

THE WISHING WELL

by

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ESTABLISHING SHOT - SMALL TOWN POST OFFICE - DAY

The place looks like any small town post office. A male Postal CLERK, 40s, works the counter. He helps a MAN, 30s, mailing a package.

Two women, GERTRUDE, 60s, and MILDRED, 50s, stand in line.

On the wall next to the women, a tangle of notices are tacked on a bulletin board. Mildred points at one of the notices.

MILDRED

The Quilting Bee's coming up, Gert.
Next month.

GERTRUDE

Oh goody!
(gasps)
And Jed's BBQ's next week. He makes
the best sauce in town.

The two women turn their backs on the bulletin board.

A light breeze tickles the notices.

MILDRED

I do love our little town get
togethers. . .

The Jed's BBQ notice breaks off and softly wafts to the ground, fully revealing two faded missing persons posters.

MILDRED

. . . One big happy family.

GERTRUDE

(nods)
That we are, Mildred. That we are.

EXT. MAIN STREET - GREENBRIAR, MS - DAY

BURNED INTO SCREEN: GREENBRIAR, MISSISSIPPI : POPULATION 300

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)

(southern accent)
In the small town of Greenbriar,
Mississippi, there's a rumor of a
magical wishing well.

A ground well with a stone ring surrounding it slowly materializes onto the screen.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 The rumor, passed down for
 generations, states that whomsoever
 closes his or her fist on a copper
 round. . .

A closed fist materializes.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 . . . makes a wish . . .

The fist uncurls revealing a penny inside.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 . . . and tosses the coin into its
 watery depths will have their wish
 come true.

The hand flips the coin into the well.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 For real.

SERIES OF SHOTS - COUNTRYSIDE AND HILLS IN THE AREA

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 Now this seemed preposterous. The
 nonsensical stuff of children's
 fairy tales. Even more unbelievable
 was the fact that you had to
 discover this Well. No one knew if
 it was hidden in the forest between
 the evergreen trees or out in the
 open for anyone to stumble upon.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE TOWN OF GREENBRIAR

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 In fact, no one alive in the small
 town of Greenbriar, Mississippi had
 ever been lucky enough to find the
 wishing well.

EXT. BRANNON'S COUNTRY STORE

The store is about as country as can be, built of wood with a
 wide front porch.

FEMALE VOICE (V.O.)
 Note I said alive. According to old
 Lester Bradshaw, his grandfather
 found the well years ago.

EXT. PORCH

LESTER BRADSHAW, early 70s, weathered, brawny, with faded blue eyes, sits in a rocking chair.

LESTER
My Granddaddy found that well.
That's how he got his land up on
Choctaw Ridge and how he met my
Grandmama too. He done wished fer
her. I swear--

EDGAR BRANNON, 50s, 6'4, a man as wide as he is tall, stands on the porch smoking a cigarette.

EDGAR
Lester, if I hear that story one
more time. . .

He clenches his fist. Lester gazes up at him with faded blue eyes.

LESTER
Aah, Edgar.

EDGAR
I've heard it one too many times.
Don't make me sorry I stuck that
rocker out here for ya. Ya got
chores to do, don't ya?

Lester purses his mouth.

LESTER
Nah! I done ma chores this mornin'.
I milked my cows at the crack a
dawn, tended to my corn crop, and
fixed Mildred's fence awready.
Can't I just sit here, Edgar?

Edgar throws his cigarette down on the ground. Stamps on it.

EDGAR
Fine! Sit there, ya grizzled old
toadstool. But I don't want to hear
that story no more, ya hear me?

MRS. HALL, 60s, walks up the steps. Edgar nods to her.

LESTER
'Lo, Missus Hall.

MRS. HALL
Hello, Lester.

Edgar opens the door for her.

EDGAR
Come on in, Mrs. Hall.

She enters. Edgar points a warning finger at Lester with one eyebrow raised.

Lester stares back at him, expressionless.

Edgar follows Mrs. Hall into the store.

EDGAR
What can I get for ya today, Mrs. Hall?

Lester focuses his attention on a young man, JIMMY MICHAELS, late teens, passing close by the porch, head in the clouds.

LESTER
Hey you, boy. Come 'ere.

Jimmy stops. Too late, he notices who called him. He glances wide-eyed left to right for any means of escape.

LESTER
I said come 'ere. I wanna tell ya 'bout somethin'.

Jimmy drags his feet over to Lester.

LESTER
I ever tell ya about my Granddaddy and the Wishin' Well, boy?

Jimmy nods his head up and down. Lester ignores him.

LESTER
My Granddaddy found that well. . .
. (voice fades out)

INT. STORE

Edgar rings up Mrs. Hall's purchases.

MRS. HALL
Lester's mind is startin' to wander, isn't it?

EDGAR

I'm afraid so. He just can't stop talkin' about that well. Lord knows everyone around here's heard that darn story.

Edgar bags her groceries.

MRS. HALL

I know, but you have to forgive him, poor old soul. That well's his claim to fame.

EDGAR

I know that, Mrs. Hall. That's why I put that chair out there for him. At least he's comfortable. But he does wear on my nerves at times.

Mrs. Hall gathers up her bags of groceries.

MRS. HALL

Bless you, Edgar. You take care now.

EDGAR

You too.

Mrs. Hall opens the door and exits. Lester's voice is heard droning on from outside.

LESTER (O.S.)

Yep, he found it in the forest somewheres out--

The door closes cutting off Lester's voice.

Edgar shakes his head and goes over to the door. He opens it slightly, peering out through the crack.

EXT. PORCH

Polite Jimmy stands on the porch. His eyes are half closed. He yawns.

INT. STORE

Edgar chuckles.

EXT. PORCH

Lester takes off his cowboy hat and scratches his bald head.

LESTER
My Granddaddy never did let on
where he found that well. Said he
wanted to keep it to hisself.

JIMMY
Why?

INT. STORE

Edgar blanches.

EXT. PORCH

Lester opens his eyes wide.

LESTER
(loud)
WHY? WHY YA ASK? Well if ya found a
magic wishin' well, would ya tell
anyone else where to find it? It
might run outta wishes! Then where
would ya be?

Jimmy stares at the ground. Shuffles his feet.

JIMMY
I guess not.

LESTER
Damn right ya guess not! My
Granddaddy told me that when he
found that Well it was bubblin' and
curdlin' down deep inside just
darin' him to throw a penny in it.
And when he done reached in his
pocket and pulled one out, the
water slopped over the side in a
mad frenzy like it was alive or
somethin'! Scared him to pieces it
did, but he closed his eyes and
threw that penny in anyways,
wishin' for that big piece of land
up there on Choctaw Ridge. And
that's what he done got! The next
mornin' the deed to the land had
been pushed under his front door!

INT. STORE

Edgar glances at Jimmy who looks like he's about to cry. He
goes out onto the porch.

EXT. PORCH

EDGAR

Lester! You're boring this young man to tears. Let him go.

Lester gives Edgar a wry look.

EDGAR

Go on, Jimmy. Git!

Jimmy hightails it off the porch like his ass is on fire.

LESTER

What'd ya do that fer? I was just gettin' into it.

EDGAR

Lester, what'd I say before I walked in my store? We all know your story. Save it for the ones who don't.

(points)

Look, here comes one now.

Lester's eyes swing around.

A beautiful young WOMAN, JOANNA BRAVERMAN, 30ish, petite with silky dark hair and violet blue eyes reminiscent of a young Elizabeth Taylor, strolls toward the store.

JOANNA

Hello there. How are you gentlemen?

EDGAR

Fine and dandy, young lady, and yourself?

JOANNA

All right. Beautiful town you have here.

Lester stares at Joanna, wide-eyed.

EDGAR

Thank you. We like it. What brings you to us?

JOANNA

I'm a Photographer. From Los Angeles. I've heard there's some beautiful spots around here, especially up on Choctaw Ridge.

EDGAR
Well, that there are.

JOANNA
Great! I'd like to get some shots
for my portfolio.

She extends her hand.

JOANNA
Joanna Braverman.

Edgar shakes her hand.

EDGAR
Edgar Brannon. Pleased to meet you.

She turns to Lester, who's eyes are still glued to her face,
and extends her hand.

JOANNA
Hello.

Lester stares at the small hand in front of him. He takes it
into his own large, gnarled one. His tongue comes untied.

LESTER
Lester Bradshaw.

JOANNA
Hi, Lester.

He reluctantly releases her hand.

LESTER
You know ya look like a young
Elizabeth Taylor? 'Round the time a
her Cleopatra movie?

JOANNA
(smiles)
I get that all the time. It's the
eyes.

LESTER
Yeah. They shine outta your face
like two lavender tea cup candles.

Joanna's amused eyes flick to Edgar, who rolls his.

JOANNA
Well, thank you, Lester. I don't
think I've heard that one before.

LESTER
Don't mention it.

EDGAR
You here by yourself, Joanna?

JOANNA
All by my lonesome.

The two men look surprised.

JOANNA
Don't worry. I do it all the time.
Prefer it actually. I'm a bit of a
loner you might say.

LESTER
Nothin' wrong with that. I'm a bit
of a loner myself.

JOANNA
I thought I'd head up to the ridge
tomorrow. Any areas that you two
fellows can recommend?

LESTER
I know some. But ya gotta be
careful. There's wild things up
there!

JOANNA
Oh I think I'll be okay, Lester.
I've been in wilder areas. Both
Africa and Brazil. They're about as
wild as it gets.
(beat)
So, any legends or strange stories
about the area?

Lester's eyes light up! Edgar groans.

EDGAR
Well, now you done it, young lady.
I've got work to do inside. Have
fun.

He goes inside. Joanna calls after him.

JOANNA
Nice meeting you, Edgar!

She turns to Lester.

JOANNA
I guess you have a story to tell,
huh?

Lester nods. Points to the steps.

LESTER
Yup. It's about my Granddaddy's
wishin' well.

Joanna sits down.

JOANNA
A wishing well?

LESTER
Yes, ma'am. A bonfide wishin' well
that'll make all your dreams come
true, if'n ya can find it.

JOANNA
Do you know where to find it?

Lester peers closely at her.

LESTER
Ya won't find it. It hides.

JOANNA
Oh it does, does it?

LESTER
Yup.

Lester glances around the area. He leans in to Joanna.

LESTER
(whispers)
I do have a general idea where it
is. I don't tell many people, but
maybe if ya found it ya could bring
back the pictures and show us.
Prove to folks that I ain't been
lyin' all these years, huh?

JOANNA
Of course.

LESTER
All right then. I'll tell ya.

Joanna leans in closer.

LESTER

Well, ya gotta drive up the road about four miles past the Robinson Ranch. . . then drive another two miles to the highway about twenty-five minutes north a here. . . then ya'll see a huge boulder that kinda sticks up outta the ground (voice fades out)

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JEEP WRANGLER - MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - THE NEXT DAY

The jeep travels up the highway.

INT./EXT. JEEP

In the driver's seat, Joanna's eyes search the area. A large misshapen boulder comes into view at the entrance to a dirt road. Her eyes widen slightly, recognizing Lester's boulder.

The jeep slows and turns off onto the dirt road, traveling slowly.

Joanna pulls the jeep over to the side of the road and kills the ignition. She opens the door and steps out.

She pauses, listening. BIRD CALLS are abundant. The SOUND of running water. She smiles.

Joanna reaches into the jeep and picks up a bag. She opens it and peers in.

TIGHT on a canteen, cell phone, and flashlight inside.

She slings the bag over her left shoulder, camera on her right. She heads west up a ready-made trail among the trees.

MONTAGE

A.) Joanna snaps several photos as she hikes.

B.) High on the ridge she spies a town below. She smiles, recognition in her eyes.

C.) Joanna takes a photo of an unusual plant. She stands, glancing around. Shadows have deepened. She squints up at the lowering sun.

D.) She takes the flashlight out. . . turns it on . . . then off. She sticks the flashlight back in her bag, tosses it over her shoulder and strikes off up the trail.

E.) Joanna reaches the end of the trail. There is a stone ring where wood was once burned. Ashes overflow.

END MONTAGE

EXT. END OF TRAIL

Joanna walks over to the ring and bends down. She runs her fingers through the ashes. She makes a face and wipes grimy fingers on her jeans.

She turns to the right and spies a spacious path, well worn, branching off from the trail. To the left. . . another path, thinner, less used.

JOANNA

(whispers)

The road less traveled.

She shrugs and heads up the left path.

Joanna spies a large stone ring a few hundred yards up, off to one side of the path, hidden part way by brush. She stops and squints at the ring.

A grin parts her lips. She walks quickly, haphazardly to the ring, eyes focused only on it.

Without warning the ground CAVES in beneath her. She SCREAMS as she hurtles helplessly into a deep hole!

INT. HOLE

Joanna lands on her right side, on top of her camera.

The SOUND of crunching glass.

She cowers as dirt rains down on top of her.

When the dirt shower subsides, she sits up and SPATS out dirt!

Joanna blinks hard and wipes the dust from her eyes. She moves her right arm back and forth, testing it.

She gets to her feet, glancing around. Dazed, she tries to focus on her new surroundings. On the bottom of the hole an immense amount of branches and leaves lie.

She grabs at her left shoulder. She glances frantically around the hole then looks up, squinting. She can just make out the strap of the bag, hanging part way down into the hole. She visibly deflates.

JOANNA

Dammit!

Joanna goes over to one of the walls and runs her hand down it. Smooth! She whirls around, her back against the wall. Panic creeps into her large lavender eyes.

INHALE. EXHALE. INHALE. EXHALE.

She bolts to the center of the high opening.

JOANNA

HELP! HELP ME! SOMEONE HELP!

(pitiful whisper)

Oh God. Please help me.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOLE - NIGHT

Emotionally exhausted, Joanna sits against the wall. She checks her watch.

TIGHT on watch face: 7:45.

She gazes up at the pitch black sky through the opening. Stars twinkle.

Suddenly a grizzled old face peers over the edge of the hole!

LESTER

Hi, Joanna.

Joanna jumps up!

JOANNA

LESTER! Lester, oh my God! I fell
in here. Please get me out of here!

Lester stares down at her with eyes that once were so faded, but are now a bright, BOLD blue.

He grins at her, and plants his burly body down on the edge of the hole, feet swinging downwards. In his left hand is a rope. In his right, a large Bowie knife.

LESTER

All in good time, my dear.

He picks up a branch and begins to skin the bark off it with the knife.

LESTER

See, I knew when you didn't make it
back to town that somethin' bad
must've befallen you.

Joanna watches him in disbelief. With panic spreading in her
widened eyes, she glances around the hole, and back up at
Lester. She gets it now.

LESTER

Ya found the well Joanna. . . but
I'm 'fraid its wishes are reserved
for us Bradshaws only.

A sickly smile distorts his face.

She backs up against the wall and slides down to the ground.

LESTER

Did I ever tell ya how my
Granddaddy met my Grandmama?
I never knew her. She died way
'fore I was born. . . .

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. POST OFFICE - DAY

The same postal clerk works the counter. He helps a young
WOMAN, 20s, with a package.

Gertrude and Mildred peruse the bulletin board. Mildred pulls
off one of the notices, uncovering a missing person poster
dated six years ago of a young WOMAN, Jenny Peterson, 23,
large eyes, perfect teeth.

MILDRED

This one's expired.

Gertrude squints at the board. She plucks off the BBQ notice.
It uncovers another missing person poster dated two years ago
of a young LADY, 24, with sparkling green eyes.

GERTRUDE

So has this one.

The postal clerk walks up and tacks up another missing person
poster. Gertrude stares at it.

GERTRUDE

Oh, look Mildred. Another one
missing. What a shame.

Mildred turns around.

MILDRED

My world! But doesn't she look just
like a young Elizabeth Taylor?

The two women peer at the poster.

GERTRUDE

You decide to go to the quilting
bee on Friday?

MILDRED

I shore did, Gert. Gonna be a hoot.

The women continue to talk amongst themselves. . .(voices
fade out)

Close up on Joanna Braverman's missing person's poster dated
one month ago.

Her eyes shine out from it like two lavender tea cup candles.

FADE OUT:

CREDITS ROLL

THE END