

THE WILD GUNS

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FADE IN:

EXT. BLACK HILLS - NIGHT

A winding, overgrown trail, deep in the woods, hemmed in by HEAVY FOG on all sides.

TITLE: **THE DAKOTA TERRITORY. 1881.**

SHAPES APPEAR, ghostlike from the mist --

A dozen silhouettes -- tall and imposing. Maybe human, maybe not. They step closer, into the moonlight --

REVEAL -- an ESCORT of SIOUX WARRIORS. *The TALL FEATHERS of their HEADDRESSES only made the silhouettes APPEAR monstrous.*

They move through the woods silently, like ghosts, bows tightly drawn, forming a protective circle around --

A YOUNG WOMAN. Beautiful, eyes piercing and radiant. This is AIYANA. She abruptly pulls up short, raises an arm. Leans down to the trail --

TRACKS IN THE DIRT. *Some kind of animal?* A warrior named KOHANO kneels beside her -- studying the tracks --

KOHANO

A wolf?

AIYANA

... no.

Suddenly, from somewhere, a FAINT WHISPERING ECHOES, carried by the wind. Strangely, Aiyana is the only one who seems to hear it. She peers into the darkness of the woods -- focused, intense -- until Kohano breaks her concentration --

KOHANO

Are we being followed?

The whispering STOPS. Aiyana surreptitiously WIPES AWAY THE TRACKS as she stands --

AIYANA

No ... I just need to rest. We'll make camp for the night.

KOHANO

Your father said --

AIYANA

(sharp)
-- my father is not here.

Aiyana glances back to the woods. The whispering is gone:
maybe it wasn't there to begin with. She nods, certain --

AIYANA
We'll make camp.

The escort moves to obey. Kohano hangs back, staring after Aiyana ... not bothering to hide his concern.

EXT. BLACK HILLS - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A DISTANT CAMPFIRE glows like a beacon in a SEA OF DARKNESS.

EXT. TEMPORARY CAMP - NIGHT

WARRIORS DANCE around the BONFIRE, the CARCASS of a FRESHLY-KILLED STAG displayed nearby, STRIPS OF MEAT drying on racks. An air of JOVIAL CELEBRATION as a JUG is passed around.

Aiyana excuses herself from the fire, moves to the LARGEST TIPI. Across the fire, Kohano watches her go ...

INT. TIPI - NIGHT

Alone in the tipi, Aiyana sorts through her belongings. She pulls out a BUNDLE, unwraps it to REVEAL -- an old-fashioned Western six-shooter. *Not something you'd expect her to have.*

Aiyana handles the gun fondly, almost reverently. A noise from behind and she quickly hides the gun, spins around -- Kohano has entered the tipi.

KOHANO
*I've been trying to speak with you
 all night. Are you going to pretend
 you haven't noticed?*

AIYANA
I noticed.

A beat ... Kohano nods, he knows the truth --

KOHANO
I am not the one you want.

Aiyana says nothing, confirming it. Kohano steps forward --

KOHANO
*The one you want isn't coming back.
 I know the white man, Aiyana. I
 know him better than you.*

AIYANA
This one was different.

KOHANO
If your father knew of this --

Aiyana silences Kohano with a glare.

AIYANA
*If my father did not trust the
 white man, why is he on his way to
 Cheyenne?*

KOHANO
*Because he is afraid. He believes
 peace is our only chance of
 survival ... but the incursions
 into our territory worsen with
 every day. No treaty will change
 that. We are at war, Aiyana.*

Kohano's eyes flick down to the six-shooter. Suspicious.

KOHANO
Which side will you fight on?

This sinks in. Aiyana looks at the gun. Torn.

Suddenly, a STRONG WIND BLOWS, HOWLING ... drawing our attention to the fact that the sounds of celebration have COMPLETELY FADED from outside. *What the hell?*

EXT. TEMPORARY CAMP - NIGHT

Kohano and Aiyana emerge from the tipi -- and Aiyana GASPS. Whereas moments ago, we saw a thriving camp, full of laughter, now we find a DARK, EMPTY CLEARING.

The camp is abandoned. Not even insects disturb the eerie calm.

Kohano notches an arrow in his bow before venturing out into the open, staying protectively ahead of Aiyana.

MOVING THROUGH THE CAMP --

The fire has been extinguished, SMOKE BILLOWING into the star-filled sky.

Weapons are UNTOUCHED, every arrow still in its quiver.

The WHISKEY JUG lies on its side, empty. Kohano stops to sniff the bottle -- *was it drugged?* -- then notices --

TRACKS IN THE DIRT. Same as before. And beside them -- CLAW MARKS. Evidence of people being DRAGGED AWAY. A flash of recognition -- he whispers --

KOHANO
Yee naaldloosh--

Aiyana CLAMPS a hand across Kohano's mouth --

AIYANA
We must not say its name.

Too late. A HORRIBLE SOUND builds from the woods -- LOW, GUTTURAL GROWLING, seeming to come from ALL DIRECTIONS.

Aiyana instantly drops to her knees and begins to SING -- an ancient NAVAJO CHANT. Kohano DRAWS HIS BOW, takes aim into the woods, trying to find the source of the noise.

A WHIP-FLASH of MOVEMENT behind Kohano, and he SPINS --

Nothing there. ANOTHER FLASH, and he SPINS AGAIN --

Still nothing. All the while, the GROWLING and Aiyana's CHANTING grow LOUDER, reaching a CRESCENDO. Kohano SCREAMS --

KOHANO
SHOW YOURSELF, DEMON!

The growling abruptly HALTS. Aiyana STOPS SINGING.

A long, dread-filled silence ...

Then, something LUNGES from the dark -- a FLEETING GLIMPSE of MATTED FUR and CROOKED TEETH, before KOHANO LETS FLY --

The arrow arcs harmlessly into the woods, missing its target.

As soon as it appeared, the creature is GONE. For a moment, all is quiet. Then, Kohano looks down --

BLOOD POOLS from a GASH in his OPEN THROAT. He looks up at Aiyana with a look of infinite sadness -- then DROPS FORWARD, into the firepit. Aiyana stifles a scream, stumbling back.

She produces the SIX-SHOOTER, holds it out protectively, as the NOISES return -- that same LOW-PITCHED GROWLING, now accompanied by a DIFFERENT SOUND. *Is it laughter?*

MOMENTS LATER

Aiyana pitches blindly through heavy woods, running full-tilt, branches LASHING OUT at her face. ALL AROUND, the NOISES seem to be closing in, cutting off any escape.

Aiyana TRIPS, falls hard. She reaches for her fallen six-shooter, but just as she grabs it, a SHADOW falls over her.

She bravely turns to meet eyes with her attacker -- a trembling whisper --

AIYANA
Yee naaldlooshi.

A VICIOUS ROAR!

Aiyana scrambles for cover, when The Thing -- whatever it is -- GRABS HOLD OF HER LEG. She SCREAMS a name we'll understand the significance of in a moment -- an English name --

AIYANA
WYATT!

-- before she's YANKED BACK into the woods. We FOLLOW HER, PUSHING INTO DARKNESS, taking us to --

BLACK. Over which reads --

THE WILD GUNS

INT. BOARDING ROOM - DAWN

WYATT EARP SNAPS AWAKE, gun reflexively in hand. HE FIRES, a total instinct. The bullet TEARS THROUGH the opposite wall --

We HEAR the SOUNDS of the boarding house coming rudely awake. Shouts of: *'what was that? Someone's firing! Is it the Clancy boys? Someone fetch the Sheriff!'*

Wyatt regains his composure -- *only a dream*; we might notice the gun in his hand is IDENTICAL to the one that Aiyana carried in the previous scene.

The door suddenly FLIES OPEN and a SCOWLING LANDLADY enters, holding a SHATTERED MUG. She looks from the HOLE in the wall, to the SMOKING GUN in Wyatt's hand, then finally up to Wyatt ... at which point, her scowl HARDENS into stone.

EXT. BOARDING HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Wyatt is TOSSED OUT onto the street. He fumbles with his belongings, yanking up his pants, trying to play it cool --

WYATT
All right all right, I can tell
when I'm not wanted, no need to get
physical. But before I go, d'you
mind pointin' me in the direction
of the Sheriff's office?

The Landlady sizes up Wyatt. Discerning his purpose.

LANDLADY

We already got a Sheriff.

WYATT

And I'm sure he's doin' a fine job
... 'cept for the fact that I just
discharged a firearm on private
property, and no one's yet bothered
to ask me why.

(beat; suddenly worried)

Think they'd buy self defense?

The Landlady's scowl miraculously DEEPENS. She indicates
'thataway' down MAIN STREET -- lined with CRUMBLING
BUILDINGS, on the edge of ruin. Wyatt tips his hat, mounts
his horse. The Landlady SHOUTS after him --

LANDLADY

I'm sure he's just busy!

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

SHERIFF WADE has his legs SWUNG UP over his desk, head tilted
back, catching flies. Wyatt stands before him, hat in hand,
waiting to be noticed. A glance to the DEPUTY --

WYATT

Should I -- ?

The Deputy just shakes his head: *not a good idea*. Wyatt waits
another beat -- then, *the hell with it*, he taps the Sheriff's
chair with his foot. The chair TILTS BACK and the Sheriff
comes awake MID-SNORE, collapsing into a SPUTTERING HEAP.

SHERIFF WADE

CHARLIE! GODDAMMIT BOY!

Charlie (the Deputy) points an accusing finger at Wyatt. The
Sheriff takes in the company -- and the SILVER HANDLE
protruding from his holster. He re-calibrates his tone --

SHERIFF WADE

This'd better be good. I was just
parlayin' with a pair of fillies
from St. Louis. Twins, goddammit.

Wyatt clears his throat -- a practised speech --

WYATT

Good morning, sir. I apologize for
the interruption, and I realize we
haven't been formally introduced.
The name's Wyatt -- just came in on
the westbound out of --

The Sheriff impatiently indicates for Wyatt to get on with it, focused more on stuffing his tobacco pipe.

WYATT

Uh ... anyway. I was hopin' I might offer up my services -- whatever may be required to help keep the peace of this charming settlement.

SHERIFF WADE

Services ...
(working it through)
You wanna job?

WYATT

I believe you'll find me to be useful.

The Sheriff seems to find this amusing. He STRIKES A MATCH --

SHERIFF WADE

Well we don't have much use for useful people 'round here. Not since the silver mine dried up and half the town hightailed it west, lookin' for greener pastures --

The LONE PRISONER interjects from the LONE HOLDING CELL --

PRISONER

California and the like --

SHERIFF WADE

-- shut your mouth, y'goddamn horsethief!
(then, back to Wyatt)
California and the like. What'd you say your name was again?

PRISONER

Aw hell, Sheriff, can't you tell Wyatt Earp when he's standin' right in front of you?

SHERIFF WADE

I SAID SHUT YOUR --

The Sheriff catches himself, looks back to Wyatt -- squints --

SHERIFF WADE

Wyatt Earp ... the Wyatt Earp?

Wyatt straightens his posture, trying to look the part. A long pause -- then the Sheriff BURSTS OUT LAUGHING.

SHERIFF WADE

Well I'll be damned! The Wyatt
Earp, in my office, askin' me for a
job. Boy howdy!

CHARLIE

(a small echo)
... boy howdy.

WYATT

I suppose you've heard of me.

SHERIFF WADE

Oh, I've heard of you. Heard all
about you.

WYATT

Then you know I'm more than
qualified to --

SHERIFF WADE

-- heard about a man who thought he
could stand above the law.
Administer a justice of his own
variety. A man who went on a ride
of vengeance -- a Vendetta Ride --
and left half the damn Arizona
Territory dead in his wake. Does
that about sum it up, Charlie?

CHARLIE

About does.

Wyatt is surprisingly affected, eyes downcast --

WYATT

I'm not that man anymore.

SHERIFF WADE

Well whatever man you may or may
not be, one thing's for certain.
When Wyatt Earp rides into town,
that thieving mountebank Doc
Holliday can't be far behind.

WYATT

Doc and I are through. You have my
word. If you take me on, you won't
see head nor tail of him.

SHERIFF WADE

May be. But the way I figure it,
why take the chance? Wyatt Earp or
no ... I got all the help I need.

WIDEN to REVEAL -- apart from the aforementioned trio, the station is completely empty. Wyatt nods, he gets the picture.

WYATT

Well. I appreciate your time. I'll let you get back to St. Louis.

SHERIFF WADE

Charlie, show this pompous jackass the door.

Charlie puts a hand on Wyatt's shoulder, but that's a mistake you only make once. Lightning-quick, Wyatt POPS Charlie in the nose, FLIPS HIM on his back, and TAKES HIS GUN.

WYATT

Word of advice, son.

CHARLIE

(staring down the barrel)
P-please, mister, don't!

Wyatt turns the gun sideways -- uncocks it -- then slides it back into Charlie's holster.

WYATT

Otherwise, nice fella like yourself's liable to shoot his damn foot off.

SHERIFF WADE

HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!

The UNMISTAKABLE SOUND of a SAWED-OFF SHOTGUN being COCKED -- both barrels aimed at the back of Wyatt's head. Wyatt raises his arms as Charlie scrambles away, cupping his nose.

CHARLIE

Shoot him, Sheriff! SHOOT HIM!

SHERIFF WADE

It's not like that, Charlie. Y'see, you and I are officers of the law. And I do believe the famous Wyatt Earp has just struck an officer of the law. In front of witnesses.

PRISONER

I didn't see nothin'.

SHERIFF WADE

You saw whatever the hell I said you saw, you goddamn horsethief! Now make some room!

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

News of Wyatt's predicament has spread across town, a GROWING CROWD clustered outside the window of the Sheriff's Office. THROUGH THE WINDOW, Wyatt is faintly visible, wrists manacled together, trying to tune out the unwanted attention.

AMONGST THE CROWD, we find a MAN who doesn't belong -- shiny brass buttons down the front of his DARK BLUE UNIFORM. This is COLONEL SHERIDAN. He plucks a RANDOM BOY from the crowd --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

You. Boy. Is that Wyatt Earp in there?

BOY

Sure is. Heard he killed a man. Maybe two!

(re: the uniform)

Are you Army?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Sure am. Wanna know how many men I've killed?

The Boy looks into the Colonel's eyes ... and shakes his head 'no'. Sheridan nods, '*smart kid*', then marches for the front of the office. Such is the force of his presence that the crowd wordlessly PARTS to LET HIM PASS.

INT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - HOLDING CELL - DAY

Wyatt sits still as a statue -- ignoring the other Prisoner, who stares at him intently from across the cell. Finally:

PRISONER

Y'know, my cousin was at the OK Corral. Ran for a time with Billy Claiborne. But don't worry, you didn't kill him or nothin'.

WYATT

Glad to hear it.

Charlie enters the office and begrudgingly sets about opening the cell, a WAD of BLOODY TISSUE crammed up his nose.

CHARLIE

Seems you've got some powerful friends, Wyatt.

Wyatt frowns, not quite sure what that means. He collects his belongings, steps out into the main office, where the Sheriff is waiting -- carrying the air of a recently-punished child --

SHERIFF WADE

Mr. Earp. It's been suggested to me that it might be in my best interests to take the long view on our current imbroglio and forget the day's earlier unpleasantness ever occurred.

WYATT

Really. Suggested by who?

As if in answer, COLONEL SHERIDAN appears in the doorway.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Hello, Wyatt.

(re: the chains)

If this is your idea of keepin' the peace, I think you might be on to somethin'.

Wyatt blinks. Impossible to tell his reaction, until he mutters a single, solitary syllable --

WYATT

Shit.

Sheridan smiles.

INT. SALOON - DAY

Empty save for a SINGLE PATRON with distinctly NAVAJO FEATURES, lightly tinkering on a piano in the corner. Wyatt and Sheridan help themselves to a bottle of whiskey at the bar. Strangely, Wyatt's wrists are still manacled together.

WYATT

You gonna take these things off me?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

I'm entertainin' the possibility.

Wyatt eyes the key in Sheridan's palm.

WYATT

You think I can't take that key from you?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

I think you can. I also think it'd be a lot easier for you to just hear me out on my proposition.

Wyatt realizes Sheridan is probably right. He SLAMS DOWN his glass, frustrated --

WYATT

Dammit, Sheridan. What the hell sorta pull do you have with a local Sheriff anyway?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

None whatsoever. What I have is a talent for gettin' folks to do what's in their own best interest.

WYATT

Well, whatever you've got in mind, I can safely say I don't do that sorta thing anymore. I've changed.

Sheridan feigns AMAZEMENT. He scrutinizes Wyatt, checks under his hat, turns his head this way, then that.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

You've -- you've changed? How?

WYATT

I won't kill anyone.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Oh. Well that hurts my feelings. What makes you think I'm not here to ask you to save someone? And not just anyone, but a friend to boot.

Sheridan slides a MONOCHROME PHOTOGRAPH over to Wyatt -- AIYANA is posed, standing stoically behind her father -- an ELDERLY SIOUX, unmistakably the CHIEF: Sitting Bull.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Remember them?

At the sight of the photograph, Wyatt grows VERY STILL. Instant recognition. His voice is low, coiled tight --

WYATT

Aiyana ...

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Little more'n just friends, huh? Yeah, I had a feeling.

WYATT

What happened?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

She was taken en route to join her father in Cheyenne -- at the ceremony of his official surrender.

WYATT
Sitting Bull surrendered?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Well, that was the plan, but now
the ol' guteater's holdin' out on
us. Says he won't sign the treaty
unless we mount a rescue operation.

A beat, as this sinks in.

WYATT
... so she wasn't taken by one of
yours. What do your scouts have to
say on the matter?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
That Her Majesty was taken by an
ancient demon, or spirit or
whatever -- some Navajo bogeyman
called *yee naaldlooshi*.

In the background, the piano music FALTERS OFF. *Is the Navajo
Patron passed out, or listening in?*

WYATT
You're tellin' me Sitting Bull's
daughter was kidnapped by a demon?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
No. I'm tellin' you that's what the
savages are sayin'. Fortunately,
I'm not relying on the intelligence
of a band of dirt-worshipping
heathens. I have it on my own
authority that the squaw was taken
while passing through the Black
Hills region of the Dakota
Territory by a man of flesh and
blood, same as you and me.

WYATT
Who?

Wyatt's voice is calm, but his eyes are BURNING EMBERS.
Sheridan flashes a dark grin --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
There, that's the look I like to
see! My old friend Wyatt, back from
his *mysterious transformation*.

WYATT
Who, Sheridan?

The Colonel slides ANOTHER MONOCHROME across the bar. It's old and faded, so we can't quite make out the man's face, but he has an undeniable presence. His eyes are matching pools of OBSIDIAN GLASS, a window into your worst nightmares.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

The Natives call him Wikito -- some crackpot aboriginal, thinks he's got a direct line with the spirit world. Been a pain in my ass since the end of the War.

WYATT

Why would an Indian kidnap the Chief's daughter?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Leverage, mostly. He doesn't want Sitting Bull to sign the treaty; the crazy bastard'd rather go out in a blaze of glory -- and he's not alone, either. His followers have already taken a stronghold in the Hills. From what I gather, they're holdin' the cards on one of the most lucrative gold claims in the entire Territory.

WYATT

So that's what this is about. *Gold.*

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Not for me, Wyatt. For the nation. Reconstruction ain't cheap, y'know. We need that gold. And Sitting Bull was gonna cough it up, too, before that pagan savage started his war-mongering. Believe me, I've tried reasonin' with the bastard, but everyone I send into the Hills ... they don't come out.

WYATT

Alive?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

At all. No two ways about it.
(re: the photo)
He wants a war.

Suddenly, the Navajo Patron is STANDING OVER THEM, as if he just appeared out of nowhere, staring down at the photograph of Wikito with haunted eyes --

NAVAJO PATRON
Yee naaldlooshi.

Wyatt and Sheridan turn, surprised by the company --

WYATT
Excuse me?

The Navajo indicates the photograph --

NAVAJO PATRON
Skinwalker.

WYATT
Do you know this man?

The Navajo confiscates the bottle of whiskey, moves back to the piano, parks himself on the stool.

WYATT
Hey. I asked you a question. Do you know this man?

NAVAJO PATRON
(soft)
He is not a man.

With that, he RESUMES PLAYING, a JAUNTY RAGTIME SONG. Wyatt and Sheridan can only stare. Very strange.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Exiting the saloon. Wyatt rubs his NOW-FREE WRISTS --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
We'll rendezvous at Fort Lincoln in two weeks time. I'll supply you with everything you need -- the finest soldiers the Seventh Cavalry can afford to spare.
(notices Wyatt's smiling)
What's so funny?

WYATT
Nothin'. I just never realized the Chief had you guys so thoroughly by the balls.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
You have no idea. Those recreant highbrows from Washington won't even think of annexing the Territory unless they get their damn treaty. This must be done.

WYATT

I'll do it. But not for you. And
not for your bullshit treaty.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Long as you get results, I don't
care if you do it for the Queen of
England. Where will you start?

Wyatt mounts his horse -- considers the question --

WYATT

I need to see a doctor.

With a SLAP of the reins, Wyatt takes off at a FULL GALLOP.
Sheridan watches him go ... and smiles.

EXT. PARADISE - NIGHT

The arching town marker reads PARADISE, but don't let that fool you; this place is hell on earth. More of a camp than a town, really, merchants hawking their wares from OPEN WAGONS, shouting over the general HUBBUB of drunkards, loudmouths, prostitutes and thieves -- not to mention the FREE-RUNNING LIVESTOCK and CEASELESS GUNFIRE.

Into this Gomorrah strides WYATT EARP, sporting that same cold shark look. He pauses to let a LYNCHING PARTY of MEXICAN RURALES thunder past before proceeding into the only fully-constructed storefront in town: the saloon. Of course.

INT. CAN CAN LOUNGE - NIGHT

A classic Victorian hellhole, originally intended to be an AMPHITHEATRE, judging from the LARGE CRYSTAL CHANDELIER -- not to mention the STAGE, currently populated with WOMEN in various stages of undress, as opposed to Shakespeare.

Right now, the establishment is UNUSUALLY QUIET, focused on a SINGLE POKER TABLE, cluttered with CASH, GOLD INGOTS, a PROPERTY DEED -- and now a WEDDING BAND, joining the pile.

PEMBRY

Call. Gimme two.

JOHN PEMBRY is a tough-looking bastard, but his hands are TREMBLING as he takes his cards from the DEALER. He's clearly got everything on the line.

DEALER

And for you, Doc?

WHIP PAN TO -- DOC HOLLIDAY, dressed in a THREE-PIECE SUIT, rumpled from several days' continuous use.

A stark contrast to his opponent, Doc acts as if he's got nothing on the line -- nothing to gain, nothing to lose. He WAVES OFF THE DEALER, inciting EXCITED CHATTER from the crowd, which has grown to include WYATT, who keeps to the fringes, just watching.

PEMBRY

What the hell're you playin' at,
Holliday? Y'don't want any?

Doc speaks with the voice of a refined Southern gentleman --

HOLLIDAY

At my age, Mr. Pembry, I've learned
it's important to find contentment
in the things one already has.

(he lifts the property
deed)

Such as a nice piece of land for
instance. A slice of God's Green
Earth to call one's own.

(next, he models the ring)

Or a wife. Loving, faithful. The
makings of a family, to fill that
aforementioned property with sweet,
blessed memories.

(he comes to the loot)

Of course, what good's a family
without the means to provide for
them? Seems to me, Mr. Pembry, that
you walked into Paradise with
everything a man could ever hope to
achieve, and now you stand to leave
with nothin'. And for what?

Holliday digs around his pocket, comes up with ANOTHER GOLD
INGOT, which he casually tosses on the table with the others.

HOLLIDAY

Shiny rocks.

The speech lands hard on Pembry, as intended. Wyatt eyes the
ingot with suspicion, as the Dealer places it on a scale,
kept handy for just that purpose.

DEALER

Five ounces. Hundred dollar value
to you, Mr. Pembry.

Pembry is torn. Holliday's gaze is steady, unflinching --

HOLLIDAY

Walk away, friend. No shame in
losin'.

Pembry's fear hardens into an IMPOTENT RAGE. He pulls a COLT STANDARD ACTION from his waistband; the crowd TENSES, backing away, sensing trouble -- all but Wyatt, who STEPS FORWARD --

-- but Holliday wordlessly REACHES BACK and SIGNALS WYATT NOT TO INTERVENE. *Doc knew he was there the entire time!*

A beat ... then Pembry lays the gun on the table, barrel facing away, joining the pot.

PEMBRY

I call. No speeches, Doc. What do you got?

Doc lays his cards on the table, one by one, never breaking eye contact. He holds the last card a moment longer than the others -- then lays it down --

TEARS EXPLODE in Pembry's eyes as the crowd REACTS -- a few gasps, a light SMATTERING of APPLAUSE. Pembry buries his face in his hands and WEEPS --

PEMBRY

Oh Jesus ... Jesus, Charlene, I'm sorry ...

It's a bit awkward. Patrons drift away to find another table -- no need to see Pembry's cards. Holliday seems unaffected by the man's weeping, focused squarely on his winnings --

HOLLIDAY

Think of it this way, Pembry. You might've lost your place in San Bernardino, but --
(he spreads his arms)
At least you found Paradise.

Pembry looks up, eyes wet and burning -- that does it; he LUNGES for the Colt, but Doc gets there first, lays a hand on top of the gun.

HOLLIDAY

Of course, I might be persuaded to overlook this latest run of misfortune, assuming I was properly compensated.

PEMBRY

Compensated. What are you talkin' about? Christ, you've already taken everything I own!

HOLLIDAY

Not quite everything.

Holliday's eyes drift down to a NECKLACE, mostly hidden under Pembry's shirt. Pembry tugs it free -- an old STONE ARROWHEAD featured prominently in the design. He feigns confusion --

PEMBRY
This? You want this?

HOLLIDAY
I want that.

PEMBRY
What for? It's nothing, it's worthless.

HOLLIDAY
Then make the trade.

A beat -- for some reason, this doesn't seem to be an easy decision for Pembry. He eyes the pot, keeping a protective fist curled around the necklace.

PEMBRY
You're offering back everything?

HOLLIDAY
Everything you see before you. The deed, the ring, I'll even throw in the gold. You get to return to your wife a rich man, and I get some bric-a-brac the Injuns probably unload by the dozen for half a case of whiskey. What d'ya say?

Pembry holds Doc's gaze. His grip TIGHTENS over the necklace ... until a RIVULET of BLOOD snakes from his palm. He SNAPS --

PEMBRY
No. Screw you, Holliday, it's mine. I've sacrificed too much, you can't have it!

Wyatt's reaction: *'what the hell? It's just a necklace!'*
Holliday shrugs --

HOLLIDAY
Suit yourself. Would you like to break it to the missus, or should I?
(over Pembry's shoulder)
Well speak of the devil!

Pembry spins, following Doc's line of sight -- sure enough, his WIFE has entered the saloon -- a real beauty, scanning the crowds --

HOLLIDAY

Most attractive devil I've ever
seen. I must admit, Pembry, you
snagged yourself a beaut.

(waves across the bar)

Hi, Charlene!

CHARLENE -- the wife -- waves back, a little confused. She
sees her husband, starts making her way over.

HOLLIDAY

Uh-oh, I do believe I've drawn
attention to myself. Here she
comes, Pembry. Tick tock.

SHEER AGONY in Pembry's eyes as Holliday scoops up the pot --
a whole life's work, vanishing before his eyes. A long, tense
pause ... then Pembry HURLS the necklace at Holliday.

PEMBRY

Here. Won't do you no good anyway.
Some people are beyond savin'.

HOLLIDAY

Maybe you're right.

Pembry stands and slides on the WEDDING RING, just as his
wife approaches --

CHARLENE

John? My goodness, what's all the
ruckus? Folks outside said you lost
a fortune!

PEMBRY

Oh, don't pay no mind to that
scuttlebutt, dear, sour grapes is
all. You remember Doc Holliday?

Doc takes Charlene's hand, gives it a kiss.

HOLLIDAY

Ma'am.

An unmistakable connection between them. SPARKS FLYING. Wyatt
notices, rolls his eyes. Pembry notices, too; his face turns
BEET RED, on the verge of tears --

PEMBRY

Aw, hell.

He stalks off, inconsolable. Charlene seems momentarily torn,
as if she wants to stay with Doc, but he gives her a little
'go ahead' nod, and she takes off after her husband --

CHARLENE

John? John!

Satisfied, Holliday examines his prize -- focused on the STONE ARROWHEAD in particular. He speaks without turning --

HOLLIDAY

Y'know the thing about you, Wyatt?
One could never quite tell if you
were comin' or goin'.

WYATT

Not usually sure myself.
(re: the necklace)
You develop some affinity for
Indian jewelry in my absence?

HOLLIDAY

Oh, I think you're gonna wanna be a
little more concerned with the half-
dozen roughnecks just walked in the
door.

Wyatt re-directs his gaze, finds the men Doc's referring to -- ARMED TO THE TEETH, still wearing the road's dust, cutting a path through the saloon with bloody-minded purpose.

HOLLIDAY

Wanna venture a guess as to what
their business might be?

It only takes Wyatt a moment to figure it out --

WYATT

They're lookin' for the gold they
lost. The gold you stole.

HOLLIDAY

You're a judgmental man, Wyatt.
Just a flaw in your nature I
suppose, but I do admit you know me
well. So given our present set of
circumstances, between comin' or
goin', which do you suppose would
be the wisest course?

The roughnecks have spotted Holliday, approaching fast; the leader, SLIM LARSON, is out front ... and it doesn't look like he's in the mood to talk. Wyatt seethes --

WYATT

Goddammit, Doc, you know I don't do
this sorta thing anymore.

HOLLIDAY

Well that's okay, I'm sure they're
gonna give you a chance to explain.
(to his guests)
Hiya, fellas!

Without warning, WYATT FLIPS THE POKER TABLE END OVER END,
sending the bounty FLYING INTO THE CROWD --

Patrons scramble for the loot, forming a barrier between Doc
and his attackers; Wyatt and Doc make a RUNNING, DIVING LEAP
over the bar as roughnecks OPEN FIRE. PANDEMONIUM ERUPTS --
everyone CRAMMING into the exits, climbing over one another.

BEHIND THE BAR, Wyatt and Doc take refuge with the BARTENDER.

HOLLIDAY

Christ! They're shooting!

WYATT

Of course they're shooting! I'd be
too if I was them! How many?

HOLLIDAY

Oh, not many, just -- six or seven.
(sincere)
It's nice to see you, Wyatt. I'm
sorry about Albuquerque.

WYATT

Don't talk to me about Albuquerque!

MORE GUNFIRE, EXPLODING bottles of booze. Doc catches a
little in his mouth, then FIRES BACK.

The Bartender offers a mirror, which Wyatt uses to gauge the
proximity of the remaining roughnecks -- fanning out through
the saloon, flanking the bar. Larson shouts from cover --

LARSON (O.C.)

You're a dead man, Holliday!

The voice registers with Wyatt --

WYATT

Is that Slim Larson?
(no response)
You stole gold from Slim Larson!?

HOLLIDAY

Oh, you know me, Wyatt. I see
somethin' shiny, I just can't help
myself.

WYATT

All right, I changed my mind. Let's talk about Albuquerque. I wanna hear you admit to what you did!

HOLLIDAY

I didn't do anything!

WYATT

Then why were you apologizing!?

HOLLIDAY

Cause we're probably about to get shot!

WYATT AND DOC LEAP UP AS ONE, returning fire. Doc aims for the CRYSTAL CHANDELIER, which DROPS, *Phantom of the Opera* style -- CRUSHING THE ROUGHNECK NEAREST THE DOOR. He grins --

HOLLIDAY

I love the theater.

WYATT

MOVE!

They break cover. Wyatt FLIPS A ROUND TABLE, rolls it along, using it as a BULLET SHIELD as they run for the nearest wall--

EXT. THOROUGHFARE - NIGHT

-- and come CRASHING OUT THE WINDOW, tumbling off the boarded sidewalk, landing in a PILE of HORSE SHIT. LAUGHTER from surrounding pedestrians as the pair climbs to their feet --

HOLLIDAY

I'd like it noted for the record I was aimin' for the damn door.

Wyatt starts to retort, but he's cut off by a BELLOWING CRY --

CAPTAIN (O.C.)

HIJO DE PUTA!

Wyatt and Doc turn to find themselves staring down the BARRELS of a DOZEN RIFLES, held by that same LYNCHING PARTY of MEXICAN RURALES we saw before. The CAPTAIN is focused on Doc, RAGE IN HIS EYES. Doc throws up his arms in frustration.

HOLLIDAY

Aw hell, boys, isn't this just a little outta your jurisdiction?

The Captain SCREAMS INCOHERENTLY in SPANISH, gesticulating wildly. Holliday struggles to keep up. Over the rant --

HOLLIDAY
You makin' this out?

WYATT
Somethin' about you corruptin' the
honor of his only daughter.

HOLLIDAY
Well tell him he's got it
backwards! She corrupted my honor.

The rant comes to an end with a singular phrase --

CAPTAIN
Yo te voy a matar!

WYATT
All right, that part I got. He says
he's going to kill you.

Holliday nods: *figures*. The soldiers begin to ADVANCE --

LARSON (O.C.)
Hold it right there!

LARSON and his ROUGHNECKS arrive from the saloon, completing the circle. BEHIND THEM, we may or may not notice a LONG-HAIRED GENTLEMAN, stacking barrels in the road. *Weird*.

LARSON
The doctor's ours, Pancho! Back
off!

The lieutenant rurale translates for the Captain, who immediately issues a STERN RESPONSE.

LARSON
What'd he say?

RURALE
He said his name is not Pancho.

Larson gives a SIGNAL and GUNS COME OUT -- all the incentive the locals need to SCATTER, covering their wagons, closing up shop for the night. Over this, Wyatt whispers --

WYATT
I don't suppose that necklace of
yours might do us any good?

Holliday looks at Wyatt like he's an idiot --

HOLLIDAY
What? No. It's a necklace. *Psh*.

He raises his voice to address the crowd --

HOLLIDAY

Now fellas! Looks to me as we've arrived at a bit of an impasse!

(to the Captain)

You've obviously gotten the wrong idea about some improper relations that may have passed between me and your lovely daughter Carmela --

CAPTAIN

CARMELITA!

HOLLIDAY

Carm, yes. Of course.

(to Larson)

And you boys -- well, I assume you're wantin' to know where the rest of that gold is stashed.

(to everyone)

Surely, gentlemen, there's an equitable solution to be discovered here, and I for one am determined to appeal to the better angels of our natures til such a solution manifests. Now what'd'ya say we put this unpleasantness behind us, head back inside and have a drink?

The Captain looks to his lieutenant for a translation, but he just shrugs. Larson's gun COCKS --

LARSON

Save your breath, Holliday! You're gonna need it to tell us where that gold's buried -- and for all the screamin' that follows!

A nod from Larson and roughnecks move to apprehend Doc --

The Captain SHOUTS AN ORDER, and the rurales TAKE AIM, stopping the roughnecks in their tracks -- the classic Mexican stand-off, with Wyatt and Doc stuck in the middle.

A long silence ... all sides sizing each other up, itchy fingers trembling over triggers. The calm before the storm.

Suddenly, a STRANGE SOUND intrudes over the scene; believe it or not, somebody's WHISTLING. One by one, heads turn --

The Long-Haired Man has continued to work through the altercation, WHISTLING to himself, stacking barrels on the road, just minding his own business. Wyatt squints --

WYATT
I know that man.

Awkward glances are exchanged, until Larson CALLS OUT --

LARSON
You'd best get off the road,
stranger! Less you wanna get shot!

A beat -- then the Long-Haired Man turns -- we recognize him as the Navajo Patron from the saloon!

He BOWS DEEP and walks away ... but first grabs a LANTERN from a nearby post and takes it with him -- still WHISTLING.

Such is the strangeness of this encounter that all parties feel compelled to watch. The Mysterious Navajo looks back to the group -- back to Wyatt in particular -- he smiles --

-- then HURLS THE LANTERN HIGH INTO THE AIR --

The lantern sails through space. ALL EYES FOLLOW IT --

-- except Wyatt's; his gaze tracks down to the LABEL on the barrels -- **DYNAMO BLASTING POWDER.**

Immediately, Wyatt gets the idea, pulls his gun, and FIRES --
-- SHATTERING the lantern in mid-air. An impossible shot!

FLAMES RAIN DOWN, igniting the POWDER KEG in a STAGGERED, MASSIVE EXPLOSION that ROCKS THE THOROUGHFARE.

HORSES PANIC, throwing their masters -- giving Wyatt and Doc a chance to SPRINT FOR COVER. GUNFIRE strafes the buildings around them, missing by inches.

LARSON
Goddammit! Get after 'em you
gutless ingrates!

Roughnecks and rurales alike scramble to regain control of their horses -- momentarily aligned --

EXT. PARADISE - ALLEY - NIGHT

Wyatt and Doc come running around a bend, where Holliday's horse, GEORGIE, is waiting. He immediately BUCKS and WHINNIES at the sight of Doc.

WYATT
This your horse? I don't think he
likes you.

HOLLIDAY
 Yeah, it's my fault. I made some
 crack about his eye.
 (to the animal)
 C'mon Georgie, now's not the time.

Wyatt notices the EYEPATCH, covering Georgie's left eye.
Jesus. Sounds of pursuit near, no time to argue, they both
 MOUNT UP --

EXT. PARADISE - HORSEBACK - NIGHT

Riding hard out of town, Wyatt and Doc both mounted astride
 Georgie, sharing the saddle. HOOFBEATS BEHIND THEM --

Holliday TWISTS AROUND so that he's riding BACK TO BACK with
 Wyatt. WHAT HE SEES: FIVE RURALES give chase, coming up fast.

HOLLIDAY
 We got company!

WYATT
 Well shoot 'em!

Holliday draws his revolver, FIRES while Wyatt RE-LOADS --

HOLLIDAY
 So, listen. Not that I'm not
 enjoyin' it, but d'you wanna let me
 in on the point of this little
 sojourn?

WYATT
 I dunno. D'you wanna let me in on
 what's so important about that damn
 necklace?

HOLLIDAY
 You're right. Better if we don't
 talk.

Clickclick -- Doc's out of bullets.

WYATT
 How many'd you hit?

ON THE RURALES, still charging forward -- still five of them.

HOLLIDAY
 Uhh ...

WYATT
 Christ, lemme do it.

Holliday SWINGS AROUND to the front of the saddle, while Wyatt BACKWARD SOMERSAULTS to the rear; they've switched positions. Wyatt pulls his SIX-SHOOTER -- aims --

BANG! The first shot knocks the sombrero off the Captain's head; it flies back, COVERING THE FACE of the trailing horseman. He loses his grip, and SPLASHES into the mud.

BANG! The second shot hits the FIRING HAND of a GUN-WIELDING RURALE. He falls off his horse --

-- as his gun FLIES BACK -- SLAMMING into the face of another soldier; he FLIPS BACKWARDS off his horse.

Wyatt closes one eye, takes careful aim -- BANG! The shot dislodges a HANGING SIGN outside the FEED STORE. The sign SWINGS OUT like a PENDULUM --

-- and knocks the THREE REMAINING RURALES, including the Captain, off their respective horses; they join their comrades in the mud. Wyatt lets out a SATISFIED WHOOP --

WYATT

Now that's some shootin'!

Holliday glances back to the herd of RIDERLESS HORSES.

HOLLIDAY

I suppose I always was the brains
of the outfit.

UP AHEAD, LARSON and the ROUGHNECKS appear, guns drawn, cutting off Wyatt and Doc's escape.

HOLLIDAY

Shit. Hang on!

Holliday pulls the reins to reverse direction -- but MORE GUNMEN are there, flanking in. Wyatt and Doc are surrounded.

LARSON

Give it up, Doc! You've got nowhere
left to run!

It certainly seems to be the case ... but in Georgie's eyes we sense the MAD GLEAM of INSPIRATION. He REARS UP of his own accord, and VEERS TOWARDS A HALF-CONSTRUCTED WAREHOUSE.

The momentum of the sudden move throws Wyatt SIDEWAYS off the saddle; he balances on the stirrup and OPENS FIRE, scattering the gunmen.

HOLLIDAY

Whoa, Georgie! Whoa!

But Georgie's not listening; he gallops full-tilt towards the building, showing no signs of slowing --

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

GEORGIE EXPLODES THROUGH A WINDOW, taking part of the wall with him. Miraculously, Wyatt and Doc manage to hang on.

PANDEMONIUM as the CONSTRUCTION TEAM scrambles for safety, shouting cries of '*devil horse, caballo del diablo!*', etc.

Georgie BUCKS and KICKS, DEMOLISHING beams left and right --

HOLLIDAY

Whoa, horse! Stupid horse! Stupid
crazy sonofabitchin' horse!

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

Larson leads a CHARGE OF GUNMEN, pushing past the FLEEING CONSTRUCTION CREW, firing madly --

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

BULLETS WHIZ PAST, pock-marking supply crates; Doc tries to steer for cover, but Georgie is still going wild. Strangely, he KICKS the same spot twice, and ANOTHER SUPPORT BEAM GIVES WAY. Doc gets the idea -- a snaking smile --

HOLLIDAY

Good horse! Brilliant crazy
sonofabitchin' horse! Yee-haw!

Doc's smile fades -- a LOW-HANGING RAFTER comes up fast --

HOLLIDAY

Wyatt, down!

Wyatt sees the rafter, but too late; he SLAMS INTO THE BEAM, clinging to it as Georgie RIDES ON without him.

BELOW, gunmen spill into the warehouse. They spot Wyatt --

LARSON

Up there!

-- and start FIRING UP AT HIM. The rafters narrowly deflect the bullets as Wyatt HAULS HIMSELF UP --

ON GEORGIE, focusing in on a CENTRAL BEAM. He SPINS, rears back, gives it a KICK -- it splinters, but holds --

ON WYATT, chasing after Georgie and Doc, hopping across rafters, firing back at his pursuers.

ON GEORGIE -- again, he SPINS, again, he KICKS -- but again, the beam holds. *Damn.*

ON WYATT, coming to a LONG GAP. He steels himself -- jumps -- but doesn't quite make it, dangling from a rafter, high above the ground.

BELOW, Larson sees Wyatt's predicament and smiles. He waves off his men -- *this one's mine* -- takes careful aim --

Suddenly, Georgie makes one last try at the support beam -- and this time, it SNAPS like a goddamn toothpick!

The whole building SHIFTS, distracting Larson. A beam COLLAPSES, and he DIVES FOR COVER --

-- just as Wyatt loses his grip and FALLS --

-- landing gracefully on Georgie's saddle. Impossible to tell if it was luck, or if Georgie caught him. No time to ask --

HOLLIDAY

Hyah!

Wyatt and Doc ride for the exit, as remaining support beams CREAK and SPLINTER and SNAP -- unable to support the weight of the structure --

The roughnecks turn to run, but it's too late; the roof CAVES IN and they're LOST in a CLOUD OF DEBRIS.

Meanwhile, Wyatt and Doc ride for the opposite end of the warehouse, trying to outrun the DOMINO EFFECT of COLLAPSING BEAMS ... it's gonna be close ...

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

CRASH! The trio comes out the way they went in -- EXPLODING VIOLENTLY THROUGH THE WALL, clearing the damage area as the building COLLAPSES into a PILE OF SPLINTERS behind them.

With a TRIUMPHANT WHOOP, Wyatt and Doc ride for the horizon --

-- passing by the Mysterious Navajo. He watches them go with a satisfied smile, then slips off into the dark. WHISTLING.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

Georgie thunders out of town. RISE UP to REVEAL: PARADISE IS BURNING, a PILLAR OF SMOKE twisting into the star-filled sky.

MATCH DISSOLVE:

An identical PILLAR OF SMOKE. We PAN DOWN TO --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Wyatt and Doc, huddled in the orange glow of the fire, the surrounding desert falling into PITCH BLACK DARKNESS behind them. After a long beat, Holliday mutters --

HOLLIDAY
Sitting Bull. Jesus.

WYATT
We owe him.

HOLLIDAY
(waves him off)
Ah, he had his own reasons for
doin' what he did. Truth is, no man
owes anyone anything.

WYATT
A useful perspective for a man of
your debts.

Holliday starts to retort, but is interrupted by a COUGHING FIT. He holds up a kerchief. Gives it a moment to pass. Then:

HOLLIDAY
Tell me it's not about the girl.

WYATT
It's not about the girl.

Doc's look says: *so, what then?* Wyatt throws a stick in the fire and watches it burn.

WYATT
Do you remember how many men we
killed? On the Arizona ride?

HOLLIDAY
I dunno. Seven. Eight.

Wyatt solemnly considers the number.

WYATT
... felt like more.

Suddenly, a STRANGE WIND BLOWS, fanning the flames. Georgie STOMPS and SNORTS, unsettled.

WYATT
Y'hear that?

HOLLIDAY
It's just the wind.

But he doesn't sound so sure. An eerie mood has settled over the scene ... both men sensing the presence of something out there in the dark.

WYATT

We're runnin' out of time, Doc.

The wording of that strikes a nerve with Holliday. His hand goes to the necklace under his shirt.

HOLLIDAY

What do you mean?

WYATT

I mean you can't take a life
without giving up a piece of your
own in return. If you wanna move on
from this world in any way whole
... then you have to settle for the
things you've done.

HOLLIDAY

Settle with what?

Wyatt stares hard into the darkness.

WYATT

I dunno ... but it's out there.

Georgie SNORTS, getting spooked. Holliday tilts his head, realizes the horse is staring the same direction as Wyatt. He forces a smile --

HOLLIDAY

Jesus, Wyatt. If I knew retirement
was gonna screw you up this bad, I
never would've left Albuquerque.

WYATT

You still don't wanna admit what
you did?

Holliday lays himself down by the fire --

HOLLIDAY

Tell you what. If we make it outta
the Hills -- again -- then I'll
tell you. In the meantime, do me a
favor and find somethin' else to
gripe on. Shouldn't be hard, given
my list of character defects.

Wyatt can't help but smile: *he knows this is Doc's way of saying that he's in.*

Holliday glances to the kerchief in his hand -- SPOTTED with BLOOD. He tosses it into the fire, destroying the evidence, then huddles under a blanket -- suddenly cold --

HOLLIDAY

You know they deserved it, right?
Them cowboys.

WYATT

Yeah. Shit, I know that.

We start PULLING BACK, until the glow of the fire is small in frame, disappearing. Doc abruptly kicks a bucket of water into the fire and the flames extinguish with a LOUD HISS --

-- leaving us in BLACK.

OVER BLACK, we hear SHALLOW, FRIGHTENED BREATHING. A door OPENS and CLOSES. Shuffling of FOOTSTEPS. The breathing QUICKENS. A hood is lifted to REVEAL --

INT. CAVERN - DAY

AIYANA. Crouched in a dark, undisclosed location, hands bound before her. She squints against the torchlight. Her eyes adjust -- and she GASPS --

She's face-to-face with a HUGE WOLF -- matted fur and crooked teeth, just like the creature that took her from the camp!

The wolf looks up, raising his head to REVEAL --

A MAN beneath. His features are dark, his eyes empty pools of obsidian glass. We've seen this face before. It is WIKITO.

Aiyana gets her fear under fragile control --

AIYANA

*You are not yee naaldlooshi. You
are no skinwalker.*

WIKITO

Maybe. Maybe I am worse.

Wikito reaches out with a KNIFE and SLICES AIYANA'S ARM. She gasps, recoiling from the pain as Wikito stands. He regards the blood-soaked knife a moment. Then LICKS IT CLEAN.

Aiyana hides her disgust as Wikito moves past, to a LONE BARREL in the corner. He dips in a bowl -- turns to offer it to Aiyana --

WIKITO

Will you drink?

Aiyana just stares with seething defiance. She will not.

Wikito nods to a PAIR OF FOLLOWERS -- surprisingly, both of them are WHITE. One of them -- DEACON -- wears a tattered Army uniform. They both GRAB Aiyana, PIN HER DOWN --

AIYANA

What are you doing? Get off me!

Wikito straddles Aiyana -- drains the bowl of liquid into her mouth. His voice is a soothing whisper --

WIKITO

Drink.

She SPUTTERS and COUGHS, but some goes down. Immediately, the followers haul Aiyana to a kneeled position before Wikito. She regards the knife in his hand.

AIYANA

Do what you will. I am not afraid to die.

Wikito's smile takes on a crazed dimension. He SLASHES DOWN -- severing Aiyana's bonds. She looks up at him, confused, as he moves for the door --

WIKITO

Bring her.

INT. CAVERN - TUNNEL - DAY

Aiyana is guided along a TORCHLIT CORRIDOR, which opens to SEVERAL LARGER CHAMBERS; in each one, a DIFFERENT VIGNETTE -- workers crushing stone, hauling debris, laying explosives, all under the vigilant watch of armed guards.

AIYANA

*You're digging ...
(working it through)
... but not for gold.*

The group reaches the end of the corridor. Aiyana steps forward, but Wikito grabs her arm, indicates --

The floor VANISHES, SLOPING DOWN into IMPENETRABLE DARKNESS.

Deacon HURLS A TORCH into the pit, illuminating --

THE "BANSHEES". They prostrate themselves before Wikito, most refusing to even look at him, as one would turn away from the sun. Many try to CLAW THEIR WAY up the wall, but FINGERNAILS SNAP and they fall back down, then immediately try again. In the flickering firelight, their eyes appear ENTIRELY BLACK.

Aiyana is too appalled to speak, or cry out, or scream. She just stares, numb, as Wikito whispers in her ear --

WIKITO

Your father is weak, Aiyana. He signs treaties when we should be at war. Do you see how eager my children are to fight? Soon, it will be time to send them out again.

AIYANA

(convincing herself)

You are not yee naaldlooshi. You can't be ... it's not possible ...

Aiyana blinks, suddenly dizzy -- feeling the effects of the tonic. Her legs GIVE OUT and she starts to FALL, but Wikito catches her; his voice is suddenly DEEPER, DARKER --

WIKITO

Are you sure?

Slowly, Aiyana turns --

WIKITO GRINS A MOUTHFUL OF SHARPENED TEETH and AIYANA SCREAMS, turns to RUN. Deacon grabs her, but she KICKS HIM hard in the groin, barrels back the way she came --

FOLLOWING AIYANA

Running for her life, twisting and turning through the LABYRINTH of NARROW STONE CORRIDORS.

AIYANA'S POV: SHADOWS BLEED across the walls, seeming to COME TO LIFE; they reach for her like phantoms, SHRIEKING.

Suddenly, up ahead, an EXPLOSION OF LIGHT. A way out! Aiyana runs for the light, fighting against the effects of the tonic, almost there, almost there ...

Damn! Wikito's followers come out of nowhere, SWARMING AIYANA from all sides as SHE SCREAMS --

AIYANA'S POV: The followers take on an animalistic quality --

Their eyes are RED, their mouths cluttered with ROWS of JAGGED TEETH. They pull her into darkness as she SPITS and SCREAMS, reaching for the light.

We PUSH INTO the POWERFUL GLOW to REVEAL --

The light was not caused by the sun, as expected, but by MOUNTAINS OF GOLD, piled high in a SHIMMERING CAVERN.

IN THE CENTER, we find a SKELETON -- complete except for the MISSING SKULL. It looks like some kind of SHRINE.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT LINCOLN - DAY

ROLLING GREEN HILLS under a CLEAR BLUE SKY, a stark contrast to the previous horrors. HOOFBEATS APPROACH and WYATT AND DOC appear, cresting a hill that overlooks --

FORT LINCOLN. Barracks and officer's quarters line acres of open training grounds, framed by the Missouri River. A few soldiers mill about, but for the most part, the fort is COMPLETELY ABANDONED.

HOLLIDAY

This is it? The infamous Seventh Cavalry? I must admit, they're not all I imagined they'd be.

WYATT

I'm sure there's an explanation.

Wyatt rides hard for the grounds --

INT. OFFICER'S QUARTERS - SHERIDAN'S OFFICE - DAY

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Explanation?

Sheridan just stares at Wyatt and Doc. He sweeps an arm out an open window that overlooks the EMPTY GROUNDS --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

There's your explanation! There's no men!

WYATT

You said --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

-- I said you could have access to all the soldiers I could afford to spare, and that still stands. But you can't expect me to wave a magic wand and make a hundred troops appear outta nowhere.

HOLLIDAY

He's right, Wyatt, that would be unreasonable. Sorta like askin' the two of us to face down an army of pissed-off Redskins all on our own.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 (feigned offense)
 On your own? I'm not sending you in
 there on your own. What kind of
 asshole do you take me for, Doc?

HOLLIDAY
 Kind that wears a uniform.

Sheridan glares at Holliday. Immediate dislike between them.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 Look, forget about the soldiers.
 What you boys need is a guide,
 someone know knows the Black Hills
 well, who can get you in and out
 undetected. And lucky for you, I
 know just the man for the job.
 (he sticks his head out
 the door)
 Send him in, Mary.

A beat -- then, the Mysterious Navajo appears, looking out of
 place in Sheridan's tastefully-appointed office.

WYATT
 You ...

Sheridan claps the Navajo proudly on the shoulder, as if to
 say: *look what I found!*

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 I'm callin' him Curley. He doesn't
 seem to mind.

Curley gives Sheridan a glance that seems to indicate that he
 might indeed mind. Wyatt approaches -- thoughtful --

WYATT
 I suppose I owe you thanks.

No response from Curley.

WYATT
 Does he speak English?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 Oh, sure, once you get him going,
 he won't shut up. He insisted he be
 hired to abet you on your quest --
 that's what he called it, your
quest. Most enthusiastic I've ever
 seen an Injun about anything other
 than scalpin' the white man.

Sheridan chuckles at his own joke. Wyatt focuses on Curley --

WYATT

What's your interest in all this?

Curley is confused by Wyatt's choice of words --

CURLEY

Interest. It is not my interest. It is my destiny.

WYATT

Destiny.

CURLEY

To guide and protect the warrior who hunts *yee naaldlooshi*.

WYATT

And you think I'm that warrior?

CURLEY

The signs are clear. For those who can see them.

WYATT

Uh-huh. What if I told you I don't believe in *yee naaldlooshi*? Or ghosts or demons or any of that spiritual chicanery. What if I told you I only believe in what I can see and what I can shoot?

CURLEY

I will guide you. Then you will see. Then you will believe.
(nods, confident)
Then you will shoot.

Curley's focus is almost unnerving. Holliday intervenes --

HOLLIDAY

What about me, what's my destiny?

Curley regards Holliday -- his eyes momentarily drawn to the NECKLACE under his shirt. A glimmer of recognition. Holliday notices, backs off --

HOLLIDAY

... fine, don't tell me. I'd rather be surprised, anyway.

Curley turns his attention back to Wyatt --

CURLEY

Rest now. We'll leave tomorrow,
while the trail is still fresh.

WYATT

What trail? Aiyana was taken weeks
ago. Whatever tracks she left
would've been washed away.

CURLEY

The tracks we follow can not be
washed away by any storm. But they
do fade in time, so we must not
linger on stupid questions.

Curley exits -- stopping only to regard Holliday one last
time. He shakes his head, mutters a word -- *numaloca* -- and
then he's gone.

HOLLIDAY

Did he just insult me?

WYATT

I think both of us.
(to Sheridan)
We'll take him.

EXT. FORT LINCOLN - NIGHT

Night falls over the abandoned fort. A MAP of the NORTHERN
PLAINS is splayed out across a table before Wyatt and
Sheridan --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Once you have the girl, we'll
rendezvous here -- in the Hayden
Valley, just off the Yellowstone. A
day's ride west.

WYATT

Why not Fort Buford? It's less than
half a day north.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

The Chief won't come near our
forts. For some reason, he's a
little cagey about the white man.

WYATT

Yeah, I wonder why.

Sheridan regards Wyatt thoughtfully.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
It occurs to me, I never asked what
happened between you and the squaw.

WYATT
Are you askin' now?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
(yes)
No.

Wyatt turns away -- Sheridan can't help himself --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
It's just, there were a lot of
prisoners taken during that war.
Atrocities committed on all sides.
But you and Doc both came out with
hardly a scratch ... I wager the
girl had somethin' to do with that.

WYATT
No ... it was *Wakan Tanka*.
(off Sheridan's look)
Their deity. Said we were supposed
to live.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
What for?

WYATT
I dunno. Somethin' about us ...
havin' a task we'd yet to perform.

From Wyatt's expression, it's clear: *he thinks this might be
that task*. He turns for the barracks. As he goes --

WYATT
I'll hold up my end, Sheridan. Just
make sure you hold up yours.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
I'm a man of my word, Wyatt.

Sheridan watches Wyatt go. He smiles to himself --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Wakan Tanka. Fuck me.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Wyatt and Doc lie asleep in matching twin beds, the FULL MOON
shining bright outside the window. Suddenly, a FIGURE RISES,
blotting out the moon --

It's Curley. He reaches for Holliday's NECKLACE. Suddenly, Doc's hand SNAPS OUT, grabs Curley's wrist.

HOLLIDAY

Y'know, I have a feeling you and I
are gettin' off on the wrong --

Holliday cuts himself off, looks down -- Curley has a knife to his throat. Doc releases Curley's wrist.

CURLEY

Where did you find this?

HOLLIDAY

Won it in a poker game.

CURLEY

You lie.

HOLLIDAY

Almost always.

The SOUND of a GUN COCKING -- Curley looks down -- Doc's pistol is pressed under his chin. A stand-off.

Slowly, Curley retracts the knife. Just as slowly, Holliday retracts the gun.

CURLEY

You do not know what you carry.

HOLLIDAY

(shrugs)
It's an arrowhead.

CURLEY

Yes. An arrowhead, carved by the
hands of my ancestors in the world
beyond this one. It is the only
weapon capable of slaying yee
naaldlooshi.

Holliday frowns. That's news to him. He gives it some thought
... then tucks the necklace back under his shirt.

HOLLIDAY

Nice try, Curls. But I've got other
plans for this beauty.

CURLEY

You wish to sell it?

HOLLIDAY

In a manner of speaking.

Curley reaches out -- Holliday reflexively clutches the necklace, but Curley's hand MOVES PAST, to examine Doc's collar -- speckled with BLOOD. He realizes --

CURLEY

You wish to trade it. To the medicine men of the Algonquian tribes. You believe they can cure your disease.

Doc doesn't deny it. He regards Wyatt's sleeping form --

HOLLIDAY

I suppose you're gonna tell him.

CURLEY

No. You must tell him. He will need your loyalty before this is through. And your trust.

HOLLIDAY

Yeah? Who told you that? The Great Spirit?

CURLEY

(like it's obvious)

Yes.

Curley slips back into the shadows and seems to VANISH. Doc is left toying with the necklace ... considering his course.

EXT. DAKOTA PLAINS - DAY

The iconic shot: WYATT, DOC AND CURLEY RIDE, hooves kicking up dirt as they sweep across the vast empty plains of the Dakota Territory. *The hunt is on!*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BRUSHLAND - DAY

A HAND. Laid to rest on the GROUND, fingers gently connecting with soil, barely touching. WIDEN to REVEAL --

CURLEY. On his hands and knees, staring at the ground; it almost looks like he's PRAYING. *Some ancient Navajo rite being observed?* Wyatt and Doc watch from their horses.

WYATT

What do you see, Curley?

A long beat ... then Curley VOMITS. Holliday's face twists with disgust as Curley gets to his feet and climbs back onto his horse -- with some difficulty. Wyatt just glares.

WYATT

Are you drunk?

CURLEY

I have partaken in the, uh --
ancient Navajo tradition of ...

(beat; he nods)

Yes. Drunk.

Curley spurs his horse forward. Wyatt stares after him in disbelief. Doc cheerfully indicates to Wyatt: 'after you'.

EXT. BRUSHLAND - DAY

Wyatt, Curley and Doc ride side-by-side. Curley is mid-story--

CURLEY

In the early days, there was much
strife amongst the people -- much
greed and killing. It is under
these conditions that yee
naaldlooshi thrives. My ancestors
were the first to openly hunt the
creature. They trapped and killed
the last of its kind more than two
hundred years ago.

WYATT

Then how can there be another one?
Doesn't it need to ... reproduce?

CURLEY

Yes. Yee *naaldlooshi* is born
constantly, into the hearts of
every man. Most live their whole
lives without ever knowing it was
there. But there are others who
commit crimes so unspeakable, so
much an insult to the natural way,
that they rip apart the barriers
that prevent yee *naaldlooshi* from
running free. When that happens,
the man becomes less than a man.
And more.

WYATT

What does he become?

CURLEY

The beast. The skinwalker. Yee
naaldlooshi in its purest form. It
is said that the beast can take any
shape ... and walk the land in
whatever skin it chooses.

WYATT

And this Shaman fella, Wikito ...
he's a skinwalker?

CURLEY

I don't know.

WYATT

(a beat; he blinks)
You don't know? What do you mean
you don't know? Hell, aren't you
supposed to be hunting this thing?

CURLEY

No. I am merely the guide. You are
the warrior.

Wyatt frowns: *glad I asked*. Curley continues --

CURLEY

According to legend, there is a
ritual that can unlock the power of
the beast. The ceremony is known
only to the most powerful Shamans
... it must be performed on sacred
ground, when blood covers the moon.

HOLLIDAY

Yeah, but you have to say the magic
words, right?

CURLEY

(ignoring that)
The host must cannibalize the blood
of a pure Navajo, mixed with the
bones of the last skinwalker. My
people were determined to ensure
that the beast stayed at rest, so
they found the grave of yee
naaldlooshi and scattered his bones
across the northern plains. If
Wikito is able to assemble them, he
could complete the ritual, and
inherit the power of the beast --
the power to breach the darkest
recesses of the spirit world ...
and take any shape he desires.

WYATT

Well. Guess we better stop him
then.

Curley just nods, dead serious. Wyatt and Doc share a look:
this guy's clearly nuts.

Suddenly, something catches Curley's eye -- SMOKE on the horizon, its source blocked by the surrounding hills.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY

Curley crests the hill -- and FREEZES. Stretched out below him is an incredible sight --

THOUSANDS OF NATIVES are MARCHING WEST, their numbers blanketing the horizon. At first glance, it would appear to be an old-fashioned wagon train ... until you spotted the SOLDIERS with GUNS and BULLWHIPS, herding the Natives like cattle -- reminiscent of the TRAIL OF TEARS.

Wyatt and Doc ride up alongside Curley. Taking in the sight.

HOLLIDAY

Christ Almighty.

(re: Curley's expression)

You know these people?

It takes Curley a moment to find his voice --

CURLEY

Where is the smoke coming from?

Wyatt realizes -- the source of the smoke remains obscured, coming from the direction the Natives marched. Curley rides hard down the embankment. Wyatt SHOUTS after him --

WYATT

Don't get too close!

EXT. WAGON TRAIN - DAY

A SERIES OF VIGNETTES --

Families cluster together; mothers carry their babies.

An ELDERLY WOMAN cries as she's separated from a PRECIOUS KEEPSAKE, too heavy to carry.

A CHILD collapses from exhaustion; he's quickly CARRIED OFF, over the protests of his MOTHER -- the FATHER calms her, insisting the soldiers are just going to help him ...

We settle on an OLD WOMAN, skin like leather, marching with an expression both tranquil and taciturn. CURLEY appears beside her --

CURLEY

Mashke.

"MASHKE" turns -- and smiles. But never stops walking.

MASHKE

*Ah, Ashishishe. The apple returns
to its tree. Have you come to join
your people at Standing Rock?*

(off Curley's look)

That is what they're calling it.

Curley takes in the docile, defeated faces around him.

CURLEY

Why does no one fight?

MASHKE

*They know they must leave. The
Hills have become a haunted place.*

(she grins)

*If wasicu wishes to claim the
bounty of the mesa, they must pay
the price for it.*

CURLEY

*You have seen it then? You have
seen the skinwalker?*

Mashke considers denying it -- but can't help divulging --

MASHKE

*I have seen him. Every day, his
army grows. Soon, he will become
all-powerful.*

Curley is unsettled by Mashke's tone --

CURLEY

You want this?

MASHKE

There must be a reckoning.

CURLEY

*There will be, Mashke. I promise
you. But not like this. Yee
naaldlooshi must be destroyed.*

MASHKE

Who will do it, then? You?
*(she smells the liquor on
Curley's breath)*
I doubt it.

CURLEY

*I travel with warriors. Together,
we seek the daughter of Sitting
Bull. She has been taken.*

MASHKE
*... taken? By yee naaldlooshi? That
 is unusual.*

In Mashke's eyes, a trace of doubt. Curley presses her --

CURLEY
Please, Mashke. Help us.

EXT. RIDGE - DAY

Wyatt and Doc watch from an elevated plateau as the progression passes below. The scene calls for WHISPERED VOICES --

HOLLIDAY
*... you're not buyin' all this
 skinwalker shecoonery, are you?*

Wyatt thinks -- shrugs --

WYATT
*Parts, I guess.
 (off Doc's look:
 'really?')*
*I believe there are crimes that can
 make a man less than a man ... rob
 him of any claim to decency.*

HOLLIDAY
Or mercy.

Wyatt shoots Doc a look -- lets that slide --

WYATT
*But the rest of it?
 (shakes his head: 'nah')*
*People don't need evil spirits to
 make 'em do evil things. They do
 'em all on their own.*

Holliday stares hard at the tragic scene below.

HOLLIDAY
Obviously.

Suddenly, Curley is beside them, peering over the ridge. He joins the conversation as if he's been there the whole time --

CURLEY
*There is a settlement, not far from
 here, where men have been vanishing
 for many weeks -- taken into the
 Hills by agents of yee naaldlooshi.*

WYATT
So ... we find the settlers, we
find Aiyana.

CURLEY
Yes.

WYATT
Where's the settlement?

Curley doesn't answer -- again distracted by the smoke on the horizon. He SPURS HIS HORSE forward: *he has to know.*

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

SMOKE WAFTS from an UNSEEN SOURCE as Wyatt, Doc and Curley approach. We don't yet see what they see ... but whatever it is turns their stomachs.

WYATT
I don't understand ... why would
the Army do this?

Curley shrugs --

CURLEY
Why not?

He dismounts, steps forward -- something on the ground has caught his attention -- a CHILD'S-SIZE MOCCASIN. Burned. Curley looks up, and we follow his gaze to REVEAL --

The CHARRED WRECKAGE of a NAVAJO VILLAGE, LOW ADOBE DWELLINGS BURNED TO THE GROUND, along with PILES OF BELONGINGS, everything the Natives couldn't afford to carry. Gone.

Curley stands. Still holding the moccasin. He pulls his FLASK from his pocket -- then empties its contents into the dirt.

Holliday stares heartbroken -- moreso by the waste of booze than the devastation of the village. Curley re-mounts his horse. A long, heavy silence. Finally:

CURLEY
Whitehead Creek.
(off Wyatt's look)
We ride to Whitehead Creek.

EXT. WHITEHEAD CREEK - NIGHT

An isolated prospecting village at the base of a thousand-foot ridge, surrounded by ponderosa pines.

TITLE: WHITEHEAD CREEK, 5 MILES SOUTH OF THE BLACK HILLS.

Wyatt, Doc and Curley ride into town. The roads are empty, yet BRIGHTLY-LIT by ROWS OF GAS LAMPS, running full blast.

Suddenly, up ahead, SOUNDS OF SINGING --

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The ENTIRE TOWN is present, packing the pews, singing a SPIRITED HYMN. Wyatt and Doc enter -- taking in the sight.

HOLLIDAY

I didn't realize it was Sunday.

WYATT

It's not.

At the pulpit, the PREACHER, a fire-and-brimstone-type named COLLINS, spots Wyatt and Doc. He shouts over the song --

COLLINS

Can we help you, boys?

The singing abruptly STOPS. All eyes turn. Wyatt respectfully takes off his hat --

WYATT

Pardon the intrusion. We're, uh --

A WOMAN from the front pew interrupts -- this is ADA --

ADA

You're from the Marshall's Office.
God be praised, our prayers have
been answered!

WYATT

What prayers were those, ma'am?

COLLINS

Ada. We do not speak of our
troubles with outsiders.

ADA

It's okay, they're here to help!
(to Wyatt, hopeful)
... aren't you?

Wyatt is surprised, he wasn't expecting to be expected. But he takes advantage, steps forward --

WYATT

Yes, ma'am. We're here to help, in
any way we can. I understand you've
had a few folks go missing.

A MAN speaks up -- he seems to be a PROSPECTOR, just come down from the hills --

PROSPECTOR
More'n just a few. Five last week
alone, my cousin included!

VOICE FROM CROWD (O.C.)
My husband, too!

Sounds of agreement from the crowd, confirming the number.

COLLINS
(scolding)
And you all remember the week
before that, don't you? The last
time some well-meaning lawman rode
into town, in answer to Sister
Ada's prayers? Eight. Eight lost
souls, including the lawman
himself! I tell ya, the presence of
outsiders aggravates the demons,
and if we wanna keep 'em at bay, we
have to tend to this matter
ourselves! Without interference!

The congregation is torn on that point, some murmuring in agreement, others shaking their heads, arguing amongst themselves. Holliday SHOUTS over the noise --

HOLLIDAY
Excuse me, sorry. Hey! Fellas!

He has their attention. A one-word question, asked with a smile --

HOLLIDAY
Demons?

Ada regards Doc with sympathy and disappointment --

ADA
You are unprepared to face the evil
that awaits you.

Off Wyatt and Doc's matching reactions: *what the hell's going on in this town?*

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - NIGHT

A MATCH IS STRUCK and a LAMP is lit, casting a shadowy orange glow across the face of -- EMMETT RILEY. Barely a teenager but already a man, keeping a lonely watch.

A TWENTY-FOOT PILLAR of DRIED TWIGS and LEAVES has been hastily-assembled behind him. *Weird.*

Emmett settles in for the long haul. Suddenly, a hand falls on his shoulder and he GASPS, wheels around -- finds himself face-to-face with --

EMMETT

Earl! Damn you!

EARL stands before him, grinning like an idiot.

EARL

Scared ya, didn't I.

EMMETT

Damn right you scared me! I thought you were one a' them. Where the hell've you been?

EARL

Take a wild guess.

Emmett scrutinizes Earl. That shit-eating grin.

EMMETT

Lilly?

EARL

Wilder.

EMMETT

Beth?

EARL

Wilder.

EMMETT

(beat)

... both of 'em?

The grin WIDENS. Emmett SHOVES Earl, and Earl SHOVES HIM BACK, laughing.

EMMETT

You whoremongerin' little warthog,
no wonder you're always so late!

The playful shoving match is interrupted by a STRANGE NOISE --

A WET CUTTING SOUND, coming from the woods. The boys FREEZE.

Emmett -- obviously the braver of the two -- inches forward.

EMMETT
Y'hear that? Sounds like
something's ... eatin'.

The NOISE gets LOUDER. Emmett RAISES HIS LAMP --

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

A SCREAMING ARGUMENT has erupted amongst the congregation -- half in favor of letting Wyatt and Doc stay, the other half arguing to make them leave.

Wyatt and Doc just stand there, the calm center of the storm. A look passes between them -- Doc nods, *go ahead* -- and Wyatt FIRES into the air. SILENCE falls over the chamber.

COLLINS
Brother Wyatt. You can not
discharge a firearm in the House of
the Lord!

WYATT
I doubt the Lord can even hear
Himself think over your ruckus.
(addresses the
congregation)
Now, listen up! It's true we're
here to help, but there's nothin'
we can do unless someone tells us
what the hell it is we're up
against.

A nervous exchange of glances -- no one speaks. Finally:

ADA
The devil, Mr. Earp. It is the
devil comes for us each night.

This sinks in. Her certainty is unnerving. Suddenly, from outside, a SHARP WHISTLE --

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Curley stands alone in the center of the road. He points towards the horizon as Wyatt and Doc come alongside --

CURLEY
They're coming.

Wyatt and Doc look off in the direction Curley is pointing ... but they don't see anything.

Curley moves off, leans against a building, and starts playing a SINGLE REED WIND INSTRUMENT. Holliday frowns --

HOLLIDAY

Is it me, or is he getting'
weirder?

Suddenly, a STRONG WIND BLOWS, coming in off the Hills --

Lamps are EXTINGUISHED, one by one, shrouding the town in
TOTAL DARKNESS. The congregation starts emptying out of the
church, spilling onto the street --

COLLINS

The lamps ...
(to the others, urgent)
LIGHT THE LAMPS! Hurry, everyone
grab a torch, pitch in!

The town GALVANIZES INTO ACTION, scattering to re-light the
lamps. Wyatt and Doc watch them go ... Holliday shrugs --

HOLLIDAY

Maybe they're afraid of the dark.

WYATT

... they're afraid of somethin'.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF TOWN - WOODS - NIGHT

Emmett steps through HEAVY WOODS, approaching the source of
the NOISE. Behind him, Earl follows -- fidgeting, impatient --

EARL

C'mon, Emmett, let's get back. It's
just border ruffians probably.

EMMETT

Not around here.

EARL

Well a coyote then. In fact, I -- I
think I just saw one, just now!
Give him a shout, he'll scatter --

Emmett SHUSHES Earl. A SHAPE starts to materialize from the
shadows -- something MOIST and DARK, about twenty feet away.

EARL

Emmett ... it's just a coyote,
right? Right, Emmett?

Emmett steps closer --

The GLITTERING EYES of a COYOTE stare back at him -- then,
the eyes retreat (*or are they pulled back?*) into darkness.

Emmett breathes a sigh of relief -- lowers his lamp --

EMMETT

Yeah, just a coyote --

Suddenly, SOMETHING FLIES OUT OF THE WOODS, and LANDS at Emmett's feet. Emmett looks down -- and goes deathly pale --

THE COYOTE. Throat TORN OPEN, guts SPILLED OUT, neck cleanly SNAPPED. Its glittering eyes just stare, lifeless.

For a moment, Emmett and Earl are too scared to move ... then, a ROAR FROM THE WOODS and they take off RUNNING, breaching the woods, SHOUTING at the tops of their lungs --

EMMETT/EARL

They're comin' back! Take cover,
everyone! THEY'RE COMIN' BACK!

Emmett HURLS his lamp onto the pillar of twigs; the lamp SHATTERS and the pillar BURSTS INTO FLAMES. A warning beacon.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

The townsfolk are too focused on re-lighting the lamps to notice the PILLAR OF SMOKE rising in the distance. Wyatt steps forward --

WYATT

What the hell ... ?

Collins follows Wyatt's line of sight. He finds his voice --

COLLINS

Ev-everyone ...
(then)
EVERYONE INSIDE, NOW!

One by one, the villagers take in the sight of the smoke.

Oh. Shit. They abandon their duties, ushering children off the street; they run into their homes, their shops, anyplace they can find. Doors slammed, locked, firmly bolted.

A crowd of villagers make for the church, SHOVING over one another, CRAMMING into the narrow frame.

COLLINS

Everyone stay calm! One at a time,
don't push, one at a time!

ON CURLEY: He just keeps playing that damn instrument, leaned against the wall of the post office, oblivious to the chaos that swirls around him.

ON THE PROSPECTOR, rushing to light the final lamp. The flame RISES, illuminating --

A HIDEOUS SHRIEKING BLACK-EYED FACE!

ON WYATT AND DOC, reacting to the sound of the PROSPECTOR'S SCREAMS -- even as they're SWEPT ALONG in a WAVE OF PEOPLE, pushed bodily back inside the church --

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

The doors are closed; a wooden beam SLAMS into position.

And then -- silence. All is quiet, except the faded sounds of Curley's continued playing, echoing from outside.

Collins gives a wordless signal to a CHOIRBOY, who starts dutifully -- quietly -- blowing out the candles.

Suddenly, a SERIES OF NOISES surround the church -- GROWLING and GASPING and MOANING and SHRIEKING.

Villagers COWER at the sounds, covering their ears. Wyatt turns to Collins who nods, somber --

COLLINS

They're here.

EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT

PANDEMONIUM ERUPTS as SETTLERS RUN FOR COVER. All around, SHADOWS come to life, SWOOPING IN to pluck off STRAGGLERS, pulling them SCREAMING into DARKNESS. Through it all, we catch fleeting glimpses of the ATTACKERS -- ravenous, animalistic, eyes BLACK as midnight. Maybe human. Maybe not.

INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

At the sounds of the screams, Wyatt immediately moves to lift the beam --

WYATT

C'mon, we've gotta get these doors open! Somebody gimme a hand!

No response. Wyatt faces down the congregation --

WYATT

What's wrong with you? Those are your people out there, we could fit more! A lot more!

Still, the townsfolk just stare. Holliday shrugs --

HOLLIDAY

For all their talk of the Lord,
they sure aren't in any hurry to
meet Him.

Suddenly, a LOUD BANGING from the OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR,
SPLINTERING the wood, nearly jarring the beam loose. Wyatt
and Doc pull their guns in unison --

WYATT

Everybody get back!

The congregation is quick to comply, stumbling over the pews.
The choirboy re-doubles his efforts, ascending the altar,
feverishly blowing out candles.

Again, something THUDS against the door with IMPOSSIBLE
FORCE. Then AGAIN. And AGAIN. And then -- silence. Lots of
it. Wyatt lowers his gun --

WYATT

It's gone.

SCREAMS from the crowd as SHADOWS GLIDE PAST THE WINDOWS --
the creatures circling outside, looking for a way in.

Wyatt charts the trajectory of the shadows and moves to a
window at the back of the church. He fumbles with the latch --
OPENS the window, just a crack. He readies his six-shooter --

Immediately, the congregation MOVES AWAY FROM WYATT,
clustering back towards the front of the church.

Wyatt takes aim out the crack in the window, and waits ...

... and waits ...

Suddenly, a SHADOW PASSES over the stained glass. STIFLED
GASPS from the assembly. Even Holliday holds his breath.

Wyatt takes in the shadow -- IMPOSSIBLY TALL, hair like a
WILD MANE -- LONG, SPINDLY FINGERS --

The shadow is moving towards the gap in the open window.
Soon, it will be within Wyatt's line of sight ...

... but then, out of nowhere, the creature STOPS. Frozen.
Sensing Wyatt's presence?

HOLLIDAY

Shoot it, Wyatt. Shoot it.

For some reason, Wyatt HESITATES. Real fear in his eyes ...
for the first time, he's starting to believe.

Suddenly, across the church, A DIFFERENT WINDOW SHATTERS --

CLAWED HANDS REACH IN, GRAB THE CHOIRBOY, AND PULL HIM SCREAMING OUT INTO DARKNESS! ANGUISHED CRIES RING OUT from the congregation as Wyatt and Doc shove their way through --

WYATT

Move! MOVE!

EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

Wyatt and Doc LEAP FROM THE WINDOW, landing in a pair of matching barrel rolls. They get to their feet, back-to-back, GUNS DRAWN, aimed out at --

Nothing. An empty town. A LONE TUMBLEWEED tumbles by.

The noises are gone. The creatures are gone. And Curley is gone. His pipe lies discarded on the ground.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Wyatt SLAMS Curley's pipe down onto a table in a cavernous meeting chamber. Collins, Ada and a few townsfolk are present, Holliday lingering off to the side --

WYATT

Two months. Two months they've come from the woods, takin' your people ... are you tellin' me no one's ever once tried to track them?

COLLINS

Of course we tried. They don't leave any tracks.

WYATT

Everyone leaves tracks.

COLLINS

Not them. They're unnatural, that's what I'm tryin' to tell ya. They're demons. Straight from hell.

A few 'amen's rise from the group. Wyatt tightens his grip on the pipe -- seething --

WYATT

They are not demons, they are not ghosts, they are not skinwalkers, they are men. Just men. And you, sir, are a coward. Hidin' behind your pulpit while out there, people are dyin'. Your people, Preacher.

This sinks in.

HOLLIDAY

Y'know, it occurs to me, under the present circumstances, a rational person might find another place to live. One without so much of a, how shall I say ... demon problem.

ADA

This is our home, Mr. Holliday. Our community. We can't just --

COLLINS

Now that's not the truth, Sister Ada. I wish to God it was, but you know it ain't. The gold is why we came, and damn our souls, the gold is why we stay!

(addressing the others,
full-on Preacher mode)

We all made the pilgrimage to the Hills to buy ourselves a second chance ... but absolution never came at so low a price. We've all got terrible sins on our conscience. The sin of this town is greed.

Murmurs of assent. Collins pointedly turns to Wyatt --

COLLINS

What's yours, Brother Wyatt?

Wyatt can't take anymore, he SUCKER PUNCHES the Preacher full in the face, sending him SPRAWLING BACK across the table.

WYATT

... punched a man of God once.

Wyatt takes the pipe -- addresses the shocked townsfolk --

WYATT

I'm going after our people. Any one of you wants to tag along can feel free. Other than that, I'd stay out of my way.

With that, he strides for the door. Doc tips his hat to the group -- *adios* -- then joins Wyatt's stride. Whispers --

HOLLIDAY

Christ, Wyatt, aren't you in enough trouble with the Big Man already?

Now clear of the others' view, Wyatt nurses his bruised knuckles --

WYATT

No, Doc, I suppose I'm not.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The sun rises over the pine-covered Hills, casting LONG SHADOWS over the beaten, weary faces of --

THE TAKEN. Men, women and children, marched through heavy woods like an old-fashioned CHAIN GANG, seven in all, CURLEY amongst them. He ventures a glance up at the guards --

They're mostly WHITE MEN, some dressed in frontier clothing, others wearing Army uniforms -- none of them recently-bathed.

From the woods, we hear the FAMILIAR SHRIEKS of the BLACK-EYED BANSHEES, trailing closely behind.

Curley frowns: *this isn't what he expected*. UP AHEAD, the woods clear to REVEAL --

EXT. GOLD STRIKE - DAY

A fully operational GOLD MINE.

SLAVES operate lifts and pulleys, hauling debris from a TUNNEL that cuts deep into the side of the mountain. Curley takes in the staggering sight ... before he's SHOVED FORWARD--

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Wyatt and Doc, leaned low over their horses, tracking their quarry; from the looks of it, they're not having much luck. Doc surreptitiously COUGHS into a kerchief. Wyatt notices, but doesn't let on. He sits up on his horse, frustrated --

WYATT

Well. So much for our larger purpose.

HOLLIDAY

Refresh my memory. What purpose would that be again?

(off Wyatt's look)

Ah, *Wakan Tanka*. I almost forgot.

WYATT

You buy into all that?

Doc is momentarily distracted by the blood on his kerchief. He shakes it off, plays his tone casual --

HOLLIDAY

Who knows. What I do know is that, 'bout a month into captivity, the Chief came to me ... said he had a vision of his people's triumph over the white invaders. He described to me a fantastic scenario of trappin' some two hundred cavalrymen with an alliance of Cheyenne and Sioux -- slaughterin' every last one of 'em.

WYATT

He was talking about Little Bighorn.

HOLLIDAY

He would've been, if the conversation hadn't taken place two full weeks prior to the engagement.

(this sinks in)

He described every moment, every maneuver, down to the smallest detail ... as if it had already happened.

WYATT

Do you think he foresaw this? The two of us, lost without a hope while some maniac does God-knows-what to his only daughter --

Wyatt cuts himself off -- sees something. He spurs his horse forward. Dangling at eye level, we find --

CURLEY'S FLASK. Strapped to a low-hanging limb.

WYATT

Curley.

A look passes between Wyatt and Doc: *it suddenly becomes clear why Curley allowed himself to be captured.*

Wyatt and Doc RIDE ON with a renewed spirit. Holliday snatches the flask from the tree limb in passing --

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Curley and the prisoners are forced to their knees, facing the DARKNESS of the OPEN MINE SHAFT. Some cower, some pray. From the darkness, FOOTSTEPS APPROACH --

The Banshees grin, revealing MOUTHS of SHARPENED TEETH, filed down to points; they're SHAKING and SHRIEKING, unable to contain their excitement, as the footsteps grow louder --

WIKITO appears. He regards the prisoners with cold eyes.

WIKITO

Seven. One less than last time.

Deacon doesn't understand the Sioux language, but Wikito's disappointment is plain enough.

DEACON

They had help. Men with guns. Not
like the others.

Wikito soaks this in -- approaches the prisoners. For the first time, we hear him speak ENGLISH, surprisingly fluent --

WIKITO

Welcome to the Black Hills.
(almost professorial)
Thirteen years ago, agents of your
government signed a treaty at Fort
Laramie -- a treaty that recognized
these Hills as the sovereign
territory of my people. For years,
there was peace ... until your
General Custer led an expedition
into the Hills and discovered this.

Wikito produces a HANDFUL of GOLD NUGGETS, pulled fresh from the earth. They glitter and shine in his palm. He starts PELTING the prisoners with the gold, punctuating his speech --

WIKITO

This is why you have come. This is
why you have stolen our land --
killed our children -- burned our
villages -- raped our women. This
is why you dig. Now, you dig for
me. If you are obedient, you will
be allowed to leave. Rich men. I
care nothing for the gold ... you
can take as much as you want.

Most of the prisoners remain terrified, but a GLIMMER OF GREEDY INTEREST shines in the eyes of a few. Wikito takes note of this -- then his tone darkens --

WIKITO

But if you cross me. If you try to
escape, or warn the settlements ...
you will be punished.

Wikito nods off-screen, and a MAN is DRAGGED FORWARD by a pair of guards -- his arms and legs TIGHTLY BOUND.

(We're starting to see how Wikito's system works. His guards are former captives who have agreed to voluntarily serve in exchange for gold. Others are Natives loyal to Wikito who have become addicted to his powerful "medicines" -- which regresses them to their basest animal instincts.)

IN THE HILLS, Wyatt and Doc approach, taking cover behind a boulder, spying on the scene below. They check their weapons, preparing for a fight.

BELOW, Wikito indicates the condemned --

WIKITO

Does anyone know this man?

A beat -- then one of the prisoners, a FRIGHTENED WOMAN, nods. The Condemned Man recognizes her --

CONDEMNED MAN

Sharon -- Sharon, no --

Deacon CLUBS the Condemned Man, silencing him. SHARON finds her courage -- looks up at Wikito --

SHARON

He's my husband ... been missin' for almost a month.

WIKITO

Your husband was disobedient. He tried to escape.

Sharon starts to sob --

SHARON

We have three children ... he was just tryin' to get back to us. Please ... please, show mercy.

Wikito leans close to the woman -- intense --

WIKITO

Were my people shown mercy when they were taken from their homes? Marched west in the dead of winter with no food, no supplies? I was the Shaman -- the healer. Every day, the tribe looked to me for help ... every day, the mothers came to me with their babies. Do you know how many died in my arms?

Sharon is affected by the story despite herself --

SHARON

I'm sorry ... I can't imagine what
you've suffered ...

WIKITO

Soon, you will not need to imagine.
Our pain will be yours.

Wikito nods to Deacon, who KICKS the Condemned Man onto his back. Sharon starts to SCREAM, but is quickly gagged.

IN THE HILLS, Wyatt sees what's happening; he instinctively reaches for his six-shooter, but Doc grabs his arm --

HOLLIDAY

Wait. Look --

He indicates -- SENTRIES are positioned on the ridge, overlooking the canyon floor, rifles at the ready.

Wyatt curses under his breath -- stows his revolver --

BELOW, Deacon gleefully empties a CANTEEN of DARK LIQUID into the Condemned Man's mouth --

DEACON

Bottoms up, *pardner*.

The Banshees are LAUGHING, SHRIEKING, their SHARPENED TEETH bared, eager to be turned loose.

Deacon moves away from the Condemned Man as he CONVULSES on the ground, WRITHING under the effects of the tonic.

THE CONDEMNED MAN'S POV: the landscape is SHIFTING, the sky going DARK, BLEEDING into the ground; the SHRIEKING of the Banshees takes on an almost DEMONIC QUALITY.

CONDEMNED MAN

What did you -- what did you do?
What did you do!? SHARON!

Sharon tries to cry out through her gag, to no avail.

Finally, Wikito nods to the Banshees. They LUNGE FORWARD, shoving over each other, surrounding the Condemned Man --

THE CONDEMNED MAN'S POV: the faces of the Banshees, already far from pretty, become GENUINELY MONSTROUS, their bones DISTORTING and EXTENDING within their skin.

The Condemned Man has time for one SOUL-CURDLING SCREAM before the Banshees LAY INTO HIM, ravenous.

IN THE HILLS, Wyatt and Doc stare down at the gruesome scene -- unable to look, unable to look away --

HOLLIDAY

Cannibals ... Christ, Wyatt, they're a bunch of cannibals.

Wyatt grips his gun tight.

HOLLIDAY

What was it Curley said? About crimes so unspeakable ...

BELOW, Deacon FIRES into the air and the Banshees SCATTER, mouths caked with blood. Sharon is white as a ghost, staring vacantly at her husband's remains as he's CARRIED AWAY.

Guards escort the prisoners into the mines. One of them glares at Deacon and HISSES --

PRISONER

Paul Deacon, you should be ashamed. Throwin' your lot in with them. I knew your father!

DEACON

So did I. Good man. Died poor as I recall. Move it along!

Curley is the last to go; he meets eyes with Wikito in passing -- a GLIMMER OF RECOGNITION between the two, before Curley disappears into the darkness of the mines. Deacon notices Wikito's distant expression --

DEACON

What's wrong, Boss?

WIKITO

(in Sioux)

A ghost from my past.

Deacon shakes his head, mutters to himself as he follows the others inside --

DEACON

Don't know how many times I have to say it, I don't speak fuckin' Injun.

INT. GOLD MINE - MAIN CAVERN - DAY

The slaves work under BACKBREAKING CONDITIONS -- in some cases literally -- hauling rocks from a series of NARROW TUNNELS that branch through the mesa like an ant-farm.

VOICE (O.C.)

CLEAR!

A DYNAMITE EXPLOSION ROCKS THE CHAMBER --

DEBRIS FLIES in all directions, blinding prisoners who fail to get out of the way in time.

MOMENTS LATER, a slave clambers down into the CRATER. We recognize him as the Choirboy, taken from the church. He starts to dig, removing debris with his bare hands --

A GENTLE BREEZE WHIPS at the boy's face. For a moment, he just enjoys it ... then -- *'what the hell, where's that wind coming from?'* -- he paws at the dirt --

LATER

A SMALL CROWD has gathered. Deacon shoves his way through to see what all the fuss is about. He FIRES HIS PISTOL, scattering the workers. They part to REVEAL --

An OPENING has been discovered, barely large enough to fit a mouse, snaking DEEPER UNDERGROUND. Wind wisps from below.

LATER STILL

The opening has been BLASTED WIDER, all of the slaves now focused squarely on this one task. Deacon returns with Wikito -- workers shrink from the Shaman as he passes --

Wikito sees the opening. Hiding his excitement well. He nods--

WIKITO

Bring the girl.

DEACON

(re: the prisoners, sotto
voice)

What about them?

Wikito shrugs, he could care less --

WIKITO

Leave no trace.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - DAY

Slaves are forced out into BLINDING SUNLIGHT -- all under armed guard, marched in a two-line formation.

A Mexican Guard named RICO unlocks a WOODEN GATE that leads to a NARROW ENCLOSURE -- a cave/cell, blasted from the side of the mountain. Prisoners are CRAMMED INSIDE, one by one.

EXT. CANYON RIM - RIDGE - DAY

A PAIR OF SENTRIES keep watch from an elevated position, rifles aimed down, ready to fire if any of the prisoners get out of line. A NOISE FROM BEHIND, and they TURN --

-- as a PAIR OF FISTS fly at their faces --

BELOW

A TRICKLE OF DIRT lands on Rico's shoulder, the only sign of the scuffle up above. He tilts his head back, peering up ... but sees nothing. He SHOVES a straggler through the gate.

ABOVE

The prone bodies of the sentries are DRAGGED AWAY as Wyatt and Doc take their place on the ridge. They peer down -- just as the last of the prisoners is forced inside the enclosure.

HOLLIDAY

What's your play, Wyatt?

WYATT

Whatever that Shaman's lookin' for,
I think he found it.

HOLLIDAY

I'm guessin' that won't work out
too well for your girlfriend.

WYATT

I'm guessin' it won't work out too
well for them either.

Off Doc's look, Wyatt indicates --

DYNAMITE, packed along the rim of the canyon, near the top of the gated enclosure. The slaves will be buried alive.

A moment of decision -- Wyatt and Doc read each other's minds -- they both nod simultaneously --

WYATT/HOLLIDAY

Split up.

INT. AIYANA'S CELL - DAY

Aiyana hears SOUNDS OF COMMOTION outside her cell. The door opens and Deacon enters, flanked by guards.

Deacon nods to his men and they move to grab Aiyana; she SQUIRMS AWAY, dives into the corner, and PRETENDS TO CRY. Deacon just rolls his eyes, goes after her --

DEACON

C'mon, for Christ's sake ... I
thought you people were supposed to
be tough.

CLOSE ON AIYANA, removing a SECRET PANEL -- beneath is a
small, hand-dug crevice, and inside -- her six-shooter --

Aiyana tucks the gun under her shirt, wiping away crocodile
tears as Deacon HAULS HER to her feet --

INT. MAIN CAVERN - DAY

ANOTHER EXPLOSION, and more rocks fall away, exposing the
ENTRANCE of a TUNNEL, sloping down into darkness.

Wikito steps through dust -- behind him, Aiyana is restrained
by Deacon -- a HALF-DOZEN ARMED GUARDS tagging along for good
measure. Wikito nods --

WIKITO

Keep close. Stay together.

They move forward. PULL BACK to REVEAL --

WYATT. Crouched behind a boulder, watching from shadows as
Aiyana is forced into the tunnel with the others. For a
moment, he's caught up staring at her; he has to admit --

WYATT

She looks good.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Torchlight illuminates a NARROW PATH. ON THE WALLS, rough
carvings of DEMI-GODS have been scrawled -- half-man, half-
animal aberrations, blurring the line between man and beast.

Some of the drawings are truly grotesque, but from the tears
in Wikito's eyes, he finds them beautiful.

AIYANA

(re: the drawings)

People have been down here before?

WIKITO

*Not for hundreds of years. This was
a sacred temple for worshippers of
yee naaldlooshi. A fitting place
for them to hide the final piece.*

AIYANA

The final piece of what?

Wikito just smiles as if to say: 'you'll see'.

INT. SUBTERRANEAN TEMPLE - DAY

The tunnel opens to a CAVERNOUS CHAMBER -- an UNDERGROUND CATHEDRAL, the roof supported by MASSIVE STONE COLUMNS. But it's not the columns that grab our attention --

It's the SKELETONS. ROWS OF DECOMPOSED HUMAN REMAINS, gathered in a semi-circle before a PEDESTAL in the EXACT CENTER of the temple. And on the pedestal --

THE SKULL OF YEE NAALDLOOSHI.

Its features are humanoid, but not quite human. Possibly EARLY MAN, or SIMIAN, or something else entirely. A few TEETH remain -- it's clear there are meant to be several rows of them. Reminiscent of the demi-gods in the tunnel.

The convoy is fixed on the skeletal remains --

DEACON

(kicks the bones)

Poor devils. Must've been trapped down here.

WIKITO

No. Willingly sealed. Your priests would call them acolytes or martyrs. Willing to sacrifice their lives as an offering, to maintain the balance of the spirit world.

AIYANA

They were *witkotkoke*.

Wikito approaches Aiyana. She's held in place by a PAIR OF GUARDS as Wikito produces his KNIFE --

WIKITO

No. They were believers.

Wikito SLICES Aiyana's arm, deeper than before. She gasps, tears squeezed from her firmly-shut eyes.

WIKITO

Soon, you will be, too.

FROM HIDING, Wyatt grips his gun; he has to bite his tongue to keep from crying out in anger.

ON WIKITO -- his hands BATHED in AIYANA'S BLOOD. He steps past the acolytes, ascending the pedestal.

An air of hushed anticipation, all eyes fixed forward ...

... which gives Wyatt a chance to sneak up from behind, his bandana pulled low over his mouth, bandit-style.

Wikito whispers, seeming to speak directly to the SKULL --

WIKITO

I am your vessel. Your servant.

(pleading)

Guide me.

Wikito reaches out with BLOODY HANDS and LIFTS THE SKULL. Immediately, a JUXTAPOSITION OF IMAGES FLASH BEFORE US, reflected in Wikito's GLASSY STARE --

A harsh and blood-covered landscape, TWO STONE PILLARS reaching up into the sky, seen from a distance.

A STORM BREWS over the RUINS of an ANCIENT CLIFF DWELLING.

A CREATURE, silhouetted by a moon -- RED EYES GLEAMING, rows of JAGGED TEETH dripping with BLOOD, only faintly glimpsed.

With some effort, Wikito PRIES HIS HANDS from the skull --

The skull drops, tap-tap-tapping down the stairway, landing at Aiyana's feet. She curiously lifts it -- notes the TWO BLOODY HAND-PRINTS on the sides. Her blood.

Wyatt comes up from behind and CLAMPS a hand across Aiyana's mouth, stifling a scream. She turns -- sees Wyatt --

Instant recognition. He puts a finger to his bandana-covered mouth -- 'shhh' -- then guides her out the way they came --

ON THE GUARDS, helping Wikito to his feet --

DEACON

Jesus Mary and Joseph! You all right, Boss? What happened?

WIKITO

(in Sioux)

The dwelling of the ancient pueblo peoples. That is where we must go.

DEACON

(still doesn't speak
Sioux)

Yeah. Sure. Whatever.

ON WYATT AND AIYANA, almost through the chamber, when --

CRUNCH. They look down --

The bones of an acolyte are broken beneath their feet. *Shit.*

For a moment, everyone in the chamber turns and stares ...

Then, GUNS COME OUT and Deacon's men OPEN FIRE, bullets CHASING Wyatt and Aiyana as they DIVE FOR COVER behind one of the columns. Wikito reaches for the guns --

WIKITO

No! Idiots! We need her alive!

Deacon considers his options -- calls out to Wyatt --

DEACON

You here for the gold, stranger?

WYATT (O.C.)

Nope! Here for the girl!

Deacon glances to Wikito, who shakes his head: *he can't have her.* Deacon shrugs --

DEACON

Too bad! See, my friends and I, we are here for the gold! And this Injun's lettin' us carry it out by the wagonload! There's more'n enough to go around! Interested?

ON WYATT, re-loading, pretending to consider --

WYATT

Well, that's a real smart offer!
Tell ya what ... why don't you
gimme the night to think it over.

Aiyana reaches out, tugs down the bandana to reveal the rest of Wyatt's face. A frozen moment between them.

WYATT

(soft)
Hi.

AIYANA

(soft)
Hi.

Still looking at Aiyana, Wyatt calls out to Deacon --

WYATT

On second thought ... no deal,
pardner!

As one, Wyatt and Aiyana BREAK COVER and OPEN FIRE with MATCHING REVOLVERS, scattering Deacon's men -- they weren't expecting more than one shooter --

Wyatt and Aiyana retreat to the NEXT COLUMN, closer to the exit -- stopping to re-load and re-group --

ON DEACON, realizing that Wyatt means business; he signals to his men and they FAN OUT, flanking the column. *It's on.*

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - DAY

Rico LIGHTS THE FUSE, which trails up the canyon wall, towards the dynamite -- all in plain view of the PRISONERS, who start SCREAMING and CRYING and RATTLING THE BARS OF THEIR CELL, to no avail. They're going to die.

Suddenly, a WHISTLE FROM BEHIND and Rico spins -- DOC HOLLIDAY stands there, making no effort to conceal himself --

HOLLIDAY

'Scuse me, sirs, sorry to bother you. I'm from the Labor Department. Hopin' I might ask you a few questions about the working conditions in these here mines.

A moment of shocked silence -- then --

RICO

CONSEGUIRLO!

GUARDS CHARGE DOC -- he just smiles -- KICKS a load of GOLD INGOTS off a camouflaged ORE LIFT --

The ore lift RISES, carrying Doc to safety -- as the counterweight DROPS, CRUSHING the advancing guards.

Holliday LEAPS from the lift onto the scaffolding, as guards below OPEN FIRE --

Doc clambers up onto the rim of the canyon; he makes for the dynamite, dodging gunfire all the way, as the fuse line trails down to the apocalypse.

BELOW, prisoners CHEER DOC ON. *Their savior!*

ON THE RIM, Doc reaches the dynamite and takes cover. The fuse line gives him maybe ten seconds to think --

DOWN BELOW, guards are scrambling up the scaffolding, nearing the top. Holliday TOSSES the SPARKING DYNAMITE -- it lands at the base of the scaffolding, and --

KA-BOOOOOOMMMMMMMMM! The EXPLOSION obliterates the structure, sending the scaffolding CRASHING TO THE GROUND, taking the guards with it.

PRISONERS CHEER, ecstatic, as Doc LEAPS OFF THE RIM, grabs a rope, and slides gracefully down to the canyon floor.

He smiles at the destruction he's caused ... but his smile fades, as a HALF-DOZEN REMAINING GUARDS emerge from the cloud of debris, including Rico ... looking pissed.

HOLLIDAY

So. About those working conditions.

GUARDS CHARGE and Doc TURNS TAIL and RUNS --

INT. GOLD MINE - CROSSROADS - DAY

The cavern BRANCHES OFF in SEVERAL DIRECTIONS. Doc looks between the different paths. *Which way to go?*

MOMENTS LATER

Rico and the guards arrive at the same crossroads. Rico pulls up short -- shushes the guards -- listening --

RICO

Esta manera!

They charge off down one of the paths, their footsteps receding into silence ... then Doc DROPS DOWN from above.

He starts to head back the way he came, when something catches his eye from an adjacent room. He pokes his head around the corner and sees --

WIKITO'S ARSENAL

Cases of AMMO, barrels of GUNPOWDER, rifles and pistols and canons, literally filling the chamber. Holliday takes in the sight ... and SMILES. *He's a kid in a candy shop.*

INT. SUBTERRANEAN TEMPLE - DAY

GUNFIRE ERUPTS FROM ALL DIRECTIONS --

Wyatt and Aiyana hold their own, but they're still THREE COLUMNS back from the exit -- still COMPLETELY OUTNUMBERED and soon to be COMPLETELY SURROUNDED.

BANGBANGBANG--*click*. They share a desperate look --

WYATT

We got anything else?

Aiyana holds up the skull --

AIYANA
We have this.

ON DEACON, signalling his men; they MOVE IN -- slowly, cautiously, ready for anything. Wikito paces the perimeter of the gunfight like a lion.

And then -- THE SKULL APPEARS. For a moment, it seems to be peeking around the column of its own accord. Almost comical.

Wikito and the others just stare. *What the hell?*

Then, Wyatt steps out into the open, holding his gun to the temple of the skull, as if it were a living, breathing hostage.

The look on Wyatt's face says he's not sure this is going to work ... but then, he sees the look on Wikito's face, and he knows it will. Smug triumphalism sets in -- Wyatt grins --

WYATT
Well well. Looks like someone
doesn't want me to put a bullet
through his little dead friend
here.

Wikito just scowls at Wyatt and Aiyana as they back up to the tunnel, holding the guards at bay with their "hostage". Wyatt can't help but get in one last shot --

WYATT
I'm sorry, Wikito. It is Wikito,
isn't it?
(re: the skull, mock
somber)
I don't think he's going to make
it.

With that, Wyatt disappears into the tunnel. Through it all, Wikito has remained COMPLETELY MOTIONLESS; his voice escapes a strained, angry whisper --

WIKITO
Bring me the skull ... or yours
takes its place.

Deacon gets the picture; he leads a charge of men after Wyatt and Aiyana, muttering as he goes --

DEACON
Now the bastard speaks English.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - GATED ENCLOSURE - DAY

A SMALL GUNPOWDER EXPLOSION BLASTS the lock off the cell door and a WAVE OF PRISONERS SWARMS PAST, running for freedom. Holliday passes out rifles to every man, woman and child --

HOLLIDAY

Hurry. Head for the Hills, get the children to safety.

Curley emerges from the cell. Holliday takes the opportunity to give him back his flask -- along with a rifle --

CURLEY

I had a feeling you would come.

HOLLIDAY

Yeah? One of them Indian premonitions?

CURLEY

Sure. Where's Wyatt?

Doc is already running back inside the mine --

HOLLIDAY

Where'd'ya think? Playin' Cowboys and Indians! Get those horses ready!

INT. GOLD MINE - TUNNELS - DAY

Wyatt and Aiyana twist through the maze, running full-tilt, Aiyana still gripping the skinwalker skull. Aiyana suddenly GRABS WYATT, pulls him up short --

The ground VANISHES at their feet, falling off into darkness. Aiyana has seen this pit before. She pulls a torch from the wall, throws it down, illuminating --

THE BANSHEES. They SHRIEK. And SCREAM.

WYATT

What in the hell are they?

AIYANA

Tribesmen faithful to Wikito. He makes them drink his tonic ... it makes them think they're beasts.

SOUNDS OF PURSUIT echo from the tunnels. Wyatt and Aiyana are trapped, and the Banshees just keep SHRIEKING, giving away their position.

WYATT

Is there any way to shut them up?

AIYANA

Yes. We wait for the light to go down. Or ...

WYATT

... or?

AIYANA

We feed them.

Not the answer Wyatt was hoping to hear.

MOMENTS LATER

A ladder has been stretched across the pit like a makeshift bridge. Wyatt and Aiyana crawl across; the rungs CREAK under their weight.

WYATT

You're doin' great, Aiyana. Just don't look down.

AIYANA

Don't tell me not to look --

THE RUNG SNAPS BENEATH AIYANA AND SHE FALLS SCREAMING --

-- but grabs onto the next rung, now dangling by her fingertips over a HUNDRED SCREAMING BANSHEES. Wyatt reaches --

WYATT

Grab my hand!

Deacon and his men arrive at the edge of the crevasse. Deacon takes in the situation -- smiles -- then KICKS OUT THE LADDER. It starts to fall --

-- but Doc arrives on the far side of the pit, grabbing hold of the ladder JUST IN TIME; it SLAMS against the wall beneath him, now reaching VERTICALLY down into the crevasse.

Wyatt and Aiyana look up -- still clinging to the ladder --

WYATT

Doc! That's the second time this week I've been happy to see you!

HOLLIDAY

Feeling's mutual!
(re: Deacon's men)
Those friends of yours?

DEACON
OPEN FIRE!

Deacon and his men LET FLY.

HOLLIDAY
... guess not.

Holliday RETURNS FIRE with his one free arm, bullets WHIZZING across the pit as Wyatt and Aiyana CLIMB --

BELOW, the Banshees pile on top of one another, forming a PYRAMID. The top one GRABS HOLD OF THE LOWEST RUNG, and starts to CLIMB, preternatural, ravenous. A race to the top.

Wyatt and Aiyana get there first, crawling over Doc to safety -- but just before Holliday can let go of the ladder, a BANSHEE GRABS HIS WRISTS, SHRIEKING, SHARPENED TEETH BARED.

DOC SCREAMS LIKE A GIRL --

-- and suddenly, out of nowhere, the Banshee falls silent.

Doc peeks one eye open, realizing he's still alive. He glances down, notices --

The necklace has come loose under his shirt, the ARROWHEAD clearly visible. The Banshee stares at the arrowhead, terrified; he relaxes his grip on Doc's wrists. Doc smiles --

-- then DROPS the ladder. The Banshee SHRIEKS, flailing back down into the darkness of the pit.

Deacon and his men OPEN FIRE, as Wyatt, Doc and Aiyana make a run for it, bullets PINGING off the walls around them.

WYATT
When we get outta here, you and I
are gonna have a talk about that
goddamn necklace.

HOLLIDAY
Yeah ...
(re: Aiyana)
She looks great.

EXT. CANYON FLOOR - MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Curley waits on his horse, two more tethered nearby -- we recognize Georgie via his signature eyepatch. Suddenly, Curley smiles as he sees --

Wyatt, Doc and Aiyana, racing out of the mine. They leap astride their horses -- Wyatt and Aiyana sharing one.

Curley notices that Aiyana is carrying the skinwalker skull --

CURLEY

Where did you get that?

WYATT

Tell ya later, Curley. *Hyah!*

They RIDE OFF -- and then, Curley sees why they're in such a hurry. He SPURS his horse after them -- as HUNDREDS OF WIKITO'S FORCES come CHARGING out of the mines.

DEACON

Grab the horses, boys, get after 'em!

Deacon's men start to give chase, when GUNFIRE ERUPTS FROM THE HILLS, scattering the men, forcing them back into cover --

The freed slaves are FIGHTING BACK from the woods, armed to the teeth with the weapons Holliday gave them!

WIKITO emerges from his men as they engage the settlers; he strides fearlessly through gunfire, every shot miraculously seeming to miss him by inches. He stares off --

Wyatt, Doc, Curley and Aiyana recede into the horizon, vanishing in a cloud of their own dust. GONE.

Strangely, Wikito smiles. He turns back to the mines, oblivious to the battle -- he whispers to Deacon in passing --

From Deacon's reaction, he's surprised by the order ... but shrugs, signals his men to BREAK OFF THE ATTACK --

IN THE HILLS, the settlers take turns FIRING and RE-LOADING. Suddenly, the Choirboy STANDS and POINTS --

CHOIRBOY

They're turnin' away!

Indeed, Wikito's forces are in OPEN RETREAT, stowing their weapons, scattering back into the safety of the mines.

A CHEER RISES FROM THE SETTLERS, celebrating their newfound freedom, hugs and backslaps all around. The Choirboy stares after Wyatt and Doc ... *who were those guys?*

EXT. DAKOTA PLAINS - DAY

Our heroic foursome get their TRIUMPHANT MONEY SHOT, riding hard for the western horizon, towards the setting sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BLACK HILLS - GOLD STRIKE - DAY

Hours later. A BOX of GOLD ORE is loaded into a COVERED WAGON under Deacon's supervision. A SECOND WAGON is located nearby, already filled with gold. From the mines, Wikito approaches, stepping over DEAD BODIES. Deacon takes off his hat --

DEACON

The prisoners took off into the Hills, Boss. I sent my boys after 'em, but ... they're gone.

WIKITO

Let them go. They have served their purpose.

DEACON

... and us?

Wikito stares hard at Deacon, looking into his soul. Deacon loosens his collar, withering under the Shaman's gaze --

DEACON

Well, look, I mean -- I'm sorry you lost your skull, but -- a deal's a deal, right?

Wikito regards Deacon's men -- all gathered around, hands on their weapons, expecting a fight.

Wikito extends a hand. Deacon stares at it, uneasy ... then SHAKES IT. Wikito smiles, baring his teeth. Deacon returns the smile, trying to be polite, but he's kind of freaked out.

DEACON

Y'know, it's not entirely true what folks say about you. You're not all bad.

WIKITO

Your horse is free.

Deacon shakes his head, he doesn't understand.

DEACON

Is that an -- old Indian saying? Same to you, I guess.

Wikito points over Deacon's shoulder --

WIKITO

Your horse is free.

Deacon turns, sees --

The SECOND WAGON OF GOLD is MOVING AWAY, heading back into the mines. Deacon and his men chase after it, SHOUTING OBSCENITIES as they vanish into the cavern.

Wikito starts to walk away. He nods --

WIKITO
A deal is a deal.

Suddenly, behind him --

A CATAclysmic EXPLOSION TEARS OPEN THE RIM OF THE CANYON, sending an AVALANCHE OF DEBRIS SLAMMING DOWN OVER THE ENTRANCE TO THE MINE, sealing it like a tomb.

Wikito doesn't even flinch; he mounts the remaining wagon, SLAPS the reins, and drives off with the gold. *He's got other plans for it.*

We linger behind -- sounds of the avalanche settle, and we're left with the ANGUISHED CRIES of the men trapped inside -- and the SHRIEKS of the BANSHEES, trapped in there with them.

EXT. YELLOWSTONE RIVER - DAY

Wyatt, Doc, Curley and Aiyana crest a hill that overlooks a calm stretch of the Yellowstone River, nestled beneath a low mist in the Hayden Valley. Picturesque is an understatement.

HOLLIDAY
This is the place?

WYATT
Yep.
(scanning the area)
... Sheridan's men should be here by now.

HOLLIDAY
Got held up, maybe?

WYATT
Maybe.

From his tone, he doubts it. The empty spaces hold the promise of danger ... but Wyatt nods --

WYATT
We'll make camp for the night. No fire. No signal.

Curley nods, rides for the river. Aiyana winces, favoring her wounded arm as she dismounts. Wyatt notices with concern, indicates: *'let me look at it'*. She smiles -- lets him --

EXT. YELLOWSTONE RIVER - CAMPSITE - DAY

LATER. Doc playfully runs from Curley, holding his pipe out of reach. IN THE DISTANCE, Wyatt and Aiyana are seated by the river, Wyatt wrapping Aiyana's wound. After a moment:

AIYANA

Wyatt.

WYATT

Yeah.

AIYANA

Where's Josephine?

Wyatt is surprised by the question, but plays it off with a shrug -- staying focused on Aiyana's arm --

WYATT

Colorado.

No more information is forthcoming.

AIYANA

Wyatt.

WYATT

(terse)

Yeah.

AIYANA

Why aren't you in Colorado?

Wyatt looks up to meet Aiyana's stare. Steady, unwavering. She clearly isn't going to drop the subject. He looks away, out over the river --

WYATT

When I left, she told me ... come back a peaceful man, or don't come back at all. I tried to remember the last time I felt that way. Peaceful inside. Had to reach back.

AIYANA

How far back?

WYATT

Back. When there wasn't anything but me standin' between the good people and chaos. Lawlessness.

(he shakes his head)

World's moved on, I guess.

Wyatt is silenced as Aiyana lays her hand on top of his.

AIYANA

That was really the last time? The
last time you felt peaceful?

Looking into her eyes, Wyatt can't help but smile.

WYATT

Almost.

They lean in to kiss. Suddenly, a DISTANT CRY --

CURLEY (O.C.)

Wyatt!

There's real fear in Curley's voice. Wyatt and Aiyana RUN --

AT THE CAMPSITE

Holliday CONVULSES, skin pale, blood on his mouth. Curley crouches over him as Wyatt and Aiyana approach --

CURLEY

He just fell. One minute, he was
running, and then --

WYATT

Tuberculosis.

(off Curley's look)

Had it for years. Go make a fire.
Now!

Holliday manages a smile through obvious pain --

HOLLIDAY

N-now, Wyatt, I th-thought that was
our little s-secret ...

WYATT

Cat's outta the bag, Doc. C'mon ...

Wyatt and Aiyana help Doc up, his arms tossed around their shoulders. Suddenly, Doc glances down and realizes -- uh-oh --

HOLLIDAY

I--I dropped somethin' ...

WYATT

Don't worry about it.

SHEER PANIC in Holliday's eyes. He glances back to where he fell -- sees the necklace lying in the dirt --

HOLLIDAY
No, I-I need it, I --

WYATT
-- let's get you warm --

HOLLIDAY
NO!

Holliday violently SHAKES LOOSE, runs back to the necklace, and COLLAPSES on top of it. He CLUTCHES the arrowhead to his chest as Wyatt and Aiyana lift him to his feet.

HOLLIDAY
It's okay ... I g-got it ...

A concerned look passes between Wyatt and Aiyana as they haul Holliday over to the tents.

EXT. YELLOWSTONE RIVER - CAMPSITE - ESTABLISHING - NIGHT

A FIRE burns beside the MOONLIT RIVER under a SEA OF STARS.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Holliday's condition has improved -- he's still shivering, still clutching the necklace, but at least some color has returned to his face. Wyatt sits by his side --

WYATT
I wish you would've said something
... I never would've let you ride
with me.

HOLLIDAY
That's why I didn't say anything.
Couldn't let you have all the fun.
Besides ...
(he smiles faintly)
Just about my favorite thing in the
world is the look you get when you
have a plan. Plan for what, I
dunno. Hardly ever do. Satisfy the
hunger, I guess. But every time,
boy, it's a sight to see.

WYATT
Hunger?

HOLLIDAY
Yep.

WYATT
What'm I supposed to be hungry for?

Holliday looks at Wyatt like: *you don't know this?*

HOLLIDAY

Blood. You're a predator, Wyatt.
But you never feed on the
righteous, I admire you for that.

(beat)

Still ... that's a different matter
altogether from bein' righteous,
isn't it.

WYATT

Yes, it is.

Holliday COUGHS. Wyatt's gaze drifts to the necklace ...

WYATT

You really think they can help you?
These ... medicine men?

HOLLIDAY

Algonquian medicine men.

WYATT

(whatever)

You think they can cure you?

HOLLIDAY

... I dunno.

(he smiles)

Nice to have a plan, though.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Wyatt emerges from Doc's tent, eyes full of worry.

IN THE DISTANCE, Curley is SINGING, his silhouette framed by
the river, which shimmers in the full moonlight.

AIYANA

He prays to *Wakan Tanka* for the
health of your friend.

We find AIYANA, sitting by the fire. Wyatt takes a seat by
her side --

WYATT

I thought they hated each other.

For a moment, they sit in silence, listening to Curley sing.

Wyatt notices the SKINWALKER SKULL lying nearby. He regards
it thoughtfully, meeting its hollow gaze, like Hamlet. Aiyana
notices his expression with concern --

AIYANA
What's wrong, Wyatt?

He isn't sure if he should say anything ... but he has to --

WYATT
When we were prisoners, your father
said Doc and I had some purpose
we'd yet to fulfill.
(re: the skull)
Was this that purpose? Stopping
some rogue Shaman from stealing a
worthless old skull?

It's Aiyana's turn not to be sure if she should say anything
... but she also has to --

AIYANA
There is no purpose. I told my
father the Great Spirit had come to
me ... I told him it demanded your
release. He would've killed you
otherwise.

WYATT
... you lied?

AIYANA
I did what I had to.

WYATT
Had to?

AIYANA
To save the man I loved.

A long pause ... this might be the first time either of them
has announced their love for the other.

WYATT
Oh. Well, I guess ... that makes us
square, then. You saved my life, I
saved yours.

AIYANA
Yes. Square.

A smile passes between them and they KISS ... drifting down
to the fire, as Curley's song comes to an end ...

FADE TO BLACK.

GLARING SUNLIGHT, blocked by a MAN, leaning down into frame --
COLONEL SHERIDAN --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Now isn't this sweet. I might just
start bawlin'.

WHAT HE SEES: Wyatt and Aiyana, curled up by the remains of
the fire, in each other's arms. We are --

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

The cavalry has arrived, THREE DOZEN SOLDIERS in all, making
themselves at home; they've got a breakfast fire going. No
sign of Curley or Doc. Sheridan helps Wyatt to his feet --

WYATT
You're late.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Apologies, your Grace, didn't
realize I was keepin' you.

Wyatt glances to Holliday's tent -- empty. He frowns --

WYATT
Where's Doc?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
I was hopin' you might answer the
same question. But no matter ...

Sheridan focuses on Aiyana, who shrinks from his gaze --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
... you're the real guest of honor,
Yer Highness.
(he sizes her up,
borderline lecherous)
Y'know, I hear tell you might speak
yourself a bit of English. That
true?

Aiyana glances to Wyatt, who gives her a nod: *'it's okay'*.
She nods to Sheridan, and he smiles.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Y'know what they call them, don't
you, Wyatt? Apples. Red on the
outside, white on the inside.

He laughs at his own joke, and a few soldiers join in, but
not Wyatt, and definitely not Aiyana.

AIYANA
Where is my father?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Your father, right. Well, sadly,
I'm afraid there's been a slight
change of plans.

Suddenly, from across camp, SOUNDS OF COMMOTION. Curley has been restrained, his arms and legs MANACLED.

Before this can sink in, RIFLES COME OUT, aimed at Wyatt. Sheridan moves to restrain Aiyana, but she FLAILS -- getting in ONE GOOD SHOT before she's overpowered.

WYATT
Sheridan, you son of a bitch! We
had a deal! You said you wouldn't
take them prisoner!

Sheridan is still wincing, recovering from Aiyana's blow --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Well, geez, Wyatt, give a man a
chance to explain. They're not my
prisoners. They're his.

A crowd of soldiers part to REVEAL --

WIKITO. He approaches Wyatt -- then immediately moves past, rummaging through Wyatt's belongings, searching.

WYATT
(putting it together)
You made a deal with him?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Technically, he made a deal with
me. Said he'd guide me to the
mother of all gold claims. In
exchange, all I had to do was
recover for him what he'd lost.
(to Wikito)
Satisfied, Chief?

Wikito finds what he was looking for -- the skinwalker skull.
He handles it carefully, as if it were a living thing.

WIKITO
Yes. Satisfied.

He starts whispering to the skull, incomprehensible.

WYATT
He's lying to you, Sheridan.
There's no gold, he's leading your
men into a trap!

On this, Wikito stops whispering. He turns to Wyatt --

WIKITO
Wasicu calls me a liar?

For a moment, the two just glare at each other, burning embers reflected in obsidian glass.

Then, Wikito moves to a COVERED WAGON; he throws off a tarp to reveal the GOLD beneath, shining in the early morning sun.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Gold never lies, Wyatt. Sorry.

This sinks in. Wyatt changes tack --

WYATT
Sheridan, please. You can't do this. Think about the treaty!

COLONEL SHERIDAN
The treaty? The treaty was a means to an end. You think I care if the government annexes this pile of rocks? All I care about is the gold ... and I couldn't've gotten it without you. You've done your country a great service.

WIKITO
Might I ask a favor, Boss?

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Boss. See, I like that.
(to Aiyana)
That is how you treat your superiors with respect.

Aiyana squirms away from him, disgusted. Wikito indicates Wyatt --

WIKITO
Let me have him. He has no further purpose.

The wording of that strikes a nerve with Wyatt.

Sheridan takes a moment to consider ... he's not crazy about the idea, but finally gives in with a shrug --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Call it a gesture of goodwill between our two cultures.

Wikito bows his thanks. A nod from Sheridan and soldiers carry Aiyana off towards the horses.

AIYANA

NO! WYATT!

WYATT

Aiyana --

He reflexively moves for her, but is CLUBBED FROM BEHIND by a GRINNING SOLDIER. Aiyana's SCREAM is cut off by a gag. Sheridan regards the fallen lawman with sympathy --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

You've led a great life, Wyatt.
Take my word for it, history's
gonna remember you -- the man who
liberated Dodge, made a stand at
Tombstone, and brought law to the
lawless frontier.

(nods)

It's a good story.

Wyatt tries to climb to his feet, woozy, vision blurred -- he spins, searching for Aiyana --

-- when Wikito BLASTS HIM with a FINE BLUE POWDER. The residue hangs in the air a moment ... before Wyatt drops to his knees, rubbing his eyes, GASPING, unable to breathe.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

... but all stories have to end
somewhere.

Sheridan turns away, leaving Wyatt and Wikito alone. Wikito circles Wyatt like a shark, his face twisted with hatred --

WIKITO

My people might be naive ... but
yours are so predictable. Their
greed enslaves them better than any
chains.

WYATT'S POV: the powder is taking effect, DISTORTING the landscape, like a more concentrated version of the Shaman's tonic. Wikito's voice is DEEP and DERANGED --

WIKITO

When I join with *yee naaldlooshi*,
they will make a fine meal.

Wikito KICKS Wyatt onto his stomach. Desperate, Wyatt PULLS HIS GUN and starts FIRING WILDLY in ALL DIRECTIONS. Every shot misses any conceivable target by a wide margin.

Wikito PUNCHES Wyatt -- the gun falls from Wyatt's grasp; he collapses a few feet from the river.

IN THE DISTANCE, Aiyana is made to watch, as Wyatt tries to stand; his pupils are FULLY DILATED, making his eyes appear ENTIRELY BLACK -- just like the Banshees before him --

Wikito retrieves Wyatt's gun -- examines it --

WIKITO

Such a simple thing. The
cornerstone of the white man's
dominance over my people. Things
will be different next time.
(he cocks the gun)
Starting now.

WIKITO SHOOTS WYATT IN THE CHEST. All sound drops out --

IN THE DISTANCE, Aiyana FLAILS WILDLY, but whatever struggles she can put up are overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

ON WYATT ... he looks down at the hole in his chest, as if surprised to find the blood blossoming across his shirt.

Wikito grins his sharpened teeth -- then SHOVES Wyatt back, into the river. He's immediately carried off by the current, disappearing from view.

Wikito notices -- Wyatt's blood stains his fingers. He licks them clean -- then makes a face -- *blech* -- and turns away, keeping Wyatt's gun as a souvenir.

WIKITO

Hunkesni.

MOMENTS LATER

The cavalry RIDES OUT, Aiyana and Curley brought along against their will. Aiyana looks back to the river, which recedes into the distance ... no sign of Wyatt. He's gone.

EXT. YELLOWSTONE RIVER - DAY

MOVING WITH WYATT, riding the current, on the edge of consciousness, clinging to a piece of driftwood. His eyes are PITCH BLACK, seeing the world like a NIGHTMARE.

Slowly, he vanishes beneath the surface --

UNDERWATER

Limbs splayed, helpless against the current, Wyatt drifts along ...

10 ... 9 ... 8 ... 7 ... 6 5 ... 4 ... 3 ... 2 ... 1 ...

TWO HANDS suddenly REACH DOWN, grab Wyatt, PULL HIM UP --

FADE TO BLACK.

DISTORTED IMAGES FLASH BEFORE US, FADING IN AND OUT --

Wyatt is laid across a table. Wrists and ankles TIED DOWN.

His shirt is TORN OPEN, revealing a GAPING BULLET WOUND.

A HORRIBLE SOUND, like a BANSHEE SHRIEK --

-- belonging to Wyatt, as he LUNGES against his restraints, ravenous, reaching for a LONE FIGURE, hovered over him --

The BUTT OF A RIFLE comes down, SLAMMING INTO FRAME. BLACK.

PLIERS dig through BLOOD, searching. They find --

A spent bullet casing. It drops into a metal pan. CLANK.

And then, the face of the figure becomes clear -- DOC HOLLIDAY, hovering over us, his voice a soothing whisper --

HOLLIDAY

It's all right, Wyatt, relax ...
relax ... I'm a doctor ...

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. LODGE - DAY

Holliday is saddling up Georgie before an isolated shack on the edge of the wilderness -- no other living soul around for miles ... except WYATT. He emerges from the shack, pale and trembling, but starting to look like himself again.

HOLLIDAY

Feelin' better?

Wyatt lightly touches his chest.

WYATT

... where'd you run off to?

HOLLIDAY

Took off in the night. My legal standing is, shall we say, less than pristine in certain parts of this fine country, and I wouldn't put it past an opportunist like Sheridan to bag himself a catch.

WYATT

Well, I appreciate what you did.

HOLLIDAY

Watched over you is all.

Finally, Doc turns to Wyatt. Genuinely curious.

HOLLIDAY

What was it like?

Wyatt is haunted by the still-fresh memory --

WYATT

I saw their faces. Every one of
'em. Every man we killed.

HOLLIDAY

Huh. How'd they look?

WYATT

(beat)
Hungry.

Wyatt's gaze settles on the horizon.

WYATT

I'm goin' after her, Doc.

Holliday isn't surprised, but he isn't pleased, either. He turns his back on Wyatt, tightening Georgie's saddle --

HOLLIDAY

I thought you said this wasn't
about the girl.

WYATT

It's not.

HOLLIDAY

Well, I've got someplace I need to
be.

Holliday climbs up onto his horse. Immediately, GEORGIE BUCKS, throwing him off; he barely misses a pool of mud. Wyatt helps him to his feet --

WYATT

I've got someplace I need you to
be. I can't do this without you.

HOLLIDAY

We already did what we said we'd
do.

(MORE)

HOLLIDAY (CONT'D)
 It's not your fault that Colonel
 turned out to be a lyin' sack of
 shit, and y'know what? It's not my
 fault either.

Again, Doc climbs up onto his horse -- and again, GEORGIE
 THROWS HIM OFF. This time, Doc lands squarely in the mud.

HOLLIDAY
 God-dammit, Georgie.

WYATT
 Curley said that Shaman needs
 Navajo blood to complete his ritual
 -- Aiyana's blood. He's gonna kill
 her, Doc. When he gets to where
 he's goin', that Shaman's gonna
 kill her. I know it.

HOLLIDAY
 So, Wyatt Earp rides to the rescue.

For some reason, Doc stays in the mud. Like he belongs there.

HOLLIDAY
 Y'think it's gonna change anything?
 Y'think you can save this girl and
 start dreamin' the dreams of the
 righteous? Doesn't work that way.

Wyatt regards Holliday, and for the first time, he realizes --

WYATT
 You see 'em, too.

HOLLIDAY
 Christ, Wyatt. I killed one of
 those boys with my bare hands.
 D'you know what that feels like? To
 feel someone's life slippin'
 through your fingers?
 (beat)
 Nineteen years old. Tops.

Holliday crawls out of the mud. Wearing it like a uniform.

HOLLIDAY
 I see the same things you do.
 Difference is, I'm smart enough to
 know they're not goin' anywhere.
 Best we can do is stay alive as
 long as possible, cause the moment
 we die, I swear to you ... we are
 goin' straight to hell.

Holliday mounts up again -- cuts off Georgie's attempt to throw him with a single harsh word --

HOLLIDAY

Don't.

Wisely, the horse doesn't.

WYATT

You really think that? You think we can't be forgiven?

HOLLIDAY

I dunno, Wyatt. Forgive yourself. Would you?

A beat -- then --

WYATT

No.

Wyatt turns away, and we STAY WITH HIM ... even as we hear the sound of HOOFBEATS, riding away, fading into silence.

EXT. OPEN RANGE - DAY

Holliday rides like he's being chased. Georgie suddenly pulls up short, SNORTING in protest: *he doesn't want to go*. Doc looks from his necklace, back to Wyatt ...

HOLLIDAY

I know, Georgie.

But he KEEPS GOING, the same direction. Leaving Wyatt behind.

EXT. DESERT CANYON - DAY

The SUN BLAZES over the CAVALRY, riding west across a harsh and unfriendly terrain. Faces are sweaty and disgruntled -- all except Wikito's; his eyes remain fixed in the direction of his destination. Stoic, confident.

AHEAD, two STONE COLUMNS reach into the sky, IDENTICAL to the columns glimpsed in Wikito's vision. He smiles.

Sheridan pulls up at the entrance to a NARROW GAP -- a dry riverbed forged between the two columns. He shakes his head --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

No good. We'll go around.

WIKITO

Excuse me, Boss. If we go around, we lose a day's ride.

(MORE)

WIKITO (CONT'D)

There are others besides myself who know of the treasure. It could all be gone by the time we get there.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

I can't help but notice, you still haven't told me where we're going.

In response, Wikito points into the canyon: *through here*.

Sheridan doesn't like it, but the promise of gold glitters in his eyes, and he SPURS his horse forward.

EXT. CANYON - DAY

The cavalry passes through the BLOOD-RED CANYON, nervously scanning the STEEP RIDGES that block them in on either side.

MOVEMENT IN THE FOREGROUND, shapes tracking the cavalry, crawling along the top of the ridge. They're being watched.

ROCKS TRICKLE DOWN the ridge and a SOLDIER spins, panicked, taking aim at -- nothing. Just a pile of rocks. He rides on -- and a NATIVE WARRIOR emerges from PERFECT CAMOUFLAGE, exactly where the soldier's gun was just pointed moments ago.

ON WIKITO, the only one of the group who isn't afraid --

CURLEY

I know what you are.

Wikito notices that Curley is riding alongside him.

WIKITO

I am yee naaldlooshi. The shapeshifter. The beast.

CURLEY

No. You are a fake. You have no powers here.

WIKITO

The kiwasicu who guides the white man calls me a fake?

Wikito contemptibly regards Curley's uniform, his Army-issue jacket and boots.

WIKITO

Tell me, Curley. Do you think, because you wear their boots and ride their horses, that you are one of them?

(he smiles)

(MORE)

WIKITO (CONT'D)
*You are the pride of no one. The
 friend of no one. You have chosen
 the wrong path.*

Curley's expression is calm, but inside, he's coiled tight
 ... worried there might be some truth to Wikito's words.

Sheridan's horse suddenly WHINNIES and BUCKS. One by one,
 other horses follow suit, sensing danger on the ridge.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 Goddammit, there's somethin' up
 there. We're bein' followed.

WIKITO
 Yes.
 (eyeing the ridge)
 They guard the treasure of the
 ancient dwelling. Before you claim
 it, there is a fight to be had.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 Good to know. What do we do?

Wikito looks to Sheridan: *isn't it obvious?*

WIKITO
 We ride.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

BLOOD ON THE MOON as a LUNAR ECLIPSE plunges the desert into
 TOTAL BLACKNESS, punctuated only by DISTANT FLASHES of
 LIGHTNING, a storm on the horizon.

But still, the cavalry rides on --

Shooting through the dead of night, their torches providing
 only scarce relief against the CONSUMING DARKNESS.

Wikito abruptly dismounts, scouting the path ahead -- a FLASH
 OF LIGHTNING illuminates the OUTLINE of a TOWERING MESA,
 right in front of him. He nods --

WIKITO
 We're here.

Sheridan peers into the inky darkness.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
 Here? We're nowhere!

He's had enough; he draws his pistol, aims it at the back of
 Wikito's head --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Where's the gold, you lying savage?

WIKITO
Give me your torch.

Awkward stares. One of the soldiers places a torch in Wikito's outstretched hand; Wikito FLINGS IT FORWARD --

All eyes follow the torch's arching orange glow, as it lands ... and extinguishes ... and darkness returns.

A long beat passes. *That's it?*

Suddenly, FLAMES IGNITE, right where the torch landed. A FIERY TRAIL IS FORGED, SNAKING AROUND THE MESA, flames WHOOSHING along a PATH OF OIL --

THE CLIFF DWELLINGS OF THE PUEBLO PEOPLES ARE ILLUMINATED -- a multi-tiered village, forged into the rock -- houses and streets and stairways and furniture, all made of SOLID STONE, carved over several hundreds of years. In a word --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Incredible.

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - BURIAL GROUND - NIGHT

ROWS OF GRAVES litter the base of the fire-lit mesa. The cavalry files through, taking whatever looks valuable, showing no respect for the dead.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
What is this place?

Wikito says nothing, so Curley speaks up --

CURLEY
The people believed it was a gateway to the spirit world. A place of dark magic and restless spirits.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Uh-huh, that's real fascinating, but ... I'm not seein' any gold.

WIKITO
Up there.

The soldiers follow the Shaman's gaze --

Up, up, up the mesa, to the LOWEST LEVEL of the VILLAGE, maybe fifty feet off the ground.

There are no ladders or stairways, no indication of why they started building so high. The implication is that they did so out of necessity, for protection. *But protection from what?*

WIKITO

There are four sacred chambers,
where the people collected their
offerings to the spirit world, in
the hopes that the spirits would
remain at peace, and watch over
their loved ones in the afterlife.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

I thought you were taking us to
mine a gold claim, not rob a burial
ground.

WIKITO

Does it matter?

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Not really.

WIKITO

(grim)
I didn't think so.

COLONEL SHERIDAN

So how do we get up -- ?

THUNK! Sheridan can't even get the question out, before an arrow SLICES PAST his ear -- and LODGES into the chest of the soldier standing directly behind him.

Everyone just stares ... as the soldier falls backwards off his horse and lands in the dirt with a THUD. Then --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Indian attack!

A BARRAGE OF ARROWS RAINS DOWN FROM THE MESA -- a thousand little shadows dancing over the flame-lit grounds.

Soldiers dive for cover, seeking refuge in open graves. They RETURN FIRE, bullets WHIZZING UP into the ANCIENT STONE VILLAGE.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

FROM A DISTANCE, it's a beautiful sight -- the towering mesa lit up by FLAMES, outlined by LIGHTNING. Sounds of GUNFIRE -- the SHOUTING of the cavalry, the WHOOPING of the NATIVE ATTACKERS -- a MASSIVE BATTLE in the middle of nowhere, isolated from the eyes of history.

A SILHOUETTE APPEARS, taking in the sight from horseback -- Wyatt Earp. He looks back in the direction he came --

Only darkness behind him. No sign of Doc. The smallest moment of hesitation ... before Wyatt SPURS his horse, riding hard into the eye of the storm --

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - NIGHT

Melee! Rifles and gunpowder versus bows and arrows -- no contest, of course; the Natives are being forced back.

An arrow lands in a grave marker -- right next to Aiyana. She manages to pull it loose, even with her hands tied behind her back. She SNAPS off the arrowhead, palms it.

Nearby, Sheridan spots something --

Along the perimeter of the mesa, an ELABORATE NETWORK of LIFTS and PULLEYS gives access to all levels of the mountain, like a primitive elevator system. The Colonel grins, SHOUTS --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
C'mon, men! Let's send these dirt-
worshipping guteaters to their
precious fuckin' spirit world!

SOLDIERS CHARGE --

They swarm the pulleys, crowding onto the platforms. A LEVER IS KICKED and the pulleys RISE INTO THE AIR, impossibly fast.

The pulleys reach the LOWEST LEVEL of the village and soldiers spill out onto the streets, blasting away at the Natives with rifles and handguns.

Those who try to flee are shot in the back. Those who try to fight are shot in the front. It's target practise, with only a select few warriors managing to escape into the ruins.

WIKITO strides through the chaos with vacant eyes. He uses his foot to turn over the body of a SLAIN WARRIOR --

It's only a child. His lifeless eyes meet Wikito's hollow stare. Sheridan comes alongside the Shaman and smirks --

COLONEL SHERIDAN
No wonder you people were so easy
to conquer.

Wikito remains calm, but his eyes are burning.

WIKITO
This way, Boss.

INT. CLIFF DWELLING - STONE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Soldiers RANSACK the village, KICKING IN DOORS, overturning furniture, WHOOPING and HOLLERING as they hunt for their treasure, blood still pumping from the battle.

IN THE CENTER OF THE VILLAGE, four doors lead to four separate chambers. It takes TWO SOLDIERS to kick one in ... and when they do, they pull up short, speechless.

SOLDIER

Colonel! I think you're gonna wanna see this!

MOMENTS LATER, Sheridan arrives, crowded by soldiers. He steps forward ... something SHINING in his eyes -- REVEAL --

Wikito wasn't lying. The room is FILLED WITH TREASURE -- statues and tapestries and armor and artifacts, all plated with silver and surrounded by gold. There isn't anything here that doesn't look like it's worth a fortune. The wealth of a nation, right before our eyes.

Sheridan takes a moment to find his voice -- he swallows --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Get those other doors open.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

as the OTHER DOORS are forced open, one by one --

Soldiers KICK OPEN the SECOND DOOR --

INSIDE, the room is filled with treasure, much like the first. STATUES of DEMI-GODS, all made of SOLID GOLD ...

The THIRD DOOR is also KICKED OPEN with ease --

INSIDE, more treasure, more statues -- grotesque gold-plated figurines that blur the line between man and beast.

(NOTE: *When we see these statues, we might remember the carvings on the walls of the mine. They're identical.*)

The FOURTH and FINAL DOOR is giving the soldiers trouble; no matter how much weight they apply, the door just won't budge ... like some UNSEEN FORCE is keeping it closed.

GRINNING SOLDIER

Stand aside, fellas!

The Grinning Soldier, along with two others, is carrying one of the DEMI-GOD STATUES -- using it as a BATTERING RAM --

It hits ONCE -- TWICE -- AGAIN. On the third try, the door FLIES OPEN and we REVEAL --

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Nothing. The room is EMPTY, save for a SINGLE DUSTY CHALICE and a STONE KNIFE on the floor. The soldiers take in the sight, disappointed --

GRINNING SOLDIER
... that's it?
(off the other's looks)
Still, not bad for a day's work, eh
boys?

The soldiers LAUGH, getting over their disappointment as they return to the treasure of the other three rooms.

As soon as they're gone, WIKITO darkens the frame of the doorway. He takes in the sight of the dusty chalice and the stone knife ... and smiles. *This is what he was looking for.*

He leans down and BLOWS DUST off the floor REVEALING --

A carving of the skinwalker. Wikito GRIPS THE KNIFE -- turns to a soldier in the doorway --

WIKITO
Bring the girl.

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - NIGHT

The storm BUILDS, lightning STREAKS through the sky, but Sheridan and his men hardly seem to notice --

They're hard at work, PILING treasure onto the lifts, lowering the loot down to the bottom of the mesa, where it's passed from one soldier to the next, bucket-brigade style, into a LINE OF COVERED WAGONS.

The last soldier in line deposits a statue. Then, a WHISTLE from around the wagon and he goes to check it out -- a moment passes --

-- then WYATT peeks out, holding the soldier's gun. He slips closer to the pulleys, using the wagons for cover --

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Aiyana is forced into the chamber by a soldier, both of them taken by the strange sight before them --

The BONES of YEE NAALDLOOSHI are assembled across the chamber, each filling a section of the carved outline.

Wikito produces the final piece -- the skinwalker skull -- it has a presence in this room, seeming DARKER and MORE POWERFUL. Hard to tell but ... *has its expression changed?*

BEHIND AIYANA'S BACK, she continues to work on her bonds, fumbling with the severed arrowhead with bloody fingers.

The skull is positioned, and the skeleton is complete. The soldier clears his throat, nervous --

SOLDIER

Uh ... w-will that be all?

Wikito turns to the soldier. Smiles.

WIKITO

Yes.

Lightning-quick, Wikito SLASHES with the stone knife, SLICING the soldier's throat. Blood POOLS OUT onto the floor, but Wikito is careful to make sure none of it disturbs the bones.

Aiyana turns to run, but Wikito GRABS HER, spins her around --

Suddenly, her hands are free of their bonds and she LASHES OUT with the arrowhead, SLICING the Shaman's cheek.

Furious, Wikito HURLS Aiyana hard against the wall. She stands to fight -- but he KICKS HER HARD, and it's over.

Wikito retrieves the dusty chalice and straddles Aiyana, holding the bloody knife to her throat. He scowls --

WIKITO

Fill my cup, wee-che-cah-lah.

He RAISES THE KNIFE to STRIKE, when suddenly --

CURLEY

Stop!

LIGHTNING FLASHES, illuminating -- CURLEY, standing in the door. He steps forward. Unarmed.

CURLEY

Don't ... don't take her blood.

Curley summons his courage -- then offers his wrists --

CURLEY

Take mine.

AIYANA

Ashishishe, no --

Wikito silences Aiyana, CLAMPING his foot down over her mouth. He considers Curley's offer, bemused --

WIKITO
You are Navajo?

CURLEY
Yes. My ancestors were the hunters
of yee naaldlooshi. They killed the
last of his kind.
(he indicates the bones)
Him. Two hundred years ago.

A beat, as this sinks in. Without hesitation, Wikito crosses to Curley, SLICES HIS ARM, and LICKS THE BLOOD OFF THE KNIFE.

IN HIS EYES, a look of revelation. He bares his SHARPENED TEETH in a dark, twisted grin. Curley closes his eyes --

-- as the stone knife FLASHES --

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - NIGHT

Sheridan supervises as the loot comes down on the lift --

GRINNING SOLDIER
That's the last of it, sir.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
Load 'er up and let's get the hell
outta here. You know how I despise
the cliché, Clarence, but ... this
place gives me the creeps.

Soldiers work to unload the gold, revealing --

WYATT. Hidden behind the bounty. He matches the Grinning Soldier's grin --

-- then pulls his gun and FIRES, obliterating the lever. It SPINS OUT OF CONTROL; the COUNTERWEIGHT DROPS, and Wyatt RISES UP, away from the soldiers, taking the gold with him.

COLONEL SHERIDAN
KILL HIM!

The soldiers FIRE after Wyatt --

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Wikito begins his CHANT, perched over the skeleton of yee naaldlooshi, ignoring the sounds of GUNFIRE from outside.

He holds the chalice -- filled with blood -- Curley's blood --

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - NIGHT

Soldiers watch helplessly from below as Wyatt disappears with the gold, into the village. A soldier shrugs --

SOLDIER

Maybe we should just let him go. We have enough.

But that word isn't in Sheridan's vocabulary. He SHOVES the soldier aside, clambering onto a lift --

COLONEL SHERIDAN

Send me up!

A LEVER IS PULLED and SHERIDAN RISES, accompanied by a HALF-DOZEN SOLDIERS, crowding the platform.

EXT. STONE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Wyatt stalks the village, searching, gun in hand, the SOUNDS of WIKITO'S CHANTS seeming to echo from ALL DIRECTIONS.

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Aiyana tends to Curley -- still alive, but barely, taking short heavy breaths as Wikito FINISHES HIS CHANT, punctuating the final word by bringing down his fist --

SMASHING THE SKINWALKER SKULL INTO DUST.

OVER THE VILLAGE

Lightning STRIKES the top of the mesa, IGNITING scrub brush, which instantly BURSTS INTO FLAMES.

EXT. STONE VILLAGE - NIGHT

ON SHERIDAN, crouched in hiding, spying on -- WYATT, nearly a hundred feet away. He takes aim at the lawman's back.

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

The FINE WHITE POWDER of the skinwalker skull is mixed with CURLEY'S BLOOD in the chalice. Wikito raises the cup over his head, eyes full of tears. And then -- oh yes --

He drinks it. He drinks every last fucking drop.

Finished, the chalice DROPS from the Shaman's hands, and for a long moment, nothing happens. SILENCE ... except for the rain and the wind, HOWLING outside. And then --

SQUISH-SQUISH.

Aiyana frowns: *what was that?* Even Curley seems curious, tilting his head up to get a better look as --

SQUISH-SQUISH-SNAP-POP! CRACK! Wikito TREMBLES -- then THROWS BACK HIS HEAD and SCREAMS IN HORRIBLE PAIN!

EXT. STONE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Wyatt and Sheridan react to the sound of the SCREAM. Wyatt runs towards it and Sheridan FOLLOWS --

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Aiyana cowers before WIKITO'S SHADOW, which PERFECTLY RESEMBLES the carved outline on the floor --

His limbs TWIST, torqued by some impossibly-strong, unseen force, LIFTING HIM UP OFF THE GROUND.

Bones SNAP and CONTORT and EXTEND, re-arranging inside his skin. MUSCLES ARE RIPPED and RE-BUILT, then RIPPED AGAIN, and from Wikito's CONSTANT SCREAMING, it hurts like hell.

(The transformation is reminiscent of the tonic-induced hallucinations we saw earlier ... except now, of course, it's really happening.)

Wyatt enters -- sees Aiyana. He rushes into her arms, checking to make sure she's all right -- but his concern is short-lived, because he can't take his eyes off Wikito --

The Shaman's eyes SNAP OPEN -- red like the moon --

His screaming mouth CONTORTS -- fitting an extra row of jagged teeth. And as this happens, the SCREAM becomes a HYSTERICAL SHRIEK of DERANGED, PAINFUL LAUGHTER.

Finally, Wikito SLUMPS TO THE GROUND, his body slowly regaining its REGULAR SHAPE.

WIKITO

At last, the man is dead.

Wikito turns -- he looks the same, except for his EYES, tinged red, his TEETH, filling his mouth with horror ... and his bones, which seem to be CONSTANTLY MOVING beneath his skin, like LIVING SNAKES.

WIKITO

The beast is free.

Suddenly -- GUNSHOTS RING OUT, bullets TEARING into Wikito, throwing him back against the wall.

IN THE DOORWAY, Sheridan FIRES MADLY -- *click-click-click* --

The last shot echoes down into silence. Then -- of course --

WIKITO RISES. His bones TWIST and CONTORT, until the spent bullet casings fall from his mouth like candy. He grins --

WIKITO

Hello, Boss.

Sheridan takes in the horrifying sight -- for a moment, unable to move. But only a moment. He TURNS and RUNS --

-- and Wikito LUNGES AFTER HIM, impossibly-fast, RUNNING ON ALL FOURS. (*In his movements, he would seem to be in the werewolf family -- fitting given that skinwalkers pre-dated and inspired our werewolf legends -- but he remains human throughout, a monstrous version of himself.*)

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - VARIOUS - NIGHT

What follows is a MASSACRE; the skinwalker LAYS INTO the cavalry, seeming to come at them from EVERY DIRECTION.

TERRIFIED SHADOWS flee across the walls of the mesa like ancient caveman drawings come to life. Throats are RIPPED OUT, bones SNAP, blood FLOWS FREE.

Sheridan pitches desperately through the carnage, face painted with the blood of his men. He makes a DIVING LEAP off the edge of the mesa --

-- grabs hold of a rope in mid-air, and starts SHIMMYING DOWN to the desert floor, stopping only to KICK ASIDE a STRUGGLING SOLDIER who gets in his way.

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - NIGHT

Wyatt tries to lift Curley up -- his eyelids flutter, on the edge of consciousness --

WYATT

C'mon, I'm getting you outta here.
Can you walk?

AIYANA

He's lost too much blood.

SOUNDS OF CARNAGE are filtered from outside. Curley pulls Wyatt close --

CURLEY

You must destroy it ... you must
... it's your destiny ...

WYATT
 (re: the screaming)
 Can't it be someone else's destiny?

Curley pushes his bow into Wyatt's hands. Clasps them tight.
 He whispers --

CURLEY
*The signs are clear ... for those
 who can see them ...*

Then, he loses consciousness. Wyatt is left staring at the bow. Unsure.

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - NIGHT

Miraculously, Sheridan has made it to the horses; he starts to mount up, when something catches his eye -- a PILE OF GOLD, tossed from the back of an UPENDED WAGON nearby.

A moment of hesitation -- then Sheridan runs over and starts filling his pockets, taking just as much as he can carry. *At least he's not leaving empty-handed.*

A SHADOW FALLS OVER HIM and he SPINS, gun drawn, aimed at -- Himself. A PERFECT DOPPELGANGER stands before him.

A frozen moment. Sheridan blinks. Then, Other Sheridan ROARS a MOUTHFUL of SHARPENED TEETH --

SHERIDAN SCREAMS as this MONSTROUS VERSION OF HIMSELF BITES INTO HIS THROAT. Blood GEYSERS across PILES OF TREASURE.

INT. STONE VILLAGE - NIGHT

Wyatt and Aiyana listen, as the SOUNDS OF SCREAMING echo down into an AWFUL SILENCE, leaving them with the sickening, unavoidable conclusion -- they are alone with the beast in this haunted place.

They move through the village, guns out, seeing danger in every shadow, death in every noise. And then -- a VOICE --

SKINWALKER (O.C.)
*And so it begins. The slaughter.
 The reckoning. Our war begins
 tonight, Aiyana. Are you sure
 you've chosen the right side?*

AIYANA
*The people will never follow you,
 Wikito ... no matter how many men
 you kill.*

SKINWALKER (O.C.)

You still don't understand. I am no longer Wikito.

Ahead, a form materializes from shadows -- not Wikito, as expected -- it's an ELDERLY NATIVE AMERICAN with haunted eyed and dignified features. We've seen this face before -- it's SITTING BULL. Aiyana lowers her weapon, overcome --

AIYANA

Father ...

WYATT

That's not your father, Aiyana.

Aiyana looks closer, and sure enough -- Sitting Bull's bones are MOVING beneath the surface of his skin; he truly is the SHAPESHIFTER, able to take any form. He smiles --

-- then STRIKES, impossibly fast; he grabs Aiyana, spins her around so she's facing Wyatt, claws pressed to her throat.

WYATT

Don't.

Wyatt has his gun aimed at "Sitting Bull". He sneers --

SITTING BULL

Go on, gunslinger. Shoot.

A beat -- Wyatt lowers his gun --

WYATT

I'm done shooting. Let her go.

SITTING BULL

I intend to. As soon as she agrees to follow me as she followed him.

AIYANA

I won't.

His grip tightens --

SITTING BULL

Have I misjudged you, *wichicala*? Are you really in love with every wasicu, or just this one? Has your love blinded you to the injustice they've inflicted on your people?

AIYANA

I'm blind to no injustice -- not even yours.

Something catches Wyatt's attention -- a SHAPE on the horizon, silhouetted by a WALL OF FLAME. It's a horse ... a horse with an EYEPATH over its LEFT EYE.

SITTING BULL

Your father had his chance to be the leader we needed. Instead, he signs treaties and makes peace.

(he spits)

For the crimes our people have suffered, there must be justice.

WYATT

This isn't justice.

The declaration stays the skinwalker's hand. He smirks --

SITTING BULL

What does the man with the gun know of justice?

WYATT

I know it's never the same thing as revenge. You think it'll bring satisfaction, but I promise you ... it weighs on your soul more than you can possibly imagine.

For the briefest of moments, Sitting Bull's eyes fade to their original darkness. *He knows Wyatt speaks the truth.*

SITTING BULL

Yes ... that is why I must cut my soul free.

WYATT

AIYANA, DOWN!

Instinctively, Aiyana SQUIRMS from her "father", as HOLLIDAY DROPS FROM A NEARBY ROOF -- ENCHANTED ARROWHEAD in hand -- and JAMS IT INTO THE SKINWALKER'S SHOULDER --

The arrowhead SIZZLES as it makes contact with the demon's skin. The skinwalker ROARS IN PAIN; he pulls the arrowhead free. It SIZZLES in his hand, BURNING HIM --

With a FURIOUS HOWL, the beast VANISHES into the ruins. A long silence -- our trio just stares after him -- then:

HOLLIDAY

What'd I miss?

Wyatt smiles despite himself.

WYATT

Jesus, Doc ...

Holliday hands something to Wyatt -- his six-shooter. He must have pulled it off Wikito during the struggle --

WYATT

Thanks.

Thanks for the gun, or thanks for coming back?

HOLLIDAY

You're welcome.

Suddenly, from the top of the mesa, the SKINWALKER ROARS -- a monstrous, inhuman sound. Issuing his challenge to Wyatt and Doc.

HOLLIDAY

Somethin' tells me you're gonna need it.

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

Wyatt and Doc ascend a STONE STAIRCASE, weapons out, Wyatt's bow tightly drawn, senses on alert; they're on the hunt --

HOLLIDAY

(re: the arrow)

Careful with that thing, by the way. I'm gonna want it back when we're done with this guy.

WYATT

You always were the optimistic sort. What made you come back?

HOLLIDAY

Who says I'm back? Saving your ass is just on my way.

Wyatt glances to Doc -- impossible to tell if he's kidding. The stairway ends and they arrive at --

THE TOP OF THE MESA

Scrub brush still BLAZING from the lightning strike -- the desert falling into pitch black darkness around them, like a private battle arena, alone in all the universe ...

Suddenly, RAIN SHEETS DOWN, extinguishing the brushfire.

HOLLIDAY

... is that bad?

DARKNESS descends over the mesa. *Shit.*

WYATT
It's not good.

Gradually, we're left only with SOUNDS -- the sounds of the storm, and of Wyatt and Doc's SHAKY BREATHING.

And then, ANOTHER SOUND -- a LOW, GUTTURAL GROWLING, seeming to come from RIGHT BEHIND US.

HOLLIDAY
Uh ... Wyatt --

RED EYES pierce the darkness -- the skinwalker ATTACKS and WYATT LETS FLY --

-- but the arrow misses by a wide margin, lodging into an adobe wall. The skinwalker LUNGES for the arrow --

But Holliday GRABS HOLD of the skinwalker's legs, dragging him down. Immediately, he's on top of the creature, fists flailing, fighting like a goddamn champion.

HOLLIDAY
(focused on the fight, but
directed at Wyatt)
GO!

Wyatt runs to retrieve the arrow, hearing only the SOUNDS of Holliday's fateful struggle with the beast, obscenities flying in all directions.

Wyatt notches the arrow, turns and aims into darkness --

CLOUDS PART ... the BLOOD-RED MOON casts an EERIE RIM around the aftermath of the struggle --

TWO DOC HOLLIDAYS stand before Wyatt on the edge of the mesa.

Wyatt tenses -- *the classic 'which-one-do-I-shoot situation'* ... both Hollidays staring at him with pleading eyes.

The silence seems to last forever, until one of the Docs utters a SINGLE WORD --

HOLLIDAY
Albuquerque.

No hesitation. WYATT FIRES --

The arrow LAUNCHES in SLOW MOTION, spinning through the air, heading for the Doc on the left -- then diverting to the Doc on the right. It LODGES deep in his chest.

For an agonizing moment, Holliday just stands there, numb, and we're left to wonder: *did Wyatt shoot the right one?*

Then, the arrowhead starts to SIZZLE --

-- and "Doc" releases an INHUMAN SCREAM, like a THOUSAND VOICES, CRYING OUT IN UNISON. He loses his balance -- but reaches out, pulling the real Doc with him, over the side.

WYATT

DOC!

ON DOC AND THE SKINWALKER

Tumbling down the slope, an avalanche of dirt and stone falling with them. Holliday fumbles at the mountainside, feet scrambling for purchase; he finds a PROTRUDING ROOT --

-- and the skinwalker LATCHES onto his ankle, dangling over a dizzying drop. It HAULS ITSELF UP so they're eye-to-eye --

The face we see, barely glimpsed through the darkness, is not the face of Wikito ... it is the SKINWALKER in its true form, a destructive spirit from beyond our realm. *Hideous.*

SKINWALKER

Come with me, doctor. You're not long for this world.

Doc removes the arrow from the skinwalker's chest --

HOLLIDAY

Longer than you.

-- and STABS the beast THROUGH THE HEART. The skinwalker SCREAMS, losing ALL CONTROL over his shape.

BONES and FLESH DISTORT -- morphing from Sitting Bull, to Sheridan, to Holliday, to Aiyana -- then, finally, to Wyatt -- all forms SHRIEKING their FINAL DEATH CRIES --

Holliday seems momentarily overcome by the sight of his friend dying. He tugs loose the arrow as "Wyatt" falls back --

-- sailing through space, through darkness --

-- before LANDING in an OPEN GRAVE -- as if it was dug especially for him.

EXT. TOP OF THE MESA - MOMENTS LATER

Wyatt helps Doc up over the side -- he's still clutching the arrowhead, wet from the beast's SIZZLING BLOOD. Then, the blood EVAPORATES into the night air. Gone.

Wyatt and Doc look down --

WIKITO lies far below -- no longer the monster that possessed him. He's just a man, staring up with cold, lifeless eyes ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - SUNRISE

The sun rises over the pueblo, allowing us to take in the beauty of the village in the full light of day.

INT. SACRED CHAMBER - DAY

Curley lies still, eyes closed, breathing faintly. Aiyana is perched over him, as Wyatt and Doc enter --

AIYANA
He's fading.

Wyatt and Doc move to Curley's side. Suddenly, shadows DARKEN the chamber as the SURVIVING NATIVES enter.

A tense moment -- all eyes fixed on the PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN, his gaze unmistakably stern. He SPEAKS, voice pitched low.

AIYANA
He says ... how can they thank the
warriors who killed yee
naaldlooshi?

Palpable relief. Wyatt indicates Curley --

WYATT
Can you help him?

The Chieftain regards Curley. He SPEAKS, somber -- again, Aiyana translates --

AIYANA
He says there are medicine men of
the northern places who can cure
him ... powerful men who walk
between worlds. But for such a
service, they would demand payment.

A beat -- then Holliday SNAPS OFF his necklace and TOSSES IT to the Chief --

HOLLIDAY
Pay 'em with that.

The Chief examines the ENCHANTED ARROWHEAD -- speaks with a tone of amazed disbelief --

AIYANA

He says that arrowhead was carved
from rock in the spirit world ...
he wants to know if you also walk
between worlds ...

Holliday hits the Chief with his best poker face.

HOLLIDAY

Tell him yes.

Aiyana shakes her head to the Chief: 'no'. The Chief can't help but LAUGH, gleefully studying the necklace. Doc frowns.

EXT. CLIFF DWELLING - DAY

The Natives prepare to ride out -- Curley is carried by warriors, who pause to let him say goodbye to Wyatt and Doc --

HOLLIDAY

You're gonna be okay, Curly. Don't
go runnin' off to any spirit world,
y'hear?

Curley struggles to speak --

CURLEY

You are my people ...
(off Wyatt's look)
... my friends ...

Wyatt nods. Curley smiles as he's carried off with the convoy of departing riders ... WHISTLING as he goes. Holliday stares after him, wistful --

HOLLIDAY

I really liked that necklace.

MOMENTS LATER, Aiyana returns from a conversation with the Chief -- holding something in her hands --

AIYANA

The Chief says there is one more
thing that must be done.

Off Wyatt and Doc's matching looks -- *what more could they possibly do?* Aiyana offers -- the CHIEFTAIN'S TOMAHAWK.

EXT. WIKITO'S GRAVE - DAY

Wyatt and Doc stand over the OPEN GRAVE containing WIKITO'S REMAINS. Holliday jumps in, holding the tomahawk --

WYATT
... careful.

HOLLIDAY
Careful? He's dead.

Suddenly, a NOISE catches Doc's attention. He LEANS DOWN to the corpse ... putting his ear to its mouth.

Faintly, we hear the SOUNDS of a THOUSAND SCREAMING VOICES, as though echoing from some dark and lonely place.

WYATT
What do you hear, Doc?

Holliday draws back, unsettled.

HOLLIDAY
... just the wind.

He brings the tomahawk down, HARD --

EXT. DESERT - DAY

Wyatt, Doc and Aiyana ride from the pueblo, the stone columns receding into the sun-bleached distance behind them. Wyatt has a SATCHEL slung across his back. Over this --

WYATT (V.O.)
We rode from the Four Corners with the remains of the skinwalker, and scattered his bones across the northern plains ... from the mountains of the Dakota Territory to the valleys of Wyoming, to the open spaces of Arizona; we returned the beast to the dirt, in the hopes that yee naaldlooshi will never again be set free to wreak its havoc on the world of the living.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HUT - DAY

Wyatt continues his story --

WYATT
... and now, I've come ... to deliver the final piece to you.

He pulls something from his satchel -- the SKINWALKER SKULL (Wikito's) -- and offers it across the hut --

-- to SITTING BULL. The Chief looks from the skull, to Wyatt, to Doc, to his daughter, seated by his side. Then SPEAKS --

SITTING BULL

My daughter once spoke to me of the Great Spirit ... she said *Wakan Tanka* had ordained an important purpose to you both.

(a long beat)

... I know she was lying. She was merely trying to protect you. I let her believe her fantasy, that she would ever be capable of deceiving her father --

A small smile passes between them.

SITTING BULL

-- but the truth is ... the Great Spirit had already come to me, and made truth of her lie.

(he leans in)

You have a purpose. Both of you.

HOLLIDAY

I'm actually a bit booked up, schedule-wise --

Wyatt silences Holliday with a shot to the ribs.

WYATT

What is our purpose?

Sitting Bull stares into the eyes of the skull, as if seeing the mysteries of the world unfolding within.

SITTING BULL

There is a balance to all things ... but none more important than the balance between this world and the one beyond. That balance has been disrupted. The injustices my people have suffered at the hands of *wasicu* have unsettled forces long thought to be at rest. They now roam the land freely.

(he leans in)

They have heard the cries of their brother, *yee naaldlooshi* ... and they will come looking for you.

HOLLIDAY

Is there any way to explain to them -- rationalize, like decent folk --

Another shot to the ribs, and again, Doc is silenced --

WYATT

What do we do?

SITTING BULL

You must go looking for them. You must confront the evil spirits of the land, and return balance to our worlds. Until you do, there will never truly be peace ... there will never truly be justice.

Wyatt considers -- then nods --

WYATT

We'll do it.

Wyatt ignores Holliday's look: *oh, will we?*

SITTING BULL

Of course, my people will assist you in any way we can ... but I am afraid you can not remain among us. You have made a challenge to powers beyond even my understanding ... and if I allow you to stay --

WYATT

I understand.

He's concerned about his daughter.

Wyatt stares across the tipi, at Aiyana. She finds it difficult to meet his gaze.

EXT. LAKOTA OUTPOST - DAY

The Sioux are packing up their village, preparing for the journey south. Wyatt and Doc are facing the opposite direction. Wyatt looks back --

ACROSS THE CAMP, Aiyana emerges from her father's hut.

HOLLIDAY

You comin' or goin', Wyatt?

Wyatt dismounts and makes his way over to Aiyana. Holliday stares after him ... unsure how this is going to play out.

ON WYATT AND AIYANA

Wyatt approaches. A silence lingers between them ...

AIYANA

I think, we have both found our
paths.

She offers something to Wyatt -- his other six-shooter --

AIYANA

They cross, but never join.

Wyatt knows it's the truth. He takes the revolver -- fills
his empty holster. He tips his hat --

WYATT

Ma'am.

-- then walks away.

WE STAY ON WYATT, keeping a measured pace, the longing
painfully evident in his eyes. Behind him, Aiyana recedes
into the distance ... and then she's gone ...

EXT. OPEN RANGE - SUNSET

Wyatt and Doc sit astride their horses, staring down the wide
open spaces of the wild west. They don't speak. They listen.

Slowly, we hear what they hear --

WHISPERED VOICES, carried by the wind ... beckoning our
heroes ... calling their names ... daring them forward, into
the vast, expansive nothing ...

Wyatt looks at Doc. Doc looks at Wyatt. They both nod.

WYATT/HOLLIDAY

Hyah!

The two old friends RIDE HARD for the WESTERN HORIZON, filled
with a renewed sense of purpose. They chase each other into a
GLORIOUS SUNSET that WASHES THE FRAME, and we --

FADE OUT.

THE END