

FADE IN:

EXT. ROLLING HILLS DAY
1980'S)

(LATE

Just outside Knoxville. A well-used Bronco and U-Haul roll through gorgeous Tennessee hills, hollows, lush valleys. Scenic, but foreboding.

EXT. KNOXVILLE / BRONCO DAY

Bronco reaches the strip. MUSIC at full bore.

Two dogs lap up the breeze. One, a giant German shepherd, Powwow the Indian Boy. The tiny one's a nervous mutant named Speck, always hiding behind something.

Up front, BARBARA LAMAR, 20. Barbara's strong, smart, and won't take shit from anybody. She's also real attractive.

On her wrist, a worn horsehair bracelet.

EXT. MASSIVE CLAPBOARD HOUSE DAY

In Fort Sanders, the college ghetto. Barbara parks outside an old mansion chopped into student apartments. She pets her dogs, moves to porch.

EXT. FRONT PORCH DAY

Some COLLEGE STUDENTS on front porch.

BARBARA

This is the Blue House, isn't it?

KID ON STEPS

Duuh.

BARBARA

Is Matt Range here?

KID ON STEPS

We just moved in, man. We've only been here since school's out.

BARBARA

(checks return address on
envelope)
It's Five C.

KID ON STEPS
I think all those Cs are down in
the basement. Steps around the
side.

EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE

Barbara passes, next door, an overgrown yard with a bunch
of cats.

Surrounded by cats, an old lady waters her weedy garden.
MISS CHARLOTTE COLLIER. Sweet, but nutty.

MISS COLLIER
(to her cats)
There, there girls. Now you play
nicely with the little boys. You
wouldn't want anything to besmirch
your spotless little reputations.

Barbara descends basement steps to a little door marked C.
Five mailboxes beside it.

INT. BASEMENT HALLWAY

Dimly lit, five ratty doors. Loud MUSIC from one
apartment.

Barbara wanders down... Knocks on 5. No answer.

She writes note.

HEY MATT. I'M FINALLY IN TOWN. I'LL
TRY BACK AGAIN. GOING APT. SHOPPING.
LOVE, SCOUT.

And crams it in the door.

EXT. THE ROUNDUP RESTAURANT DAY

Older part of town. Neighborhood eatery. Immaculate.
Barbara's Bronco parked outside. Her dogs in the cab.

INT. THE ROUNDUP RESTAURANT DAY

Formica and chrome tables, checked linoleum floors. Window unit A/C. Two feisty OLD WOMEN run the place.

Barbara eats, crossing off apartments in newspaper. She circles one.

INT. ADMINISTRATION OFFICE DAY

Barbara carries her admissions packet, sticks her head into a cluttered office. A compact dynamo of a woman, TRUDY MEAD, 40's, won't tolerate slackers. She's on the phone.

TRUDY

You tell those little shit frat
boys it's horse tranquilizer and
it's for horses!

Trudy slams down the phone, sticks out her hand.

TRUDY

(calm, friendly)
And you're Barbara Lamar.

BARBARA

I am.

TRUDY

I'm Trudy Mead. Call me Trudy.
And you, my dear, are going to be
the first woman to graduate from
the Equine program. I don't care
if it kills you and me both, we're
going to get you through, darling.

BARBARA

Thanks.

TRUDY

I wanted to be an Equine vet.
Twenty years ago, there weren't
even many girls in the vet program
at all, at Auburn, much less in
the large animal practice. So I
been stuck lancing boils on
poodles's asses hoping you'd come
along and make my life a little

more worth while. So don't let me
down, kiddo!

Barbara smiles.

EXT. BARBARA'S HOUSE DAY

Older white clapboard farm house. Semi-decent neighborhood.
Barbara sits under a tree, slowly shredding a "For Rent"
sign. Talking to her dogs.

BARBARA

Pow. Speck. Now fellas, we're
here. All this story lacks is The
Boy.

EXT. OLD COLLEGE INN NIGHT

Barbara parks. Goes in.

INT. OLD COLLEGE INN NIGHT

At the bar. Crowded with BUSINESSMEN and college STUDENTS.

BARBARA

Beer.

Male BARTENDER serves her.

BARBARA

Is Matt here?

BARTENDER

Matt who?

BARBARA

Matt Range.

BARTENDER

I just started, so you'll have to
ask Martha when she comes back
around. She's in the weeds right
now.

A tall dark girl steps to the kitchen window. The MANAGER.

BARTENDER

That's her right there. MARTHA!

MANAGER

Hey.

BARBARA

I'm looking for Matt Range.

MANAGER

A couple months ago, he just quit coming to work. We thought he might've taken off to the Keys or someplace. Can you wait tables?

BARBARA

No thanks.

MANAGER

Hey, that shit always happens at the end of the semester. He just quit coming to work. Maybe Florida... or he ran off with some girl somewhere... Why?

BARBARA

Never mind.

At the bar, a heavy set businessman, DOUG WILSON, 20's, eyes her in a friendly way. There's nothing crazy Doug won't try or dare you to. He winks. She likes him right off the bat.

DOUG

You look like you could use a funny story.

BARBARA

Another time. I've got to see a man about a horse.

DOUG

Hey, I'm usually around. Next time.

Barbara leaves.

EXT. NEYLAND STADIUM NIGHT

100,000 crazed football fans. A SOUND unlike any you've ever heard.

EXT. KNOXVILLE STREETS NIGHT

A sea of drunks, celebrating victory. Horse mounted POLICE.

A DRUNK busts a beer bottle, charges one horse.

INT. VET SCHOOL NIGHT

Middle of the night. Barbara checks the stalls.

A cop hurries in. JIM POTEET, late 30's, Knoxville Police sergeant. Solid citizen. Honest, competent, smarter than he looks.

POTEET

Can you help my horse? He got cut
by some damn drunk football fan.

INT. STALL NIGHT

Standing with a head harness, a big Morgan. The horse's shoulder is cut. Blood everywhere. A snooty THIRD YEAR STUDENT examines the horse. The horse fights him.

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

Yeah, all we got's to do is sew it
up.

(pause)

We'll have to put him out, though.
But we'll have to wake up Doctor
Grainey first.

Barbara: yeah, right...

BARBARA

(to Poteet)

What's his name?

POTEET

Twister.

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

What're you gonna do?

BARBARA

(to horse)

You're a good boy, aren't you
Twister... It's okay, big fella,
it's okay.

Barbara takes the halter, leans in, talks to him. The horse calms right down.

Barbara examines the wound. The horse breathes hard, but holds still.

BARBARA

There's still some glass in there.
It'll give him worries later on.
Let me clean it up first.

(to Third Year Student)

Get me a little Lidocane and a
suture kit.

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

You don't have to prove anything.
Just let Grainey do it.

BARBARA

Will you let me take care of it?

(to horse)

You don't need a nap, do you
Twister?

Barbara injects him with the sedative and injects Lidocane around the wound.

Poteet watches as Barbara gently takes the glass out. Sews the leg up. Ointment, bandages. Smooth.

BARBARA

He'll be just fine in a couple of
days.

Poteet is impressed as hell.

Third Year Student is pissed.

BARBARA
You want to look at this?

He leaves.

POTEET
You're pretty good with horses,
aren't you?

BARBARA
Better'n I am with third year
residents... Officer...
(checks name tag)
Poteet.

They shake. Barbara lets the horse down. Poteet backs
Twister out of there. Poteet and Twister head out.

BARBARA
Y'all go straight home, and try to
stay out of trouble, you hear?

EXT. VET SCHOOL PARKING LOT NIGHT

Night shift ends. Barbara comes out, weary. Sits in her
Bronco, tired. Then starts it.

BARBARA
Matt... where the hell are you?

EXT. THE ROUNDUP RESTAURANT DAY

Barbara comes in for breakfast. Just like every day.
She's not smiling.

INT. THE ROUNDUP RESTAURANT DAY

The little old ladies behind the counter wave as Barbara
walks up. They load up her plate.

Outdoors, PEACH, 30's, a surfer dude with long, unruly
hair, ties his dog up, then comes inside.

OLD LADY #1

Barbs, I want you to take a look at my Chihuahua. He's limping. You reckon if I brought him up to your house, you could take a look at him?

BARBARA
What's his name?

OLD LADY #1
Fury.

BARBARA
I'll be home this afternoon. You bring him by.

She looks at Peach. He grins.

PEACH
Now I now why you got the extra biscuits. Only thing they've ever offered to give me is a haircut.
(pause)
You a veterinarian?

BARBARA
I'm working on it. You need some vet work done?

PEACH
No. Nacho's all right out there, I reckon.

BARBARA
That's your Heeler. I love Heelers. They don't get sick too much, just hurt.

They laugh. Keep it light. Barbara feels a little relaxed. First time in a long time.

PEACH
My name's Bill Peach.

BARBARA

I'm Barbara Lamar. Nice to meet
you. Take care of that Heeler
now.

Nice look between them. He picks up the sports page.

PEACH

See you around the breakfast
table.

Barbara takes off.

EXT. VET SCHOOL LOADING DOCK NIGHT

Eerie, silent.

A dead horse on the dock, highlighted against dark sky.

INT. VET SCHOOL LABORATORY NIGHT

Barbara's working late. Third Year Student looks up.

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

Hey, cover for me. I'm gonna run
get a sandwich. The weirdo guy's
gonna come and pick up that
carcass on the dock, so you'll
have to sign it out.

BARBARA

What weirdo guy?

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

You know, Quasimodo, that dude
that hauls off all the dead shit
around here.

BARBARA

I heard y'all talking about him.
But I never met him.

THIRD YEAR STUDENT

You're not gonna want to.

He leaves. Barbara reads the paper.

EXT. LOADING DOCK NIGHT

The dead horse in a circle of light. Barbara comes to look at the animal. Reverently.

Wind blows. Lonely out there.

INT. VET SCHOOL LABORATORY NIGHT

Barbara reads. Far off, she hears the big CORRUGATED METAL DOOR clanking open. An eerie sound.

Worried, she looks around. Sees nothing, calms herself and returns to her book.

CARL (O.S.)

You sign this?

Barbara spins, scared.

Behind her, CARL HUBBARD, 30's, wiry and a little crusty looking, with greasy hair poking out of an orange baseball cap. Stooped, in a soiled uniform with the name "Carl." Missing teeth.

BARBARA

God, scared me to death.

She sticks out her hand.

BARBARA

Hi. I'm Barbara.

Carl doesn't know whether to take her hand or not. Finally, he shakes her hand.

BARBARA

(laughs)

You're not gonna tell me yours?

CARL

My name's Carl. I come t'get your dead horse.