

MOUNTAIN THUNDER

'PILOT'

\*EXCERPT\*

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**FADE IN:**

**EXT. RIVER'S EDGE - NIGHT**

Fresh snow blankets the trees near a rocky shoreline as sludgy, half-frozen water laps against the rocks, keeping a gentle rhythm.

**SUPER:**

**Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island - 1873  
Formerly Mashpee Wampanoag Territory**

Deep in the darkness of the thick forest, torch-fire **FLICKERS** through the trees.

Footsteps ferociously **CRUNCH** through snow.

Deep **BREATHS**.

Someone is running.

And someone is chasing.

Coming out of trees and catching her breath is **SOKANON**, 28, a native to this land. Tall and strong, she steps into the moonlight, surveying the landmarks around her. Wrapped tight around her breast is a **BABY**. She cradles it gently as she now looks up to the stars above.

Flames from a torch illuminate the shore as **FINN**, 30, stumbles out of the forest. Heavy build, scruffy red beard, big arms -- he's not built for running.

FINN  
(thick Irish brogue)  
You're too damn fast, woman.

SOKANON  
No. You're just damn fat... man.

He rubs his belly playfully.

FINN  
I thought that's what you liked  
about me?

SOKANON  
This way. They won't be far behind.

She takes off down the rivers edge. Finn follows.

**EXT. STONE BRIDGE - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER**

Sokanon and Finn come to a natural stone bridge where the river runs below.

Keeping close to the waters edge, Sokanon heads into the darkness under the bridge.

**HOWLS** and **WAR CRIES** can be heard ululating from in the distance.

Finn looks back to the sound with terror in his eyes.

SOKANON

Finn! Quickly. There's a cave here.

**INT. CAVE - TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS**

As Finn follows his wife deeper down the tunnel, his torch throws light on the rock walls, revealing ancient paintings.

**SYMBOLS. ANIMALS. CONSTELLATIONS.** All are displayed in a great tapestry that Finn doesn't comprehend.

FINN

What is this place?

Sokanon has no time to answer as she turns a corner. And then another. It's all an underground maze to Finn.

Sokanon is determined, but anxiety is setting in as she comes to a **DEAD END.**

SOKANON

I'm not sure this is going to work.

FINN

Is there a way out?

In his panic, Finn hasn't even noticed the **CAVE PAINTING** on the tunnel wall. Sokanon has. It's all she's focused on.

Again, we hear the war cries, now echoing through the tunnel.

The Baby gives a squeak.

Sokanon looks down at her daughter and smiles.

SOKANON

Take her.

Sokanon unwraps the shawl and hands the child to Finn.

FINN

But--

Sokanon then unties the **WAMPUM NECKLACE** she wears and places it with her daughter.

SOKANON

My Aoife...

Aoife smiles up at her mother.

Sokanon turns back to the painting, resolute.

She sits and crosses her legs, as if meditating, and softly whispers in a language Finn doesn't understand.

The war cries are getting closer.

FINN

(terrified)

Sokanon??

She keeps repeating her chant. Each time more forcefully.

She reaches out, placing her hands on the painting.

Finn sees them. Down the tunnel. **HOWLING**.

They're here.

She repeats her words. One last time. Gently. Pleading.

**WOOSH!!** The cave painting flashes **WHITE** and then **FADES AWAY**, along with the wall -- opening a **GATEWAY**.

SOKANON

Take her through.

FINN

What is this?

SOKANON

(forceful)

Just do it!

Finn, amazed at what he is seeing, steps through the barrier and finds himself in a enormous **CAVE**. He turns back to Sokanon as she holds open the small doorway between the two worlds.

Sokanon smiles at her husband and child, it's a small moment that is lost when an arrow **PIERCES** her in the ribs.

**BOOM** - The gateway closes.

FINN

NO!

He stands petrified, staring at a wall. His wife gone.

FINN (CONT'D)

SOKANON!!!

**IN HIS ARMS** Aoife smiles, unaware of all that's happened.

FINN (CONT'D)

SOKANON!!!!!!

**FADE TO BLACK.**

**DARKNESS. STILLNESS. UNTIL...**

**CLANK!**

**CLANK!**

**DESSOLVE TO:**

**CLANK!** Metal meets rock.

**CKANK!** Again. A miner's pickaxe **SMASHES** into a stone wall.

A jumble of rocks crumble and fall to the floor of-

**INT. CAVE TUNNEL**

The soot-stained face of a young **CHINESE MINER** goes wide with a smile when he sees, within the bundle of debris, a not-so-small, shiny rock.

**SILVER!**

He scoops it up, drops his axe and darts up the narrow cave corridor.

As he runs, we see other men, all Chinese, chipping away at the stone. Their heads whip around as he passes.

Further up the tunnel he runs, towards a dim light. He passes workers that are laying tracks for the mine carts they will eventually have to fill.

Finally our runner makes it to a man, **HAN**, 40s, he's also Chinese, with a long braid down his back. He isn't nearly as filthy as the other men, but he still gets his hands dirty. He is overseeing the construction of load bearing beams within the mine.

He speaks Chinese to the men he is working with. They all listen and follow his instructions. It is evident that this man is respected by the crew.

The beams are hammered into place as our young Miner approaches Han. He holds out his hand for Han to see.

Han marvels at the brilliant streak of silver in the rock. He takes the ore from the young Miner and pats him on the shoulder.

HAN  
(in Chinese)  
Good work.

The young Miner smiles and runs back down the tunnel, eager to get back to work.

Han heads the opposite way, to the light outside of the tunnel and out into-

**EXT. UPPER MOUNTAIN MINING CAMP - DAY**

The mountainside mining camp is a bustle of activity -- Dozens of Chinese men are hard at work, some are laying track for the mine carts, others are filling those carts with ore.

**SUPER:**  
**Sierra Mountains, California - 1893**  
**Formerly Miwok Territory**

**OVERSEERS**, all white men, armed and mounted on horseback, keep watchful eyes on the camp. Han walks over to the nearest one.

HAN  
(English)  
Has Sam left yet?

**WOOOOOOOSSSSSSH!!!!!!!!!!** A train whistle sounds.

That's his answer.

Han runs through the camp and towards the sound. He passes tents and small outbuildings peppered throughout. He leaps over caches of dynamite and piles of lumber, all on his way to the camp outskirts, and his destination--

**A LOCOMOTIVE** - But much smaller than anyone could imagine. It's about a quarter of the size of a normal locomotive, and hitched to its back is a row a mine carts, all filled with chunks of the mountain.

In the cab sit's **SAM**, the engineer. He's finished making his final preparations and is about to head down the mountain.

HAN (CONT'D)

SAM!!!

Sam's head pops up as he sees Han rushing towards him.

HAN (CONT'D)

Wait!!

Han rushes up to the side of the locomotive and jumps in the cab.

SAM

Didn't think you were comin' down  
on this run?

Han takes a breath.

HAN

Neither did I.

Sam throws wood in the burner and closes the hatch as the train picks up speed and rolls away from the camp and down the mountain.

It snakes its way through thick **FOREST**, twisting and turning, passing **STREAMS** and **THICKETS**. Han gets comfortable, he sits back and smiles at the beautiful sight of the majestic **MOUNTAIN**, towering over everything and everyone.

The small train chugs its way down to the valley floor and finally arrives at to a clearing where we find--

**EXT./INT. ADAMS INDUSTRIAL PROSIDIO - DAY**

As the train rolls into the fortified camp, we see it encompasses a large area with walls that protect a small industrial ecosystem, or labour camp, depending on how you look at it. For people live, work, and even die within these walls.

When the train **SKREECHES** to a halt, a work group immediately begins unloading the unrefined ore.

HAN

(to Sam)

Sounds like the breaks need  
lubricating. And be sure to check  
the equalising levers.

Sam nods as Han jumps out of the cab and heads into the building where all the workers are bringing the ore.

Han looks back at the tired faces of the workers. All women and those too young to work up in the dangerous mountain. Yet, in time, all the boys will eventually make it there. Han broods for a moment, taking in the worrying site. After a moment, he composes himself and heads into-

**INT. REFINING LONGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

The ore is loaded onto **BELTS** that funnels the stones into **CRUSHING MACHINES**. The **DEAFENING TURBULENCE** pervades the ears of anyone who enters.

As Han makes his way to the other end of the longhouse, we pass the crushing machines and see the yield it produces- a fine dark sand- which is poured onto mine carts and is being inspected by **MORGAN** (40s), a man somewhere between a cowboy and businessman.

HAN  
(yelling over the sound)  
What's the yield!?

Morgan looks up to find Han. He smiles at his friend.

MORGAN  
(straining)  
HUH??

HAN  
THE YIELD! WHAT'S THE PERCENTAGE OF  
THE NEW BATCH?

Morgan nods at one of the workers, who then wheels the mine cart outside of the longhouse and over to the **FURNACE BUILDING**.

Han and Morgan follow it outside so they can chat without having to scream.

MORGAN  
Less than thirty percent. Not  
ideal.

HAN  
Well this might brighten your day.

Han reaches into his pocket and pulls out the shining stone.

Morgans eyes sparkle.



**INT. ADAMS INDUSTRIAL PROSIDIO - MAIN OFFICE - DAY**

**ARCHIBALD ADAMS**, late 20's, is lustfully eyeing the shining stone held tightly in the grasp of his talon like fingers. He's handsome, ambitious, and has a dandy style that makes him instantly distinguishable as a man of means.

ADAMS

Where was it found?

Standing on the other side of his desk in the office is Morgan, a step behind him is Han, silent, with his eyes glued the floor.

MORGAN

Site eight. Near the south-west ridge.

ADAMS

Excellent.

Adams finally pulls his gaze away from the silver and looks to Morgan.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

This is it, Morgan. This will turn the tide.

Just then, a **YOUNG WOMAN** comes in with a **SACK** that is nearly too heavy for her to carry.

MORGAN

Let me get that for you.

She hands it over and quickly leaves.

ADAMS

Fantastic! What a day indeed. Come, come, bring that here.

Morgan plops it on Adams' desk and opens it to reveal a small, but significant stack of **SLIVER BARS**.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

This is my favorite part.

From his desk, Adams produces a **HAMMER** and **BRAND**. Pulling one of the bars aside, he lines up the brand on the silver and **BANGS** it with the hammer, pressing in his company symbol.

**BANG!** He brands another one.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

I just love this.

**BANG!** Another.

ADAMS (CONT'D)  
With this new find we're going to  
need those with a firm hand...

**BANG!**

ADAMS (CONT'D)  
...to stop the savages that  
continue to confound you and your  
men.

MORGAN  
With all due respect, sir-

**BANG!**

ADAMS  
We've had fires set.

**BANG!**

ADAMS (CONT'D)  
Dynamite stolen.

**BANG!**

ADAMS (CONT'D)  
Track ramps sabotaged.

**BANG!**

With each hammer hit, Morgan's anger registers on his face.

ADAMS (CONT'D)  
We need a change of direction.

MORGAN  
I'm the foreman here-

**BANG!** The last bar is stamped. Adams pulls a handkerchief from his breast pocket and pads his forehead, as if he had overexerted himself.

ADAMS  
Yes... But I've dispatched Skurow  
into town with the aim to recruit  
some more security. Men with  
significantly fewer... scruples,  
than yourself.

Adams goes over to the **SAFE** that stands in the corner. As his hand spins the dial, Han's eyes come up for the first time. He's laser focused on the combination lock.

**CLANK!** Adams opens the safe and pulls out a leather satchel.

Within the safe are other silver bars, a gun and an accordion envelope overflowing with documents-- this is what Han can't keep his eyes off.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Take this into town.

He fills the satchel with the silver bars.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Deposit it in the bank for me,  
would you?

Adams sits back down on his chair and scoops up the shining stone.

ADAMS (CONT'D)

Collect Skurow and any men he's  
conscripted and meet me at the site  
where you found this.

Morgan takes the silver-filled satchel, a smile hiding the true animus in his eyes.

MORGAN

Of course. I'll head there now.  
Sir.

Morgan and Han leave Adams to stare lovingly at his prize.