

# BAD WATER

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Directed by Chuck Bowman

**TEASER:**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT TOWN - TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY 1**

A wealthy mining baron, **CLAY HARDING**, his son, **CALVIN**, and his henchman, **BEN**, ride into town on a busy morning, tie their horses up and start into the telegraph office.

**HORACE** is filing messages, but when he sees **Harding**, **Calvin** and **Ben** walk in, he jumps to attention.

I'm staking a new claim for gold - west of Willow Creek. Just below my mill ....

**HORACE:**

That's fine, Mr. **Harding**, but I gotta wire **Golden** - see if it's been staked already. We'll get an answer back in a couple of days.

**Harding** steps closer to **Horace**.

**HARDING:**

While we're waiting, I want you to keep this quiet.

**HORACE:**

Oh, course. I took an oath, when I got sworn in. All claims are confidential.

**Harding** considers, looks at his son and **Ben**, then turns and walks out. **Ben** lights a stogie as he moves to **Horace**, threatening.

**BEN:**

**Make sure you keep your trap shut.**

**Horace nods vigorously.**

**INT SALOON - DAY**

**Hank is setting up at the bar when Calvin, looking arrogant, walks in. Several men are drinking. Myra stands by.**

**CALVIN:**

**Whiskey (Hank doesn't respond).**

**Are you deaf? Whiskey!**

**HANK:**

**I can't serve somebody who don't shave yet.**

**Other men laugh**

**CALVIN:**

**Don't you know who I am?**

**MYRA:**

**We know who your Daddy is.**

**Calvin takes a wad of bills from his pocket, slaps a few on the bar.**

**CALVIN:**

**That enough for a glass of whiskey?**

**Hank eyes the money - it's more than enough. Starts to pour.**

**HANK:**

**You're gettin' older by the minute.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT STREET - DAY**

**BRIAN carrying a basket of eggs, walks in front of the saloon with MATTHEW.**

**Calvin backs out, a little tipsy, Myra hangs in the door.**

**CALVIN:**

**(Waves) Goodbye pretty lady.**

**Myra rolls her eyes. He turns, bumps into Brian. Brian stumbles and the eggs go flying, splatter on the ground. Brian cries out.**

**Myra steps out, tries to help Brian pick them up.**

**CALVIN:**

**Hey kid, watch your step.**

**EXT CLINIC**

**MIKE is on the porch saying goodbye to a patient when she looks up to see what's happening.**

**EXT SALOON**

**MATTHEW:**

**(To Calvin) You just bought yourself some eggs.**

**CALVIN:**

**Don't need any eggs.**

**Calvin starts to walk away and Matthew grabs him. Calvin shoves Matthew. That's it.**

**They fight. Mike runs up, as do Harding and Ben.**

**MIKE:**

**Stop it!**

**Mike moves to pull them apart, but Ben grabs her first.**

**BEN:**

**Hold on there!**

**Sully suddenly appears and pulls Ben off of Mike. Ben takes a swing at Sully who ducks it and backs off, ready to pull his tomahawk.**

**HARDING:**

**That's enough!**

**CALVIN:**

**He started it!**

**HARDING:**

**You pick a fight with my son?**

**MATTHEW:**

**No sir.**

**MIKE:**

**Your son bumped into my son and made him drop the eggs.**

**Harding looks around. People in the crowd nod and murmur agreement. He takes a large gold coin and throws it in the dirt at Brian's feet, puts his arm around his son and they walk off. Ben follows. Brian glances at Matthew, then picks up the coin. Mike looks outraged.**

**FADE OUT**

**END OF TEASER**

**ACT ONE**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT CLINIC - DAY - ESTABLISHING**

**EZRA (V.O.)**

**How much of this I got to drink?**

**INT CLINIC - DAY**

**Mike is examining OLIVE, who sits on the examining table. A sick man, EZRA lies on a cot against the wall.**

**MIKE (over the screen)**

**All of it, Mr. Stone. It's called paregoric and it will calm your stomach.**

**OLIVE:**

**That's what I need. I can't keep food down. I feel so weak ...**

**Olive runs a hand through her hair, and a bunch of strands come out.**

**OLIVE:**

**Look at this. It's been falling out every time I brush it. (She tears up; vulnerable). It's not the change, is it? Dr. Mike? ... am I gettin' old and dried up?**

**MIKE: (comforting)**

**No, of course not. (A hug). You're far too young.**

**OLIVE:**

**I don't feel young. My teeth are even gettin' loose.**

**MIKE:**

**Your teeth?**

**OLIVE:**

**My gums are bleedin'.**

**We hear bell to clinic ring.**

**MIKE:**

**I'll give you some alum to rub on them.**

**As Olive comes out from behind the screen, the REVEREND walks in.**

**REVEREND: (concerned)**

**Miss Olive, how're you?**

**OLIVE:**

**Not feelin' my best. How bout you, Reverend?**

**REVEREND**

**Same. I feel so poorly, I had to cancel choir practice ...**

**MIKE:**

**Upset stomach? (he nods). Have you noticed any hair loss?**

**REVEREND:**

**How'd you know?**

**MIKE:**

**You're the fourth person I've seen with these symptoms. (nods at cot). Ezra has the same thing. It almost seems like kind of poisoning.**

**REVEREND:**

**You mean someone's trying to kill us?**

**MIKE:**

**No. But you all may have eaten something bad.**

**EZRA:**

**I got a bitter taste in my mouth.**

**REVEREND:**

**You do? So do I. Sort of like metal.**

**OLIVE:**

**Yeah.**

**MIKE:**

**What have you been drinking? Where do you get your water?**

**REVEREND:**

**Willow Creek.**

**MIKE:**

**Who else gets water there? Everyone in town?**

**OLIVE:**

**I do.**

**EZRA:**

**Not me.**

**REVEREND:**

**A lot of folks have wells.**

**MIKE: (turns to Ezra)**

**You're sure you haven't had water from Willow Creek?**

**EZRA:**

**No ma'am.**

**MIKE: (frustrated)**

**Can't be the source then.**

**Ezra reaches in his coat pocket. Takes out a flask bottle, takes a drink.**

**MIKE:**

**What's that?**

**EZRA:**

**Moonshine.**

**OLIVE:**

**You running a still?**

**EZRA:**

**No ma'am. Bought this from Happy Walker.**

**MIKE:**

**Where's he get his water?**

**EZRA: (a look, then)**

**Willow Creek.**

**Mike looks excited - this may be the key.**

**EXT POND - DAY**

**Mike walks beside the Willow Creek pond, with the three kids. Matthew carries a knapsack. Mike kneels and scoops up water, runs it through her fingers, sniffs it.**

**BRIAN:**

**What're we looking for?**

**MIKE:**

**Something unusual, that isn't normally there .....**

**BRIAN:**

**There's a tree frog!**

**COLLEEN:**

**That's not what she means.**

**SULLY:**

**Over here. Between the rocks.**

**Mike and the children walk over and look.**

**MATTHEW:**

**That silver stuff?**

**MIKE:**

**Hand me the copper pot.**

**Matthew opens bag and hands her a copper pot.**

**COLLEEN:**

I was wonderin' why you brought it.

Mike dips pot into the water, rubs it against the rocks and pulls it out. The silver material sticks to the copper.

**BRIAN:**

What is it?

**MIKE:**

I'm not positive, but ... who has a nickel?

Matthew hands her one. She rubs the nickel with the silver material. It shines it up.

**MIKE:**

It's mercury.

She looks at Sully, who nods.

**EXT TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY 2**

Horace helps Mike post a sign by the chalk board: "Danger - Bad Water. Willow Creek is contaminated with mercury. Highly poisonous. Don't drink or eat fish caught there until further notice. Dr. M. Quinn."

**MIKE:**

Where does Willow Creek have its source?

**HORACE:**

Well, let's see, it winds back up toward the hills. (points). Goes right through that new claim of Mr. Harding's ... oh my gosh.

He checks himself, realizes he shouldn't have mentioned the new claim. Looks embarrassed.

**MIKE:**

**What?**

**HORACE:**

**I wasn't sposed to say nothin' bout that claim. Please don't tell no one. I took a oath ....**

**MIKE:**

**I won't. Don't worry. But ... where does the stream go from there?**

**HORACE:**

**It curves around past the Harding mill ...**

**MIKE:**

**A gold mill?**

**HORACE:**

**Yep. They crush all the rock from his mines there - separate out the gold.**

**MIKE: (turns to leave)**

**Thank you Horace.**

**HORACE: (concerned)**

**Please don't say nothin'!**

**MIKE:**

**I promise.**

**EXT STREET - DAY**

**Harding, his son, Clay and Ben are walking past the saloon. Mike comes out of the telegraph office and spots them, approaches. Horace follows her, with apprehension. Harding and Clay are ready to ride out of town and have their horses saddled at the**

hitching post. Sully is there, watching. So is Olive. Mike's manner, at first, is pleasant and respectful.

**MIKE:**

Mr. Harding, may I have a word with you? (as her turns). Do you happen to use mercury in your mining operation?

**HARDING:**

Course we do. It's the best thing for separating gold from ore.

**MIKE:**

Is it possible that some of that mercury is finding its way into Willow Creek? It runs right by your mill.

**HARDING:** (gives her a hard look)

Runs by a dozen other mills, too.

**MIKE:**

Would you mind if we came and took a sample? People here are getting sick and I'm concerned ....

**HARDING:** (interrupting)

Damn right I'd mind. We don't allow outsiders. Lot of folks jump claims, leads to shooting and killing ...

**SULLY:**

You're the one doing the killing. I lost my best friend in one of your cave-ins.

**HARDING:**

I run a safe operation.

**MIKE:**

**Mr. Harding, mercury poisoning builds up slowly - until the lungs and kidneys give out, and you die with painful convulsions ...**

**Harding swings onto his horse, as does Calvin.**

**HARDING:**

**Quite a tale. But it's not my concern.**

**MIKE:**

**Oh, but it is sir.**

**HARDING: (to Calvin)**

**Son, let's ride.**

**MIKE:**

**Mr. Harding, if I can prove to the authorities in Denver that mercury is coming from your mill, I will shut you down. And if one person dies, I will see to it that you're arrested and tried for manslaughter.**

**Harding shares at her, then tips his hat, leans over to her.**

**HARDING:**

**You got quite an imagination.**

**He spurs his horse. Calvin follows, leaving Mike, Sully and Horace to stare after them. Ben, who's staying behind to manage Harding's affairs, gives the three a dark look.**

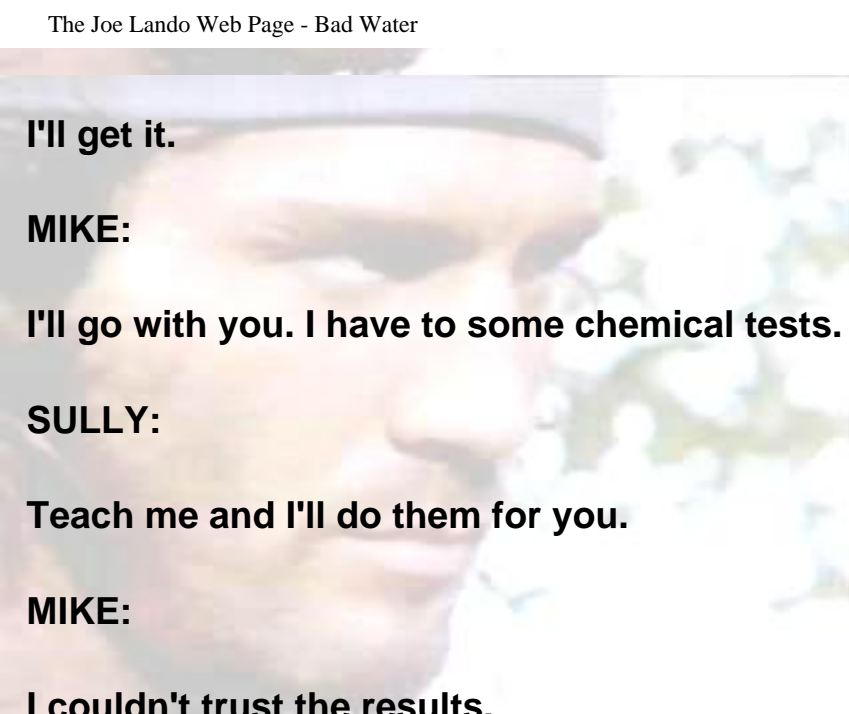
**EXT TOWN - STREET - DAY**

**Mike and Sully are walking and talking, some place where they can't be overheard.**

**MIKE:**

**I'll need a sample from the water by his mill.**

**SULLY:**



**I'll get it.**

**MIKE:**

**I'll go with you. I have to some chemical tests.**

**SULLY:**

**Teach me and I'll do them for you.**

**MIKE:**

**I couldn't trust the results.**

**SULLY:**

**I've done some assay work if you're thinking I can't do it right.**

**MIKE:**

**No, it's not that. (beat). I mean a judge might find your results biased. You made it quite clear you have a score to settle.**

**SULLY:**

**Well, it's too hard a journey for someone like you to make.**

**MIKE:**

**Someone like me?**

**SULLY:**

**You ever slept in anything but a bed? (her look). I'll bring the sample back here, and then you ...**

**MIKE:**

**I need to conduct the test at the source. I need you to guide me there. Will you?**

**SULLY:**

**(beat; then) If you go, it'll take too long and more people are gonna get sick.**

**MIKE:**

**Fine. (she walks on a beat). Then I'll go by myself.**

**Sully throws up his hands in frustration.**

**INT GENERAL STORE - DAY**

**Mike buys supplies.**

**OLIVE:**

**You wouldn't be fixin' to go out after that water now?**

**MIKE:**

**What makes you think that ....**

**OLIVE:**

**Getting' to know you.**

**Mike starts to deny it, but realizes she can't fool Olive. Mike sighs.**

**MIKE:**

**Someone has to stop Harding before it's too late.**

**OLIVE:**

**Sully going with you?**

**MIKE:**

**He wants to go alone. Says I'll slow him down.**

**OLIVE:**

**You ride as good as him. Must be another reason.**

**MIKE:**

**Well, it is rough country. And it could be dangerous.**

**OLIVE:**

**You know what I think. I think he's scared to be out there alone with you.**

**MIKE:**

**Why would that scare him?**

**OLIVE:**

**(wry). I can't imagine.**

**Mike steals a look at her, and it's clear, she knows exactly what Olive means. Mike blushes. They laugh. It's a moment of understanding between the women.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

**Mike and Sully have started on their journey. Sully bareback on an Indian pony, Mike on Bear. Wolf trots along. Mike has saddle bags and a tent tied onto her horse. Sully travels light.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

**Walking their horses, they come to a gate with a large sign: "Property of Harding Mining Co. No Trespassing."**

**MIKE:**

**Isn't there a less conspicuous way?**

**SULLY:**

Not if you want to follow the river you want to test.

Sully forces the gate open. Mike looks about nervously. He opens gate, and leads his horse through. Mike follows.

**DISSOLVE TO: EXT CAMPSITE - NIGHT**

Mike is trying to clean up, sitting in front of her tent. Washing her face by the campfire, pouring water from a canteen onto a handkerchief. Sully enters from the woods, sees her, smells her scented soap.

**SULLY:**

Don't go wastin' water. We can't drink from the creek, and we got a ways to go before there's a spring.

Sully lays down next to the fire. Mike puts her toilet items away. Sully is at once comfortable, closes his eyes. Mike watches him for a moment.

**MIKE:**

Well ... good night.

He doesn't respond. She lies down.

**BACK TO MIKE**

staring at the stars, his eyes open looking at the same, neither daring to look at one another .....

**FADE OUT**

**END OF ACT ONE**

**ACT TWO**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT WOOD - DAY**

**Mike is still sleeping. A fire is going, a coffee pot sits in the embers. Sully has gotten up early and quietly done everything. He's tying his bedroll to his horse. Wolf sits quietly waiting. Sully starts to put out the fire. The noise wakes Mike who stands and calls to Sully, holding the blanket in front of her.**

**Mike springs into action, goes into a flurry of gathering and packing her things. Sully pours coffee, sits back to watch.**

**MIKE:**

**Why didn't you wake me?**

**SULLY:**

**I said we'd leave at sun up.**

**MIKE:**

**You could at least have given me some warning ....**

**SULLY:**

**Just did.**

**Sully eyes her pile of belongings: a mirror, toiletries, clothes, towel, cookware.**

**SULLY:**

**Better hurry up and pack all that junk.**

**MIKE:**

**It's not junk.**

**She quickly takes down her tent and gathers her things.**

**SULLY:**

**Well at least don't be usin' any more of that fancy soap. If I can smell it, then everybody**

**else can too.**

**He turns away. We HOLD on her.**

**EXT TOWN - DAY**

**The three kids are walking down the street when they hear a commotion, turn and look behind them**

**THEIR POV**

**A horse comes into town with a DEAD MAN strapped onto him. A sign pinned to his back reads like the sign Mike and Sully saw on the gate: "Harding Mining Co. Trespassers will be shot." A crowd gathers around the horse, including Robert E., Grace, Olive, the Reverend, Horace, Hank, Jake, Loren and Myra. Kids approach. Several men lift the dead man down, as Robert E takes off and reads the sign.**

**ROBERT E:**

**"Claims jumpers shot on sight - Clay Harding."**

**Crowd reacts with shock, fear.**

**OLIVE:**

**Dr. Mike and Sully left yesterday to get a sample of water near Harding's mill ... We gotta warn em. Who's ridin' with me?**

**REVEREND:**

**You're not feeling up to it Olive.**

**OLIVE:**

**Neither are you.**

**ROBERT E:**

**I'll go.**

**GRACE:**

**We promised to look after the younguns.**

**HORACE:**

**I'll go.**

**HANK: (snickers)**

**You'll go get shot, is what.**

**OLIVE:**

**Just cause you ain't brave.**

**HANK:**

**I ain't stupid.**

**OLIVE:**

**That's a matter of opinion.**

**REVEREND:**

**Well, I'm goin'. Jake what about you?**

**JAKE:**

**LOREN (to Jake)**

**We can't let them shoot Dr. Mike, can we?**

**JAKE:**

**What if someone in town needs a haircut?**

**OLIVE:**

**Doctor Mike has helped a lotta folks in this town.**

**HANK:**

**Jake's yellah.**

**JAKE:**

**Oh yeah? Who's yellah - I'll go if you go.**

**HANK:**

**Ha! (turns to Loren, taunting). How bout you old man? Giddee up?**

**LOREN: (defiant)**

**You bet.**

**EXT WATER'S EDGE - WASH - DAY**

**Mike is completing a test by the water. She's putting away her kit when Sully enters.**

**MIKE:**

**We're still on track.**

**SULLY:**

**Let's rest here.**

**MIKE:**

**Don't stop for me. I'm fine if you want to move on.**

**SULLY:**

**We're stopping for the horses.**

**Sully walks away. We HOLD on Mike.**

**EXT TREES**

**Mike is giving the horses water from their supply. Sully is pulling off Mike's gear.**

**SULLY:**

**You've got to keep checking the straps. Balance the load.**

**MIKE:**

**How much farther before we stop?**

**SULLY:**

**We'll keep going until dark. (half beat). You alright with that?**

**MIKE:**

**Of course.**

**Suddenly the horses get spooked. Wolf lets out a low growl.**

**SULLY:**

**Easy boy.**

**MIKE:**

**What is it?**

**SULLY:**

**Don't know. Could be a bear, maybe another wolf.**

**And then we hear the growl.**

**SULLY:**

**Mountain lion.**

**And the horses both run off. Sully can't hold them.**

**ANGLE MOUNTAIN LION (stock) up on some rocks above them. He growls.**

**SULLY picks up a rock, throws it at the lion.**

**SULLY:**

**Get! Go on!**

**ANGLE LION (stock) as it turns and runs.**

**BACK TO SCENE**

**Mike looks after the horses. Sully starts picking up his gear.**

**MIKE**

**Aren't we going after the horses?**

**SULLY:**

**They're long gone and we gotta move. Leave everything but what you need.**

**She chooses her brush/mirror as one of the "essentials". He shakes his head.**

**EXT LIVERY - DAY**

**The posse gathered in front of Jake's shop. Loren, Horace, Jake, Hank, the Reverend. Grace, Olive, Robert E are there to send them off.**

**Matthew watches from the porch of Jake's store.**

**REVEREND;**

**We'll head up to four corners, pick up the creek there.**

**Matthew climbs on his horse.**

**JAKE:**

**What do you think you're doin'?**

**MATTHEW:**

**Going with you.**

**HANK:**

**This ain't a job for kids.**

**MATTHEW:**

**I don't see any kids here, do you Reverend?**

**The Reverend mounts up.**

**REVEREND:**

**No, I don't. Let's ride.**

**They spur and start out. We go with them. Olive, Grace, Robert E wave to them**

**ANGLE REVEREND**

**REVEREND:**

**I'll raise my arm like this when I'm gonna stop.**

**He turns around to demonstrate for them and gets blind-sided by the Cooper sign hanging above the street. The Reverend does a flip to the ground.**

**Everyone stops. Grace, Robert E and Olive come running up the street.**

**Olive bends and puts his head on her lap, stroking his brow.**

**OLIVE:**

**Are you all right?**

**REVEREND:**

**I don't think so ...**

And with that he passes out.

**HANK:**

That's one down.

Matthew spurs his horse, takes off. The men hurry to catch up. We hold on Grace, Olive, Robert E and the unconscious Reverend.

**EXT WOODS - DAY**

A RATTLESNAKE glides over the warm rocks. CAMERA MOVES to reveal it's headed right for SULLY, reclining on his side, back to CAMERA and the snake. Sully's watching something.

SULLY'S POV - MIKE asleep, sitting up against a rock. They've stopped for a rest. Wolf rests beside Mike, as if guarding her.

**ANGLE SULLY**

**SULLY:**

Hey .... psst.

**ANGLE THE SNAKE**

as it stops, raises its head, flicks the tongue out. Two feet from Sully.

MIKE opens her eyes.

**MIKE:**

I fell asleep.

**SULLY:**

I know. Time to get going again.

**MIKE:**

I was dreaming.

**SULLY:**

**You talk in your sleep.**

**MIKE:**

**I do?**

**SULLY: (smiles)**

**Pick up your gear.**

**Mike starts to gather her things, brush, mirror ... she looks at herself in the mirror ....**

**MIKE:**

**What'd I say?**

**SULLY:**

**Nothing worth repeating.**

**That sets Mike to thinking. But then Sully sits up, revealing the snake behind him. And the sudden movements causes the rattler to coil and begin rattling.**

**MIKE:**

**Oh my God!**

**Wolf starts barking. Sully knows enough to hold still. He can see it out of the corner of his eye.**

**MIKE:**

**Shhhh .... Wolf ... stop it ...**

**Wolf stops barking. Mike slowly lowers her mirror, and the sun flares from it. Mike gets an idea. She starts to slide the reflection beam across the ground. Sully sees what she's doing and watches ... she moves the beam up, onto the snake's body and then into its eyes, blinding it. At that moment, Sully makes his move, gets away, then pulls out his**

**tomahawk and kills the snake. He picks up his tomahawk, the dead snake.**

**SULLY:**

**Thank you.**

**Mike puts her mirror away.**

**MIKE:**

**Never hurts to be prepared.**

**SULLY: (nods, then)**

**I'll save him for dinner.**

**And Sully starts walking. Wolf follows, and then Mike shakes her head in wonder, picks up her gear, goes off after them.**

**EXT CLEARING - CEDAR GROVE - NIGHT**

**The search party is making camp. Jake starts a fire. Hank drinks from a flask. Jake and Horace both want the same spot. Jake throws Horace's blanket to the side, grabs the spot.**

**JAKE:**

**I'm sleeping here.**

**MATTHEW:**

**I wouldn't if I was you.**

**JAKE:**

**Why not? It's the best spot. Nice and soft.**

**MATTHEW:**

**Ticks.**

**Jakes gives him a look, picks up his blanket.**

**LOREN:**

**Hush up! Look!**

**HORACE:**

**Skunk!**

**A large skunk is walking straight toward them.**

**MATTHEW:**

**It won't bother us. Leave it be.**

**HORACE:**

**I don't like skunks.**

**HANK:**

**Make a skunk noise.**

**JAKE:**

**Skunks don't make noise.**

**HANK:**

**"Git!"**

**MATTHEW:**

**Don't scare him!**

**Matthew moves away. Hank picks up a rock.**

**LOREN:**

**What're you doin'?**

**HORACE:**

**Don't get him mad.**

**HANK:**

**Skunks are bullies.**

**JAKE**

**Hank, no!**

**Hank tosses a rock at the skunk and it lets loose. We stay on the men as it sprays them. Jake, Loren, Hank and Horace cry out in distress, close their eyes, cover their noses, roll in the dirt in a mad tangle ...**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT TRAIL - DAY**

**Mike and Sully come to a rock near the river, stop and peer around it. Wolf is with them**

**THEIR POV**

**A lean to, with a crude still beside it. No sign of activity.**

**BACK TO SCENE:**

**SULLY:**

**That's Happy Walker's still.**

**MIKE:**

**Shall we see if he's there?**

**Mike starts to straighten up.**

**SULLY:**

**No. He's crazy. Shoots at anything that comes near. (stands). Wait.**

**Cautiously, silently, Sully advances toward the still. Then stops, turns around and looks at Mike. Motions her to come.**

**MIKE:**

**What is it?**

**She moves up to Sully and is startled.**

**THEIR POV:**

**Happy Walker on the ground, dead. An overturned jug of moonshine beside him. He's pale, and his open mouth is nearly toothless. Mike crouches beside him, touches his hair, and it comes out in her hand. She looks at Sully.**

**FADE OUT**

**END OF ACT TWO**

**ACT THREE**

**FADE IN**

**EXT TRAIL - DAY**

**Sully and Mike walk along a trail. Mike stops, sets the tent down.**

**SULLY:**

**You need that tent?**

**MIKE:**

**It might rain. (his look). All right, we'll leave it.**

**She picks up the moonshine bottle.**

**SULLY:**

**You need that:**

**MIKE:**

**Evidence.**

**Sully grabs the bottle, tucks it in his shirt, starts out again.**

**EXT WASH - DAY**

**Hank, Jake and Horace are in the stream below the rock in their long johns, madly washing themselves and scrubbing their clothes. Loren's on the bank, scrubbing his clothes on a rock. Matthew watches them.**

**LOREN:**

**Smell won't come out.**

**HORACE:**

**I told ya' ....**

**JAKE: (pitches clothes to shore)**

**Nothin' to do but burn em.**

**HANK: (tosses shirt down river)**

**Just toss em.**

**They start wading out, putting on hats and boots and gun belts over their damp long johns. Getting horses ready. Considering the different paths.**

**LOREN:**

**Which way, ya' think?**

**HORACE:**

**That right path. goes to the mill.**



**JAKE**

**No, it's the left. I been here before.**

**LOREN**

**That's right, Jake.**

**JAKE: (misunderstanding).**

**Left!**

**HORACE:**

**But I seen it on the map.**

**LOREN:**

**Most maps are worthless.**

**HANK:**

**Take the right. I know the river.**

**JAKE:**

**Like you know skunks? (Swings onto horse)**

**I'm leadin'. Left!**

**MATTHEW:**

**I think we should go this way.**

**HANK:**

**Yeah, what do you know?**

**MATTHEW:**

**I know enough to still have my clothes. And if we go this way, we'll save half a day.**

**Matthew rides out. But the other men shake their heads and mount up reluctantly.**

**JAKE:**

**Well I'm going this way.**

**HANK:**

**Me too.**

**Hank, Jake and Loren ride off in a different direction from Matthew. Horace is torn, then follows Hank and Jake.**

**HORACE:**

**Hey, wait up!**

**EXT WOODS - DAY**

**Sully and Mike are walking along a rocky path with a sharp fall off to one side. They are picking their way over the boulders. Suddenly, Sully stops. Listens.**

**SULLY:**

**Get down.**

**And then we see the wagon, coming into view just ahead. Another moment and they'll be seen by the two armed guards.**

**SULLY:**

**Now!**

**Mike moves for cover, loses her balance and falls on the rocks. She lands hard on her wrist, breaking it. Sully is immediately beside her.**

**MIKE:**

**ahh!**

**CLOSER ANGLE**

Sully put his hand over her mouth stopping the scream, holding her, hoping the men didn't hear.

**ANGLE WAGON**

as one of the guards looks around, then shakes it off.

**ANGLE SULLY**

crouching low in the rocks, holding Mike until the men pass. Mike nearly faints from the pain. Finally, the guards and wagon are gone and Sully lets go of her.

Mike nods, tries to feel her wrist.

**MIKE**

It's broken.

**EXT LIVERY - DAY**

Olive and Robert E are sitting with the kids.

**ROBERT E**

That search party musta found em by now.

**OLIVE:**

They're all on their way home.

Grace comes out with a plate of homemade cookies.

**COLLEEN:**

Hope you're right.

**GRACE:**

**Right or not, worryin' bout it won't accomplish nothin'. How bout some cookies?**

**Everyone reaches for them, and despite their fears, it's a treat to taste them. Lots of mmmms and ahhhhhs.**

**BRIAN (to Grace):**

**You oughta open a cafe.**

**GRACE: (this is a joke)**

**What an idea.**

**ROBERT E:**

**You cook good enough.**

**COLLEEN:**

**You cook better n anyone in town.**

**GRACE:**

**You're just hungry now, is all.**

**ROBERT E:**

**Lot of miners would pay good for a hot dinner.**

**BRIAN:**

**You could call it, Grace's Cafe.**

**GRACE:**

**How'm I gonna do that? I got no place.**

**OLIVE:**

**I might back ya'. I know you love workin' for me, but the town needs a cafe.**

**COLLEEN:**

**You could start right her ... put up a picnic table.**

**GRACE:**

**I never heard such foolishness! (laughs). Grace's Cafe.**

**But we see, from her face, that despite her protests, she's beginning to consider it. Shoots a look at Olive.**

**BRIAN:**

**wonder if they found em yet.**

**EXT WOODS - NIGHT**

**Sully is roasting a rabbit on sticks. Mike sits beside the fire, watching it, as does wolf. She's got a stick splint tied to her wrist, a sling fashioned from her petticoat and skirt. She picks up the canteen, but can't open it with one hand. Sully takes the canteen, opens it, pours her some water.**

**SULLY:**

**Your wrist hurt?**

**MIKE: (shrugs)**

**Dull ache.**

**SULLY:**

**Best give it a rest.**

**MIKE:**

**Thank you. (irritated with herself). But it's not necessary to wait on me.**

**SULLY:**

**No shame in letting folks help you.**

**Mike shakes her head. Looks at Sully.**

**MIKE:**

**I'm sorry. I wanted to show you I could do whatever you could. (rueful). Now I'm nearly helpless.**

**SULLY:**

**Why don't you quit tryin' so hard?**

**MIKE:**

**It's an old habit.**

**SULLY:**

**Give it up.**

**They sit a beat. She takes brush out. She tries to take the pins from her hair. He stops her. He starts taking them out for her. She let's him. He moves behind her and begins to brush it. Mike stiffens at first, very uncomfortable. Then, slowly, she begins to relax ..**

**CLOSE ON SULLY**

**Mike can't see his face, but we can. He's touched by the soft feel of her hair, the nearness of her body, the warmth of her skin.**

**CLOSE ON MIKE**

**Her shoulders droop, and she allows herself to enjoy the feeling of Sully grooming and stroking her hair. Is it possible ... she could enjoy being take care of?**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT RIVER - DAY**

**Sully stands at the river's edge.**

## **SULLY**

**We should cross here.**

**Sully starts out into the water.**

## **EXT CLIFF ABOVE THE RIVER**

**Ben and another man, on horseback, watch Sully enter the river. They don't see Mike, hidden under the overhang of the cliff below them. The man takes out his rifle, starts to line up on Sully. Ben pushes the barrel down, shakes his head.**

## **BEN:**

**I got a better way.**

**He reaches into his saddlebag, pulls out a stick of dynamite, lights a short fuse, throws it into the river below.**

## **ANGLE SULLY**

**as the charge lands in front of him and goes off. Sully is catapulted up and back by the blast. He lands face down, unconscious.**

## **ANGLE MIKE**

**showered by the blast of water. She sees Sully floating, doesn't hesitate as she goes to save him.**

## **ANGLE RIVER**

**Mike struggles to reach him, then using her good arm, flips him over on his back. She grabs him by the shirt, holds his head above water, starts dragging him to the shore.**

## **MIKE'S POV - BEN AND MAN**

**on their horses, making their way down the trail to the water.**

## **MIKE**

**pulls Sully to the shore. She looks around for a hiding place, then drags him into some tall reeds. She looks up as Ben and the man ride down into the river.**

**ANGLE - BEN AND MAN**

**as they search the banks of the water, step out into it.**

**BEN:**

**Must have washed on downstream.**

**The other man nods. Ben turns his horse for home.**

**ANGLE - MIKE AND SULLY**

**hiding in the reeds.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT CLEARING - DAY**

**Mike and Sully sit on opposite sides of a large tree, their backs to each other. Mike's in her under garments, her arm in the sling. Sully's in his Indian briefs. Their clothes are spread out on the rocks to dry. They're exhausted, but feel that euphoria and gratefulness that comes from having survived an ordeal. As they talk, they're careful not to look at one another in their underclothes.**

**SULLY:**

**For someone who's "nearly helpless", you did good.**

**MIKE:**

**We were lucky.**

**SULLY:**

**The Cheyenne would say you have a debt on me.**

**MIKE:**

**We all have a debt on each other.**

**An awkward moment. Sully is acknowledging her and although she doesn't let on, it means a great deal to Mike.**

**MIKE:**

**Think the clothes are dry?**

**SULLY:**

**I'll check. (playful). Don't look.**

**MIKE:**

**I wouldn't dream of it.**

**He stands and goes to the rock, where Wolf is lying. Sully feels the clothes.**

**ON MIKE**

**She looks straight ahead, but curiosity gets the better of her, she sneaks a look around the tree at Sully, then snaps her head back.**

**ON SULLY**

**He picks up the clothes, starts back to the tree, keeping his eyes on the ground. Wolf walks beside him. Sully can't resist lifting his head and sneaking a look, but the wolf barks and Sully drops his head.**

**THE TREE**

**Mike has the sling off her arm. Sully stands with his eyes closed, holding up Mike's shirt, unbuttoned, so she can get into it.**

**MIKE:**

**Keep your eyes shut.**

**She slips her good hand through a sleeve, then uses that hand to guide the injured hand through the other sleeve. Mission accomplished, she pulls the sides of the shirt together**

in front of her. Tries to do the buttons, but it's impossible with one hand.

**MIKE:**

You may open them. (as he opens eyes). Could you ... fasten the buttons?

Trying to act as if it's just another task, Sully buttons the front of her blouse.

**MIKE:**

Thank you.

**SMASH CUT TO**

**EXT LEAN TO - NIGHT**

Mike is sleeping in a cave in the rock. Sully sleeps outside it, with Wolf. Mike raises her head.

**MIKE:**

Sully!

**SULLY: (lifts head)**

What?

**MIKE:**

It's raining. Come inside.

**SULLY:**

It'll stop soon.

Beat. He looks over at her.

**MIKE:**

Don't be stubborn.

**SULLY:**

**It's an old habit.**

**MIKE:**

**Give it up.**

**INT LEAN TO**

**Sully comes in and lies down next to Mike to give her warmth. She has her back to him. They don't speak, but they're tantalizingly aware of the other's presence. Neither can sleep.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT MILL - DAY (Stock)**

**Beside the river, we see Harding's mill. A sluice carries dirt and waste right to the water. Liquid, probably containing mercury, oozes from the sluice into the stream.**

**ANGLE**

**Mike hides behind a clump of bushes, watching the mill.**

**ANGLE**

**Mounted guards pass with rifles. When way is clear, Sully makes for the river, dips glass in, fills it and moves stealthily back towards Mike.**

**THE BUSHES**

**Hidden from view, Mike and Sully prepare to test the water. Mike has her kit of chemicals open. Sully holds glass of river water. Mike hands him another glass. Takes a small gold-colored chunk and drops it in the empty glass.**

**MIKE:**

**We'll put a piece of iron pyrite in there ...**

**SULLY:**

**Looks like fool's gold.**

**MIKE:**

**Exactly. (takes a vial from case). Open this - pour a few drips in? Careful, it's acid.**

**Sully opens vial, pours it over pyrite. It bubbles, forming a gas that smells putrid. Sully reacts.**

**SULLY:**

**What's that smell?**

**MIKE:**

**Hydrogen Sulfide gas. Now cut a piece of cloth off my petticoat.**

**Sully sets the two glasses down carefully. Takes knife and cuts a piece of her slip.**

**MIKE:**

**We'll soak it in the river water, and hold it over the other glass. If there's mercury in that water, the cloth will turn black. Mike dips the cloth in water, then stretches it over the glass. Gas bubbles up through the cloth.**

**THE GLASS**

**For a moment, nothing seems to be happening. Then a circle of black residue appears on the cloth.**

**BACK TO SCENE**

**Mike lets out a whoop ... then catches herself, looks at Sully. They've got what they need. Wolf starts to growl - they look up to see two armed guards coming at them. Sully sees they're trapped.**

**SULLY (to Wolf)**

**Run.**

**Wolf bolts away - one of the guards takes a shot at him. Misses, but then turns the gun on Sully and Mike. They raise three hands between them, slowly rise to face the guards as we**

**FADE OUT END OF ACT THREE**

**ACT FOUR**

**FADE IN**

**EXT HARDING'S CAMP**

**This is an encampment where Harding stays when he visits the mill. Harding, his son, Calvin, and their henchman, Ben, stand in front of Harding's tent, which is more elaborate than several nearby tents. In front of tent is a table and several chairs. Guards have brought Mike and Sully to Harding. One guard holds gun on them; other places items they've confiscated on the desk: the blanket/pack, chemical test kit, jug of moonshine, scrap of blackened cloth and the two glasses used in the experiment. One is capped and still contains water from the stream.**

**HARDING:**

**What's all that claptrap?**

**MIKE:**

**a crude way to test for mercury in the water ...**

**HARDING:**

**Nothing wrong with that water.**

**MIKE: (indicates glass)**

**Would you drink it, Mr. Harding?**

**HARDING:**

**No. I won't engage in theatrics.**

**MIKE:**

**Good. Then you won't object to sending a sample to Denver for analysis ...**

**CALVIN:**

**My father's word is good enough.**

**HARDING:**

**Let me remind you, Doctor Quinn ... you are the ones who've committed a crime - coming onto my land without permission - in spite of clear posted warnings ...**

**MIKE:**

**You refused permission.**

**SULLY:**

**And we know why. Your mines aren't safe.**

**HARDING: (steps forward, angry).**

**I got a right to shoot you.**

**They stare at each other.**

**SULLY:**

**That wouldn't be the end of this, Mr. Harding. You'll be found out and hung for it.**

**HARDING:**

**Ben!**

**Ben steps forward.**

**HARDING: (continuing ominous)**

**Take 'em to that tent down there. Make sure they're not ... disturbed. We'll settle it all in the morning.**

**Ben and the guards usher Sully and Mike toward another tent. Harding follows.**

**CLOSE ON CALVIN:**

**Calvin lingers behind, and when everyone's turned away, he clips the jug of moonshine under his arm and goes off toward the woods.**

**EXT BIG ROCK - DAY**

**The search party of Hank, Jake, Loren and Horace in their long johns covered with dirt - come down a path on their horses.**

**HORACE:**

**What I wouldn't give for some hot biscuits.**

**LOREN:**

**Bacon - crackling in the skillet.**

**HANK:**

**Rabbit stew, with brown gravy and potatoes and white cake for dessert.**

**JAKE:**

**Hey, look! What the heck ...**

**They stare at the landmark rock. They're right back where they started! Everyone moans.**

**HANK:**

**How'd we end up back here again?**

**LOREN:**

**We musta got turned around in the woods.**

**HORACE:**

**I told ya' - we should have stayed by the stream.**

**HANK (mimics him):**

**Told ya'. Told ya'.**

**JAKE:**

**We been ridin' all this time and we ain't gotten nowhere!**

**HANK:**

**Why are we doin' this anyhow? Who's harebrained idea was this?**

**A beat, they look at each other and all speak at once.**

**ALL (darkly)**

**The Reverend!**

**HANK:**

**He suckered us.**

**JAKE:**

**I bet he faked running into that sign. Probably never meant to come.**

**HANK:**

**And what about the doc? If she didn't go pokin' her nose where it don't belong ...**

**LOREN:**

**A pox on all of em. Let's go home!**

**HORACE:**

**Empty handed?**

**LOREN:**

**Who cares?**

**JAKE:**

**We'll never live it down.**

**HANK:**

**I ain't sure now which way home is.**

**JAKE/HORACE/LOREN**

**That way!**

**But the three of them point in different directions.**

**HANK:**

**That way.**

**And Wolf comes running up, barking. They follow him.**

**INT TENT - DAY**

**Mike and Sully are sitting on cots. Sully's tomahawk has been taken. Guard with rifle outside.**

**MIKE:**

**What do you think they're going to do?**

**SULLY:**

**Take us somewhere ... make it look like an accident ...**

**Suddenly tent flap opens and Ben sticks his head in.**

**BEN:**

**Come out here! Now!**

**Sully and Mike exchange glances.**

**EXT TENT**

**Harding has brought Calvin to the tent. Mike and Sully come out. Calvin is sick, doubled over in pain, groaning piteously.**

**HARDING:**

**My boy took sick. You're a doctor, right?**

**Mike steps toward Calvin, her professional instincts taking over.**

**MIKE (to Calvin)**

**What happened?**

**CALVIN**

**My stomach hurts. Terrible. I've been throwing up.**

**MIKE: (suspicious)**

**Did you drink water from the creek?**

**HARDING:**

**Course not. We have a spring ...**

**He catches himself - he's just admitted he doesn't use the creek water.**

**MIKE (to Calvin):**

**Do you have a bitter taste in your mouth?**

**CALVIN:**

**Yes!**

**MIKE:**

**Did you drink or eat something ... mixed with that water? Anything ... unusual?**

**CALVIN: (sheepish)**

**That moonshine you brought.**

**HARDING:**

**You drank that?**

**MIKE (to Harding):**

**It's full of mercury.**

**CALVIN (to father)**

**You said there was nothing wrong - the water was good.**

**Harding, at this point, doesn't care about anything except his son surviving. He turns to Mike.**

**HARDING:**

**Can't you do something?**

**MIKE:**

**I don't have my bag ...**

**She holds up her hands, which are tied. Calvin drops to the ground in pain, and Harding kneels beside him, freaking out.**

**HARDING:**

**Good god, please, help us ... there must be something you can do. Please!**

**MIKE:**

**Get me some charcoal. Powder if you have it.**

**HARDING:**

**Charcoal?**

**MIKE:**

**It absorbs the poison. We'll have him swallow some.**

**HARDING: (to guards)**

**Get it for her.**

**One guard takes off for Harding's tent. Mike kneels beside Calvin, puts her hand on his forehead, soothes him. Sully looks on, concerned.**

**MIKE:**

**Hold on. Take some deep breaths, like this ....**

**She demonstrates, and Calvin tries to breathe as she does.**

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT PLATEAU - DAY**

**Harding is standing by the creek, staring at the water. Mike comes up behind. He turns, anxious to know how his son is.**

**MIKE:**

**Calvin's going to pull through. The charcoal worked.**

**Harding closes his eyes and sighs with relief.**

**HARDING:**

**Can I see him?**

**Mike nods, and they start walking toward Harding's tent.**

**MIKE:**

**I've sent for some paragogic - that will calm his stomach. Give hm lots of milk to drink. And of course, none of that water...**

**HARDING:**

**Yes, the water.**

**They've reached the table in front of the tent.**

**HARDING:**

**People have got to be warned not drink it.**

**MIKE:**

**That's not enough. There's animals, fish ... everything is affected.**

**HARDING;**

**You know how much it'd cost not change our operation?**

**MIKE:**

**You know what it'll cost if you don't? It almost cost you Calvin.**

**HARDING: (deliberates)**

**We could build a tailings pond, dam up the waste so it can't seep into the river.**

**MIKE:**

**How soon?**

**HARDING: (stares at her)**

**I'll talk to my foreman now.**

**MIKE:**

**Good.**

**HARDING:**

**I'm grateful, about Calvin. (takes out money). What do I owe you?**

**MIKE:**

**Maybe, instead of paying me, you could make a settlement with the family of Happy Walker?**

**Harding stares at her a moment. She's asking a lot. Then he nods.**

**HARDING:**

**I'll lend you two of my horses - take you back not town.**

**MIKE:**

**Thank you.**

**She extends her hand and he shakes it.**

**BEN:**

**Hey, boss!**

**THEIR POV - GUARDS**

**Riding in with Matthew.**

**EXT WOODS - DAY**

**Mike, Sully and Matthew are riding back not town. Suddenly they hear a noise - men's voices shouting. They stop and listen - Wolf comes running up not them barking.**

**EXT RIVER FORK - DAY**

**the mud men are on their horses, making their way along the river arguing.**

**JAKE:**

**That way's North.**

**HANK:**

**Shut up. You done nothin' but get us lost.**

**LOREN:**

**See that moss on the side of the tree?**

**HORACE:**

**That ain't moss, it's mold.**

**ON MIKE, SULLY AND MATTHEW**

**As they watch, the mud men round a corner and come right at them - a terrible sight. Wolf starts barking. Mike cries out, the others are startled.**

**ON THE MUD MEN**

**Horace's horse spooks, lowers his head and Horace slides right down the neck onto the ground, in front of Mike**

**WIDER ANGLE**

**MIKE:**

**Horace:**

**HORACE: (looking up)**

**Dr. Mike?**

**(turns to others)**

**It's Dr. Mike and Sully! We found em.**

**The mud men stare at Dr. Mike, with her arm in sling and her dress all ripped.**

**JAKE:**

**You hurt?**

**MIKE:**

**Took a fall, broke my wrist, that's all.**

**LOREN;**

**We been searchin' for you for days.**

**SULLY:**

**Matthew told us.**

**HANK:**

**Folks in town was worried you'd get shot.**

**Mike and Sully exchange a look.**

**MIKE:**

**Well, thank goodness you found us.**

**HORACE:**

**Let's take em home!**

**The men all cheer and whoop. Start turning their horses, but they turn them in circles, not sure which way to go.**

**Sully realizes they're hopelessly lost. Moves his horse forward onto trail.**

**SULLY:**

**Why don't I lead?**

**Everyone falls in line behind Sully.**

## **EXT TOWN - TREE BY LIVERY STABLE - DAY**

The children, Olive and Robert E are helping Grace get ready to serve her first meal. Colleen and Grace set plates and utensils on the picnic table, which is covered with a checkered cloth. Brian hammers a sign, "Grace's Cafe," into the ground. Robert E is tending the fire, where a big pot of chili simmers. Olive arranges flowers on table. Suddenly they hear the sound of a group of horses riding up. Townspeople start to shout and cheer. The kids, Robert E., Olive and Grace drop what they're doing and run to the road.

## **THE ROAD**

Dr. Mike, Sully, the posse and Wolf come riding into town.

## **THE CROWD**

Includes the three kids, Robert E., Grace, the Reverend, Olive.

## **OLIVE:**

They're back. They found em!

## **REVEREND:**

Praise the Lord!

## **ROBERT E:**

Told you they would.

## **BRIAN:**

Ma!

Brian runs toward Mike, followed by Colleen.

Mike gets off her horse and holds out her one arm. Brian runs up and hugs her. Soon the three kids and Mike are wrapped up in a warm bunch.

## **COLLEEN:**

**What happened?**

**MIKE:**

**Nothing serious. I'm so glad to see you.**

**REVEREND:**

**Three cheers for the search party.**

**Mike and Sully exchange a look. Then join the cheer.**

**REVEREND (leading the group)**

**Hip hip hoorah! Hip hip hoorah!  
Hip hip hoorah!**

**The mud men are a little uneasy at first, but then start not bask and preen in the crowd's applause.**

**MIKE:**

**There's more good news. Mr. Harding has agreed: no more mercury will be dumped in the stream.**

**Crowd cheers again. The mud men and Sully start to dismount.**

**OLIVE:**

**What happened to your clothes?**

**HORACE: (sheepish)**

**Skunk.**

**Everyone laughs.**

**GRACE;**

**Well, gentlemen, you're just in time for the openin' of my cafe. How'd ya like a hot meal?**

**JAKE:**

**We're starvin'!**

**GRACE (points not table)**

**I got chili and beans, cornbread, apple pie ...**

**OLIVE (looks at their muddy underwear), Maybe you wanna freshen up first ...**

**HANK:**

**After we eat!**

**They make a run for the tables.**

**ON MIKE, SULLY AND THE KIDS**

**BRIAN:**

**See any big animals?**

**SULLY:**

**Just a mountain lion.**

**COLLEEN:**

**You don't have to go back there, do ya'?**

**MIKE: (reassuring)**

**No, I think we'll stay put a while.**

**BRIAN:**

**Let's get some food!**

**The children run ahead, leaving Sully and Mike alone.**

## ANGLE - SULLY AND MIKE

**SULLY (smiles)**

**You hungry?**

**MIKE:**

**I could eat anything! Unless it's snake again.**

**They start for the tables. Mike stops him**

**MIKE:**

**Do I really talk in my sleep?**

**Sully doesn't answer. He smiles and walks away. We HOLD ON Mike, smiling on him as we**

**FADE OUT**

**THE END**

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