

LITTLE GIRL

By

GONÇALO DE JESUS

Important Note: Throughout the story, the only face shown is the Little Girl's, unless explicitly specified otherwise. The narrative focuses on her point of view, and her lack of confidence causes her to avoid eye contact.

Context Note: This is a script for a story that plays out like a silent film, and some aspects are purposefully conceptual and abstract. Most dialogue should be accompanied by matching written intertitles.

PRELUDE

The base screening is black and white, with vignette, analog scratches and grain, and visual artifacts. This is the main visual identity of the story's presentation.

FADE IN:

EXT. DESERT CROSSROADS, MIDDAY

The Little Girl walks along a stretch of desert, carrying a heavy bag of seeds on her back. The heat rises from the sandy floor, and distorts what's in the long road forward.

Her feet are caked in dust, and her frail dress is patched up in so many spots that the original fabric has nearly dissipated into the rips and tears of the story of her life.

A crossroad ahead. The faint, approaching figure of a man slowly comes together from the beige mist that the wind gently picks up.

The Little Girl and the Unnamed Soldier stop in front of each other. The Girl drops the seed bag, as the Soldier puts down his backpack and rifle.

INTERTITLE (SILENT)

The Characters

a Little Girl.....
her Big Sister.....
an Old Man.....
an Old Lady.....
an Unnamed Soldier.....
a Kindred Boy.....

The Little Girl presses her head against the Soldier's shoulder, and he squeezes her tight. After a while, the Girl eases the embrace. The Soldier holds her head in his hands, and places his thumbs on her forehead, lightly pushing it downwards. The Little

Girl feels the tension in her muscles relieve. She adjusts her cloth blindfold, and smiles.

INTERTITLE (SILENT)

Centuries past would they meet;
Once, thrice, many times more.
Always there at the crossroads:
One on the right, Another on the
left.
They hugged in silence, and wept.
"Goodbye", they said, and on they
went.

- R.

The Girl is shown walking away. Over her shoulder, the Soldier's shape gradually vanishes into the desert air once more. She looks back over her shoulder for a while, then continues to walk away.

TITLE

LITTLE GIRL

SUBTITLE

Act I
*Dried flowers, old windows, and the
morning sun*

FADE OUT

ACT I

FADE IN:

INT. OLD MAN'S FARM - BARN, MORNING

The Little Girl is asleep in the barn when her Big Sister walks in and wakes her up with hurried, but gentle nudges on her shoulder.

BIG SISTER

Sweetheart, it's time to wake up.
He asked me where the book was; the
one we read last week.

The Little Girl shakes her head to wake up, adjusts the tie on her blindfold, and sits halfway through before reaching under a small stack of hay in a corner, and pulling out a small pocket book. Her Sister takes out an old newspaper and they trade.

BIG SISTER

I sneaked this one past him on the way out. It was in the middle of the wood basket.

I'll make breakfast and keep him busy. Take a look. I think you might like what you see.

The Little Girl picks up the newspaper as her Sister exits the barn. She moves towards a gap on the wall's dilapidated wooden planks, and starts to read.

The newspaper article is heard in the background, as the screen is - in addition to the original aesthetic - tinted slightly blue, and images of the railroad's construction and inauguration are shown throughout.

The "RELroad"?

Jonah Peterson

The one and only Charlotte, Empress of Vulforia, was present at the official inauguration of the commonly named "RELroad" - the Richard Ericcson Lawrence Railroad - this Tuesday, December 17th.

The opening was the main attraction on the six-year anniversary celebration of the eight-day Battle of Ingridsen, led by General Richard Ericcson Lawrence, that took place in former South Astralia. This was where Lawrence's troops regrouped with General Phearly, whose forces, after the bloody battle, secured and settled into the new territory as Lawrence moved on to conquer the lands of former West Astralia.

"Worth it... Hard, but worth it."

These were the words of Sargeant Philip Lane about the eight-day confrontation which amassed around thirty-five thousand casualties on the opposing side and, ultimately, was a key factor for the official recognition of our great empire as the rightful owner of the Astralian lands.

Now, a railroad will connect the Western fronts to the Eastern shore, in an effort to accelerate the communication and transportation methods between the two main campaigns. Making this possible will be the - increasingly known as - "Longest

Train in the World".

The *Sentence*, as officially named, is an extremely long train which brings incredible innovation to the traditional railroad transport, and will change service networks forever!

(More details in "A Hundred Coaches Long", in this week's issue!)

The base screening style returns.

From outside, Sister's voice sounds out, as she approaches the barn with a tray in her hand.

BIG SISTER

Breakfast, dear!

The Little Girl stashes the newspaper beneath a nearby pile of hay, and sits upright.

FADE OUT

EXT. OLD MAN'S FRONT PORCH, MORNING

FADE IN:

The Little Girl walks towards the house, with a basket of fruit in hand. She goes up the stairs, and notices a sunflower in a shaded window stool.

She puts down the fruit basket, approaches the vase, picks it up, and places it on top of the porch handrail.

Her Big Sister comes out of the front door, and puts a hand on her shoulder.

BIG SISTER

What're you doing, love?

The Little Girl rotates and adjusts the vase so that the sunflower points towards the sunlight. She looks at her Sister and points at the Sun, smiling.

Her Sister gives her a squeeze on the cheek - causing her smile to widen - and picks up the Girl's fruit basket.

BIG SISTER

Get lunch started, dear; he'll be
here in about half an hour. I'll
take this.

The Big Sister enters the house. The Girl, looking at the clear sky once more, as if taking in the breeze, before following her Sister inside.

FADE OUT

EXT. OLD MAN'S FARM - COTTON FIELD, LATE AFTERNOON

FADE IN:

The Little Girl and her Big Sister walk side by side along an aisle of the farm's cotton field. A handful of light faded clouds make up the only features of the arid skies. Below the horizon, heavier tiny clouds of blossomed cotton balls at times seem to drown the sisters' silhouettes.

They both carry baskets in their hands, and carefully pick up cotton on their way through.

BIG SISTER

Did you like the newspaper?

The Girl looks at her and nods. Her Sister crouches down beside her and gently leans closer.

BIG SISTER

(in low volume)

I'll tell you tonight why I wanted
you to read it, is that okay?

The Little Girl nods affirmatively.

BIG SISTER

(almost whispering)

I'm afraid someone may hear us out
here.

UNSEEN MALE VOICE

(aggressively, from the outskirts of the field)

Back to work! Do I have to go
there?!

She backs away and stands up, continuing to collect cotton. The Little Girl leans on top of a cotton plant and supports her weight on a cautiously placed hand, while the other reaches into the plant to harvest.

She loses her balance a bit, and a thorn makes a deep cut across the back of her hand. She flinches.

Her Sister promptly rips a part of her sleeve, and ties it around the Girl's hand. She tightens the tie, and the Girl winces. She gently traces her thumb across the cloth, and kisses the Girl's hand.

BIG SISTER

(whispering very lightly)

I *will* get you out of here, I
promise.

FADE OUT

INT. OLD MAN'S FARM - BARN, EVENING

FADE IN:

The Little Girl sits on her bed: a layer of hay on the dirt floor of the barn. She has just lit an oil lamp, which she hangs on a nail on the wall.

Her Sister enters the barn with her hands behind her back. She crouches in front of the Girl.

BIG SISTER

I brought you something. A gift.

She places an ornate wooden box on the Girl's lap. The Girl looks at her, puzzled.

BIG SISTER

(motioning towards the box)

Go on, open it.

Her Sister sits down at her own bed, right beside her. The Girl opens the box, and looks surprised.

She starts taking out items from the box, and analyzing them. An old handkerchief, an army knife, a very worn-out picture of a woman

- with her face imperceptible -, and other war-time memories that someone kept in this box.

BIG SISTER

Beautiful, isn't it?

The Little Girl smiles as she continues to browse the items.

BIG SISTER

It belonged to an Australian soldier.
The Old Man stole it when he was at
war.

(trailing off, melancholic)

Poor soul... Never got home to whoever
was waiting...

The Sister leans over and points at a metal key handle on the outside of the box.

BIG SISTER

(in a contrasting attitude: excited)

Give that a few spins.

The Little Girl spins the key handle, and after a while, a small golden ballerina starts rotating inside a golden cage with a dome. As she rotates, the platform she's on slowly elevates.

To the side of the cage, a golden cylinder rotates and plays a tune, with slight bumps that vibrate thin strips of gold at different lengths. A music box version of "*Where Did You Sleep Last Night?*" sounds out in soft waves through the air.

The lamp's flame resonates with the golden pieces and silver gears and mechanisms, and the Little Girl's face lights up. Her face turns from happiness to childlike wonder and surprise.

Her Big Sister leans and kisses and pats her head.

BIG SISTER

I talked to the others today in the
fountain; he told me of a house on
the far side of the village where an
Old Lady lives.

BIG SISTER (CONT.)

He told me she could help us get on
a boat to a place where we can be
free!

At this, the Little Girl's attention moves away from the music
box, and she looks at her Sister.

BIG SISTER

That train you read about? She can
sneak us in there.

BIG SISTER (CONT.)

(increasingly gesturing *big boats* with her hands)

It crosses the country, and goes to
a place where big boats go to other
countries.

BIG SISTER (CONT.)

(kneeling, grabbing the Girl's shoulders)

Sweetheart, if we get into one of
those, we can get out of this place.
We can go wherever we want.

BIG SISTER (CONT.)

(sitting back down on her bed)

He's going away all day tomorrow, so
I'm gonna gather food and water for
the trip.

BIG SISTER (CONT.)

We leave tomorrow night, when no one
notices, alright?
Try to get some sleep, honey.

She lays down, and holds the Little Girl's hand. The music box has
died down, and the ballerina has descended further into her cage.

The Girl takes the lamp and turns it off, laying down as well.
With her foot, she pushes the barn door to close it, plunging the
interior into darkness.

*In flashbacks, the visual style is an aggressive exaggeration of
the base style, in black and white as well. There are lots of*

grain and analog artifacts. The contrast is bigger, and the quality lower. Above that, the footage has frequent cigarette burns. The main idea for this style is to pass on the idea that this is lost or recovered footage, either purposefully cut or lost in time.

FLASHBACK, HARD CUT:

INT. OLD MAN'S FARM - SMALL SHED, DAWN

The heavy rain blends with the analog scratches, as the small shed is seen, to the side of the barn. From inside, a faint candle light shines through.

OLD MAN

(almost shouting, angrily)

I save you, I save your sister, and
this is how you repay me? You steal
my books?! Steal my letters?!

The Little Girl is kneeling down in a corner, with her hands over her face, crying profusely. She isn't blindfolded, but her face is concealed by her hands. On her body, a handful of fresh slash marks are visible.

In front of her, the Old Man is putting down a battered old leather belt. On top of a crate to his side are cloth strips and a fire-poking iron. He picks up the iron and brings it close to the candle flame.

OLD MAN

(rotating the poking iron on the flame)

You know where you'd be if no one
bought you? I did you a favor! You
and your disgrace of a sister!

The poking iron glows red. He approaches the Girl with the iron in hand, picking up the cloth with his other hand.

OLD MAN

You think you're smart, don'tcha?
Don't worry, you'll learn a lesson
you'll never forget.

He is now close, and swings the iron over his head.

MATCH CUT:

swinging motion is lined up with Girl's abrupt sitting motion
