

Running Ghost

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Directed by James Keach

TEASER

EXT. FIELDS - DAY

DR. MIKE, SULLY, CLOUD DANCING, BRIAN AND COLLEEN are out gathering wildflowers and herbs. Cloud Dancing is showing two nearly identical leaves to Mike and Sully. Wolf rests beside Sully.

CLOUD DANCING:

This one cures. This one kills.

MIKE:

(distressed) I can't see the difference.

CLOUD DANCING:

What you cannot see you can feel.

He runs her fingertip over each leaf. Mike and Sully exchange a look.

MIKE:

One is sticky.

CLOUD DANCING:

That is the poison.

Brian comes running up to Cloud Dancing with some bulbs.

BRIAN:

I found some wild onions.

MIKE:

We'll have them for supper.

Colleen approaches with some flowers.

COLLEEN:

Aren't these pretty?

CLOUD DANCING:

That is called (Cheyenne word).

MIKE:

We call it Camomile. It makes a lovely tea. Very restful.

CLOUD DANCING:

Also good for stomach trouble. (Half beat). The earth give us everything if we know how to look.

MIKE:

Or feel.

They exchange a smile. Suddenly we hear a gunshot echo on the wind. Followed by a low rumble.

MIKE:

What's that?

Cloud Dancing, Sully and Wolf, run to the ridgeline in the direction of the gunfire, and Mike and the children follow.

ANGLE ON THE RIDGELINE

as everyone appears and looks off in the distance.

LONG LENS - (stock)

A herd of buffalo are running away from us in a valley below. More shots ring out.

ANGLE - HERD (stock)

as several buffalo fall in their tracks.

ANGLE - TATE RANKIN

a leathery buffalo hunter. Rankin raises his rifle and aims, fires again. He starts to reload, sees something.

RANKIN'S POV - WHITE BUFFALO

standing alone in the distance.

BACK TO RANKIN

as he rubs his eyes, not sure what he saw. He raises his rifle, fires again.

EXT. RIDGELINE - DAY

The family listening to the gunfire echo in the distance, watching the slaughter.

BRIAN: (to Mike)

Ma, what's he doing?

SULLY:

He's been hired by the railroad to kill buffalo.

MIKE:

Why?

SULLY:

They say it's to feed the workers.

MIKE:

But why so many?

Mike looks at Cloud Dancing.

CLOUD DANCING:

Because they know when the buffalo are gone, the Cheyenne people will disappear.

We HOLD on Mike.

FADE OUT

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN

INT. CLINIC - DAY 2

Mike is about to lance a blister on Horace's telegraph finger. He looks pale.

MIKE

Don't look. It'll be over in a second.

As she lances the blister, washes it, and bandages it.

HORACE:

This usually only happens around the holidays, but I been sending a lot of telegrams back east for that railroad fella. They're out there right now, surveying the street.

MIKE:

For what?

HORACE:

They're talking about bringing the railroad right through town.

EXT STREET - DAY

A crowd gawks at a crew of two surveyors, who are sighting a transom. With the surveyors, is a man in a three piece suit, THADDEUS BIRCH. Seeing Mike and Horace, he gives them a wave and goes right to them.

EXT. CLINIC - DAY

BIRCH: (to Horace)

Mr. Bing, who is this lovely lady?

MIKE:

I'm Dr. Quinn.

BIRCH:

Doctor?

HORACE:

Yep, she runs the clinic.


BIRCH (hands Mike a card)

Thaddeus Birch, Attorney at Law. (Confidentially). I had a lady doctor take out my lumbago in St. Louis.

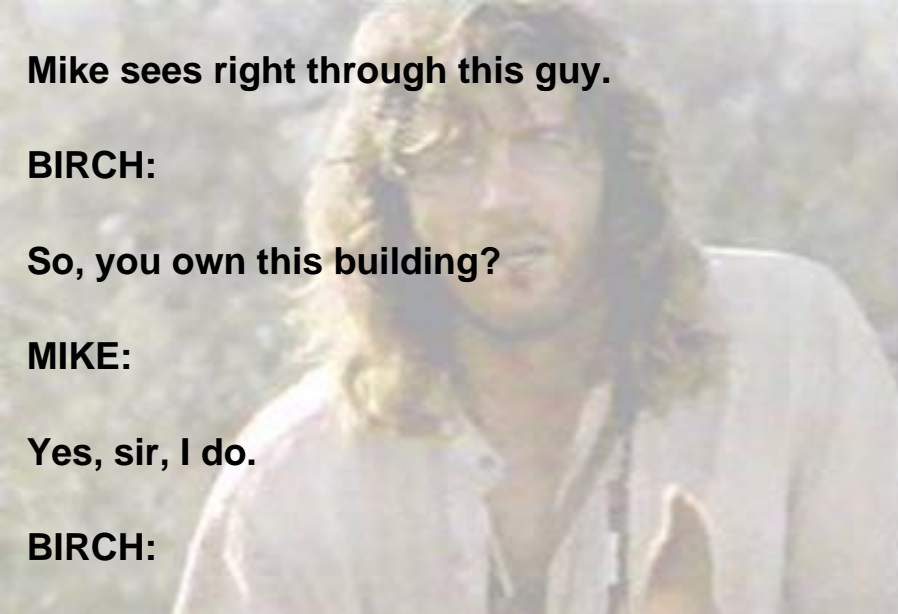
MIKE:

Took it right out, did she?

BIRCH:



You bet, but she wasn't as pretty as you.



Mike sees right through this guy.

BIRCH:

So, you own this building?

MIKE:

Yes, sir, I do.

BIRCH:

Well, madam, I have some very good news for you. You know the Continental Republic Railroad? Well, they're bringing the tracks right through the center of town.

MIKE:

Really? Right here?

BIRCH:

Before you can say Jack Robinson, this little town is going to be bigger than Denver!

HORACE:

Well, whata ya' know!


BIRCH:

And to make that dream come true, I'm here to purchase all the land parcels in town. At a very handsome price.

HORACE:

This is excitin'!

MIKE:



Let me understand, Mr. Birch. The railroad is coming right through the center of town?

BIRCH:

You betcha. Depot will be right where the saloon is, loading chutes for the stockyards right there, (points to clinic), warehouse and a two story hotel right there ... (points at Loren's store) complete with a genuine crystal chandelier shipped all the way from London. That's in England, you know.

MIKE:

So I've heard.

BIRCH:

Yes, ma'am, there's some big changes coming. Lot of money to be made. This is truly your lucky day.

On Mike.

MIKE: (reflecting)

I'm not so sure about that.

EXT. MOUNTAIN RANGES - ESTABLISHING - (STOCK) - DAY 2

We can hear angry voices speaking in Cheyenne.

BRAVE (O.S.)

I am going!

CLOUD DANCING: (O.S.)

You must listen to reason.

EXT. BLACK KETTLE'S CAMP - DAY 2

Black Kettle, Cloud Dancing and Sully are talking with several angry young Braves. Black Kettle is trying to calm them down. Some women and children stand nearby, listening.

CLOUD DANCING:

You must not leave the reservation.

BRAVE:

Are we to do nothing, then?

BLACK KETTLE (in Cheyenne)

It will bring great sorrow on our people if we make war now.

BRAVE: (to Black Kettle)

I will not let my people starve!

The Brave walks away. The other Braves watch him go, talk among themselves. A weary Black Kettle turns to Sully.

BLACK KETTLE: (in Cheyenne)

Talk with this white man who kills the buffalo. Help me brother, help me keep the peace.

Sully nods, Black Kettle walks away. The other braves drift off into the camp.

SULLY:

I have never heard Iron Knife talk to Black Kettle that way.

CLOUD DANCING:

His only child died of hunger last winter.

SULLY:

I'll ride out and have a word with the man the railroad hired.

CLOUD DANCING:

I will come with you.

SULLY:

Don't think that's a good idea.

CLOUD DANCING:

Why?

SULLY:

Buffalo might not be the only thing he likes to kill.

They look up to see the young Brave riding out of the camp on his Indian pony. He's carrying a lance.

CLOUD DANCING:

I will ask for the ghost buffalo to protect you as he protects the herd and my people.

INT. LOREN'S STORE - DAY 2

Loren is at the counter, scooping flour from a large sack into smaller sacks. Birch stands next to him. Other shoppers in the b.g.

BIRCH:

I believe it's a fair offer, Mr. Bray. You just say the word and I'll write you a check.

Birch hands him a contract. Loren wipes the flour from his hands, reads the comment.

LOREN:

It's a fair offer, but ...

BIRCH:

But you'd like it better if I went up another five hundred. All right, done, sir. You drive a hard bargain, Mr. Bray.

Birch takes the paper from Loren, crosses to Loren's desk, takes a pen, dips it in the ink well, increases the figure on the contract ...

He holds out the contract to Loren.

BIRCH:

Just sign right there at the bottom. I'll witness it.

Loren takes the pen, is about to sign ...

LOREN:

I can't.

BIRCH:

Mr. Bray, that is more than a fair price ...

LOREN:

It's not the money, Mr. Birch. You see, this store holds more than just merchandise. (half beat). It's got a lot of memories for me. (looks around). That desk came all the way from Missouri with me and Maude. My daughter learned to walk holding on to that counter. (half beat) I've spent a good part of my life living upstairs, coming down every morning. I'm older now. Don't know if I could abide the change.

BIRCH:

Change is good, sir, inevitable, in fact. The railroad is coming and there's nothing you or I can do to stop it, so why not profit by it? You can built a new store, a bigger store, and bring in even more customers.

Loren looks at the contract.

LOREN:

I'd like to sleep on this, if you don't mind?

BIRCH:

Not at all, sir, but don't wait too long. All land deals must be completed in four weeks.

Birch exits.

EXT. BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY 2

A huge, obscene mountain of buffalo hides piled in a wagon. Tate Rankin sits in front of a tent, having a drink. There's a fire going, and a rough looking skinner tends to a stew pot.

A second buffalo skinner comes from inside the tents, looks out to see.

THEIR POV - INDIAN BRAVE

a hundred yards away, holding his lance and shield. He lets out a battle cry.

BACK TO SCENE

SKINNER:

Hey, boss. Look.

THEIR POV - INDIAN

as he kicks his horse, raises his lance and starts riding hard for the camp.

RANKIN

doesn't move, but watches him coming.

INTERCUT

the Indian charging, almost on top of them and Rankin, holding his ground, sipping on his whiskey.

SKINNER (worried)

Boss.

The skinner moves for his rifle, Rankin kicks it away.

RANKIN:

Leave that be. He's mine.

The skinner turns back to look at the Indian. He's almost on top of them.

ANGLE - THE INDIAN

screaming his war cry now, lance held high, forty feet from the camp.

ANGLE - RANKIN

who suddenly reaches over, grabs his buffalo rifle, raises it up and fires, blowing the Indian out of the saddle not more than ten feet from him.

The horse runs through the camp and away. Rankin puts the gun down, picks up his whiskey bottle again, takes a drink.

INT. SALOON - DAY 2

Hank is behind the bar, pouring a drink for Birch. Hank delivers the drink, motions for Myra and another whore to sidle up next to him.

BIRCH:

Thank you.

HANK:

You see anything you like, it's on the house.

Birch looks longingly at the two whores.

BIRCH:

That's very generous of you, sir, but accepting your hospitality would place my interest in conflict, and I make it a point not to mix business with pleasure.

MYRA:

Does that mean you don't want us?



BIRCH (to whores)

Sorry, ladies. Some other time.

MYRA: (relieved)

All right with me.

Myra and the whore move away to other men. Hank frowns at Myra, crosses back to the bar. Birch slugs down his drink, follows to the bar, then places a few bills on the bar.

HANK:

What's that?

BIRCH:

An advance against your commission.

Hank is intrigued, pours him another drink.

HANK:

Advance?

BIRCH:

I've learned over the years that when the railroad comes to town, some folks believe that by holding out, sticking together, they can extract a higher price. I need someone like you ... a smart businessman, sort of a partner, to convince the reluctant parties to sell. (half beat) You interested?

Hank pours them both a drink.

HANK:

You got a deal, mister.

They drink. Hanks shakes his hand, then picks up the money, starts to count it. We hold on Birch watching him, a smug little smile on his face.

EXT BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY 2

Sully rides up on an Indian pony. Rankin and the two skinners stand to meet him.

SULLY:

I'm lookin' for Tate Rankin.

RANKIN:

That'd be me.

Sully finds it hard not to look at the piles of skins, the carnage it represents. He dismounts.

SULLY:

Name's Sully. I come to speak on behalf of Chief Black Kettle of the Cheyenne.

RANKIN:

You some kinda half breed, or somethin'?

SULLY:

What I am doesn't matter. What I come to say does.

RANKIN:

Okay. Talk.

SULLY:

I know you've got your job to do for the railroad. But the Cheyenne need buffalo.

RANKIN:

Mister, the railroad don't give a damn what the Cheyenne need. And frankly, neither do I.

SULLY:

All Black Kettle asks is that you leave them enough buffalo to survive the winter.

RANKIN: (considers, then)

Well, Mr. Sully, why don't you tell ol' Black Kettle and the rest of them Cheyenne to eat coyotes. Plenty of them around.

The skinnners laugh ... until Sully's look shuts them up.

RANKIN: (beat, then)

I'm just doing my job. Railroad's coming, Mr. Sully, whether you like it or not. You can't stop progress.

SULLY:

What's progress to some, is death to others.

RANKIN:

Then, I guess the Indians will have to go the way of the buffalo.

SULLY:

They won't go without a fight, and they won't wait until the last buffalo is gone.

RANKIN:

You wouldn't be making threats, now would you?

SULLY:

Black Kettle does not want a war, but he may not be able to stop one.

RANKIN:

And which side you gonna be on, Mr. Sully?

SULLY: (half beat)

You keep killing buffalo like you been doing and you'll find out.

Sully turns to get back on his horse. Rankin picks up his buffalo gun and slams Sully in the back with the rifle butt. Sully does down hard.

Rankin kicks him repeatedly. Then Sully is ominously still.

RANKIN:

Get rid of him.

The skinnners drag Sully away as we hold on Rankin, wiping the blood from his lips.

EXT. RAVINE - DAY 2

The skinnners drag Sully to the top of the ravine. They throw Sully in. Sully's body rolls down to the bottom.

ANGLE - SULLY'S BODY

as it comes to rest. Camera moves to reveal the beaten body of the Indian.

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN

INT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT 2

Colleen's at the stove, stirring a pot of soup. Matthew stands nearby, cutting a loaf of bread, while Mike sets the table. Brian comes quietly out of Colleen's alcove, concealing something behind him. He crosses to where his puppy lies next to the fire and begins brushing it's coat with the lovely silver hair brush that Mike's mother had given to Colleen. Colleen ladles the soup into the first bowl and carries it to the table, noticing Brian as she does. She drops the bowl, crashing and splattering to the floor, as ...

COLLEEN:

Brian!

She runs to him and wrenches the brush from him.

COLLEEN (continued)

Gimme that!

She's so furious, she socks him in the arm, and he starts to cry. Mike and Matthew are right behind her.

MIKE:

Colleen!

COLLEEN: (tears)

It's my hairbrush grandma gave me!

MIKE:

Hitting is not allowed!

COLLEEN:

But he was usin' it on his wolf!

MATTHEW: (to Brian)

You crazy?

BRIAN: (still sniffling)

Sully said to brush him.

COLLEEN:

It's a people brush, not a wolf brush!

MIKE: (to Brian)

Colleen's right. (to Colleen) But we have a family rule against hitting ... now both of you apologize this minute.

They glare at each other, but are saved by a thudding at the door. Mike gives them a "we'll finish this later" look, as Matthew opens the door. All react to Cloud Dancing standing there holding the battered, unconscious Sully in his arms. Mike quickly ushers him in, and Cloud Dancing places Sully on the bed as gently as possible. Wolf comes inside, settles at the foot of the bed. Mike stands over Sully, frightened by his deathly appearance.

MIKE:

Dear God ...

... but then she reaches to feel his pulse. By her look to the worried children they at least know that there is one.

MIKE: (continuing to Cloud Dancing)

What happened?

CLOUD DANCING:

Black Kettle sent Sully to ask the white hunter to spare enough buffalo for our people. (re: Sully) This was his answer. (beat) When he did not return, I went to look for him. When I found him he spoke your name.

Mike looks from the bloodied Sully across the bed at Cloud Dancing. A beat, as they look at one another, an acknowledgement of their respective skills. They'll work together to save Sully.

MIKE:

Matthew ... my medical bag. (to Cloud Dancing) I will need your help.

On her look.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 3

They've been up all night, though Brian has finally fallen asleep on the rug by the fire with his wolf. Matthew and Colleen sit at the table watching, as Mike tends to Sully's swollen face, changing a bloody bandage, one of many covering his visible wounds. Cloud Dancing kneels on the opposite side of the bed, chanting quietly, passing a smoking piece of cypress up and down the length of Sully's body.

COLLEEN:

Dr. Mike?

The question mark hangs in the air. Cloud Dancing stops chanting.

MIKE:

I can only see what's on the outside at this point. I have no idea what damage is inside.

She looks across at Cloud Dancing with her own question mark.

CLOUD DANCING:

The spirits say it is bad.

MIKE: (a beat)

How bad?

CLOUD DANCING:

He will live.

This gives comfort to the children, but Mike senses the foreboding in Cloud Dancing's voice.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 4

Mike is taking down dried bandage strips from the clothesline. (NOTE: Colleen and Brian in scene if schedule allows).

Suddenly Matthew bursts out the front door.

MATTHEW:

He's waking up!

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 4

..... inside where Cloud Dancing stands over the bed. Sully's swollen eyes struggle to open enough to see, let alone focus, and when he tries to speak, his voice is a mere rasp.

SULLY:

What?

MIKE:

Cloud Dancing brought you. He found you at Rankin's camp.

SULLY: (remembering, painfully)

Right ...

MIKE:

Sully, listen to me. Now that you're awake, it's very important that I examine you. To check for internal injury. He manages a nod. She pulls back the quilt, revealing him covered by only a sheet, underneath which he's naked. Sully's aware of his nudity. Matthew senses this.

MATTHEW:

I undressed you.

Sully's relieved, nods.

She presses on his side. He winces. Then the other. He cries out involuntarily.

As gently as possible, she manipulates both arms, hitting on one spot that elicits a pained grunt. Mike proceeds with the examination, very careful to move the sheet discreetly, lowering it to Sully's waist. She begins to probe his chest as gently as

possible. Big ugly bruises all over. Sully moans. Everything hurts.

MIKE:

I know you're in terrible pain, but, please, try to distinguish for me the differing degrees. It's important.

He nods. She probes some more. He winces. She presses on his rib cage. He cries out involuntarily. She presses the other side; this time he grits his teeth against the same pain. She slips the sheet back up, then carefully exposes one leg. She begins to examine them as she did his arms but elicits no expression of pain from him. She glances up at Cloud Dancing, then reaches for her medical bag. She takes out an instrument shaped like a wheel at one end, with small prongs on it. She runs the instrument down the side of Sully's leg. He says nothing. She tries the other leg. Still nothing. He can see what she's doing, and it hits him with a wave of panic.

SULLY:

My legs. I can't feel them (trying). I can't move them!

She runs the instrument across the soles of his feet.

MIKE:

That?

SULLY:

No!

The kids look devastated, as Sully looks from Mike to Cloud Dancing, panicked.


SULLY:

What's goin' on?

MIKE:

Some sort of paralysis. I don't know exactly yet.

SULLY:



I'm paralysed?

MIKE:

The problem may just be temporary.

SULLY:

What do you mean?

MIKE:

Well ... it could be an accumulation of fluid pressing on your spinal column ... but with time the swelling will go down and the feeling will come back.

SULLY:

How long?

MIKE:

I don't know.

She looks across at Cloud Dancing, appealing.

CLOUD DANCING:

**There is a root. When dried and made into a tea ...
(a beat)
I have heard of such a cure.**

SULLY:

But you never saw it yourself?

Without answering, he heads for the door.

CLOUD DANCING:

I will search for this root.

He leaves. They all watch the door close behind him. Mike fights back her emotions.

MIKE:

I'll get something for the pain.

She quickly retreats to her ...

INT. OFFICE ALCOVE - DAY 4

... where she fumbles with a bottle of laudanum powder, as the tears well and roll down her cheeks.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT BARBER SHOP - DAY 5

Birch exits the barber shop, broomed off by Jake.

BIRCH:

I'll bring the papers by tomorrow. You just have that deed ready, and I'll give you the cash down payment. Ten percent of the total purchase price.

Jake helps him on with his coat.

JAKE:

When do I get the rest of it?

BIRCH:

Could be a few weeks, can't say for certain, but I know this ... the day you look out there and see that old smokestack on the horizon, hear the whistle blowing ... you'll be a wealthy man. What do I owe you?

JAKE:

That's all right, Mr. Birch. It's on me.

BIRCH:

You know, Jake, I like your style ...

Birch looks about, then leans in confidentially.

BIRCH:

That's why I'm gonna do you a favor. I'm gonna give you an opportunity to make even more money.

JAKE:

You are?

BIRCH:

In word, Jake. And the word is stock. As in certificate. (Jake smiles). How'd you like to own a piece of that railroad?

JAKE:

I don't have that kind of money.

BIRCH:

Don't need it. Instead of the cash down payment, you take a stock interest in the railroad. For every dollar due you on the down payment, you get not one, but five shares of preferred stock.

JAKE:

Five?

BIRCH:

For every dollar.

BIRCH

And know what's gonna happen to the value of that stock the day they drive that last

spike?

JAKE: (beat, then)

You got yourself a deal, Mr. Birch.

BIRCH:

You're a smart man, Jake ...

Birch sees Mike exit Loren's store with some supplies, followed by Hank and Loren.

BIRCH:

Keep this to yourself, all right? Excuse me.

Jake nods. Birch heads off the porch towards Mike.

BIRCH:

Doc? Wait up.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Birch joins them to overhear.

HANK:

Why you gotta be so stubborn?

MIKE:

How can you sell to this man after what they did to Sully?

BIRCH:

Who's Sully?

MIKE: (to Birch)

A friend of mine. A buffalo hunter named Tate Rankin, hired by your railroad, nearly

killed him.

HANK:

Sully shouldn't been sticking his nose where it don't belong.

Mike starts to walk. Birch follows.

BIRCH:

Doc, wait up. I assure you, I have nothing to do with this.

MIKE:

Then you don't work for the railroad?

BIRCH:

Well, in a manner of speaking, but ...

MIKE: (stops)

Then I want you to get that man arrested and put in jail for what he did.

BIRCH:

Doc, you can't blame me for ...

MIKE:

Then who do I blame if Sully can't ever walk again?

Mike turns and goes to the clinic. We hold on Birch.

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 8

Colleen takes a bowl of soup to Sully, who sits, propped up in bed, his arm and chest bandaged, his face less swollen but badly bruised. His mood is dark. Wolf and puppy rest on the floor.

SULLY:

No thanks.

COLLEEN:

Dr. Mike says you gotta eat.

Brian brings him a cookie instead.

BRIAN: (to Sully)

How bout a cookie?

COLLEEN:

Brian, he needs somethin' nourishin'.

BRIAN: (to Sully)

You can have it, if you eat all your soup.

This gets a slight smile from Sully. He takes the soup and uses his good arm to eat some of it.

Brian sits at the foot of the bed.

BRIAN:

Sully, tell me a story.

COLLEEN:

Brian, let him finish eating.

SULLY:

That's alright.

Sully thinks a moment, realizing it will take his mind of things, then nods, knowing what story he'll tell. There's an undertone of his own emotions regarding the subject matter

that escapes the children, but not us.

SULLY:

It's the story of the white buffalo.

Colleen sits on the other end of the bed.

COLLEEN:

A white buffalo?

BRIAN:

There's no such thing!

SULLY:

Yep, there is. But only one in a million. The Cheyenne believe the white buffalo guard the herd.

BRIAN:

You ever seen one?

SULLY: (shakes his head)

The Cheyenne call him Running Ghost.

BRIAN:

Running Ghost? Is he a real ghost?

SULLY:

Cloud Dancing says if you see him, then he's real.

The kids contemplate this for a moment, as Sully has a few more bites of soup, when Mike and Matthew enter through the side door, carrying supplies.

MIKE:



Hello, everyone.

BRIAN:

Hey, ma.

Brian jumps off the bed and runs to her. She gives him a quick hug, noticing the cookie in hand.

MIKE:

Cookies before supper?

BRIAN:

Naw, it's for Sully.

She looks over at Sully, feigning cheerfulness.

MIKE:

and how is the patient doing?

His mood shifts to dark again. He looks away, sets the soup bowl down. Colleen shrugs her shoulders to Mike.

MIKE:

Children, may I talk to Sully, alone, please?

The kids exchange looks, then exit. Mike goes over to the bed.

MIKE:

Sully ... I know you're upset, and no one can blame you, but these injuries take time.

A beat, then he looks at her ... into her.

SULLY:

Tell me the truth ... will I heal?

A beat.

MIKE:

I don't know.

SULLY:

What are the odds?

MIKE:

The truth?

SULLY:

The truth.

MIKE:

I have no idea.

He hits the bed with his "good" arm.

MIKE:

Now, wait a minute. You could start to heal in a matter of days. Or weeks

SULLY: (interrupts)

Or not at all?

MIKE: (finishing)

... it could even take months. But there are things we can do to speed the process.

With that Mike pulls the covers aside to reveal Sully's legs.

SULLY:

What're you doin'?

MIKE:

We need to keep your legs healthy, in case your spinal chord is healing.

She starts bending one of his legs at the knee, in and out.

SULLY:

You're wastin' your time. I can't feel anything.

MIKE:

That's not the point. We need to keep the muscles strong ...

She puts his leg down and starts massaging it.

MIKE:

... stimulates the blood circulation.

He may not be able to feel it, but he can see her hands running up and down his legs. There's a sensual rhythm to it. Mike can't help but feel it, too. She glances up at him, and their eyes lock.

Suddenly, he uses his upper body strength to roll to his side, away from her, even though it hurts his rib cage.

SULLY:

I just wanna be by myself right now.

Mike nods, ashamed that she's relieved to get away from him, as well. She stands, starts to go.

SULLY: (continued)

And don't be feelin' sorry for me. She stops and faces him.

MIKE:

I'll make you a deal. I won't feel sorry for you, as long as you don't feel sorry for yourself.

ON SULLY'S REACTION:

as she turns and goes outside ...

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 8

... where the kids are glumly hanging around out front.

BRIAN:

Ma, is Sully gonna get well?

A beat, as Mike takes a deep breath of determination.

MIKE:

Let's ask ourselves a different question ... what are we going to do to help Sully get well?

Off their looks ...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

Mike is getting some water from the barrel when she sees Cloud Dancing appear from behind the barn. He carries a small bag of roots.

CLOUD DANCING:

How is my brother?

MIKE:

Better, but still no feeling in his legs.

CLOUD DANCING:

Grind these and make a salve. Wash his legs with hot water, then rub it on him.

MIKE:

Thank you.

CLOUD DANCING:

May I see him?

MIKE: (half beat)

I'll tell him you're here, but he doesn't want any company right now.

CLOUD DANCING:

Do not bother him. Tell him I will return when it is safe.

MIKE:

Safe?

CLOUD DANCING:

The soldiers are coming to keep my people on the reservation. Two more Cheyenne have been killed by this Rankin. There is much talk of war.

MIKE:

Can't Black Kettle stop it?

CLOUD DANCING:

I do not know.

Cloud Dancing nods, then disappears. We hold on Mike.

EXT. POND - DAY 11

MIKE:

All right, let's get you in the water.

Matthew and Mike lift Sully up, set him down in the water. Mike wades in with them, helps support his body.

MIKE: (to Sully)

What I want you to do is, move your arms through the water. We'll move your legs.

MATTHEW:

Don't worry Sully ... we got you.

Sully looks at Brian, then the others gathered around him. He starts to move his arms as instructed, and the group begins to move about the pond as one.

TIME DISSOLVE:

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 16

Sully lies in bed, on top of the covers, with Mike, the Reverend, and the kids gathered around him. Sully now wears a shirt and a pair of pants. A short, wooden pole, with a rope tied around its middle, hangs from the ceiling beam over the bed.

BRIAN:

Go on, Sully.

Sully takes hold of the pole with his good arm and manages to lift himself a few inches from the bed. Brian's counting.

BRIAN: (continuing)

An inch better'n yesterday!

MIKE:

And a whole lot better than two weeks ago.

Sully lowers himself back down.

REVEREND:

One more Sully, for the Lord.

Sully gives him a look, pulls himself up again, drops back.

REVEREND:

Amen.

INT HOMESTEAD - NIGHT 18

Colleen and Brian play checkers at the table, while Matthew gives Sully's legs a good rubdown.

Mike works at her desk in her office alcove beyond. She tries to concentrate, but finds her gaze drifting toward the bed, watching Matthew massage Sully. She forces herself back to her work, but again she finds herself looking over, her eyes drifting the length of his leg, from thigh to knee to calf to ...

SUDDENLY

she jumps up from her desk, startling everyone.

MIKE:

They moved!

She runs to the foot of the bed. So do the kids.

MIKE:

Your toes! They moved!

They all stare at his feet. Nothing happens.

MIKE: (to Sully)

Concentrate.

He does. As hard as he can ...

CLOSE ON SULLY'S FEET

His toes move

BRIAN:

They moved!

SULLY:

They sure did.

Matthew leans down and grabs Sully's good arm exuberantly, as Brian and Colleen hug him around the neck. Sully looks over their heads at Mike. They share a look that goes beyond touching ...

MIKE:

You're gonna be walking again before you know it.

SULLY:

That's good, cause I have things to do.

And then Sully turns away and he looks at his tomahawk and his eyes fill with revenge. We hold on him as we ...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 22

Sully is seated on the side of the bed, his legs on the floor. Mike and Matthew stand on

either side of him.

MIKE:

Now, we must go very slowly.

Sully nods. He grabs onto their arms, and pulls himself up to a standing position. Mike hands him a crutch.

MIKE: (continuing)

If you start to get dizzy, I want you to tell me.

Sully, holding onto Mike and Matthew, using the crutch, takes some shaky steps.

MIKE: (continuing)

Are you alright?

SULLY:

Yeah.

They walk a little further, then stop.

MIKE:

Do you want to rest?

SULLY:

No ... I wanna try it on my own.

MIKE:

You're not ready for that.

SULLY: (certain)

Yes, I am.

He pulls free of them, but they stay near his side. Sully attempts a few tentative steps alone. But then ... his legs cave in. Mike and Matthew grab him to keep him from falling. He regains his balance.

SULLY:

I wasn't gonna fall.

Mike and Matthew look at each other.

MIKE:

Of course not.

MATTHEW:

Absolutely not.

Mike and Matthew steer him back to the bed, where he thankfully sits back down.

EXT. COLORADO SPRINGS - ESTABLISHING - DAY 22

EXT. LIVERY - DAY 22

Grace watches as Robert E takes payment from a horse soldier, watches as he mounts up, joining four horse soldiers. They ride out of town. Hank walks over from Jake's store.

HANK:

Bet you're glad to see them soldiers back her for a while.

ROBERT E:

Ain't glad to see another Indian war start up.

HANK:

Now, what's this I hear from Mr. Birch bout you two not selling?

ROBERT E:

I'm not.

GRACE:

Me, either.

Robert E walks back to his forge, pulls out some iron, checks the color, sticks it back in the coals.

HANK:

Well you both better think hard, cause you only got one more week to make up your mind!

GRACE:

We're not against the railroad coming through. We think it's a good idea.

HANK:

Then why ain't you selling?

ROBERT E:

Mr. Birch offered me what he said was a fair price for a negro. I just want a fair price, same as you or Jake or Loren.

GRACE:

When Mr. Birch comes to my cafe, he doesn't pay any less for my cooking, why should he pay less for his land?

HANK:

Well, if you want my advice, you better take what you can get, cause the railroad's coming, and anybody stands in its way gonna get run over!

ROBERT E:

Don't be getting so riled up, Hank.

HANK:

You ain't seen me riled up like I'm gonna be if you don't sell!

ROBERT E:

You know when you get hot, you're like this piece of iron, you get weak ...

Robert E takes the iron out, slams it on an anvil, strikes it with his hammer. Sparks fly.

ROBERT E:

You bend real easy, and you break just like that.

He lays the iron on the cutting edge of an anvil, slams the hammer into it, and the piece nips off, drops into a bucket of water. It hisses and a steam cloud rises up in front of Hank. Hank frowns, throws up his hands, storms off. We hold on Robert E and Grace.

INT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT 23

Mike is at the fireplace, stoking the fire. Matthew, Colleen and Brian are putting away the dinner dishes. Sully, walking slowly, starts for the door.

MIKE:

Where do you think you're going?

SULLY:

Get some firewood.

MIKE:

I'll get it. Why don't you sit down.

SULLY:

I can manage.

MIKE:

I'm afraid your doctor doesn't think so. Not yet.

Mike leads a frustrated Sully to a chair. He sits.

MATTHEW:

I'll get the firewood, Sully.

He goes out. Brian goes to sit next to Sully.

BRIAN:

Boy, are we lucky ... nobody else has a doctor for a ma.

Sully shoots a look at Mike. She smiles, managing to get a smile out of him.

SULLY: (to Brian)

You're lucky, all right.

BRIAN:

Sully, you never did finish the story bout Running Ghost.

MIKE:

"Running Ghost?"

BRIAN:

It's a white buffalo. One in a million. Right Sully?

A beat, but then ...

SULLY:

That's right.

Colleen comes over and sits down too. Matthew comes in with an armload of firewood, stokes the fire.

INTERCUT the kids, as they listen ...

SULLY:

It was back in the Winter of 60. Cloud Dancing was hunting out near Cedar Lake. He heard the sound of crackin' ice. He climbed a ridge to look. A herd of buffalo - musta been a couple of hundred of em - were tryin' to cross the lake. But the ice started to give way. He watched, waitin' for the worst to happen.

BRIAN: (in a whisper)

Golly!

SULLY:

It was then he saw the most frightenin' sight. There appeared before him a giant, white buffalo ... as white as the snow. The herd saw him, too. They stopped in their tracks. And for some reason, they turned and went back. Then, the white buffalo ...

BRIAN:

Runnin' Ghost.

SULLY:

Runnin' Ghost, turned and Cloud Dancing saw his eyes were bright, glowing red. Burning like a hot coal in the fire. That ghost buffalo looked right at him and Cloud Dancing said it was like the buffalo could see into his spirit.

(a beat)

Then, the white buffalo turned and disappeared into the trees.

The kids sit motionless, holding onto the moment ... as Mike watches lovingly from the fireplace.

EXT COLORADO SPRINGS - MAIN STREET - DAY 24

Tate Rankin rides slowly into town. He passes two men from the survey team, regards them with curiosity.

EXT. SALOON - DAY 24

Rankin ties up his horse. Birch comes out of the saloon, clapping a couple of converts on the back.

Rankin observes as ...

BIRCH:

Congratulations Gentlemen, you won't regret this day. You just made yourself a fortune.

The men walk away. Birch starts to cross the street. Rankin suddenly steps in front of him.

RANKIN:

What are you doing here?

Birch is very uncomfortable.

BIRCH:

Mr. Rankin ...

RANKIN:

I thought you gave this up after they ran you out of Salinas.

BIRCH:

No ... I'm still in the same business.

RANKIN:

Still using the same name?

BIRCH:

I, uh, go by Thaddeus Birch, now.

RANKIN: (smiles) Thaddeus? Well, I won't say nothing Thaddeus if you cut me in.



BIRCH:

Ah, yes, I was just about to suggest it.

RANKIN:

Why don't we have a drink on it. You buy.

Rankin puts his hand on Birch's shoulder, guides him towards the saloon as we ...

RANKIN:

Nice doing business with you.

CUT TO:

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 24

Sully struggles to walk, using his crutch, holding on the side of the barn. He turns, starts back in the other direction. He's sweating from the strain. We hold on him, driven by rage, determined to get better.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT HOMESTEAD - DAY 27

Matthew watches as Sully throws his tomahawk and it bounces off the barn. Frustrated, he walks over, picks up the axe. He moves slowly, still in pain. He walks back away from the tree. There's a great anger in his eyes. He stops about ten feet away, turns, lets out a yell and throws the tomahawk again. This time it sticks. Matthew and Sully exchange a look.

We hold on him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREET - DAY 27

Rankin and Birch walk by the clinic.

ANGLE MIKE

in front of her clinic, saying goodbye to a client. She spots them.

MIKE:

Mr. Birch?

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Mike crosses to Birch and Rankin.

MIKE:

Can we talk? I need some information.

BIRCH:

Perhaps later.

MIKE:

I just need the name of the railroad president.

BIRCH:

I'm very busy.

RANKIN:

His name's Eli Stowe. Lives in Chicago. (off her look). Thaddeus, where are your manners? Ain't you gonna introduce me to this pretty lady?

Birch hesitates.

MIKE:

I'm Doctor Quinn.

RANKIN:

Tate Rankin.



A beat. A look comes over Mike.

MIKE:

You're the man who almost killed Sully.

RANKIN:

Who's Sully?

MIKE:

He came to talk to you. Unarmed, and you nearly beat and kicked him to death.

RANKIN:

He ain't dead?

MIKE:

No, and it's a miracle he isn't.

RANKIN:

Well, I was only defending myself.

MIKE:

Why don't we let a judge and jury decide that.

RANKIN:

What are you talking about? It was a fair fight.

MIKE:

You are a liar.

RANKIN:

Don't be calling me a liar to my face. I'll forget you're a lady.

MIKE: (half beat)

You are a liar, and I am going to see to it that you are arrested and tried for attempted murder.

Mike turns and walks away.

RANKIN:

Why don't you ask around. See where I can find this Sully fella. I'd like to finish what I started.

On Birch's look.

EXT. BARN - DAY 27

Matthew leads his horse out of the barn as Sully comes out of the house, followed by Mike. Wolf waits for him.

MIKE:

It's too early for you to be riding.

SULLY:

I can't stay here anymore.

MIKE;

How do you know he'll come after you?

SULLY:

Because you told him I was still alive.

MIKE:

I'm so sorry.

SULLY:

Don't worry, he'd a found out sooner or later.

Sully takes the reins, painfully pulls himself up into the saddle.

MATTHEW:

There was a man watching the house this morning. Buffalo skinner. He rode off when he saw me.

SULLY:

Only one way to end this.

MIKE:

If you think you're in any condition to take on Rankin ...

SULLY:

The Cheyenne are about to start a war. The Army is keeping them on the reservations. Rankin goes, the Army goes with him. No war. Nobody gets hurt.

MIKE:

but they'll just send hunters. What will you do? Kill them all?

SULLY: (beat)

Thank you for taking care of me.

MIKE:

Sully, don't do this.

SULLY:

I've got to. (to Matthew). Take care of Wolf til I get back.

MATTHEW:

Here boy.

Sully starts off. Mike grabs his reins.

MIKE:

If you kill Rankin then you're no better than he is. And if that's what you have in mind, then I don't know who you are anymore. I've never seen you like this ... and if you kill him, I never want to see you again. Never!

Sully looks at her for a beat, then turns the horse and rides off. Matthew puts his arm around Mike, who fights tears. We hold on them as we ...

FADE OUT

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN

EXT. TELEGRAPH OFFICE - DAY 28

Mike rides past the telegraph office on her way to the clinic. Horace is sweeping the porch. He sees her.

HORACE:

Dr. Mike?

Mike stops. Horace moves to her. She dismounts.

HORACE:

I sent that telegram to the Marshall's office in Denver for you. (half beat). I hope they do something to that man beat up Sully.

MIKE:

I do too.

HORACE:

You ain't mad at me are you?

MIKE:

Everybody has to make up their own mind Horace. If you want to sell, that's your business.

HORACE:

Didn't have much choice. Hank said he'd give Myra's contract to a fellow in San Francisco if I didn't make a deal.

MIKE:

Then you did what you had to do.

HORACE:

Dr. Mike, you know anything about stock certificates?

MIKE: (she stops)

What do you want to know?

HORACE:

Well, I'm not supposed to tell anyone, but Mr. Birch offered me some stock in the Continental railroad instead of money for the down payment ...

MIKE:

That's not unusual.

HORACE:

Nope, but the stock's got a different railroad name on it.

Horace pulls out a certificate from his vest pocket, shows it to Mike.

MIKE:

Horace, I think I'd like to send a telegram.

HORACE:

Where to?

MIKE:

Chicago.

On his look.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SALOON - DAY 28

Mike enters holding a telegram with Horace, Jake, Loren and Robert E to find Birch seated at a table. He's going over his paperwork, checking the deeds.

BIRCH:

Well, Dr. Quinn, your three weeks are up, have you changed your mind? Ready to make a deal?

Birch gets up, pulls out a chair for her. Mike sits down.


MIKE:

I've never been against a railroad coming to town, Mr. Birch. I'd welcome the chance to get medical supplies on a regular basis. And as soon as Mr. Rankin is brought to justice, I'll be happy to negotiate a sale.

BIRCH:

Music to my ears, Doctor.

MIKE:



But I won't sell to you.

BIRCH:

What?

MIKE:

I'll sell to the railroad when it gets here, which according to the board of directors might not be for another six months.

There's a reaction from the saloon.

MIKE: (to everyone)

Mr. Birch doesn't work for the railroad. He works for himself. He buys up all the property, or a controlling interest, then sells it for a profit to the railroad.

JAKE:

What about the stock he gave us?

HORACE:

You got some too?

LOREN:

We all got it. Just like I suspect, we all got taken.

BIRCH:

Not true. You'll receive a fair price when the land sells.

MIKE:

But not as much as we'd make selling to the railroad ourselves.

Birch stands up.

JAKE:

You tricked us. I want my deed back.

BIRCH:

I'm sorry, but this was done fair and square. Nothing illegal about it.

Hank grabs Birch by the collar.

HANK:

Loren, you got any tar left?

LOREN:

Yep. Got some feathers, too.

BIRCH:

Are you threatening me?

LOREN/HANK/HORACE/JAKE:

Yes.

MIKE:

I'm not a lawyer, Mr. Birch, but I know one who works for the railroad you pretended to represent and I'm sure he would be happy to prosecute you for fraud.

BIRCH:

Enough said, Doctor. I'll return the deeds.

Birch picks up the papers, hands them to Mike. He turns to Hank.

BIRCH: (to Hank)

Uh, about the money ...

HANK: (threatening)

What money?

LOREN:

What money?

BIRCH (beat; then)

You're going to make a lot of it. Good day.

Birch exits.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY 28

Mike stands on the porch, looking out, pensive. She struggles to reach a decision then does and heads for the barn.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BLACK KETTLE'S CAMP - DAY 28

Mike rides into camp. Cloud Dancing and Black Kettle are there.

MIKE:

Sully is going after Rankin. You've got to help me find him and stop him.

Cloud Dancing says something in Cheyenne to Black Kettle who shakes his head..

CLOUD DANCING:

We cannot do that.

MIKE:

Why? He's barely strong enough to walk ... he's going to get himself killed this time.

CLOUD DANCING:

This has become Sully's fight now. We cannot interfere.

MIKE:

If he doesn't get killed, he'll be arrested for murder. Why won't you help save him?

CLOUD DANCING:

Since the Army has come we cannot leave the reservation. If we do we will start a war.

BLACK KETTLE: (in Cheyenne)

Tell her we will help in the ways that we can.

CLOUD DANCING:

Black Kettle says we will do all we can to save him.

MIKE:

Then so will I.

CLOUD DANCING:

You must find him. You are the only person he will listen to.

Mike spurs her horse, rides off.

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY 28

Sully rides, looking to the horizon, following a trail to Rankin.

EXT. BLACK KETTLE'S CAMP - DAY 28

Cloud Dancing, Black Kettle, other Cheyenne conduct a ceremony to summon the white buffalo.

Cloud Dancing holds a shield with the buffalo drawn on it.

They make offerings, drum, sing songs, imploring the spirit to help their brother.

EXT. WOODS - DAY 28

Mike rides her horse looking for Sully.

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

Sully rides along on his horse, passing the carcasses of fallen buffalo.

EXT. BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY 28

One of Rankin's skinnners throws buffalo hides onto a pile.

SULLY

sneaks up behind the man. The man hears him and turns around, but it's too late. Sully punches the man, sending him face down in the mud.

ANOTHER ANGLE

Just then, the second skinner enters the area, carrying hides. He sees Sully, drops the skins and goes for his gun. But, before he can draw, Sully drops him with a powerful blow.

EXT. BUFFALO PLAINS - NEAR BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY 28

Rankin sits on his horse. He fires a shot, reloads. A few dead buffalo near him. Then he hears Sully's war cry. He looks up to see

SULLY

riding towards him, tomahawk ready.

RANKIN

climbs down off his horse, pulls out his rifle, takes aim at Sully.

RANKIN'S POV

Sully.

RANKIN

closes one eye, draws a bead. His finger tightens on the trigger and then ... he loses focus, disturbed by what he sees.

RANKIN'S POV - WHITE BUFFALO

charging for us. As it dissolves before us, changing into the image of Sully riding toward camera, full speed, tomahawk out, giving a war cry as he bears down on Rankin.

BACK TO SCENE

as Rankin shakes it off, raises his rifle to fire at Sully.

ANGLE - SULLY

who keeps on coming.

ANGLE - RANKIN

who frantically reloads to get off another shot.

ANGLE - SULLY

coming closer, riding right for us.

ANGLE - RANKIN

as he shoves the cartridge in, cocks, raises the rifle.

ANOTHER ANGLE

and Sully is on top of him, swinging hard as he rides by, catching Rankin as he fires, blocking the tomahawk meant for his skull with the barrel of the rifle. The force of Sully's blow sends Rankin back of his horse.

RANKIN

hits the ground hard.

SULLY

turns his horse, comes back for the kill.

ANOTHER ANGLE

to include Sully, as he rides straight for Rankin. Hearing Sully, the buffalo hunter turns. But before he can react, Sully leaps from his horse, diving onto him. The two men hit the ground.

Rankin breaks away, pulls his knife. The two men warily circle each other.

RANKIN:

This time I will kill you.

SULLY:

Make your move.

Rankin flips his knife over, waiting for a moment ... then he throws it at Sully. Sully jumps out of the way of the knife. Rankin sees he's off balance and rushes him and they go down again.

Rankin gets in a few quick punches from above. Sully arches and flips him over.

Rankin goes for the knife, grabs it, but Sully is on top of him. He slugs Rankin and pulls the knife from his hand. Sully grabs Rankin's hair and raises the tomahawk for the kill. Sully slams the tomahawk down at his face. He sticks the blade into the dirt by his ear, slicing part of it. Sully lifts the tomahawk, places the blade edge on Rankin's face.

SULLY:

Be gone by morning. Take nothing with you.

Sully gets to his feet.

SULLY:

If I ever see you again, I will kill you.

ANOTHER ANGLE

as Sully makes his way to his pony, pulls himself onto it. He starts to ride out.

ANGLE - RANKIN

who pulls himself to his feet, wipes the blood from his ear, looks about, grabs his rifle. He loads it, moves out of the camp, running after Sully.

ANGLE - SULLY

riding away, his back to Rankin.

ANGLE - RANKIN

as he raises the rifle, about to shoot. He hears something behind him. He turns.

RANKIN'S POV - BUFFALO HERD (STOCK)

as it starts running towards him.

ON RANKIN

paralysed, unable to move.

ON THE WHITE BUFFALO (STOCK FOOTAGE)

thundering towards camera.

CLOSE ON RANKIN

unable to get out of the way, he screams.

INSERT - BUFFALO HEAD

as it knocks Rankin down.

ANGLE ON SULLY

turning around to look.

RANKIN'S BODY

on the ground.

ANGLE - SULLY

he turns the horse and heads back into town.

EXT. RIDGELINE - DAY

Mike rides along the ridgeline, looking, then stops. She sees

SULLY

barely hanging on.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Mike rides to him, stops beside him. She jumps off, catches him.

MIKE:

Sully!

She lets him down. There's a long beat of silence.

SULLY:

It's over.

MIKE:

Tell me you didn't kill him.

Sully looks at her, shakes his head.

SULLY:

It's over.

Tears fill his eyes. Mike says nothing, but holds him.

LONG SHOT - HILL SIDE

of the two figures silhouetted against the sky.

FADE OUT

THE END

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