

FADE IN:

EXT. AERIAL VIEW, NORTHERN WISCONSIN FOREST -- DAY (1887)

A dense pine forest, pristine, serene.

The forest becomes individual trees, snow on the ground, windy. A muffled crying sound increases.

EXT. FOREST GLADE -- CONTINUOUS

An abandoned log cabin with a ramshackle shed adjacent frames nearby JENNA TRIPLETTE (17), bruised and bloodied in a tattered housecoat, blue from cold, tied to a log, sobbing.

Footsteps, though her captor is unseen. She looks up.

JENNA

Please, please, let me go.

Kerosene sloshes from a can onto Jenna's gingham housecoat. Jenna, hysterical, gasps for breath.

A hand-rolled lighted cigarette flies at Jenna, lands on a corner of her housecoat. A flame's flicker, then she's engulfed.

Footsteps recede, as do Jenna's death screams. Another pair of footsteps joins the first pair. Both men are unseen.

MAN'S VOICE

What's her name? Jenny? Jenna?

The second man simply grunts. Folded currency is handed from one hand to the other man's hand.

EXT. CHICAGO STREET -- NIGHT (1887)

KATHARINE BUSHNELL, M.D. (30) and MATILDA CARSE (50) struggle for footing against wind and blowing snow. They reach the door of a darkened police station. The street is empty.

INT. POLICE SUBSTATION -- CONTINUOUS

Kate and Matilda enter a small reception area -- dark, traces of snow melt on the floor. The DESK SERGEANT (30) nods at them, then at a heap of dirty blankets on a bench.

The heap is VIOLET LEMLER (17). Kate and Matilda go to and hover over her. Their hooded greatcoats form a spectral protective curtain.

Kate and Matilda help the heap to her feet and support Violet.

Kate nods to the Sergeant as the three approach the door.

INT. BATHING ROOM -- NIGHT

Kate and Matilda assist Violet from a steaming tub. Violet's back is a mass of bruises, her feet swollen. Kate examines her hand. Matilda writes Kate's findings.

KATE

Contusions and abrasions, back --
cervical, thoracic and lumbar.
Cigarette burn marks same areas.
Likely previously fractured fingers,
left, index
(sound fades)

Kate attempts to remove a chain and locket from Violet's neck; Violet, barely conscious, pushes Kate's hand away.

EXT. ANCHORAGE MISSION -- DAY

A stark two-story wood-frame structure of boarding house design. A sign states "Anchorage Mission, Woman's Christian Temperance Union -- Chicago." Shoveled snow is piled high.

INT. WILLARD'S OFFICE, ANCHORAGE MISSION -- CONTINUOUS

A small office, room for four, standing room for seven.

FRANCES WILLARD (48), at her modest desk, meets with Kate and Matilda.

Out of her greatcoat, Kate is slight, weary, plain in appearance and dress. Matilda is sturdy as a battle wagon, no nonsense.

Kate looks at notes.

KATE

Violet Lemler, just 17. Very sick.
Advanced syphilis, infections.
Puncture wounds on her feet proximal..

WILLARD

... From?

MATILDA

Logger's boots.

KATE

Called 'loggers small pox.'
Infections probably started there.

Kate sighs again, no energy.

KATE (CONT'D)

We can provide comfort. Laudanum.

WILLARD
She escaped from Hurley?

Kate nods.

WILLARD (CONT'D)
She's the what? --- Tenth from
northern Wisconsin?

Kate nods.

WILLARD (CONT'D)
Same story as the others? Been in
the dens several years?

Kate nods. Willard produces a Report.

WILLARD (CONT'D)
I got this from Governor Oglesby.

MATILDA
Our Frances has friends in high
places.

Willard flashes a quick smile, in no mood for joking.

WILLARD
He talked to Governor Rusk about us
at a conference last week. Both
were generals in the War. Rusk gave
him this Report.

Willard slides the Report toward Kate. Kate is immobile.

WILLARD (CONT'D)
I think it's a whitewash. Rusk
couldn't answer Oglesby's questions
about who did the Report, or whether
northern Wisconsin was even visited.

Willard advances the Report further, forcing Kate to take
it.

WILLARD (CONT'D)
That thing says the women are in the
dens voluntarily, there's no disease,
no abuse, and on.

MATILDA
Logging's big up there.

Willard arrives at her purpose.

WILLARD
A full investigation of those pineries
is needed.