

YELLOW HAIR AND BLACK FEATHER

FADE IN:

INT. WILD HORSE CAFE - MORNING

Patrons squeeze into a rustic old cafe for breakfast. Some wait by the door for tables to open, still wearing their jackets in late May.

Waitresses run to catch and deliver orders. Smells of fresh bacon and hot coffee fill the air. People talk, eat and laugh.

40 year old Shoshone native, THOMAS BLACKFEATHER sits at the bar, facing away from the tables. The tall stoic figure wears a brown leather coat with AIM (American Indian Movement) on the back.

Alone, Thomas tends to his needs, sipping coffee and browsing the paper. His ears perk up as he hears another man talking near him.

30 year old white man WAYNE DOBSON, long blonde hair, athletic build, sits with strangers. His voice rings out loud and confident. CAFE PATRONS 1 and 2, 40+ white men, sit across from Wayne.

WAYNE

It's a shame what them Injuns done at Wounded Knee. Thinking they can take over a town.

CAFE PATRON 1

Ya think so?

WAYNE

Hell yeah. They live in America and must abide by our damn laws.

CAFE PATRON 2

So you think it was ok that the troops shot those folks?

WAYNE

They should have shot all them sons of bitches.

CAFE PATRON 1

You might be careful talking that way around here friend. You are surrounded by Indian reservations.

WAYNE

I'm from California, where Governor Reagan keeps our Injuns under control.

The food comes arrives. The waitress distributes the plates of food, cooling the conversation briefly.

CAFE PATRON 2

What you doing up this way from California?

WAYNE

Hiking up Gannett Peak.

CAFE PATRON 2

That's a tall task mister. It's maybe the toughest hike in America.

WAYNE

Yeah, that's why I'm doing it. Heading out in the morning.

CAFE PATRON 1

By yourself?

WAYNE

Only way to do it my friend.

The conversation pauses again for the men to eat.

Thomas lays down a \$5 bill, tips his hat, a black broad brimmed hat with a black feather standing up in the back. He rubs his forefinger over the last of the runny egg on his plate. As he passes Wayne, he brushes the egg lightly onto Wayne's collar. Wayne bristles as Thomas passes by.

EXT. WILD HORSE CAFE - LATER

Thomas rocks in a chair across the street from the cafe. He whittles a piece of wood with a pocket knife. His eyes lift with each patron leaving the cafe. He sees Wayne leave. Thomas walks parallel to Wayne.

Wayne stops at the Curiosity Motel. A one story wood paneled motel. He disappears into room 13.

BLACKFEATHER

Unlucky 13 Yellowhair.

Thomas walks down the street to his 1970's black Ford pickup. He gets in and drives off.

## EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL HEAD - DAWN

Thomas stands beside his truck. He watches Wayne get his pack. Wayne walks over to sign the registry on a stone wall at the trail head. Wayne maneuvers his pack in place, adjusting his collar against the cold. He begins hiking.

Thomas grabs his pack out of the truck bed. He slips on his light backpack, adjusts his hat with the feather. Thomas bypasses the sign-in book and heads up the trail.

## EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL FLAT RIVER - MID-MORNING

Wayne takes a break by the river. He dangles his feet in the cool water. He leans forward cupping the water and puts it through his blond hair. "Snap" goes a branch behind him. He turns.

CUT TO:

Thomas sits behind a large rock about 100 yards from Wayne. He sees a squirrel scurry away from a tree branch. Wayne puts on his boots and pack, resuming his hike. Thomas waits until Wayne disappears and follows him.

## EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL SWITCHBACKS - NOON

Wayne looks up the trail. There are 50 switchbacks on the loose gravel trail that spans 2000 feet of elevation gain. The trail measures 5 feet wide, with tall pines edging the trail.

Wayne moves at one mile per hour. He keeps his head down, periodically peaking upward to the next switchback. He adjusts his pack routinely as his body grinds with pain. Wayne breathes heavily through his mouth.

Half-way up, Wayne rests by a large rock. He slips off his pack and leans back. Looking at the sky, he catches his breath. He eats crackers and drinks water from his pack. Peering down, Wayne sees a figure. He shrugs.

CUT TO:

Thomas matching Wayne's pace, stops for a break. Relaxing, he sips from a canteen and leans back on a rock.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL TOP OF THE SWITCHBACKS - AFTERNOON

Wayne tops the switchbacks, briefly bending over to catch his breath before crossing a small stream. After crossing, he sees two 20 something male hikers walking toward him.

WAYNE

Hey fellas.

HIKER 1

Howdy.

WAYNE

How's the hike ahead?

HIKER 2

Not too bad for the next 6 miles.  
Flat and downhill after that.

HIKER 1

You headed to the summit?

Wayne nods, adjusting his pack.

HIKER 1 (CONT'D)

By yourself?

WAYNE

You betcha.

HIKER 2

Braver man than me.

Wayne chuckles and smiles with confidence.

HIKER 2 (CONT'D)

We didn't make the summit. It's a  
bitch trying to cross the ice  
bridge.

HIKER 1

Best of luck mister.

WAYNE

Thanks fellas, but luck has little  
to do with it.

Wayne walks past the two hikers. The hikers shrug their shoulders and continue walking toward the switchbacks.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL SWITCHBACKS - CONTINUOUS

Thomas runs into the two hikers as he tops the switchbacks.

HIKER 1  
Hello fellow hiker.

BLACKFEATHER  
Hello.

HIKER 2  
You with the guy we just passed?

BLACKFEATHER  
Sort of.

HIKER 1  
I'm afraid he's overconfident and going to get hurt.

BLACKFEATHER  
Yeah, that can happen.

HIKER 2  
Maybe you can talk some sense to him.

Thomas stands still, watching the men walk away. He smiles, then walks across the stream.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DOUBLE LAKE - NIGHT

Wayne sits on a log by the lake. His tent standing and night falling. He hears coyotes calling. He throws the rest of his water on his fire and slips into his tent.

CUT TO:

Thomas lays on his blanket, with a small tarp tied to a tree overhead. He sharpens his Bowie knife with a stone. The coyotes call. Thomas gets up and creeps closer to Wayne's camp. He waits.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DOUBLE LAKE - DAWN

Wayne's pack sits on the ground. He walks around his camp looking for something.

WAYNE  
Where the hell is my flashlight, cup and lighter? Must be around somewhere.

Wayne circles the camp once more. Unsuccessful in his search, Wayne grabs his pack, shakes his head and walks up the trail.

CUT TO:

Thomas trails Wayne. He stops at Wayne's camp and sees the cup, flashlight and lighter hidden behind some rocks.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DINWOODY CREEK - NOON

Wayne stops before the bridge that crosses the fast moving creek. Taking a break, he unfurls his map. He makes notes and puts the map away. Wayne looks back and sees a tall man with a hat, maybe a feather sticking up. He waves.

Thomas sees Wayne waving. He does not respond. Thomas takes off his pack. He sits on a rock.

WAYNE

Unfriendly son of a bitch.

Wayne crosses the bridge, heading toward the Gannett River crossing.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL GANNETT RIVER CROSSING - AFTERNOON

Wayne looks for an area to cross. The water moves fast, but not too deep. He tugs on his pack and begins slowly walking in the river.

CUT TO:

Thomas watches. He sees Wayne walking in the river. Suddenly Wayne falls in. Wayne scrambles to find footing.

CUT TO:

Wayne grabs a branch. He pulls himself to the bank.

WAYNE

Shit! Cold as a witches tit!

Wayne stops on a rock formation and changes clothes. He leaves his gear, walks down a path by the river and disappears behind a tree. He unzips his pants.

CUT TO:

Thomas sneaks up and grabs some of Wayne's clothes and gloves on the exterior of his pack. Thomas moves away.

CUT TO:

Wayne walks back to his gear. He looks around. He checks his pack. Shrugging, he puts his pack on, continuing his hike.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL TARN'S CAMP - NIGHT

Wayne snores in his tent.

CUT TO:

Thomas moves toward Wayne's camp. Thomas grabs Wayne's ice pick. Using a screwdriver, he loosens some screws. Thomas walks back to his camp.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL TARN'S BASE CAMP - DAWN

Wayne walks around the camp angrily stomping and moving his hands.

WAYNE

Where the fuck are my gloves?

He stops walking. He reaches into his pack, grabbing some heavy socks to use as gloves.

WAYNE (CONT'D)

Time to top this sucker!

With only a light pack, his crampons on and ice axe in hand, Wayne begins his ascent to the top. Cloudy weather with a brisk breeze and no one else in sight. The rest of his gear stays at Tarn's base camp.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL PEAK - NOON

Wayne methodically moves up the icy slope. Stepping with his crampons, heel - toe, left -right foot. He holds his ice axe like a cane to steady him as he takes the next steps.

After a few steps, the ice axe head wobbles. Wayne slips and falls.

WAYNE

Screams.

Wayne slides down the face of the slope toward some rocks. He turns his body into a fetal position and digs the ice axe down to slow his descent. He is slowing, then the head of the axe comes off.



WAYNE (CONT'D)

Shit!

Wayne holds on to the pick, trying to push it down into the ice. He adjusts his crampons to dig in slightly, without flipping. He slows, but slams into the rocks - stopping.

Wayne reaches for his legs, feeling for injuries. He rises and scoots down the slope, toward base camp.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL TARN'S CAMP - AFTERNOON

Wayne walks into camp. He looks for his gear. He falls to his knees.

WAYNE

(Screaming)

Who are you! What do you want!

Who are you, motherfucker!

CUT TO:

The sound echoes off the mountain. Thomas walking, pauses, then continues walking down the mountain with both his and Wayne's pack.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DINWOODY CREEK - NIGHT

Wayne stumbles into a flat area across Dinwoody Creek. The sun sets behind him. On the ground - a blanket, his flashlight and a canteen. He rushes to the canteen and drinks ravenously. He pulls the blanket around him.

Wayne collapses from exhaustion. The only sounds heard - a babbling creek water and a wolf howling. A full moon illuminates the area. Wayne crawls toward his flashlight. He flicks it on, scanning the camp.

He scoots back toward a large rock, then he hits an object. A black feather sticks up from the ground. He grabs it and twirls the feather.

WAYNE

(Raspy whisper)

Blackfeather.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DINWOODY CREEK - DAWN

Thomas kicks dirt onto Wayne. Wayne wakes up, spitting out dust and shielding his eyes toward the rising sun. He sees a tall man, dark, with a hat and black feather sticking up.

BLACKFEATHER  
Get up Yellowhair.

WAYNE  
What the fuck man?

BLACKFEATHER  
Get up, you have a long way to go.

WAYNE  
Blackfeather?

Thomas kneels down closer to Wayne and nods.

WAYNE (CONT'D)  
You're trying to kill me.

Thomas grabs some dirt and tosses it to the side, trying to gauge the wind. He looks back at the sun.

BLACKFEATHER  
Yellowhair - if I wanted to kill you, I could have done it outside the cafe.

Wayne blinks and tries to sit up, unsuccessfully.

WAYNE  
This is about what I said in the restaurant...come on man.

BLACKFEATHER  
You never know who's listening.

WAYNE  
I was just shootin' shit. I didn't mean anything.

BLACKFEATHER  
Words have consequences.

Thomas stands up. Wayne shields his eyes again. Thomas turns and walks away. Wayne gets up. He pulls out the pick he has and rushes toward Thomas.

As he reaches his prey, Thomas sidesteps and trips Wayne with an outstretched foot. The pick flies away as Wayne hits the ground hard. Thomas picks up the pick. He flips Wayne over with his foot.

WAYNE  
(Groaning)  
I'm sorry man, I'm sorry.

BLACKFEATHER  
Your actions say otherwise.

WAYNE  
All I wanted to do was conquer this  
summit. I didn't want no trouble.

Thomas turns toward the summit, then back to Wayne.

BLACKFEATHER  
Yellowhair and your white brothers -  
all think they can conquer a  
mountain. You cannot. You live  
with the mountain, you move with  
the mountain, you worship the  
mountain. You do not conquer the  
mountain.

Wayne sobs lightly.

BLACKFEATHER (CONT'D)  
I will outfit you like your  
forbearers gave the tribes on their  
move to Oklahoma. Here is some  
jerky, another canteen. You walk  
down this mountain.

WAYNE  
No!

BLACKFEATHER  
You have a choice, walk or die  
Yellowhair.

Thomas quickly walks down the trail. Wayne rolls over,  
watching Thomas. Tears roll down his face. He slowly rises.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DOUBLE LAKE - NIGHT

Wayne stumbles into camp, marked by a black feather tied to a  
tall stick. There is another full canteen and jerky. Wayne  
eats like a man possessed. He drinks from the canteen. He  
sees the reflection of the moon on the lake. Rolling over,  
Wayne wraps the blanket around him and falls asleep.

EXT. GANNETT PEAK TRAIL DOUBLE LAKE - DAWN

Wayne sits up. He sees a deer sipping water from the lake  
edge. A thud behind him. The deer races off. Wayne barely  
moves.

BLACKFEATHER

Your rations. No more. You have  
to make it down today.

Wayne nods, not looking at Thomas. Thomas walks down the trail. Wayne sits still, looking at the lake with a blank stare. He grabs his jerky and canteen. He stands, wobbling at first. Wayne walks ahead, following Thomas.

EXT. GANNET PEAK TRAIL HEAD SWITCHBACKS - AFTERNOON

A 20 something white female hiker walks toward Thomas. She nods. He stops.

BLACKFEATHER

Ma'am, a few miles up this trail,  
you will see a white man with blond  
hair. He will be weary and ragged.  
Do not help him. Do you  
understand?

FEMALE HIKER

(Stops warily)  
I...I understand.

BLACKFEATHER

Good. There will be consequences  
if you don't.

The Female Hiker nods and walks briskly away. Blackfeather continues down the mountain.

GANNETT PEAK TRAIL - AFTERNOON

The Female Hiker sees Wayne, covered by a blanket walking aimlessly toward her. He mumbles incoherently. She stops, moving slightly off the trail and watches him. Wayne continues forward, never looking at her.

GANNETT PEAK TRAILHEAD - NIGHT

Wayne stumbles, falls 200 yards from the trailhead. He gets up and walks. His head bleeding. He tightens the blanket around him, weaving toward the parking lot. He falls just before the parking lot, where he signed in.

Thomas walks over to him. He kneels down to look at Wayne's bloody and dirty face.

BLACKFEATHER

You made it Yellowhair.

WAYNE

Grunts.

BLACKFEATHER

Your gear is in your truck. I've signed you out.

Blackfeather drops Wayne's keys by him. Wayne slowly moves his hand to grasp the keys.

WAYNE

(Whispering, gasping)

I'm sorry Blackfeather, I'm sorry.

BLACKFEATHER

Yellowhair, multiply your hike by 30 times and you have the trail of tears.

Wayne blinks with recognition. He whimpers.

WAYNE

I'm sorry Blackfeather.

BLACKFEATHER

(In Shoshone)

Your words mean nothing white man.  
Your actions will speak louder. Go  
and hate no more.

Blackfeather removes the feather from his hat. He places it next to Wayne. Wayne picks up the feather, twirling it as he watches Blackfeather walk off.

FADE OUT.