is a shaggy tangle. He steps out of the shelter so he can stand up straight, then quickly starts to gather his things.

EXT. FROZEN MEADOW - DAY

Oak rides into a snow covered meadow where a large herd of cows are milling.

The area is free all right, but it would be hard to call free range. Mountain peaks are all around, and range for grazing on the rocky slopes is scarce

Spaced out around the cattle are several PUNCHERS, each bundled against the freezing cold. Oak reaches WISHBONE MIKE, who pulls his scarf down so he can speak.

WISHBONE MIKE

Get your beauty rest?

OAK

You ought to woke me up.

Wishbone Mike snorts. Waking Oak isn't his job. Oak looks out at his cattle, which are all emaciated long horns.

OAK

I'm going on to Billings, look for a buyer. Take them South, meet me at Two Forks in a week.

WISHBONE MIKE

Ain't nothing but fences in Two Forks. Ain't nothing but fences on the way to Two Forks.

Oak takes out a roll of cash and hands Wishbone Mike a few bills.

OAK

Get them through. Better start today. Another week of this, they'll start dropping out.

Wishbone Mike pockets the bills, and Oak rides away.

EXT. BILLINGS - DAY

More snow is falling as Oak reaches town. As he is headed in, a group of wandering INDIANS are headed out. They are all on foot, each wrapped in bright blankets, but like his cattle, thin, gaunt, wasted.

Oak stops and watches them pass. They are pathetic in their wandering poverty. One of the children looks over his shoulder at Oak. These are the ragged ghosts of a bygone era, and the sight of them sends a new chill down Oak's spine.

INT. HOTEL BAR - DAY

Oak enters a fancy hotel. Over the bar he sees something new; a row of electric lights. A spiffy BARMAN approaches him.

BARMAN

This isn't the place for you.  
There's another hotel right down  
the street. That's where you people  
stay. Down the street.

Oak gives the Barman the thousand yard stare. He pulls his jacket back and reveals a pistol in his holster. He takes it out and lays it on the bar and then he lays the roll of cash beside it. The barman eyes both warily. It is his choice which to deal with.

OAK

I want a drink. And I want  
something to eat. Then a room.

The Barman nods and scurries away. Oak glances around and notices that more MEN are wearing suits, once a rare sight. They are staring at him like he is the last of a breed.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Oak's room has a single electric bulb hanging over a sink. He stares at the faucet, then cautiously turns the handle, and sees the water dribble out. Amazing.

Oak splashes a bit of water on his face, and looks into the tiny mirror above the sink. He reaches up and touches the flecks of gray in his beard. The world is moving on, and he is getting older.

EXT. RANCH - DAY

It is spring. Katherine is gently humming to herself as she hangs her laundry out to dry. She hears Liddy talking to the chickens in the yard. Everything seems to work, everything in its place.

She sees a NEW HAND, Drew, and Bustemante riding by in the distance. When she sees Liddy come around the corner of the house, she realizes that she wasn't talking to the chickens but rather to McFarlane. They are easy with each other. She takes all this in, then goes back to the laundry.

EXT. PORCH - SUNSET

Katherine sits on the steps, smoking a hand-rolled cigarette and watching the evening colors. Liddy appears at the door.

LIDDY

Supper's ready.

KATHERINE  
 (short)  
 I'm not hungry.

Liddy knows when Katherine is in her horrors and leaves her alone.

KATHERINE  
 Has Andrew asked you to marry?

LIDDY  
 (wary)  
 Not yet.

KATHERINE  
 When he does, you'll accept, won't you?

LIDDY  
 Yes, ma'am.

KATHERINE  
 Good.

Katherine gets up and walks away. Liddy, used to such abrupt questioning, shrugs and goes back inside.

EXT. CORRAL - DAY

Katherine is throwing hay bales out of a wagon by herself. Her fat happy cattle are digging into it as it hits the ground.

She hears a horse approaching and turns to look. The sun is in her eyes, but she can see the outline of a man on a horse. There is something familiar about the rider...

When he is closer, she can see the familiar shape, the ease and confidence of a man who has lived most of his life in a saddle.

It is Oak. Oak reaches her and stops. Each takes a moment to absorb the other, the changes that ten years have wrought. Oak comes down off his horse as she steps off the wagon.

KATHERINE  
 You're not a ghost, are you?

OAK  
 No, ma'am.

Oak takes off his hat, grabs her at the waist and hugs her. After a moment, she pushes back. She steps away from him, a mix of emotions. When he speaks, it is a new Oak, unseen before. It sounds like he has traveled a great distance to say these words.

OAK

I missed you.

Katherine jumps forward and hugs him tight.

KATHERINE

Gabriel... Where on earth have you been?

INT. DINING HALL - NIGHT

Oak and Katherine are at her dinner table. Candles are lit. He sits in front of an empty plate. An awkward silence has developed, but the air crackles with anticipation.

KATHERINE

Well, I may as well get the point. Are you staying?

OAK

I don't know.

KATHERINE

You don't know?

(angry)

Now you listen! Don't... Don't you dare...

OAK

Don't what?

KATHERINE

Don't you dare toy with me. I told you I missed you but I don't want that to be misinterpreted. I'm glad to see you, but if you're here for something more than just a friendly visit, then just say it. Come out with it.

Oak just smiles at her outburst; she hasn't changed.

KATHERINE

Did you find your precious free-range?

OAK

I did. What was left of it. I held over a thousand head at one time. But.. the land just kept getting smaller.

KATHERINE

The land wasn't all that got small.  
The price of beef as well. I don't  
know how you could make a living  
with those long horns. Bag of bones.  
But you did it. Good for you. So  
you're happy. That's good.

OAK

Are you? Happy?

KATHERINE

I have the largest ranch in the  
state. My cattle get heavier every  
season. Buyers come to me now. I  
couldn't be happier.

OAK

Then I guess you wouldn't be  
interested in this then.

Katherine looks up to see Oak holding a diamond ring. She is shocked. Oak reaches over to her and takes her hand.

OAK

I had everything I thought I wanted.  
But still, I kept thinking, I want  
to go home. I want to go home. I  
had never said it out loud before.  
Never admitted that it was what I  
wanted. Maybe I'm getting soft. And  
old.

KATHERINE

A home isn't a bad thing to want.

OAK

No. It isn't. And I realized, you  
were the best home I ever had.  
Where ever you are, there I am. I  
love you. I've loved you true and  
good since I first laid eyes on you.  
I want to marry you. Will you marry me?

KATHERINE

Yes, Gabe. Yes, I'll marry you.

EXT. CHURCH

The wind blows across the grasses. Suddenly, the church bells begin to ring, and the doors burst open. Oak and Katherine come out laughing and smiling.

She does not wear a white dress, and he does not wear a tuxedo, but they are both beaming.

All the men, many of whom are sporting wives and children of their own, are in attendance. They pour out of the church behind Oak and Katherine, and everyone begins to sing as the wedding party walks away from the church.

We settle on the graves of Troy and Mae, and listen as the singing gets fainter, until all that is left is sound of the wind and the grasses waving in the breeze.

FADE OUT