

INT. MINE - NIGHT

A mineshaft, only lit by two paraffin lamps carried by TWO MEN walking in. The narrow entrance can be seen behind them.

The MYSTERIOUS MAN keeps his face out of the light and walks a few steps behind the OLD MAN (70s) holds his lamp high, constantly looking around... uneasy.

OLD MAN
How'd you come by this gold?

A rusty, worn voice responds.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
Used to work here.

OLD MAN
So did a lot of people.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
I've spent more time in here than most.

OLD MAN
Why's that?

Beat.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
The gold first, stories later.

OLD MAN
Alright, sounds like you got a funny story is all.

LATER

They reach the end of the shaft. Solid rock in front of them.

MYSTERIOUS MAN
There it is.

The Old man stares at the wall of rock.

The Mysterious man places his lamp on the ground and grabs his pickaxe with both hands.

The Old man walks closer to the solid rock, searching for any sign of gold... there's none to see.

BAM! The pickaxe PIERCES the Old man's head and goes into the mountain, holding him up as BLOOD starts POURING out from both ends of the wound and his body goes limp.

The blood doesn't just run down the rocks but ALL ACROSS IT in every direction! As if washing the rocks clean, the blood reveals GOLD in its wake.

The Mysterious man removes the pickaxe and the Old man falls dead on the ground.

A GOLDEN LIGHT with a faint RED HUE reflects from the golden wall onto the Mysterious man, revealing his DEVIOUS grin.

EXT. MINE, ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The dilapidated entrance to the mine, the wooden beams barely visible. The ROARING of a nearby river is all we hear until

-- CLING, the sound of metal STRIKING metal from deep within the mine -- CLING -- silence -- CLING -- it turns to -- CHOP, the sound of someone chopping wood, somewhere in the distance -- CHOP -- silence -- CHOP

HARD CUT TO:

EXT. PINWOOD FOREST - BREAK OF DAWN

-- Silence.

The sun has not yet risen, but will at any moment. Low-lying fog surrounds the trees and, just ahead of us, a wooden cabin. -- CHOP -- it's coming from just behind the cabin and continues as we glide towards it.

EXT. CABIN - CONTINUOUS

As we get closer we see the cabin is old and worn, cozy when it was new perhaps, but that was years ago.

We glide around the back where JONATHAN (40s) is CHOPPING wood. Physically fit yet clearly past his prime. He's got long thick brown-but-graying hair and beard. He's sweating. A pile of chopped wood next to him, he's been at it for some time.

Jonathan CHOPS until the sunlight pierces the forest canopy and hits him right in the eyes.

INT. CABIN, LIVING ROOM - DAYBREAK

The inside of the cabin is what you'd expect from the outside.

Jonathan puts wood into the fire of a cast-iron fireplace. Steam rises from a big metal bowl filled with water sitting on top.

On the rusty stove, a pot of stew filled with vegetables and several bits of meat boil lightly.

Jonathan pours the water from the metal bowl into a half-filled bathtub and steam rises from it.

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - DAYBREAK

Jonathan opens the door.

Two mattresses, thin and flat. One is empty, the other has an old man, ABRAHAM (70s). Frail-looking, with stubble.

He's covered in a thin, tight laying sheet that reveals most of his body. His legs both stop at the knees.

JONATHAN
Morning, pa'.

Abraham opens his eyes.

INT. CABIN, LIVING ROOM - DAYBREAK

Jonathan carries a naked Abraham to the bathtub and gently lowers him into the water.

Jonathan picks up a single-blade RAZOR and starts putting shaving cream on Abraham's cheeks, who stops him.

ABRAHAM
I can do this part myself.
(grabs the razor)
Just give me that mirror there.

LATER

Jonathan walks to the bathtub from the kitchen carrying two small metal bowls with stew.

He gives one to Abraham who is done shaving, then sits down in a nearby chair.

ABRAHAM
What's this, rabbit?

JONATHAN
Uh-huh, came across it yesterday morning in the lure, but didn't have time to get it.

ABRAHAM
And it was still there when you got back?

JONATHAN
Uh-huh.

ABRAHAM
Either we're lucky or there's something wrong with that rabbit.

JONATHAN
Nothing wrong with it.

ABRAHAM
We'll see tonight. Don't be surprised if I've shat the bed.

JONATHAN
Well if you have I ain't giving you another bath. I'm just gonna throw you into the river.

They laugh.

ABRAHAM
In the war, you think we had time to chop wood, warm the water and take baths like this?

Beat.

JONATHAN
All this time and you're telling me I could have just thrown ya into the river?

ABRAHAM
A river never threatened me none.
(beat)
Except... I don't swim so good no more.

They eat in silence.

EXT. CABIN, FRONT DOOR - MORNING

Jonathan opens the door, now fully dressed and with a backpack, and a pickaxe.

JONATHAN

See ya pa.

ABRAHAM O.S

Good huntin'

JONATHAN

Yep.

EXT. PINWOOD FOREST - LATER

Jonathan walks on a well-trodden path when another set of FOOTSTEPS approaches from behind, quicker and lighter than his.

LEWIS O.S

Morning, Jonathan!

JONATHAN

Morning, Lewis. How's the baby?

LEWIS (20s) carrying a backpack and a pickaxe, well-rested and much more energetic than Jonathan catches up.

LEWIS

Oh you know, she's a handful but
luckily my wife's got two of them so,
she ain't no problem.

(beat)

How's Abraham?

Jonathan would rather not talk about it.

JONATHAN

He's fine.

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MORNING

Jonathan and Lewis walk from the forest trail onto a dirt road and joins a herd of people making their way up the hill.

Most of them are WHITE, but some are CHINESE and AFRICAN-AMERICAN, all of them are men, and all of them are GOLD MINERS. Some with pickaxes, some without.

Some distance behind the others, CLARENCE (30s, black, tall, and muscular) and his son, THOMAS (14, black) are trying to catch up. Both without a pickaxe.

CLARENCE
Hurry up, boy!

EXT. MINE, ENTRANCE - MORNING

Clarence and Thomas stand in front of a wooden stand with pickaxes nearby. The man behind the stand is the VENDOR (60s). Well dressed, not one for manual labor.

VENDOR
Name?

CLARENCE
Clarence and Thomas Washington.

VENDOR
Do you want to pay in cash or have it deducted from your pay? Twenty cents for the whole day in cash, twenty-five if you deduct from your pay. Two-and-a-half per hour either way.

CLARENCE
Deduct from pay, the two of us. Whole day.

VENDOR
Okay, sign here.

LATER

Clarence and Thomas grab a pickaxe each.

Clarence spots the FOREMAN (40s), even better dressed than the Vendor, arriving.

CLARENCE
(to Thomas)
Come.

Clarence and Thomas walk over to the Foreman.

CLARENCE (CONT'D)
Mr. Foreman, excuse me, sir.

FOREMAN
Yes, Clarence.

CLARENCE

I've been I was hoping we could get a discount on the rent, our salary barely covers it as it is.

FOREMAN

We've been over this, buy your own, or pay in cash.

CUT TO:

Jonathan and Lewis stand outside the pristine entrance to the mine, held open by solid prominent wooden beams.

They're observing the quiet but heated exchange between Clarence and the Foreman. Jonathan has had enough of waiting and walks to them.

CLARENCE

You paying us half, now you know we work twice as hard as the best of them.

Jonathan interrupts.

JONATHAN

Mr. Foreman, if it's alright I'm gonna just take my men and start on two A.

FOREMAN

Now hold on a moment, Jonathan. Would you have a problem taking some of them on your crew?

The Foreman gestures to Clarence.

JONATHAN

I don't care I just wanna get to mining.

FOREMAN

Alright then. We're opening level three so I want you there.

That has Jonathan concerned.

JONATHAN

It's safe?

FOREMAN

It's where the gold is likely to be.

Jonathan has more to say but holds his tongue.

INT. MINE

Lit paraffin lamps hang from the ceiling. We hear the sound of metal HITTING rock from various directions.

Jonathan leads the way, followed by Lewis and Clarence, then Thomas and BILLY (60s), the most worn looking of them all.

The entrance can be seen behind them, wide and solid.

LATER

They walk up to a small mechanical elevator that's just a platform, a few thick wires, and some fencing. Only big enough for two.

Jonathan looks at Thomas.

JONATHAN

What's your name boy?

THOMAS

Thomas.

JONATHAN

Okay, Clarence go down with Clarence.
Lamps are at the bottom.

INT. MINE, MOVING ELEVATOR

Clarence and Thomas descend slowly in the mechanical elevator. The noises let you know it has seen better days.

Clarence looks at Thomas, Thomas is nervous, almost shaking.

CLARENCE

Easy there boy, we'll be fine.

(beat)

Your mama would beat the shit out of me if I let anything happen to you and she scares me more than this mine and that foreman combined.

Clarence looks at Thomas and smiles. Thomas smiles back.

INT. MINE, ELEVATOR

The elevator comes back up.

JONATHAN
Lewis, Billy.

INT. MINE, LEVEL 3, ELEVATOR

Jonathan exits the elevator where the others are waiting with their lit lamps.

No sound of metal hitting rock for company. They're staring down a dark abyss, with railroad tracks guiding them in.

Jonathan picks up a paraffin lamp and lights it with a matchstick then starts walking, the rest follow. The lamps they carry do little to battle the darkness.

THOMAS
Any one of you ever hit any gold?

BILLY
Ain't no one found gold in here in months. But we get paid, either way, it don't bother me none.

JONATHAN
I used to pan for gold in the river with my pa'. We found some but... then the war happened.
(beat)
By the time we got back, it was empty.

THOMAS
But it must have come from this mountain.

BILLY
So they say.

JONATHAN
Well, we ain't in the business of speculating.

CLARENCE
Nah, we the business of gold mining.

LEWIS
We should call ourselves rock miners because that's all we find.

They laugh.

INT. MINE, END

They get to the end of the shaft, solid rock before them, and a mining cart at the end of the tracks.

JONATHAN

Thomas, you load the cart.

LATER

Thomas has filled the cart full. He tries to push it and fails. It's too heavy for him.

Lewis watches it and laughs. The others ignore it.

LEWIS

What's the matter? Too heavy?

THOMAS

No, I got it!

LEWIS

No chance. Here, let me.

Lewis walks up to the cart.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Go mine for a bit. Next time, only fill it half full.

THOMAS

Alright.

Lewis tries to push the cart, but it's too heavy for him as well. He gives up.

Clarence and Jonathan look behind them and see Lewis struggling, they're amused.

LEWIS

Clarence, why don't you fix your boy's mistake?

JONATHAN

What's the matter Lewis, too heavy?

LEWIS

Nah, it ain't that.

JONATHAN

Well okay then, get to it.

LEWIS
I'd rather mine.

JONATHAN
Well, ask Clarence politely and he
might very well do it for you.

Jonathan and Clarence share a look of amusement. Lewis faces
the humiliation.

LEWIS
Clarence.

CLARENCE
Yes, Lewis?

LEWIS
Can you please do the cart?

CLARENCE
Why?

LEWIS
Oh, come on!

JONATHAN
Now, the man asked a reasonable
question. If you can't do the cart, is
it something wrong with the wheels or
the tracks perhaps, the man has a
right to know the cause!

LEWIS
The problem is that it's too damn
heavy!

Clarence and Jonathan laugh.

JONATHAN
Now that wasn't so difficult, now was
it?

Lewis refrains from answering.

Jonathan nods to Clarence, who puts down his pickaxe and
walks over to the cart.

Lewis watches with disappointment as Clarence effortlessly
pushes the cart down the tracks.

LATER

Thomas starts pushing the half-full mining cart down the tracks, carrying his lamp. He's barely making any progress but he's determined.

Clarence STRIKES the mountain with his pickaxe and as he pulls it out a GOLD NUGGET with a faint RED HUE follows and drops to the ground.

They look at it, then each other pleasantly surprised when

-- RUMBLING, far down, towards the entrance of the shaft. They all turn, scared.

Thomas is halfway down with the cart. He stops and looks up.

Clarence looks at him.

CLARENCE

Thomas, get back, run!

Thomas leaves the cart and sprints towards them.

The mountain comes CRASHING down behind him, almost catching up, whirling up a storm of dust in the process.

He's nearly there. Then the mountain buries him.

The other men brace against the incoming dust and pebbles, and whatever may come after that.

The mountain comes to a stop about ten meters in front of them.

Once the dust settles they're met by a wall of rock. The entire entrance to the shaft has caved in, and Thomas is crushed somewhere in there.

Clarence drops to his knees.

CLARENCE

(shouting)

Thomas!

(louder)

Thomas!

Jonathan lays his hand on Clarence's shoulder and looks apologetic. Clarence starts CRYING. They have no words of comfort for him.

BILLY

Should have figured it would end like

this.

JONATHAN
We're still breathing.

BILLY
Nah, we dead men the moment that shaft
collapsed, same as Thomas.

LEWIS
We've got water. We'll ration, we
could survive for days.

Jonathan starts putting out the lamps, and the room darkens
as he does.

BILLY
Why you doing that for?

JONATHAN
We only have so much light, gotta
ration everything.

Jonathan leaves one burning.

LEWIS
How much we got?

JONATHAN
We've been here about four hours. Each
lasts for about twenty-four so...

BILLY
Eighty hours left total. Just over
three days.

LEWIS
They might be able to clear a path to
us.

BILLY
The collapse started all the way at
the bottom, ain't no way we live to
see the day.

JONATHAN
Then let us try and meet them halfway.

BILLY
Thomas is the lucky one cause he died
quick.

JONATHAN

I've got reason to live, Billy, and I
don't care if you don't.

LEWIS

If we're dead men anyway there's no
harm in trying. Better than waiting
for death to take us.

Lewis picks up his pickaxe.

JONATHAN

I'm sorry for your loss Clarence.
(beat)
But we could use your help.

MONTAGE

We watch as:

- They mine a small passage through the rubble.
- Billy moves the rocks.
- They take turns taking breaks.

END OF MONTAGE

The men have made progress when the lamp EXTINGUISHES and
it's PITCH BLACK. All we hear is the men BREATHING.

JONATHAN

We should get some rest. Ain't no use
mining half-asleep.

LATER

A lamp is shining brightly.

They have carved themselves a passageway, almost a full man's
height, a few meters into the rubble.

Jonathan is inside, on his knees, carefully mining away. The
rocks begin to GIVE IN. Jonathan panics.

JONATHAN

Back back back!

Jonathan quickly walks backward out as the passageway
COLLAPSES in front of him.

They stare at the collapsed passageway, deflated.

The lamp burns out, it's PITCH BLACK and silent, except for their BREATHING.

LEWIS (CONT'D)
Do we... keep mining?

BILLY
Why?

LEWIS
I'm not dying in here.

BILLY
We are. Every one of us is.

Silence.

BILLY (CONT'D)
Light the next one Jonathan.
(beat)
I ain't letting this mountain kill me,
I'll do it myself.

PFFFT -- A matchstick is lit. Jonathan uses it to light the lamp. Then he looks at Billy concerned.

Billy looks back, determined. He walks over to a backpack and produces a small knife from it. Billy sits down, leans against the mountain, and rolls up his left arm sleeve. He positions the knife on the middle of the wrist.

Billy shares a look with the rest, they want to stop him, but what reason can they give him to keep living?

BILLY (CONT'D)
If anyone chooses to follow, just copy
me.

He slices open his arm from wrist to mid-way to the elbow and BLOOD starts FLOWING out onto the ground and towards the solid mountain.

Billy looks at peace.

The men look at him with jealousy. Billy has found a way out.

LEWIS
Does it hurt?

BILLY

It stings, but it'll pass.

Billy's eyes close, never to open again.

The river of blood from Billy's arm reached the mountain and slowly flowing UPWARDS, leaving SOLID GOLD in its wake.

They stare at it, with a mix of terror and awe.

JONATHAN

Please tell me I am not the only one
seeing this.

As the blood reaches the top, the entire section in front of them is solid gold. The blood fades away into the rock, giving it a familiar RED HUE.

Letters appear in BLOOD RED (written in Cheyenne) *ONLY ONE MAY PASS*. Jonathan recognizes the words they spell.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

It's... Cheyenne. I fought with a few
during the war, we learned some to
communicate in battle.

CLARENCE

Now, what on earth is Cheyenne
language doing here?

JONATHAN

This used to be Cheyenne territory.
But why a mountain would speak
Cheyenne... I'm not sure I even want
to know.

LEWIS

Well, what does it say?

JONATHAN

Only one may pass.

Beat. Not the message they had hoped for.

CLARENCE

Seems like the mountain wants two of
us to die.

JONATHAN

Better than *all* of us.

LEWIS

Are we taking orders from a mountain?

CLARENCE

Mountain just turned rock and blood
into gold, I'd take orders from anyone
or anything that can do that.

JONATHAN

What we gotta decide is, who gets to
live.

LEWIS

And how we gonna do that?

JONATHAN

We're reasonable men. We all make our
case, then we agree on one. That's
fair.

Beat. The men think of why they should be the ones to live.

CLARENCE

The only reason I've ever had the
mountain already took from me.

(beat)

All I ask is that someone tells his
mama what happened.

Clarence gestures to the rubble while trying not to cry.

JONATHAN

I have my father to take care of.

LEWIS

Your father can take care of himself.

JONATHAN

His mind is going. He needs me. He
keeps talking about the war as if I
wasn't there with him.

(beat)

That I didn't hold his hands while he
screamed when his legs were being
sawed off to save his life.

(beat)

If I die here, that's the death of
two, and that's not fair. Your wife
can take care of your son.

LEWIS

My wife's black. My newborn son is too. More black than white anyhow. A black widow with a child... in this world, no way they can take care of themselves. If I die here, that's the death of three.

They've reached an impasse.

LEWIS (CONT'D)

Clarence, you decide.

They both look to Clarence, who ponders their arguments.

CLARENCE

I'm sorry, Jonathan. A child is worth more than a father.

That doesn't deter Jonathan. He looks at Lewis and Clarence... with ill intent perhaps?

JONATHAN

Hand me the knife. I'll do it myself.

Clarence grabs the knife Billy used and gives it to Jonathan.

With the lamp in Jonathan's right hand, knife in his left. Clarence to his right, Lewis to his left... He plays the scenario out in his head.

Lewis and Clarence look at each other, uneasy.

Jonathan is ready... He SUDDENLY THROWS the paraffin lamp at Clarence, the lamp SHATTERS and sets him ON FIRE, and Clarence SCREAMS in agony.

Jonathan turns to Lewis who backs away, picks up a pickaxe, and moves in for the hit.

Jonathan walks towards him undeterred. Lewis BURIES the pickaxe in Jonathan's stomach. To Lewis's horror, Jonathan continues as nothing.

He GRABS Lewis' neck and SLICES his throat with the knife and blood SQUIRTS out from the wound. Lewis grabs his own neck in terror, desperately trying to stop the bleeding.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Lewis. I'll take care of them, I promise.

They both fall to the ground. Lewis tries to speak but GARGLES blood instead. The blood from his neck pours onto the ground forming a river that flows towards the golden wall.

Clarence's SCREAMING fades out... but the fire on his body does not.

Jonathan pulls out the pickaxe from his stomach, a rush of blood follows. The adrenaline is fading. The pain catches up to him, he does his best to ignore it.

Lewis' blood reaches the wall and flows upwards... new letters appear in DEEP BLOOD RED (written in Cheyenne) BREAK THE GOLD.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
Break the gold.

Jonathan, determined, gets up, holding the pickaxe. He STRIKES the slab with his pickaxe -- CLING -- nothing. Again -- CLING -- nothing.

Fear in Jonathan's eyes now... all he has left in him is one last strike --

JONATHAN (CONT'D)
AAAAAAAAAAAAARHG!

CLING -- the golden wall SHATTERS, revealing a BLACK SPACE behind it. A RUSH of wind enters and the light sound of TRICKLING WATER follows.

Jonathan empties a backpack and fills it up with as much gold as he can.

He looks ahead to the black space.

INT. BLACK SPACE - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan walks into the BLACK SPACE. He finds himself on a smooth marble-like surface. The TRICKLING of water flows down a set of barely visible stairs to his left. Somewhere below, the RUMBLING of water.

INT. BASIN

Jonathan walks down the stairs which gives way to a basin. After just a few steps the water reaches up to his chest. He's being pulled forward and down by a current, but fights it... but where else can he go? He lets the current take him.

EXT. RIVER, MOUNTAINSIDE - DUSK

A wide river ROARS down the mountainside. Jonathan's face BREACHES the surface and he GASPS for air. He looks younger by about TWENTY YEARS.

The heavy backpack does its best to drag him below. He quickly orients himself... The riverbank is not too far away. A BURST of energy is what he needs to reach it.

He lays on the ground catching his breath.

He slides the heavy backpack off and rolls around on his back, feeling his stomach. There's NO SIGN of the wound, he's FULLY HEALED. He feels his face, his body. He starts LAUGHING HYSTERICALLY.

INT. CABIN, NIGHT

Jonathan walks through the door into the dark cabin.

JONATHAN

Don't worry pa, it's only me.

He places the backpack on the floor -- THUMP. On the floor next to it is an open letter. Jonathan picks it up.

The top reads: DUE TO THE DEATH OF: JONATHAN WILKINS. THE RECIPIENT IS ENTITLED TO: \$10.00 IN FINANCIAL COMPENSATION.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Pa?

INT. CABIN, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Jonathan enters the bedroom. The two beds are empty.

INT. CABIN, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Jonathan walks back out to the living room. Something catches his eye.

Abraham lays dead in the bathtub filled with blood. His cold dead hand holds the razor.

EXT. CABIN - NIGHT

The still night is broken by the PIERCING sound as Jonathan starts to CRY uncontrollably.