

All That Glitters

©2017

FADE IN:

EXT.FOREST

The clip clip of hooves through pine trees. Knee high boots gently nudge the horse along a riverbank. A mile ahead, the forest opens into a valley at the foothills of a great mountain range.

A large two-storey homestead is visible beneath a stunning blue sky. Cattle graze in nearby fields. Well maintained out-buildings indicate a prosperous farm. Chickens, pigs...it's all neat and tidy.

SUPER - CENTRAL OREGON MARCH 1865

INT.HOMESTEAD - FRONT ROOM

P.O.V - the approaching rider is framed at the end of a rifle barrel that pushes aside a lace curtain.

EMILY(O.S.)

Got this son of a bitch covered,
Mama. A little closer and...

(beat)

Just say the word and I'll blow
him to hell.

CORA(O.S)

Watch your language my dear. And
stay your impatience.

EMILY(O.S.)

I'm the youngest, Mama. I got to
fight for everything in this world.
I'm always impatient.

The rustle of skirts, a door is unbolted.

CORA(O.S.)

Yes, I'll cede you that. But ease
up on that trigger until I see
what the stranger wants.

Through Emily's sights, the rider is only fifty yards away now. The horse slows to walking pace.

EXT. HOMESTEAD FRONT PORCH

The door opens and CORA(52)steps into view, a tall lean woman. Her dress is stylish. Her graying but clean hair is piled high in a classical style.

Cora closes the door behind her. The rider, wearing a long sleeved shirt,buckskin trousers, comes to within twenty feet of the porch.

A revolver sits in a gunbelt around the rider's waist; a Spencer repeating rifle in the saddle scabbard.

CORA

Afternoon, stranger. I'll mind
you come no closer.

The rider nods. Beneath the wide brimmed hat, only the lower face is revealed - clean shaven, full lips.

STRANGER

Just looking to ask a few
questions, Ma'am. I'm searching
for a friend of the family. Went
missing a couple of weeks back.

The voice is soft and indicates a youthfulness.

STRANGER

Folks in Finn Rock say she
might've come up this way.

Cora takes this in, nods her head slowly.

CORA

We don't get too many visitors,
not since the war started. Your
friend have a name?

A snigger from the opposite front window. Another rifle edges out. The stranger doesn't seem perturbed.

STRANGER

Yes Ma'am. Elizabeth. Elizabeth
Hall. Seventeen years of age.
Blonde hair, brown eyes. About
your height.
(beat)

Ma'am.

Cora muses on this. Addresses the windows without turning her head.

CORA

That description sound familiar
to you girls?

The door opens. AGNES(23) walks out. She wears an apron over a bright dress, her hands behind it. She would be deemed pretty if not for the sneer on her face.

AGNES

Elizabeth? Yes, she was here for
a few days, remember Mama? We fed
her, gave her clean linen to sleep
in, comforted her.

She stares hard at the stranger.

AGNES

Said her family had thrown her
out. Her mother used to beat her.
Get drunk and beat her every night.

CORA

Ah yes, I recall her now. So sad.
So much hate in her head. We get
a few like her every now and then.
Leaving a broken home, trying to
find their lot in life. All young
girls. I give them a haven if
only for a short time.

STRANGER

She still here?

CORA

No, she left a couple of days ago.
We wanted her to stay longer but
she refused. Said she was headed
south to California to start afresh.

STRANGER

I see. You have a large farm here.
Plenty going on by the looks.
Folks in town tell me its only
you and your four daughters
working it?

CORA

Seems like the people of Finn
Rock are telling a lot of stories
lately. Maybe they should mind
their own business?

The stranger shrugs.

CORA

Me and my girls are hard workers.
Have been for a number of years now.

STRANGER

Ah yes. Twelve to be precise.
Since the death of your second
husband and his daughter.

Cora blinks, a frown appears on her lips. Agnes gasps.

CORA

Terrible accident that claimed
the lives of my loved ones.

STRANGER

Indeed. A little girl barely four,
playing with a gun. Shoots her
father and herself tragically.
Leaving you to raise your girls
by yourself. And then the war
breaks out...

CORA

You seem to know a lot about me.
Who exactly are you?

Another girl appears at the door - JENNIE(20). She's small
and nuggety, walks with a limp. Angry little thing...

JENNIE

Why aren't you fightin' with the
rest of the men? You some kind of
deserter?

CORA

Hush now, Jennie. I'm sure our
'visitor' has a valid reason for
being...so far from the war.

A titter from Emily's window. The stranger looks briefly up
to the sky then down.

STRANGER

The war will be over soon they
say. Another month or two.

MARY(18) the holder of the second rifle, pulls the curtain
aside. A plain looking girl with a mass of black curls, she
glares at the stranger.

MARY

That ain't no excuse for cowardice.

EMILY(17)now appears at the door, moves to the left side of
the porch. Her rifle - also a Spencer repeater - hovers,
ready to cover the stranger. Emily's a striking beauty,
blonde hair in pigtails.

EMILY

I agree.

(beat)

Maybe we should take this deserter
back into town? Lock him up in
the sheriff's cell until the Union
boys come home.

The other girls murmur at this, nod their heads. Cora gazes
at the stranger who holds up gloved hands before smoothly
dismounting.

The two rifles instantly snap up. Agnes brings her hand from
behind her apron to reveal a nasty looking cleaver.

Jennie draws a large Colt Navy from her dress pocket.

CORA

No further. Unbuckle your belt slowly. And take the rifle off your horse. Lay it on the ground. Again...slowly. Then step away from your weapons.

She and the girls watch as the stranger does all this.

STRANGER

I'm no deserter, Ma'am. I would've gone to fight like the rest. But they wouldn't let me.

CORA

And why not?

STRANGER

Because I'm a woman like you.

The stranger removes the hat to reveal long raven-black hair.

AGNES

Oh my. Mama, she's so beautiful. And so young.

MARY

My goodness yes.

JENNIE

She even prettier than you, Em!

EMILY

Hobble your lip before I...

She's furious now. Rifle is aimed dead on the stranger's face. Mary is at the door now. All four sisters line the porch behind their mother.

CORA

All of you hush up now.
(beat)
What is your name, child?

STRANGER

I call myself...Hope.

MARY

Such a lovely name too. She's...

EMILY

Stop it. Stop fawning over her. This is probably a trick. I bet she got others just waiting to rush in and rob us.
(beat)

You can't deceive me, bitch.

HOPE

I didn't pretend to be a man. You just assumed it.

MARY

Mama, can I have her please? I want to see her na...

CORA

Be quiet Mary!

Jennie and Agnes look worried. Mary's eyes are glazed now. She walks along the porch to the steps, rifle in one hand. Emily glances at her but keeps her gun trained on Hope. Cora tries to grab Mary's arm but she brushes it off, keeps moving.

MARY

I want her to sleep in my room, Mama. Please don't make her work in the mine with the others. Please?

AGNES

MARY, GET BACK HERE AND SHUT UP!

Hope's eyes flit to her guns for a moment, weighing the odds, then back to Cora.

HOPE

That would be the gold mine your husband started digging, wouldn't it? I guess you need a lot workers for that.

Cora's eyes narrow. She backs slowly up the steps, even as Mary comes down them.

CORA

Kill her.

A moment where time seems to halt. Then all hell breaks loose.

Hope slaps her horse's rump, it takes off. Emily pulls the trigger. Mary walks right into it, the bullet hitting her head. Gore and brains splash in the air. Mary's corpse falls forward. Hope takes the rifle from her hand.

Cora screams in anguish and fury, rushes into the house. Agnes and Jennie cry out at Mary's death but move into action. Jennie tries to aim the Colt at Hope.

Emily chambers another shot, fires again. It narrowly misses Hope's head, giving her time to return fire with Mary's rifle. The bullet tears into Emily's throat, tumbles her back through the door. Hope drops the rifle, roars up the steps.

AGNES

JENNIE! SHOOT HER! SHOOT THE BITCH!

Jennie swings the heavy weapon up just as Hope smashes into her. They hit the edge of the doorway, the gun between them. Hope grabs Jennie's hands, jerks them to the left.

Agnes has the cleaver raised to bury in Hope's head but the Colt goes off, taking Agnes above the nose. The heavy slug disintegrates most of her face. She drops.

The cleaver hits the porch. Hope trips Jennie who is in shock, grabs the cleaver and drives it between Jennie's shoulder blades. A spasm or two and she's done.

Hope stands for a moment, calm, not even out of breath. Then she takes a knife from her boot and turns to the doorway, stepping over Emily.

INT.HOMESTEAD

Hope moves carefully down a dim hallway, doors opening off. The house is quiet. Suddenly to the left, an open area where stairs rise to the first floor. Cora stands half way up, a double barreled shot gun in her hands.

CORA

I don't know who you are or how
you know about us. But you killed
my girls and now you're going to
fucking die.

She pulls both triggers as Hope throws the knife and dives to the side. The shot blows holes through the walls. The noise is tremendous. Hope raises her head, unharmed. Cora is thrown back by the recoil, drops the gun, sprawls on the steps.

Hope stands, moves up the stairs. The knife juts from Cora's chest. She still breathes, fear in her eyes.

Hope straddles her, leans in close. Cora's breaths become weaker and shallow. Her eyes bore into Hope's.

CORA

Tell me..please tell me who you are.

HOPE

I was there that day.

CORA

Please...I'm dying...I need to know.

HOPE

Look deep into my eyes, Cora. The
truth is in them.

(beat)

Now I go to your gold mine. Your
husband's mine. To free the girls
you have imprisoned there.
Innocent women to collect the gold.

Cora shakes her head weakly.

CORA
How? How can you know this?

Hope sits up, places her hands above the knife hilt.

HOPE
You can die wondering...
(beat)
Bitch.

She slams her hands down.

EXT.GOLD MINE

The mine is in a small valley at the rear of the homestead. From the darkness of the opening, Hope leads a group of women. Their ages range from ten to twenty five. All weep as they shade their frail eyes from the bright sunshine.

Dressed in rags, filthy, thin with sores on their limbs, the women are a sorry sight. Slowly they head up to the house.

EXT.HOMESTEAD - BACK YARD - LATER

The freed women sit on the grass near the back porch. Hope brings food and water out.

HOPE
Drink and eat slowly. Your bodies
will not be used to this much at
once. I have to... tidy up inside.

Half of the girls merely look at her, dazed still. But the youngest, who is called ROSE(10) looks keenly at Hope.

ROSE
You kilt them all, didn't you?

HOPE
I...yes I did.

ROSE
Thats good. They were bad ladies.
All of them.

The other women stop eating to listen. Some weep again.

HOPE
Yes they were. Hush now darling
and eat. Get your strength back.
I have to keep riding on soon.
But I'll let the town folk know
you're here and alive.
(MORE)

HOPE (CONT'D)

Some of you have family there.
Others I'm guessing were taken
while traveling past.

ROSE

I'm from Eugene. They kilt my
folks and my little brother and
took me into the mine when I was
seven. I prayed every night in
that horrible place for someone
to come save us.

(beat)

I'm so glad they are dead.

LATER

The women are still on the grass resting. Hope leads a horse
attached to a small cart from the mine area. She lugs down
two wooden boxes to the ground, opens them. Gold nuggets
fill both.

HOPE

These are yours to keep. When the
menfolk come back from the war,
this can be used to rebuild
theirs - and your - lives. Share
it around the whole town. No
arguing over it. There's been
enough killing and fighting the
last four years.

She walks to her horse which is tied to a tree. Mounts up
and looks at the group of women.

HOPE

You all take care.

Now they are all on their knees praying and weeping, thanking
Hope. Except for the plucky Rose who walks to the horse and
gazes up.

ROSE

You didn't tell us your name,
brave lady.

HOPE

Well I...no, I didn't. Why don't
you tell me yours first?

ROSE

I'm Rose.

Hope grins at this indefatigable little girl. Rose smiles
back up at her.

HOPE

Rose. What a sweet name for a
sweet girl.

(beat)

My name is H...

She pauses, clears her throat. Tears well in her eyes briefly.

HOPE

My name is Sarah.

She nods to Rose, urges her horse on. The girls watch as she disappears around the side of the homestead. Rose stands staring after her.

LATER

Almost twilight. The women have gone inside to sleep. Rose wanders the yard. She's drawn to an overgrown patch near the fence abutting the main field. Carefully pulling aside the long grass, she finds two headstones.

The elements and dirt have marked the surface. She rips a piece of her filthy dress to wipe clean the inscription on the left headstone:

In Loving Memory of Joseph Randall Foster 1813 - 1853

Rose looks at this sadly, starts wiping the second headstone. It reads:

His daughter Sarah Foster 1849 - 1853

Rose drops the rag, falls to her knees.

ROSE

Oh...God heard me.

FADE OUT.

THE END