

FADE IN

EXT. WISCONSIN HOME - EARLY MORNING

It's 1880 in Midwest America. A map outlines the plains and forests of the Mid West. A red dot appears on the screen in New Glarus, Wisconsin. An icon of Aspen trees pop up. A series of dots lead to the town of Beemer, Nebraska and an icon of a Prairie Roses appear.

EXT. WISCONSIN HOME - EARLY MORNING

A yellow cottage with light blue shutters sits on the top of a luscious green hill. Hanging outside from the windows are pots filled with wild flowers. JOSEPHINE, 37, hooded eyes, coarse brown hair and a smock dress, walks out of the front door carrying a box full of bread, muffins, and canteens full of water.

JOSHEPHINE

Clarence? Could you take this to the wagon for me? I want to get Sasha dressed.

CLARENCE, 47, with pale skin, a full red tinted beard, dark overalls, a wrinkled button down shirt, dirty work boots, cracked and worn hands, stands by the wagon adjusting the harnesses of the horses.

CLARENCE

Here. Let me.

Clarence takes the box from Josephine. She smiles and walks back inside the house.

CLARENCE

(yelling)

Livingston family! We need to leave before the sun fully rises. Let's get a move on.

Clarence lifts the back of the wagon drape and puts the crate in the back. He sticks his hand in the crate and grabs a muffin out. He starts to eat it until he is interrupted.

(CONTINUED)

FEMALE VOICE (OFF SCREEN)

Ma wouldn't be too happy if you ate
all the food before we even get on
the road.

CLARENCE

Its just one muffin Mattie.

MATTIE, 14, pale skin, with wavy brown hair, hazel colored
eyes, a tucked in dark green blouse, rugged pants, and a
dark green cow boy hat, walks towards Clarence with a large
smirk on her face.

FEMALE VOICE/MATTIE

Fine. But you're the one who has to
tell Ma.

Clarence puts the muffin back in the crate and looks
disappointed.

MATTIE

Good choice.

Clarence squeezes Mattie's shoulder and continues to prepare
the horses for travel. Josephine walks out of the house
carrying two large jugs of water. She carefully walks
towards Clarence trying to keep her balance.

JOSHEPHINE

I think we are ready to leave.
Where's Ethel?

Clarence looks at Josephine with uncertainity. He taps his
foot anxiously as the sun continues to rise.

JOSEPHINE

Here, take the jugs.
(pause)
I'll go find Ethel.

Josephine pushes the jugs at Clarence and runs into the
house. Clarence catches his balance and places the jugs in
the wagon.

INT. WISCONSIN HOME/ FRONT DOOR - EARLY MORNING

Josephine opens the front door slowly. She peers into the
doorway and finds ETHEL, 17, with wavy red/brown hair,

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hooded hazel colored eyes, and wearing a violet blouse tucked into her navy pants. Ethel sits in silence with her eyes closed.

JOSPHINE

Ethel?

Ethel peaks one eye open.

JOSPHINE

Ethel? We need to leave, dear.

Ethel sighs.

ETHEL

One more minute. I'm listening.

Josephine stares at Ethel while she sits. Josephine places her hand on Ethel's hand and crouches down.

JOSPHINE

We really must be going....

(beat)

Don't worry there will be so much more to see and listen to soon enough.

Josephine takes Ethel's hand and leads her to out of the house. Ethel follows drearily. She stares at the house as the front door shuts behind her.

EXT. WISCONSIN HOME - EARLY MORNING

Josephine and Ethel walk out of the house. Clarence cheers and Mattie pokes her head out of the wagon drapery and cheer along with him. Ethel smiles.

CLARENCE

Come on Ethel. The world's calling.

MATTIE

Come on Ethel! The back country ain't going to clear itself.

Mattie throws her hand in the air and waves them. Josephine and Ethel walk towards the wagon.

(CONTINUED)

EHETEL

I'm coming, I'm coming. Don't be so
theatric.

MATTIE

I can't help it. I'm a natural.

Josephine helps Ethel into the wagon.

ETHEL

Thank you, ma.

Josephine smiles. She hits the side of wagon three times and
pulls herself into the front of the wagon. Clarence whips
the horses and the wagon begins to move down the dirt road.
Ethel opens the back drape of the wagon and stares out.
Mattie moves next to her and sighs loudly.

INT. WAGON - NIGHT

Mattie and Josephine are lie sleeping in the wagon. Ethel
sits at the back of the wagon looking out at the sky full of
stars.

INT. WAGON - NIGHT

Ethel wakes from her day dream and jumps a little.

CLARENCE (OFF SCREEN)

(whispering)

Ethel?

(beat)

Ethel?!

Ethel climbs over Mattie clumsily and peaks her head outside
of the wagon tent.

ETHEL

Sssshhhhh

CLARENCE

Sorry.

ETHEL

What is it pa?

CLARENCE

Come join me.

Clarence helps Ethel up onto the top of the wagon seat.

CLARENCE

There we go.

ETHEL

It sure is quiet out here.

CLARENCE

Yeah, that's for sure. I ain't seen a clear sky like this in a long time.

ETHEL

It's somehow different than the stars we used to see in New Glarus. Will the sky be this bright when we reach Beemer?

CLARENCE

Not real sure. I've never traveled past the Mississippi River. I'll I've ever known is the marshes of Louisiana and our home in Wisconsin.

ETHEL

Do we know anyone where we're headed?

CLARENCE

Well, I've got a couple of kin out in Iowa but that's as close as we've got. We are on our own for this one. The railroad company know were coming though, I sent a telegram that we'd arrive by the 21st of October.

ETHEL

Oh. Ok.

Mattie peaks her head of the tent of the wagon and looks up at Ethel and Clarence.

MATTIE

Are we going to stop anytime soon
pa?

CLARENCE

No little darlin. Not till at least
mornin.

Mattie pops back into the tent. Ethel turns her head towards
Clarence. Clarence put his hand on hers.

CLARENCE

Go on. Get. I'll see you in the
mornin.

INT. WAGON - MORNING

The sun creeps into the tent crevasses. Ethel lies sleeping.
Clarence sits next to her eating an apple, Mattie is reading
a book.

JOSEPHINE (OFF SCREEN)

I'm stopping for a moment. The
horses need a break.

CLARENCE

Alright.

Clarence packs up the Wagon from the clutter. Mattie
continues to read her book.

CLARENCE

I could use some help.

MATTIE

Oh. Sorry.

CLARENCE

Mattie, could you wake Ethel.
She'll want to stretch her legs.

Mattie rolls her eyes.

MATTIE

Fine. But if she chews off my head.
I'm blaming you.

Mattie taps Ethel on the shoulder. The wagon stops moving.

(CONTINUED)

Ethel stirs in her sleep.

MATTIE

Ethel.

Clarence hops out of the wagon.

MATTIE

Ethel?

Mattie shakes Ethel.

ETHEL

Good morning to you too.

MATTIE

Sorry. Pa wanted me to wake you. We are stopping.

ETHEL

Is something wrong?

MATTIE

No. Just the horses need a break.

ETHEL

Oh, ok. Well help me down then. I'm starvin.

Mattie helps Ethel out of the wagon.

EXT. DIRT ROAD WISCONSIN - DAY

Ethel wanders the plains. She finds a nice spot and sits and listens to her surroundings. Mattie begins cooking eggs while Josephine feeds and waters the horses. Clarence watches Ethel for awhile before he heads to the the back of the wagon.

CLARENCE

I'm headed to take a nap. Wake me when we leave.

Mattie waves at him as he jumps in the back of the wagon. The eggs on the fire cook and a large plate sits next to the fire. Ethel continues to sit in silence, sulking.

EXT. DIRT ROAD WISCONSIN - DAY

Ethel walks towards the horses and begins to pet them while while Josephine pours water into a bowl for them to drink. Mattie walks towards them through the fields of ferns and wild berries. She carries fried egg in her hand and nibbles at it.

MATTIE

Here. Eat this Ethel.

Mattie shoves the plate of eggs at Ethel. Ethel clumsily takes the plate. Mattie walks back towards the fire and flips a set of fried eggs. Josephine puts down the pale of water and wipes a bead of sweat from her forehead.

JOSEPHINE

Mattie, honey... Could you grab me a plate of eggs dear?

MATTIE

Coming right up. Cooking eggs makes me miss Sally.

Ethel rips a piece of egg apart and plays with it on her plate. Josephine sighs.

JOSEPHINE

I do too. But we are traveling too far to have cat with us.

MATTIE

I know. Its just she always loved fresh cooked eggs.

ETHEL

They were her favorite.

Mattie flips the eggs again.

MATTIE

It just doesn't feel right. We could have at least brought her with us. We have room.

(CONTINUED)

JOSEPHINE

Mattie. That cat would not have lasted even one night on this journey. You know that.

Mattie plops two fried eggs onto a metal plate and serves it to Josephine who smiles at her with appreciation.

MATTIE

Then at least Ethel and I could have found her a home before we left. We didn't have to leave so soon is all.

Ethel begins to stroke the horses again. She remains silent.

JOSEPHINE

We were offered land by Union Pacific. Someone's gotta build those railroads.

Everyone is silent for a moment.

ETHEL

Don't worry. We can get a new kitty when we get there. And maybe this time you can name him.

SERIES OF SHOTS

A. Josephine wakes Clarence up from his nap.

B. Clarence helps Ethel into the wagon. Everyone piles in after her.

C. Josephine and Clara hold the reins and the wagon begins to move again.

D. The sun shines down on the wagon as it moves on the empty dirt road.

E. Mattie reads aloud a verse from the bible as the wagon travels through the lush Maple tree forest.

INT. WAGON -EVENING

Clarence sits in the wagon leaning against a beam. Mattie closes the book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*.

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MATTIE

I think that's enough for now.

ETHEL

No, please. Keep going.

CLARENCE

Ethel, she's been reading for hours. If she keeps reading she'll have nothing to read for the rest of the trip.

ETHEL

Fine.

CLARENCE

Mattie, could you pass me the water jug?

Mattie hands him the bottle.

MATTIE

I think that's our last jug.

Clarence drinks the water quickly and then stops suddenly.

CLARENCE

This is the last bottle? Can't be.

Mattie searches all of the crates in the wagon. Ethel looks nervous. Mattie shakes her head disappointedly.

CLARENCE

Bottom fact?

ETHEL

What are we going to do? Are we even close to the Mississippi river?

Clarence looks panicked.

JOSEPHINE (OFF SCREEN)

Everything alright down there?

(CONTINUED)

CLARENCE

Good as gold, Jos.

Mattie takes the bottle from Clarence and puts it away.

ETHEL

We must be at least a day away.

CLARENCE

At least.

Mattie looks at Ethel with concern. Ethel anxiously grabs a nearby disheveled notebook and begins writing in it nervously.

INT. WAGON - NIGHT

Josephine sits on the floor of the wagon slipping in and out of sleep. Ethel looks out the back of the wagon tent, leaning over the back ledge. Mattie is playing cards with herself. The wagon is moving up and down.

ETHEL

Could I get a sip of water?

MATTIE

Only a sip.

Mattie places the bottle in Ethel's hand.

JOSEPHINE

Could I have one too?

ETHEL

Here. Drink only a little. Just a sip.

Ethel holds out the bottle. Josephine takes it. Mattie watches carefully.

MATTIE

That's enough. Ethel, your turn.

ETHEL

I change my mind, I'm fine.

Mattie puts the jug away and goes back to dealing cards. It's silent in the wagon for a moment.

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