

EXT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - DAY

Two CORN HUSK DOLLS lie forgotten on a tree stump, dressed as boy and girl, a narrow gap between their outstretched hands.

Nearby, LORETTA LEE (8) stands holding a CUP OF WATER, wearing a dusty brown dress and a BANDANA around her neck.

Her father, MOSES (50), straightens up from inside the hole he's been digging for the DEAD PIG that lies nearby.

He takes the cup, drinks, and Loretta runs to the water pump to refill. Over at the PIG PEN, another sickly animal waivers and falls to the ground. Moses SIGHS and continues digging.

EXT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - ESTABLISHING - CONTINUOUS

SUPER: 1865

We see the lay of the land, a large two-story FARM HOUSE, a BARN, and run-down animal pens, nestled against the beautiful coastal foothills in central California. In the distance, a lone RIDER approaches on horseback.

EXT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - FRONT OF HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The Rider, FRANK MARTIN (30s), rides up to the house, ties off, and brazenly walks through the front door.

INT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

The house is a thief's paradise, crammed with dusty ANTIQUES and odd, exotic KNICK-KNACKS.

Frank wanders through, walks past several items he could easily steal, but no. He's there for something specific.

INT. MOSES'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The room is a dragon's lair of treasures. CRATES and CHESTS are piled against the walls.

This must be the place. Frank begins to search. In his haste, he knocks some MOBILES and WIND CHIMES hanging from the ceiling. They catch sunlight and REFLECT it around the room.

EXT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - CONTINUOUS

At the pump, Loretta sees the LIGHT DANCING on the walls in Moses's room and heads off to investigate.

INT. MOSES'S ROOM - DAY

Frank spots a case covered with a BURLAP SACK and whips it off, revealing: a STEAMER TRUNK, painted blood red, decorated with STRANGE SYMBOLS and locked tight. *Yep, that's the one.*

INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Loretta hears Frank rummaging and tiptoes to the door.

She peers inside and sees Frank rooting through the trunk. He senses her, begins to turn, and she ducks out of the doorway just in time.

Did he see her? Suddenly a hand covers her mouth, muffling her startled SCREAM.

FRANK (O.S.)
Close your eyes.

She obeys. Frank removes the bandana from around her neck.

FRANK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(good-humoredly)
I'm gonna take my hand away.
You try to run or call for your
daddy, I'll gut you 'fore you can
draw a breath. You hear me?

Loretta nods.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Open your eyes, little girl.

She does. Her bandana covers his nose and mouth.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Will you be good?

She's smart. She nods.

EXT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

Moses tosses another shovelful of dirt out of the hole.

MOSES

'Retta, you got water?

No reply. He looks around, sees the vacant water pump. He climbs out of the hole, takes a few steps, and spots Frank's horse tied outside the house.

INT. LORETTA'S HOMESTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

Moses enters the house and grabs his GUN BELT off a hook. He creeps toward the muffled voice coming from upstairs.

INT. MOSES'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Loretta sits on the ground, watching Frank search the trunk. He kicks it with frustration.

FRANK

Your daddy keeps a messy home. Why don't he make you clean a bit? You're near enough a woman.

He sits on the bed, reaches over and ruffles her hair.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Help a fella out. I'm lookin' for a set of six-shooters. Got ivory handles. You know what ivory is?

LORETTA

Mr. Blakefield has pistols at the store in town.

FRANK

Not like these he don't.

Frank leans forward, looming over her.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I bet a little girl like you has poked her nose into every nook of this house. I bet you know about every secret thing.

He pulls his gun out.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Am I right?

A floorboard CREAKS before Moses LEAPS into the room, giving Frank time to draw his gun. But Loretta KNOCKS HIS ARM and the shot goes wild.