

FIFTY

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. PARK PAVILION - DAY

An old-timey fiddle band plays their version of "I Want to be a Cowboy's Sweetheart." The park around them is the deep green of late summer fading to autumn. This is a practice, so the park is nearly empty except for the tight group.

We see each player in turn--fiddles, mandolin, banjo, tub bass, guitar. They are a mix of young and old, men and women who enjoy this music and love this art.

An older woman in her late 60's, NELLIE, warbles the words to the tune.

As she sings, she watches the guitar player, JACK, a few years older than her. He works through a new strumming pattern for the tune.

Nellie's look is a mystery, but intent enough to be filled with a deep and long love.

As the verse ends, the band moves into the next verse while Nellie yodels into the bridge. She doesn't notice, and the music falters to a stop.

Nellie comes to herself and falls sheepishly silent amid their laughter. Jack checks her music.

JACK

Next verse, Nel.

NELLIE

Sorry, sweetheart.

The laughter grows and everyone regroups. Nellie shuffles her pages and the rest position their instruments.

FIDDLE PLAYER

Light and easy, everyone.

The music begins again, fading into Nellie gently humming the same tune as the picture transitions to:

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

In a small, comfortably cluttered but tidy kitchen, Nellie pours another cup of coffee from a well-used coffee maker. She is still dressed in her morning robe.

She sits at the kitchen table. With a slow sip of coffee, Nellie looks toward a passageway leading out of the kitchen and into the sitting room.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

Jack sits in an armchair reading a newspaper spread across his lap. A cup of coffee sits on a table next to him. He's dressed in jeans and a plaid work-shirt made by Nellie.

The room is as cozy as the kitchen, full of decades-old furniture. A small woodstove sits nearby. A fire started awhile ago is just burning out.

Jack folds the paper closed and leaves the chair slowly, grabbing his coffee cup as he rises.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jack comes in and sets his cup in the sink.

Nellie lifts her cheek just slightly as Jack gives her a small kiss.

Jack slips on his boots and heads outside, the screen door rattling behind him. Nellie watches him go and takes another slow sip of coffee.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

Miles of sagebrush on one side stretch to distant mountains. On the other, the desert prairie drops into a steep canyon just beyond Jack and Nellie's small farm.

Jack has picked up Nellie's tune and hums it as he moves through his small piece of land. Every building and fence has been put in place by his own hands.

He takes a moment to breathe deep and look out toward the mountains before he opens a gate and sets to the morning chores. His cows low a greeting.

MONTAGE - MORNING CHORES

Jack feeds and waters cows, opens and shuts pens, shifts equipment, does the diligent work of a farmer rancher with just enough work for one man to accomplish.

END MONTAGE

EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

As the sun rises toward mid-morning, Jack finishes his tasks and heads back inside. A slower version of the Sweetheart tune plays him home, the background music of a western farmer on his land.

He reaches the final gate and notices one of the bolts is loose. He stops to adjust it, supporting the hinge with strong hands. In the quiet--and in time with the music--he hears the distant chopping of wood.

Jack is surprised and looks up. He releases his grip on the fence and the bolt falls into the scrub.

JACK

What in...

His words cut off as he bends to find the bolt. It's long gone in the weeds, so he leans the gate as closed as possible and keeps on toward the house.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

Jack is still a distance from the house when he catches a glimpse of Nellie, in her robe, chopping firewood. He pauses and watches in confusion as she lays down the axe, gathers an armful of wood and goes back inside.

JACK

What is she...?

He moves forward a little faster, crunching through the brush.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jack comes into the kitchen and stops to remove his mucky boots. Nellie is nowhere in sight.

NELLIE (O.S.)

I'll be back.

Jack hurries with his boots, calling out to stop her.

JACK

Nel, wait...

His boot pops off and he hurries to catch her. He's not accustomed to moving so fast.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

Nellie is at the front door, changed out of her robe and in her jacket and cap. She holds her keys and is opening the front door.

NELLIE

You need anything?

Jack blinks. He stares at their tiny wood stove, or rather at the tall pile of wood stacked next to it. It's a ridiculous amount of firewood threatening to topple into the middle of the floor.

NELLIE

Jack, you need anything while I'm out?

Jack looks up and answers in a daze.

JACK

A 1/2 inch bolt for the gate.

NELLIE

2 inch length?

Jack nods and Nellie is gone.

INT. SITTING ROOM - DAY

A small fire crackles in the wood stove. The day has grown just too warm for a fire, so Jack sweats a little as he sits near, playing the Sweetheart song on his guitar.

He is deep in thought, working the strumming and picking pattern from earlier, while he gazes from the fire to the stack of firewood, which is now missing a few pieces.

He pauses, stares for a moment deep into the fire, then sets his guitar on its stand.

Jack pulls a chunky smart-phone from his pocket and with a few clumsy jabs navigates to a search browser.

He enters "d-i-m-e-n-t-i-a."

The browser is just returning a search for "Did you mean *dementia*?" when the front door starts to creak open.

Jack turns his phone off and shoves it back into his pocket before Nellie and her packages burst into the room.

NELLIE

Here, take these, quick.

Jack jumps to grab a plastic sack from her. She bustles away with the rest of her bags as he looks in consternation at the sack.

Quadruple-bagged, it is full of dozens of 1/2" x 2" bolts.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Jack comes hesitantly into the kitchen, the bag hanging heavily from his hand.

Nellie bustles in good cheer around the kitchen, humming the Sweetheart tune while she puts away groceries and pulls out lunch fixings. She slaps a pot on the stove and a can of soup on the counter. She is oblivious of Jack's gaze.

JACK

Nel, I...

Nellie plops two styrofoam bowls on the table, some plastic spoons and a bag of plastic cups.

NELLIE

Soup for lunch?

For more information about this script, email gwadholm@gmail.com
