

Retribution Ridge

FADE IN:

EXT. PRAIRIE - EVENING

As wide as the day is long. In the distance, a town.

A horse GALLUPS toward it.

EXT. TOWN - LATER

It's no St. Louis, but in the right light it could pass for an Oklahoma City.

The horse slows at the town's outskirts. Riding on its back is the DRIFTER. A crust of dirt and a wide brimmed hat make it impossible to discern the rider's features.

The horse trots past the town's sign: **RETRIBUTION RIDGE**.

EXT. SALOON

The bar is a well-kept, two story affair. From within, a woman's voice HUMS a tune.

The Drifter slows the horse and dismounts.

INT. SALOON - SAME

A large parlor filled with empty tables. In the corner sits a beautiful Steinway Grand.

ROXY (18), pretty as a picture and just as bright, hums to herself as she sweeps the floor. Her fine petticoat twirls as she dances with the broom.

Behind the bar stands, BELLE (50), a stunner in her day, but that day has long passed. She's washing glasses in the sink.

BELLE

That voice of yours is an absolute peach, Roxy. Won't be too much longer before the men in this town are coming for your singin' instead of what's in your corset.

Roxy beams at the older woman.

ROXY

Do you mean it, Miss Belle?

BELLE

I surely do. I think the ridge is

(MORE)

BELLE (CONT'D)

just a bit of passin' scenery for you. Why I could see you singin' and dancin' in San Francisco by this time next year.

ROXY

Now wouldn't that be the day! I promise, I won't forget all that you've done for me, Miss Belle. I swear it.

BELLE

Ain't nothing I done that gave you that voice or that face. I love you like I love all my girls. I'm just happy to help when I can.

The doors to the saloon swing open. Both women look to the entrance as thhe Drifter strides in.

ROXY

Sorry mister, bar's closed.

The Drifter removes her hat, letting her shoulder length hair tumble out. In the bar-light we see she is a stern looking woman in her late 20's.

ROXY

Oh shit! I thought you was a fella.

The Drifter moves to the bar and sits across from Belle. When she speaks it's like sandpaper against gravel.

DRIFTER

Whiskey.

ROXY

You got cotton in your ears? Said we're closed.

DRIFTER

Had a long ride. Thirsty.

ROXY

I think maybe you should just get-

Belle raises her hand, silencing the young woman. She pulls two glasses and pours whiskey into each one.

DRIFTER

Obliged.

(to Roxy)

(MORE)

DRIFTER (CONT'D)

Heard you singing outside. Sounded like a little hummin' bird. Had to come check it out.

Roxy blushes.

ROXY

Well shoot, I can't argue with that!

Roxy grabs for the second glass, but Belle reaches it first.

BELLE

Now you get back to cleanin', Roxy. Let me and this stranger talk a spell.

Belle sips from her glass. The Drifter follows suit.

DRIFTER

That's good. Been a while since I had a proper drink.

BELLE

Been on the trail for sometime from the smell of you.

The Drifter snorts.

DRIFTER

Guilty.

She drains the glass. Belle tops it off.

BELLE

So what brings ya through Retribution? Lookin' for work?

Belle sizes the drifter up, moving from her shit-caked boots to her filthy hair.

BELLE

You're too ugly for whorin', but we could always use another pair of hands around here for cleanin' up.

DRIFTER

Not here for work. Here for revenge. Looking for the person that killed my daddy.

Roxy stops sweeping. The parlor falls silent.

BELLE

Well that's just terrible, sweetie.
You think there's a murderer here
in Retribution Ridge?

DRIFTER

Sure of it. Been tracking 'em for
a while.

Roxy moves closer to the bar.

ROXY

What happened?

Belle shoots a look to Roxy. She resumes her chores.

The Drifter gazes into her whiskey as if she was divining
secrets from a crystal ball.

DRIFTER

Daddy and I had been estranged for
a spell. Trivial bullshit. I was
young and in love with a
gunfighter. Just wanted to travel
the West together makin' a name for
ourselves. Needless to say, my
father didn't approve.

The Drifter shrugs off her coat as if the weight of the
thing was suddenly weighing heavy upon her. Twin revolvers
rest on her hips.

DRIFTER

After mama died, he always was
protective. Didn't realize it
'till after that he probably just
wanted to keep me around for his
own lonesomeness.

She sips from her glass.

DRIFTER

Got word he'd met some widow and
was getting hitched. Was happy for
him. My daddy wasn't a smart man,
but he was kind. Felt good to know
that he had someone to share that
kindness with. Decided to come
home and surprise him. Found our
farm sold and his corpse, buried a
month before.

ROXY

Oh my goodness. You poor thing.

DRIFTER

Thank ya, hummingbird.

The drifter polishes off her drink. Belle reaches above the shelf and pulls out a fancy bottle. She fills the Drifter's glass.

BELLE

Enough of that swill. If we're drinkin' to a kind man, let's dip into the top shelf.

The drink sits untouched in front of the Drifter.

DRIFTER

Asked around town to try and find daddy's new wife, but she'd already skipped town. Found out she'd left a slew of dead husbands behind her over the years.

Belle nudges the glass of whiskey toward the stranger. She doesn't seem to notice.

BELLE

Well that don't necessarily make someone a murderer-

DRIFTER

Poison. Dumb cow left an empty vial of it in her dresser when she run off.

Belle catches Roxy's eye. She nods to the younger woman.

DRIFTER

Now I just gotta find her and put a bullet in her belly.

The Drifter shakes herself from her trance focusing on Belle. The older woman smiles at her.

DRIFTER

Sorry about that. Didn't mean to kill the mood. Nice to have someone to talk to after such a long ride. Appreciate the hospitality and whatnot.

BELLE

Oh, no trouble at all, dear.
What's a bartender for if not a
sympathetic ear?

Unseen by the Drifter, Roxy reaches into the folds of her
petticoat. She pulls out a straight razor.

DRIFTER

Ain't that the truth? Well, I
guess I've wasted enough of your
time with my bellyaching. Best hit
the road.

The Drifter stands, reaching for her coat. As she does, she
knocks over the glass of whiskey.

DRIFTER

Oh shoot! Here, Miss Belle, lemmie
clean that up for you.

Belle grabs for a rag, but stops, eyeing the woman across
the bar.

BELLE

Hmmm...can't remember tellin' you
my name.

Behind the Drifter, Roxy advances, flicking the blade from
its handle.

DRIFTER

Well ain't that a thing.

Roxy arcs the blade at the Drifter's neck. As fast as a
snake bite, the Drifter pivots, letting the razor pass
within a whisper of her neck.

She drives a fist into the teen's stomach. The blade
CLATTERS to the floor.

Belle whips out a double-barrelled shotgun from under the
bar. In the same instant, the Drifter grabs Roxy in a choke
hold, using her as a shield. Her hand shoots to her hip.

BELLE

If you skin that shooter of yours
then I'll blow you outta your
goddamn boots.

The Drifter pauses, letting her hand rest on the butt of her
revolver.

DRIFTER

And you'll kill this sweet, little hummingbird just the same.

ROXY

(struggling)

I'll kill you, you stupid bitch!

BELLE

Hush up, Roxy! Let me handle this.

The Drifter tightens her grip.

DRIFTER

Ain't no handling nothing. This only ends one way and that's with you dead. But if you put down the scatter-gun and make this easy then I'll let this one live.

BELLE

No deal. But I can tell you I'm sorry for what I did to your papa. I'm sorry for what I did to all those men.

Belle lowers the barrel a fraction.

BELLE

But look at all the good I done with that money. You know how many girls I got off the street and gave 'em jobs? How many girls I saved from being beat, or raped, or worse? I'm a goddamn pillar of this community!

DRIFTER

Don't matter a lick of shit to me.

Belle flicks back the hammer on the shotgun.

BELLE

Then you can rot in hell!

ROXY

NO MISS BEL-

The shotgun ROARS. The Drifter drops to the ground, somersaulting out of the way.

Roxy isn't as lucky. The blast hits her square in the chest, sending her flying across the room and smashing into

the Steinway. It plays one final SOUR NOTE.

Belle spins with the shotgun, taking aim at the Drifter and jerking the trigger. It spits fire again, spraying buckshot into the parlor.

The table nearest to the Drifter EXPLODES as she jumps clear.

In one smooth motion, the Drifter draws her pistol and fires three slugs into Belle's gut. The old woman drops behind the bar.

Belle MOANS on the floor, bleeding out. The Drifter vaults the bar and kneels beside her.

BELLE

(weakly)

But...I'm a pillar of...the
community.

DRIFTER

Funny thing, ain't it? Been
dreamin' of this moment for a long
time. Pictured myself sittin' here
watching you dyin' that slow death
that only a gut-shot can provide.

BELLE

Just...wanted to...help other
girls...

The Drifter raises to her feet and places her boot on Belle's throat.

DRIFTER

Now that I'm here I see you're just
some sad, old biddy. Be a waste of
my time to sit here all night.

The Drifter stomps on Belle's throat. Through a crushed windpipe, the older woman's GASPS for air.

The Drifter snatches her hat off the bar and heads out the front door.

Belle stares at the ceiling above, struggling for breath, tears falling from her eyes. She goes still.

FADE TO BLACK.