

WASTELAND

Written by

Vicky L. Neal

3024 Apple Knoll Lane
Middletown, Ohio 45044
(513) 539-0258
vickyneal5@yahoo.com
www.vickylneal.com

FADE IN:

MONTAGE - SURVIVAL SKILLS

-- By a stream, BROOKE HARPER (17), a pretty, down-to-earth soul, yet very stubborn and determined, her hair in two braids, attaches a long blade of grass to a stick. JOHN HARPER (40), a simple man devoted to family, eyes Brooke as he makes a fishing pole of his own.

Brooke searches the ground and finds a thin twig with numerous pointed edges. She ties the other end of the grass to it. Digs into the moist dirt with the tip of a stick until she locates a nightcrawler. She impales it on the twig and drops it into the water.

-- In the woods, John works with Brooke and TIM HARPER (10), rebellious attitude, to build a shelter from discarded limbs. It's very sturdy considering the shoddy material.

-- In the woods, Brooke and Tim gather a pile of tinder next to a thin log while John watches. Brooke pulls a small battery out of her backpack lying next to her, along with a wire. Connects the wire to both terminals as she holds the battery out toward the tinder.

The battery emits a spark that lands on the small pieces of wood. Tim blows on them gently, causing the wood to smolder more and more until a fire begins. Both kids add more tinder. The fire grows in size.

-- Water has condensed inside a plastic bag tied to a leafy branch. Brooke unties the bag and carefully removes it from the limb. She dumps the water from the bag into a small container.

Watching nearby, John crosses his arms and grins, impressed with his daughter.

END MONTAGE

EXT. HARPER FARM - DAY

Large and self-sufficient. Ten acres of fields growing everything from corn to tomatoes to peas to carrots and more.

An old farmhouse stands in the distance, showcases the wear of time with its peeled paint. A barn is to the side. A ragged wire fence surrounds the property.

A handful of cows grazes. A coup contains several chickens. There are a few pigs in a pen.

IN THE FIELDS

Brooke picks green beans with Tim. Each has a large pail about half full.

TIM

This sucks.

BROOKE

You'd better watch your mouth, Timothy Harper. If Pa heard you talk like that, you'd get a real whippin`.

TIM

I ain't afraid of Pa.

BROOKE

You would be if you had a brain in ya`.

TIM

Don't you think there's something wrong with all this? All we do is prepare for something that ain't gonna ever happen. That's no kind a life.

Brooke looks off and sighs. She knows how he feels.

BROOKE

It's a big world out there. Pa says we could be attacked any time. When other folks are fightin` for food, we'll have plenty enough here.

TIM

What good does that do when folks will try to steal it?

BROOKE

That's what guns are for.

An old Chevy S-10 pickup sputters down the dirt driveway toward the house, kicking up dirt behind it.

BROOKE

Pa's home!

Brooke runs off toward the house with her bucket. Tim is far less enthusiastic as he follows her at a walk.

AT THE HOUSE

The truck parks. John, wearing mechanic's coveralls with his name on the pocket, gets out with a lunch pail.

Brooke arrives.

BROOKE

Pa!

Brooke hugs her dad.

JOHN

How was school?

They walk with an arm around each other as they head to the house. Tim trails them at a distance.

BROOKE

Bad. Brandon was picking on Josh at lunch again and kids just watched, as always.

JOHN

That happens at most schools, I'm afraid. The world ain't a friendly place.

BROOKE

(enthused)
If I was a boy...
(swings fist)
... I'd give Brandon a good pop in the mouth.

JOHN

(laughs)
That's my girl.

They enter the house.

INT. HARPER KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MABEL HARPER (late 30s), frumpy and frazzled, tends to different pots on the stove. She takes a look out through the window, where MICHAEL HARPER (5) plays on a tire swing in the backyard.

As John and Brooke enter the room:

BROOKE

I don't know why I can't just punch him. What does being a girl have to do with anything?

Mabel picks up on the conversation and passes Brooke a disapproving look.

MABEL

^Cause girls don't behave that way.

Brooke plops down at the table, bothered. She sets her bucket aside.

BROOKE

Says who?

MABEL

Me, that's who. Men and women have forgotten how to act properly.

John puts his lunchbox aside and cuddles Mabel from behind.

JOHN

Cut the girl a break, Mabel. We can't expect her to handle the worst when it comes if she's weak, now can we?

Mabel gives him a playful shove. John kisses her cheek. Mabel looks back to the dirty bucket standing on her clean table.

MABEL

Get that off my table this second.

Brooke stands with the bucket.

BROOKE

Sorry.

Brooke sets the bucket on the rear porch.

MABEL

I want those beans canned and put away in the cellar before bedtime.

Brooke sighs her discontent.

BROOKE

Yes, Ma.

Tim enters with his bucket. He also sets it out back.

TIM

Dinner almost ready?

MABEL

Go wash up. And take your brother
with you.

Tim looks out to the backyard.

TIM

Michael! Get your ass in here!

Immediately, John and Mabel whirl to him. John grips Tim's
arm.

JOHN

What did you just say, boy?

Fear illuminates in Tim's eyes.

TIM

I... I meant to say "butt."

JOHN

You're not to be using that kind of
language around here, you hear me?

Tim nods nervously.

MABEL

Or anyplace else. I have a good
mind to wash your mouth out with
soap.

TIM

I won't do it again. I swear.

Michael wanders in.

MICHAEL

I'm hungry.

John releases Tim.

JOHN

Go help your brother wash up.

TIM

Yes, sir.

They leave the room for the downstairs bathroom.

MABEL

I don't know what's gotten into
that boy.