

FADE IN:

INT. PORTLAND UNDERGROUND (1880) - DAY

Darkness, dirt floors, silence. A spider twines its way to the ceiling.

Three strong, rough looking men hide in the shadows.

INT. PORTLAND SALOON - DAY

EMMA, 18 and beautiful despite her second hand clothes, sits with her DADDY, a tall, rugged logger. They are the only customers.

SULLIVAN, a well-dressed man with the skills of a boxer, stands next to the bartender, STONEFACE, a cigar-smoking hulk of a man.

DADDY

Didja ever think you'd be in a big town like this, so close to the edge of the continent?

EMMA

It's beyond anything I could have imagined. I love it.

She reaches for his hand.

EMMA

Thank you, Daddy.

He squeezes her hand tight.

Sullivan appears at the table, suddenly hovering over them.

Daddy, startled, gives Sullivan a curious look, then reaches into his pocket. As he counts out coins for the bill, Sullivan looks over Emma, studying her body.

Emma looks away, embarrassed.

Sullivan wipes away the money from the table. He walks away slowly and arrogantly, with a smirk on his face.

DADDY

I don't get to see you near enough.

EMMA

I know. You can't help it.

DADDY

You look good. You're doing okay?

EMMA

I am.

Sullivan leans against the bar as Stoneface shifts his cigar around in his mouth. They stare at Emma and Daddy.

Daddy glances over at them. He shifts uncomfortably in his seat, but turns his attention to Emma.

DADDY

The Brooks seem like good people.

EMMA

They are. They're very sweet to me. Especially Mrs. Brooks.

Daddy's eyes dart back over to Sullivan and Stoneface.

Sullivan and Daddy lock eyes. Sullivan's face grows into a grin.

Daddy gets up from the table and offers Emma his hand.

DADDY

Let's go, Emma.

Emma hesitates, then catches Sullivan's stare. She nods and grasps Daddy's hand. They walk toward the exit.

Sullivan suddenly appears behind them. He places his hand on Emma's shoulder. Emma gasps and jerks away. Daddy turns, ready to fight.

Sullivan puts a hand up.

SULLIVAN

Woah, now. I just need fifty cents.

DADDY

Excuse me?

Stoneface moves in closer.

SULLIVAN
Fifty cents. You still owe me
fifty cents.

Daddy turns to Emma.

DADDY
Wait outside.

EMMA
But...

DADDY
Wait outside. I'll be right
there.

Emma opens her change purse and hurriedly counts fifty cents into her open palm.

EMMA
(to Sullivan)
Here...

Stoneface hits her palm and the coins clatter to the floor.

Daddy pushes Emma into the doorway.

SULLIVAN
(to Daddy)
Pretty little girl you got there.

Daddy swings at him, Sullivan catches his arm. He holds it tight as Daddy struggles and winces in pain.

Stoneface runs toward the bar.

Sullivan moves Daddy in a circle, then releases him, pushing him toward Stoneface.

The spider crawls through a crack in the floor, running over Daddy's boot.

Daddy reaches into his boot and pulls out an ivory-handled knife. He throws it toward Sullivan just as Stoneface pulls a lever. Daddy falls through a deadfall door and the knife lodges into the bar.

Emma screams.

DADDY

Daddy! No!

The deadfall door won't close. Daddy holds on, his sheer determination keeping it open.

Emma rushes toward Daddy.

The men in the underground surround Daddy like sharks. They pull at his legs as he struggles to keep his grip.

DADDY

Run, Emma! Run!

Stoneface rushes in to grab Emma, covering her mouth as she struggles.

A man pulls on Daddy as he loses his grip. The deadfall door springs shut.

Emma faints in Stoneface's arms.

Sullivan pulls the knife from the bar. He turns it round and round in his hands, admiring the intricately carved ivory handle.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

KELLY, a drunken, mean sonuvabitch, walks through the streets, wiping sweat from his face. He stares with contempt at the Chinese vendors crowding the sidewalks. They sell produce, meats, flowers, and toys.

A Salvation Army DRUMMER drums in the street, jingling a box for donations.

A Chinese man carries a bamboo pole with a basket tied at each end. The basket contains live chickens, flapping their broken wings.

Kelly, disturbed by the chickens, steps away from them and into the Drummer.

The Drummer continues to drum, right in Kelly's face.

Kelly rips away the drumsticks and glares. The Drummer smiles meekly at Kelly, then shakes his collection box.

DRUMMER

Give to the needy?

Kelly throws the sticks across the street.

EXT. PORTLAND WATERFRONT - DAY

BOY, 14, and Kelly's son, picks up a stick. He runs behind a pile of boxes joining REDHEAD, 12, and LITTLE KID, 8.

A merchant ship docks at the waterfront.

Chinese men, dressed in traditional peasant coats, crowd the deck of the ship. Masses of Chinese men gather around the docks to welcome the ship's passengers.

Boy aims the stick at the Chinese, pretending to shoot them.

REDHEAD

They look kinda like Indians.

BOY

My dad says they are Indians.
They just take jobs instead
scalps.

INT. UNDERGROUND AUCTION ROOM - NIGHT

Sullivan hurries Emma through darkness and into a large, empty room. Gas lanterns flicker, creating patterns on the dirt floor and brick walls.

Emma struggles and kicks in his arms as he muffles her cries.

INT. MERCHANT SHIP - DAY

A seedy SHIPMATE leads THE AUCTIONEER, a short man covered in carbuncles, to a row of iron cages. The cages are filled with very young Asian girls.

PRETTY FLOWER, a prepubescent Chinese girl, curls up in the corner of her cage. She cowers, her eyes open wide with fear.

The Auctioneer whacks her cage with his cane. She flinches, curling into a ball.

SHIPMATE

Her name's Pretty Flower.

The Auctioneer's face contorts from a nervous tic.

AUCTIONEER

These Chinese know how to name their women, don't they?

The Auctioneer drops a few coins into the Shipmate's open palm.

Shipmate unlocks the cage door.

Auctioneer reaches in his pocket, pulling out a piece of candy. He reaches his gnarly hand into her cage, holding the candy in front of her.

She doesn't move.

AUCTIONEER

C'mon now Pretty Flower. Eat.

He pushes the candy against her body.

She jerks, turning away from him. Her hands grasp and twist around the bars at the back of the cage.

Insulted, he throws the candy at her. His face contorts in another tic.

AUCTIONEER

Stupid girl.

He carefully unfolds a handkerchief then removes a bottle of chloroform from his pocket. He douses the cloth, then reaches into the cage.

He grabs Pretty Flower, forcing the cloth to her face. She struggles but her kicks slow as the chloroform takes effect.

She stops moving. He lifts her into his arms.

EXT. WATERFRONT - DAY

The Captain pushes near the forward gangway.

CAPTAIN

All ready!

The men walk down the gangway, shouldering bamboo poles that dangle packages of bedding and clothing. The men on the docks rush to hug and greet the passengers.

Little Kid takes off into the crowd.

Boy and Redhead look on in amazement as Little Kid walks among the men.

REDHEAD

You know...when they die, they
ship their bones back to China.

Little Kid finds a space in the crowd at the backs of two Chinese men.

BOY

My dad says our money is good
enough for them, but our soil
ain't.

Little Kid ties the long queues of two Chinese men together. A Chinese man notices and chases him away.

CHINESE MAN

(in Chinese)
Son of a barbarian!

Little Kid runs back to Boy and Redhead. They all laugh and run off along the waterfront.

Boy stops near PREACHER, a rogue, eccentric evangelist.

PREACHER

...it were a thousand times
better that these majestic rivers
had never been plowed by the keel
of mighty ships!

Boy sneaks up behind Preacher, shoving the stick in his back.

Preacher raises his hands in the air.

Redhead smirks, but Boy is deadly serious.

BOY

Don't ever say that about the ships, preacher. Those ships are my bread and butter.

Preacher spins around and rips the stick from Boy's hand. He throws the stick to the ground and steps into Boy's face, grabbing his arms.

PREACHER

Yes, but at what cost?

Boy tries to squirm away. Preacher shakes him hard, forcing him to stop and look up into his eyes.

PREACHER

At what cost, Boy?

BOY

There ain't no cost.

PREACHER

Oh yes there is, Boy. And one day you'll know that.

Preacher lets go of Boy's arms. They stare at each other for a moment. Boy takes off with Redhead and Little Kid.

They brush past The Auctioneer, who carries Pretty Flower in his arms. Boy slows down and stops, turning to look at Pretty Flower. The other boys call after him, and he runs, following them along the waterfront.

EXT. WATERFRONT DOCKS - DAY

Kelly speaks to CAPTAIN WHALE WHISKERS, a rugged ship's captain with an enormous beard and a cheek full of tobacco.

KELLY

I gotcha plenty of men.

WHALE WHISKERS

I'll need 'em in seven days.

KELLY

Not a problem.

WHALE WHISKERS

Forty a head...not a penny more.

Kelly shakes his head and laughs.

KELLY

No, Captain. And now you'll give me sixty. I call the price here. If you tell me forty-five I'll go straight to seventy. Insult me again, I'll take what little crew you do have and sell them to the next ship that comes in.

Whale Whiskers scowls.

KELLY

Are we agreed at sixty, then, Captain?

Whale Whiskers lowers his gaze, spitting tobacco juice onto the ground.

He looks up at Kelly, his eyes full of spite.

WHALE WHISKERS

Agreed.

EXT. IVY GREEN SALOON - NIGHT

Horse drawn wagons splash through puddles as men walk in raingear through the Portland rain.

A strong and sturdy LOGGER stomps mud off his boots and walks into the Ivy Green Saloon.

INT. IVY GREEN SALOON - NIGHT

Men drink and gamble in this seedy, smoky bar. Prostitutes work the crowd.

SPIDER, the Ivy Green's tattooed bartender, works the long, mahogany bar. Whiskey advertisements and titillating paintings of women hang above him.

A man stands at the bar, relieving himself while drinking a beer. A stream of urine trickles along a brass trough and into a drainage hole in the floor.

The logger walks up to Spider. He leans in close.

LOGGER

Gimme your strongest. Just got
into town and I'm fulla hell.

Spider smiles and winks as he reaches for a bottle under the bar. He takes out an odd shaped bottle and pours the logger a shot.

The logger brings the shotglass to his mouth. His eyes cringe at the fumes, as he sniffs then downs the shot.

He takes a few moments to shake it off.

Spider refills the shotglass.

LOGGER

(strained voice)

Damn. That'll grow your balls.

Spider's hand crawls along a shelf under the bar, past spiderwebs and well-used bottle of poison. He grabs a lever, caresses it, and waits.

START BROTHEL MONTAGE

Prostitutes hustle men into bedrooms.

A man shoves a laughing prostitute onto her bed.

TEDDY, wearing long underwear and a policeman's hat, feels up a prostitute on a ratty Victorian loveseat. His policeman's uniform lay crumpled nearby.

A man sprawls on a squeaky mattress as a prostitute gyrates on top of him.

END MONTAGE

INT. IVY GREEN SALOON - NIGHT

Spider pulls the lever.

INT. BROTHEL ROOM - NIGHT

A man's contorted face as he orgasms.

INT. UNDERGROUND - NIGHT

The logger's contorted face as he hits a mattress on the dirt floor.

Kelly and Boy rush to pin him.

Logger flails on the mattress as Boy rips off one of his boots.

KELLY
Hurry it up, Boy!

Boy pulls off the other boot, throwing it onto a large pile of shoes.

The logger has a hard time focusing on Kelly. He grows more and more uncoordinated, appearing drunk or poisoned.

Kelly bends over, grabbing the logger by the shirt.

The logger concentrates, gathering all of his will. He catapults forward, head butting Kelly.

Kelly staggers backward and falls against a wall. A trickle of urine falls from the ceiling onto his head.

Logger scrambles to his feet, hitting Boy out of the way as he sprints toward an exit.

Kelly wipes his face in disgust and staggers to his feet. The logger takes off running.

The logger looks as though he might make it out alive, but slows down, a pained expression emerging on his face. The ground has turned into a thick layer of broken glass. He slows to a limp as blood covers his bare feet.

Kelly places his hands on the logger's shoulder.

Logger summons all his rage, clenches his fist, and whips around to drop Kelly. He staggers from the drugs and misses. They stand facing each other.

KELLY

Let me make this easy on you.

Kelly punches him square in the face, dropping him to the ground.

INT. UNDERGROUND AUCTION ROOM - DAY

Emma sits in a corner of the room. The room begins to fill with females of all ages and races.

Her eyes dart toward possible exits. They are heavily guarded.

INT. UNDERGROUND AUCTION ROOM - NIGHT

Loud and obnoxious men fill the room.

Several ragged, frightened, and barefoot girls huddle in a corner. Older women stand around them, protecting them.

Strong men stand at the exits and police the crowd.

Emma, dirty and disheveled, sits in a corner.

Pretty Flower hides curled up against a wall, her back to the crowd.

Emma notices Pretty Flower. She moves to touch her but hesitates, unsure of what to do. She relents and gingerly places her hand on Pretty Flower's shoulder.

Pretty Flower tenses at her touch, then peers out to look at Emma. They look at each other, and Emma's overwhelmed with sympathy.

Emma moves closer, wrapping her arms protectively around Pretty Flower. Pretty Flower burrows into Emma's embrace.

EXT. UNDERGROUND AUCTION ROOM - NIGHT

Kelly wraps his hand around the back of Boy's neck.
They peer into the doorway of the auction room.

KELLY

You see this, Boy?

Boy nods his head as he studies the room.

KELLY

You got no power, you're a woman.
You got no money, you're a whore.

Boy's gaze falls on Pretty Flower. He hangs his head in shame.

INT. UNDERGROUND AUCTION ROOM - NIGHT

A plain girl, with dirty, stringy hair, stands on The Auctioneer's box in the center of the room. She wipes snot and tears from her face.

Plain Girl looks over the crowd and meets Emma's stare. Emma tilts her head, urging the Plain Girl's eyes toward a loosely guarded exit.

Plain Girl sees the exit just as The Auctioneer whacks the box with his cane.

He clears his throat. The room quiets.

Plain Girl's foot steps off the box. The Auctioneer whacks her shin with his cane, drawing blood. He glares at her as she trembles, stifling a scream.

AUCTIONEER

Now here we have an attractive
female, about sixteen.

He whacks the box in a staccato rhythm. She flinches each time.

AUCTIONEER

Not an exotic, but surely
acceptable. Plump lips and a
beautiful set of teeth. Show us
your teeth, girl!

Plain Girl's lips quiver, but she holds her lips shut. The Auctioneer uses his fingers to pry them apart.

AUCTIONEER

Yes, an incredible mouth and an ample bosom indeed!

The Auctioneer grabs at a breast.

AUCTIONEER

Bidding starts at thirty.

A man raises his hand.

Plain Girl's leg trembles as she stares at the exit. Slowly, she moves her foot from the box, hoping to make a break for it.

The Auctioneer instantly strikes her foot and she retracts it with a scream.

AUCTIONEER

Thirty, do I hear forty? Forty dollars for this handsome and able girl?

A man toward the back of the room raises his hand.

AUCTIONEER

Forty do I hear fifty? Forty do I hear fifty? Sold! For forty to the man in the back.

The Auctioneer leans over, whispering to a man nearby. People start to chatter, breaking the quiet. Suddenly, her escape path has cleared.

Plain Girl leaps from the box just as a strong man wraps his arms around her.

Emma sinks her face into Pretty Flower's hair as Plain Girl is carried away.

She raises her head to see a man towering over her.

She looks into his eyes.

EMMA

No. Don't.

The man pulls Emma to her feet, but she clings to Pretty Flower. Pretty Flower bawls as another strong man rips her away from Emma.

Pretty Flower screeches, struggling and reaching toward Emma. A sea of people fall between them as Emma is rushed to The Auctioneer's box.

The man lifts Emma onto the box.

Emma's eyes dart toward the exits. She remains composed, quietly calculating an escape.

Staccato tapping.

AUCTIONEER

Yes, well, here we have a virginal, young nubile...well-formed and perfectly symmetrical.

He lifts her dress with his cane.

AUCTIONEER

Sure to be a carnal pleasure indeed. Bidding starts at fifty.

A well-dressed man in white raises his hand.

AUCTIONEER

Fifty, do I hear sixty?

Another man raises his hand.

AUCTIONEER

Sixty, do we have seventy? Sixty, looking for seventy?

MAN IN WHITE

One hundred dollars.

The crowd falls silent.

AUCTIONEER

One hundred dollars, do I hear one-ten? One-ten?

Silence.