BIG THUNDER

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ACT ONE

FROM THE BLACK WE HEAR--

The jarring sound of a 19th century steam whistle.

SMASH UP ON:

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

C/U - a TRAIN WHISTLE blares in our faces. PULL BACK to reveal:

A steam-powered MINE TRAIN - labeled number 3 - shoots past us. The LIGHTS on the mine train track CLICK green to indicate all clear. Headed in the opposite direction of the train is a MINER running as if his very life depended on it.

He races through the labyrinthine tunnels, past MEN digging with pick axes, ducking under sharp edged stalactites, and splashing through a pool of water until he hops onto another MINE CAR headed up. Headed out.

EXT. MINE SHAFT ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

ON OUR MINER- breathless, as he emerges into daylight. He races up to the FOREMAN (grizzled), shaking with excitement-

MINER
-where is he? *Where is he?!*

FOREMAN
It's Sunday. Where do you think?

Our miner TAKES OFF.

FOREMAN (CONT'D)
Hey! Wait! He isn't to be disturbed unless-
(realizing)
Jesus Christ...

The foreman spins around, moving rapidly to RING a BELL hanging from a pole that - judging by the look in his eye - has never been rung. And as he rings it with one hand, he cups his hand with the other, shouting to the next mine shaft entrance over-

FOREMAN (CONT'D)
Gold! GOLD!!!

ON THE NEXT ENTRANCE- where we see the NEXT FOREMAN racing to his bell and shouting to the next foreman over. Bells begin to RING all over the mountainside as we PULL OUT to HEAR the hoots and hollers of excitement; SWEEP AROUND to finally see:

THE TOWERING EPIC SIGHT OF BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN IN ALL ITS ICONIC GLORY - POCKMARKED WITH THE SCARS OF INNUMERABLE ATTEMPTS AT UNLOCKING ITS TREASURE.

All failed. **Until now.**

As we ROTATE around the mountain peaks, we see a SMALL MINING TOWN come into view just past it.

Text: Big Thunder Township, Wyoming Territory. 1856.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

A thriving mid 19th century era mining town pulsing with energy, Big Thunder looming over it in the background. This place isn't the West of Sergio Leone - this is the real deal. Rough, sexy, dangerous, but also a place of great natural beauty -- forested, green terrain, crisscrossed with rivers, waterfalls and otherwise lush surroundings.

INT. SALOON - CONTINUOUS

HIGH HEELS PRACTICALLY KICK INTO OUR FACE as we RACE down a row of GORGEOUS DANCING GIRLS on-stage in barely there outfits doing a vigorous can-can to raucous cheers.

UP FRONT- a ROUGH & TUMBLE ASSORTMENT are playing poker when they see through the front window: our miner shooting down Main Street like a bat out of hell.

POKER PLAYER
What the hell's into him?

EXT. APACHE RESERVATION - SAME TIME

A peaceful Indian RESERVATION on the outskirts of town. We're closer to the mountain here and the bells on Big Thunder RING more audibly. And when they do- the CHIEF (50) raises his head and SHOUTS something we don't understand in Apache.

ON AN APACHE BOY (9)-- he watches, wide eyed, as the Chief SHOUTS again. MOTHERS start grabbing their CHILDREN, FATHERS hurrying their families into mud HOGANS. The boy's FATHER grabs him and hurries him inside.

The Chief keeps shouting whatever he's saying over and over. Whatever is going on, it's clear - *they're scared*.

INT. CHURCH - SECONDS LATER

MINER'S POV- as he rapidly makes his way down the center aisle, approaching a MAN seated at the front pew.

As the Miner nears, the man's head turns -- almost as if sensing his approach -- to REVEAL the face of man that for now we'll just call the BOSS (50): handsome, oozes power and even more sex appeal.

CLOSE ON THE MINER'S LIPS- as he leans in and whispers. And then- BOOM. The Boss is up out of his seat as EVERY EYE in the Church turns to watch him race out.

INTERCUT:

BACK IN THE MINE SHAFT- our miners are racing deeper as men with PICK AXES dig faster and faster. They're almost there.

ON MAIN STREET- the Miner and Boss ZOOM past us on horseback, headed toward Big Thunder as TOWNSPEOPLE empty onto the street.

WHILE AT THE APACHE RESERVATION- the Boy takes shelter with his FAMILY. They hold each other as if they know this is the end.

And that's when EVERYONE hears it- a sickening RUMBLE.

INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN-

OLDER MINER
Hey! Woah- stop! STOP!

C/U - On the wall, a HORSESHOE TURNED UPWARD and nailed in for good luck begins to RATTLE violently.

FOREMAN
NO! *We've come too far! Too far!*
Keep going! Dig, goddangit, DIG!

They keep digging, the rumbling deepening as they go, shaking the miners...

MAIN STREET- shaking the WHOLE town...

BACK INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN- shaking and rumbling rising in tandem with the pace of the digging to a crescendo and then-

BAM! C/U - on a PICK AXE as it SLAMS into the wall in front of them *AND-*

THE RUMBLING STOPS. Just like that.

And through the HOLE in the cavern wall, a beam of LIGHT shoots out. A spectacularly beautiful beam of bluish light, dancing across the haggard faces of our miners.

FURTHER UP THE TUNNEL- we see our Miner and the Boss stop.

MINER
What the hell...

C/U - on the Boss's eyes as we see the BLUE LIGHT reflected in his almost black pupils.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

The townspeople stare in awe and confusion, those bluish streaks of light now shooting out every hole in the mountainside; a spectral magic show the likes of which man has never seen, hypnotizing them...*hypnotizing us*.

INT. CHIEF'S HOGAN - CONTINUOUS

Several APACHE FAMILIES huddle together as the Chief starts to softly chant - a beautiful, but eerie native prayer.

ON OUR BOY'S FACE-- his father sees the fear in his eyes. He takes off his NECKLACE and hangs it around his son's neck.

C/U - on an AMULET hanging from the necklace: the distinctive Apache SYMBOL for LIGHT (the SUN). We'll remember it.

The boy clutches the amulet, hands shaking.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

And then, as the townspeople gape, the mountain RUMBLES again. Except this time, it's different than before. This time it's truly terrifying. This time, maybe our ears are playing tricks on us, but it sounds less like a rumble...

And more like a roar.

INT. MINE SHAFT - CONTINUOUS

C/U - On the wall, as the upward horseshoe RATTLES so hard, this time, *it* FLIPS *upside down*.

ON THE MINERS- as the tunnel begins CRUMBLING around them.

FOREMAN
Go! GO!!!

Within seconds- they're scrambling to leap onboard the mine train (#3).

And as the mine train makes its desperate escape, we see the rail lights behind all simultaneously CLICK RED one after the other - *as if something is coming after them.*

MINER'S POV- we can see DAYLIGHT at the end of the tunnel.

They pick up speed, shooting out toward us in a desperate last gasp toward survival when from behind them-

THE BLUE LIGHT <u>FLARES</u> AND THEN IN A BLINDING SPECTRAL ERUPTION, AS THE EARTH TREMBLES, THE LIGHT WASHES OVER THE TRAIN.

ON THE BOSS- his eyes widen a split second before the light- BLASTS over him, RACING OUTWARD.

EXT. MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

AS THE BLUE LIGHT - VWOOSH!!! - <u>EXPLODES</u> OUT OF THE MOUNTAIN FROM EVERY DIRECTION, RACING TOWARD THE SPECTATORS LIKE A PHOTIC SHOCK WAVE, OVERTAKING THEM AND THEN <u>US</u> WITH A ROAR AS-

The screen goes WHITE - leaving us with nothing, but a ringing in our ears. It takes a beat for our vision to clear and when it does- we SEE the town, except now...

<u>It's empty</u>.

The only thing left on the streets are the CLOTHES of the disappeared. We PUSH through the ghost town up toward the mountain, UP its peaks and INTO the mouth of one of its CAVES, disappearing into the darkness as we- CUT TO BLACK.

<u>TITLE: BIG THUNDER</u>

The same strange light we saw before now RADIATES off our title card, flaring again as we FADE TO:

<u>A CHILD'S DRAWING IN PROGRESS - ROUGH SHAPES THAT LOOK SUSPICIOUSLY LIKE THE TWIN PEAKS OF BIG THUNDER.</u>

We TILT UP from the drawing to see <u>instead</u>, through a WINDOW:

AN UNFAMILIAR CITYSCAPE- dominated by the twin peaks *actually* being drawn: the 20-story New York World Building and the nearly as tall 284 foot spire of Trinity Church.

<u>Text: 34 years later. New York City, 1890.</u>

We PULL BACK to reveal we're looking over the shoulder of-

JACK CARSON (10) - adorable and frail, as he sits in a chair, scribbling away, but what he's really looking at longingly is-

A group of BOYS playing stickball in the street. Average kids enjoying a simple game he never will.

GRANT (O.S.)
Jack!

He looks up to see his dad- DR. GRANT CARSON (45) the deductive abilities of Holmes, the sheer genius of Will Hunting and the rumpled good looks of Mark Ruffalo. He tracks Jack's eye-line to the stickball game.

JACK
Dad, can I-

GRANT
(as he passes)
Don't even think about it. Put the mask back on. Five more minutes...

He reluctantly puts his MASK back on - essentially a RUBBER OXYGEN MASK attached to a rudimentary HUMIDIFIER, and we realize we're in-

INT. GRANT'S EXAM ROOM - DAY

A traditional, slightly claustrophobic late 19th century doctor's exam room. A patient - MR. TIPTON (30s, white as a ghost) - sits on an exam table as Grant approaches.

MR. TIPTON
Doc, my chest is killing me. I think I'm having a heart attack.

GRANT
(unconcerned)
Um-hmm. Your collar. It's black. You chew tobacco at night?

Tipton nods. Grant walks away, comes back with: a spoonful of WHITE POWDER.

GRANT (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Open...

Tipton does. Grant shoves the spoon in his mouth.

MR. TIPTON
(swallows, sputters)
What the hell was that?!

GRANT
Baking soda. You have gas caused by chewing tobacco right before you sleep. The carbonic acid will offset it. Just lay off the tobacco at night. Anything else I can do for you, Mr. Tipton?

MOMENTS LATER- Grant hands Tipton a bill. He hesitates.

MR. TIPTON
Times being what they are, I'm don't know if I can-

Grant grits his teeth- then takes the bill back, BALLS it up.

MR. TIPTON (CONT'D)
Bless you, Dr. Carson. Bless you.

Tipton exits. Grant wearily lobs the bill into a WASTE BASKET filled with IDENTICAL BALLED UP PATIENTS' BILLS.

ON A STACK LABELED: INCOMING BILLS (UNPAID)- Grant eyes the pile. Shakes his head.

GRANT
Whoever's next, come on in!

VOICE (O.S.)
Hello, Grant.

Grant's eyes widen at the sound of his voice. He spins around to see- CHASE CARSON (35) - handsome, immaculately dressed - staring back at him from the doorway. Grant's smile disappears, the tension palpable.

CHASE
Long time.

GRANT
(beat)
Jack, I'll be right back.

He steps out into the hallway with Chase.

ON JACK-- whose eyes flit back to the softball game outside.

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Grant shuts the door behind him-

CHASE
Did you get my letters?

GRANT
I got them. I burned them.

CHASE
We're brothers, Grant--

GRANT
You can't just walk in after five years like *nothing* happened.

Chase takes something out of his pocket. Reveal: A GLEAMING NUGGET OF RAW GOLD THE SIZE OF A LIME. Chase holds it up in his brother's face.

CHASE
What if I had a way to make it up to you?

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

We PAN ACROSS: the WALLS, Grant's DESK -- littered with DRAWINGS, SCHEMATICS, various components of a BREATHING DEVICE that seems a generation before its time.

ON CHASE- taking it all in. Grant sits at his desk.

CHASE
Still working on this? Jack's breathing machine --

GRANT
It takes time.

CHASE
And money - right? Can't be easy for you right now. I heard about your wife getting let go from the Times.

Grant just stares daggers back at his brother.

GRANT
What are you doing here, Chase?

Chase takes a seat, places the golden nugget on Grant's desk.

CHASE
There's a mountain out west, in Wyoming. They call it Big Thunder.
(re: the nugget)
What if I told you that's where this came from -- and that this was the tip *of the tip* of the iceberg. Enough gold to make Midas jealous.

GRANT
What does that have to do with you?

Chase hands Grant a business card: PROJECT MANAGER - BIG THUNDER MINING CO.

CHASE
It's a special place, Grant. Wide open spaces, fresh air. A new Eden on the edge of civilization. It's only missing one thing.
(smiles)
A doctor. And they're willing to pay.

Grant is about to respond when something catches his eye out the window.

GRANT
Jesus.

Grant grabs his MEDICAL BAG and bolts.

Reverse to see: Jack has snuck out and is up at bat.

EXT. STREET - SAME TIME

ON JACK- as he nervously, awkwardly holds the bat. Kids SNICKER. Jack doesn't flinch. They throw him a pitch and-

KID 1
Strike two!

Grant races out to Jack as they throw him another pitch.

GRANT
Jack! Don't!

CRACK! Jack SWINGS, connecting with the ball. It soars down the block as Jack rounds first base, the kids cheering. Looking thrilled, he starts to wheeze as he gets to second. Grant is running full steam to get to him. Knows what's coming.

Jack rounds third and as he does...he slows. Breathing more heavily. Wheezing. He suddenly gets a look of abject fear in his eye and then- just DROPS. Grant catches him in his arms.

GRANT (CONT'D)
It's okay, buddy. I got you...

Jack's now in the middle of a severe respiratory attack. It's fucking violent and terrifying.

Without skipping a beat, Grant has set his bag on the ground and removed a SMALL DEVICE -- not the one from the drawings -- that looks remarkably like a modern day inhaler, but is actually a mid-19th century NEBULIZER with a PERFUME BOTTLE SPRAY TOP affixed to it. A Grant Carson original.

He props Jack up, brings the ad hoc INHALER to his mouth.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Listen to my voice. Listen to my voice, Jack. I'm right here. It's okay. I'm always right here.

Hearing that- Jack starts to come out of it. He clutches the nebulizer as Grant reaches into his bag and pulls out a JOURNAL. He opens it and makes a note on the episode. We SEE the journal's pages -- realize Grant tracks these attacks.

Grant shuts the book and looks up to see Chase watching from the window of the office.

EXT. CARSON HOME (LOWER EAST SIDE) - NIGHTFALL

Establishing on a MODEST BROWNSTONE. HORSE AND BUGGIES drive past. PEDDLERS are shutting down for the night. BEGGARS stumble about. It's a gritty, downcast setting.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM/BATHROOM (CARSON HOME) - MOMENTS LATER

C/U -- Chase's golden nugget framed between two stunning BLUE EYES. We PULL OUT TO reveal they belong to:

EMMA CARSON (40) -- sexy, strong, no BS type. She examines the nugget.

EMMA
So, they want you to be the town doctor?

She puts it down, as she and Grant do their respective evening routines. The bathroom is cubicle sized. Emma squeezes by.

EMMA (CONT'D)
That's all he said?

Grant steps into the bedroom.

GRANT
There was one other thing...

Grant takes a deep breath.

GRANT (CONT'D)
That in exchange for relocating to Big Thunder, the Company would agree to <u>fully</u> fund my research.

Silence. Emma comes into the bedroom, jaw-dropped.

EMMA
All of it?

Grant gestures to the schematics, blueprints, books all around the room.

GRANT
All of it. Apparently, the town's backed by a guy named Abel White. Some kind of mining tycoon. Very private. No one's ever heard of him. Chase didn't say much about him other than that the offer came from Mr. White personally.

Emma steps toward the bed, hopeful.

EMMA
Grant...

GRANT
(trying to put the brakes on this idea)
You don't know my brother like I do, Emma. With Chase, there's always a catch. You want to risk everything on a promise from *him*?

EMMA
What exactly are we risking here, Grant?! Because I look around and I see us going more broke by the second. I see our son more sick by the day-

GRANT
I can finish Jack's machine on my own-

EMMA
But you haven't yet! Now here's a chance, a real chance!

Emma moves onto the bed, closer to Grant.

EMMA (CONT'D)
The Grant Carson who paid his way through med school sweeping streets in the Five Points? The Grant Carson who proposed to me after three weeks? Do you think he'd be afraid to take this chance?

She touches his face.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What'd I say when you asked me to marry you?

GRANT
You asked me if I was sure we weren't jumping first, thinking later...

EMMA
And what'd you say?

GRANT
Sometimes you gotta jump first.

Emma smiles. Grant does, too.

GRANT (CONT'D)
We have our moments.

EMMA
But when's the last time we *had* a moment? A <u>real</u> moment. You work all day at the practice and all night on your research. Maybe this is our chance, Grant. Let's find out.

Grant smiles, knows she's right when we hear the CREAK of a floorboard. They both turn to the door and see it ajar.

GRANT & EMMA
(a sigh)
Abby.

EMMA
I'll talk to her.

EXT. CARSON HOME - MOMENTS LATER

On ABBY CARSON (17)-- a stunningly beautiful little rebel. She sits on the stoop in front of the house, staring at the New York skyline. Emma steps outside. Without a word, she sits beside her.

There's a moment, then--

ABBY
See those lights? That's Barnard, where I was going to go to school next year.
(MORE)

ABBY (CONT'D)
That building over there? That's where my first formal dance will be in a few months. I see all the things I was supposed to do and now...

EMMA
(softly)
We're not doing this for us, Abby. We're doing it for your brother.

ABBY
You don't think I know that?
(beat)
I'd do anything for Jack. Like I have my whole life. You know I'll say yes. But you know what hurts?
(meets her mother's eyes)
That you didn't even ask.

Abby stands and walks back inside, leaving Emma alone.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (CARSON HOME) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant sits, tinkering, as Emma passes through.

GRANT
How'd she take it?

EMMA
Buckle up, Dr. Carson. It's going to be a bumpy ride.

UP ON-- the SOUNDS OF A TRAIN.

INT. GRAND CENTRAL DEPOT - THE NEXT DAY

Grand Central Station's turn-of-the-century predecessor -- just as bustling.

ON A "WESTERN UNION" SIGN- we MOVE DOWN to reveal: Chase stepping to the front of the line.

CHASE
Message to Mr. Abel White. Care of the Big Thunder Mining Company...

ON OUR FAMILY- as they make their way into the center of the depot. Chase spots Grant, helping along Jack who moves slowly. Chase smiles. BACK TO:

CHASE (CONT'D)
Tell Mr. White - *we got 'em.*

EXT. TRAIN - DAY

We're on the TRAIN as it SHOOTS ACROSS BIG SKY COUNTRY -- a landscape right out of an Albert Bierstadt painting.

It's epic, breathtaking and visually about as far from the gloomy metropolitan world our family has left behind as you could imagine. *An extraordinary frontier world opening up before our very eyes.*

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

ON ABBY- looking less impressed. Emma notices.

EMMA
Stay positive, baby.

ABBY
This is my positive face.

Abby stares back blankly. Chase smiles at Grant.

CHASE
She's definitely yours.
(new subject)
Now, Mr. White first settled down and financed this entire operation in Big Thunder about four years ago and ever since-

GRANT
Four years ago? They haven't had a doctor in four years?

Jack COUGHS. Grant turns to check on him, but he's fine.

CHASE
We had someone on a temporary basis, but they moved on, which is why when Mr. White asked if I knew anyone -- I said I knew just the man for the job.

GRANT
Temporary basis? What happened to him?

CHASE
Well-

JACK
Dad -- *look*.

Grant turns to look out the window-

GRANT
Woah.

AS OUR FAMILY GETS THEIR FIRST GLIMPSE OF BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN ON THE HORIZON -- IT'S LIKE SEEING THE ENTRANCE GATE TO JURASSIC PARK OR HOGWARTS FOR THE FIRST TIME. IT'S A MOMENT.

CHASE
I give you, Big Thunder.

EXT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

We PULL WIDE, the train looking like little more than a toy against the outline of Big Thunder as a MASSIVE HERD OF BISON gallop alongside the locomotive.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

ON JACK- his face pressed up against the window. One BISON turns and SNORTS in his general direction and Jack recoils with glee.

ON GRANT- who SEES something in the distance.

GRANT
What's that out there?

Chase squints.

CHASE
Apache camp. Been there longer than any of us. Nothing to be scared about, though.

Chase forces a smile.

EXT. BIG THUNDER DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER

As our family disembarks- a PORTER grabs their luggage. Grant and Emma are taken aback by the royal treatment.

CHASE
He's got those. Don't worry! C'mon!

EXT. MAIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The Carsons sit in the back of a carriage as we get our first glimpses of Big Thunder. We TAKE IN THE SIGHTS & SOUNDS of this rich western wonderland.

CHASE
Some of the infrastructure here was laid down by previous settlements, but most of it is brand new. Financed by Mr. White.

We recognize the town from our teaser, but whatever money Abel White has put into it since then -- it shows. It's a veritable frontier paradise.

CHASE (CONT'D)
You guys can look around later. We don't want to be late for the party.

EXT. THUNDER MESA - SUNSET

C/U -- a METAL SIGN engraved: THUNDER MESA.

We HEAR the sounds of a CARRIAGE, which PULLS our gaze up over the sign to REVEAL beyond it: a shockingly modern looking, western style estate. *Light years* from New York.

INT. THUNDER MESA - MOMENTS LATER

A party is in full swing. The interior of the house is even nicer than the exterior. A dream home for anyone in 2013, forget about 1890.

CHASE
Welcome to Thunder Mesa. It's one of the oldest estates in Big Thunder. The original train depot used to be not too far from here. From upstairs you can actually see our old mine train graveyard.

EMMA
Sorry, who is this party for?

CHASE
Well, for you guys. Naturally.

Grant and Emma share a look.

CHASE (CONT'D)
C'mon. There's someone who wants to meet you.

Chase grins as he navigates them through the crowd. PARTY GUESTS nod and smile as they walk past. "Good to have you! Cheers!" Grant seems charmed. Emma is a little taken aback.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Dr. Carson and family, allow me to introduce-

ON A MAN- facing away from us.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Mr. Abel White.

And as ABEL WHITE turns toward us, we see a familiar face we never expected to see again -- the face of the Boss who seemingly vanished before our eyes in the teaser...*still 50 years old as if not a day had passed since the spectral eruption 34 years ago*.

ABEL
Dr. Grant Carson! We've been waiting for you.

Abel smiles and we-- CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. THUNDER MESA - NIGHT

Abel walks our family through the estate.

ABEL
I can't begin to tell you how exciting it is to have a true man of science out here. Chase told me about what you're working on.
(his eyes twinkle)
Very exciting stuff. I like a man with big dreams.

GRANT
Well, it's not for me. It's for him. He's a special boy.

ABEL
(looks at Jack)
Oh, I'm sure he is.

Abel's stare lingers a second too long -- or does it? It's subtle enough that no one clocks it, but Emma. Then-

ABEL (CONT'D)
And Mrs. Carson. If there's anything we can do to make this transition easier for you and your children -- anything at all -- you be sure to let me know.
(then)
Chase, did you show them around the estate? It's something isn't it?

EMMA
It is. Who's house is it?

Abel looks to Chase and then back to them with a laugh.

ABEL
Yours.

Chase smiles at Grant.

ABEL (CONT'D)
Chase, why don't you give these folks the tour while I borrow our newly delivered savior here for just a moment.

GRANT
Well, I'm a doctor, not a savior.

ABEL
We'll see about that.

ON JACK- as a group of KIDS race past, rolling small WOODEN HOOPS with STICKS, having fun.

Jack, his breathing still labored, watches them enviously. One GIRL notices, offers her hoop.

GIRL
If you want, you can take mine.

Jack hesitates- then stops himself, shaking his head.

JACK
I'm okay. Thanks.

ON GRANT- who sees it as Abel leads him away. We can see in his face, it kills him.

INT. BARN (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

The barn's interior has been completely converted into a state of the art medical facility (circa 1890) -- white, airy, downright beautiful. A far cry from his NY office.

ABEL
This is where you'll take patients. Back there you can do your research.

GRANT
This is *unbelievable*.

ABEL
Well, we're just glad you could make it as soon as you did. The situation *is* quite critical.

GRANT
What 'situation'?

ABEL
Discretion is of the utmost. We're deeper in that mountain than anyone's ever been. This would be the worst time to start a panic, particularly without cause.

GRANT
And what exactly is there to <u>not</u> panic about?

INT. THUNDER MESA - SAME TIME

Chase gives Emma, Abby and Jack the tour.

EMMA
It's so...clean.

QUICK GLIMPSES- a BEAUTIFUL YOUNG BOY'S BEDROOM for Jack. He LOVES it. A GORGEOUS TEENAGE GIRL'S BEDROOM for Abby.

Emma squeezes Abby's shoulder, sweetly. Abby just shrugs.

INT. BARN (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Abel takes a deep breath, weighing his words.

ABEL
There's a problem with the miners.

GRANT
What seems to be the problem?

ABEL
They're dying, Dr. Carson. We lost the first of them two weeks back. Since then, tens of them have taken ill. Fevers. Hallucinations of the strangest kind. Seizures like they were possessed by the devil himself. We think it could be Typhoid, although half the miners are convinced it's some kind of Apache curse. Everyone seems to have their own explanation. Meantime, our entire operation has ground to a halt.

GRANT
(shakes his head)
They don't have Typhoid. It's only infected the miners?
(Abel nods)
Then it isn't contagious. Typhoid is. It's pharmacological, something they're in contact with. I need to see them.

ABEL
First thing in the morning, I'll have Chase take you up to the camp.

Abel leads Grant out of the barn.

ABEL (CONT'D)
And Dr. Carson -- this is a mining town. No miners, no mine. This may be your first case here, but just know: this is about the *whole* town. Big Thunder hangs in the balance.
(pats Grant's back)
Welcome to the deep end, Doctor. Hope you can swim.

INT. GUEST BATHROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Emma marvels at the bathroom. It's massive.

GRANT (O.S.)
Emma!

INT. THUNDER MESA - CONTINUOUS

Emma pops out of the bathroom to see Grant approaching with Abel.

EMMA
The bathroom is the size of our bedroom.

ABEL
So? What do you think?

GRANT
It's -- *amazing*. Right guys?

Emma looks to Abby and Jack. Abby nods politely. Jack hides behind his mom.

EMMA
Sorry, he can be a little shy.

ABEL
Moving to a new place, at that age, can be a little scary.
(kneels)
It's Jack, right? When I first left home, a friend gave me this.

Abel takes off a NECKLACE with an AMULET symbol similar to, but identifiably different from the Apache one we saw in the teaser -- this one isn't the sun. This one is--

ABEL (CONT'D)
The Apache symbol for the night. The moon. It always reminds me that even when things seem the darkest, you can always find the light. It's been lucky for me. I think it'll be lucky for you.

Abel smiles and hands it to Jack. Emma watches it, discomforted.

MOMENTS LATER-- as guests depart, Grant CLOCKS Jack looking exhausted.

GRANT
Tired?

JACK
Hungry.

Grant turns to Chase and Abel.

GRANT
What do you guys do for food around here?

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE SALOON - NIGHT

We take in Big Thunder's finest dining establishment. It's clearly the town's nerve center. Packed to the brim with MINERS and every other variety of Big Thunder citizen.

People STARE as Chase leads our very urban looking family inside -- a more out of place family there has never been.

CHASE
Welcome to the Golden Horseshoe. It doesn't get better than this.

Chase leads the family up to the BAR. JOSE MORALES, a young Mexican bar-back, is filling drink orders like crazy.

CHASE (CONT'D)
Jose, where'd Selena go? We need a table. Guests of Mr. White.

Jose nods.

JOSE
She'll be up any second.

Chase nods. Turns back to Grant.

CHASE
Wait til you meet Selena. She's something else. Her father established this place, she took it over when he passed last year. Real spitfire, you'll love her.

THUG 1 (O.S.)
Well, look who it is.

Chase looks up to see THUG 1 (30s, muscled) staring back at him, flanked by THUG 2 (mean), THUG 3 (meaner) and THUG 4 (meanest).

THUG 1 (CONT'D)
Chase Carson.

Chase looks a little nervous.

CHASE
Hey, boys. I thought you all had left town for good.

THUG 1
Came to collect our money.

Grant looks pointedly at Chase, shakes his head.

GRANT
(to himself)
Of course...

CHASE
Hey, a bet's a bet.

THUG 2
Not when you cheat.

Thug 2 GRABS Chase by the lapels and SHOVES him backward, hard. He crashes into the bar, shattering a GLASS. Grant grabs his family, stepping back.

THUG 2 (CONT'D)
Time to pay up.

CLICK-CLACKKK! A shotgun is racked behind them. ANGLE around to see-- it's SELENA MORALES (28), tough as nails and as sexy as it gets with a body that could kill and probably has. She trains the gun on the Thugs.

SELENA
I'm only going to say this once.
Get out of my bar -- now.

The Thugs eye the gun and, pissed, back up and out of the saloon staring daggers at Chase. Selena puts the gun down.

SELENA (CONT'D)
Dr. Carson. Selena Morales.

Grant shakes her hand.

SELENA (CONT'D)
Sorry about the wait. Your table's ready.

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - LATER

The Carsons are finishing a dinner fit for a king. Selena refills Emma's drink.

SELENA
Big Thunder can be a tough place to raise a family. You ever need someone to talk to, my door's always open.

Emma nods, genuinely appreciative.

ON ABBY-- whose eyes drift out the front window where we see-

THWACK! AN AX SPLITS A LOG IN HALF. Pull back to see: an inappropriately sexy Apache we'll later know as KIOWA (20), chopping wood, sweat beads glistening on a physique that could only be described as Taylor Lautner-like.

He lifts the ax again, about to split another when he LOOKS up and- LOCKS eyes with Abby.

She immediately looks away, embarrassed. When she looks back up- he's walking TOWARD her. Abby panics. Looking away. He keeps walking closer and closer and then- walks right past her, bringing the fire wood into the back of the restaurant.

JACK
You can breathe now.

Abby shoots Jack a glare. As a MINER approaches their table-

MINER 1
You the new doctor from out east?

Grant nods. Extends a hand.

GRANT
Grant Carson. Pleased to meet you.

The miner doesn't take his hand.

MINER 1
Name's Randall. Thought you was supposed to be helping us, not having a party, Doc.

GRANT
Well, we just got here and-

RANDALL
My brother ain't partying it up. He might not have more than a day left.

Grant eyes Emma, who gives a supportive nod, then turns back to the Miner.

GRANT
Let's talk.

MOMENTS LATER-- at the bar, Grant buys the miner a drink.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Tell me about your brother.

RANDALL
He's been sick for days. It's getting worse.

GRANT
Do you work in the mines with him?

RANDALL
No, I work in the company office. I ain't in the shafts no more. Somethin' down there is what got 'em.

GRANT
Any idea what that could be?

Randall just shakes his head.

RANDALL
You don't get it. That mountain don't want to be opened up. That mountain wants to be left alone.

Randall seems shaken. Grant eyes him.

GRANT
What does that mean?

RANDALL
Forget it. Thanks for the drink, Doc.

Randall walks away, leaving a mystified Grant.

EXT. ALLEYWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Grant and his family walk into the street, Chase alongside them. Crickets chirp in the distance. Fireflies flicker in the night air.

CHASE
So...what do you think?

Before Grant can respond-

THUG 1 (O.S.)
I think-

Chase turns just as-

THUG 1 (CONT'D)
You messed with the wrong guys.

BAM! A fist collides with his face. Chase goes down, hard. We see the FOUR THUGS waited outside for them. They're wasted. Now they converge on Grant and his family.

THUG 1 (CONT'D)
You're going to make a fool of us like that?! Huh?!

Abby and Jack look on, terrified.

GRANT
Hey! Stay away from my family!

THUG 1
Or what?!

BAM! They PUNCH him and down he goes. Emma and the kids look terrified. Our THUGS close in, pulling out their KNIVES, ready to do some real damage when suddenly-

BOOM! *A violent force of nature we will come to know as SHERIFF JOSHUA PARKER (35) - all kinds of frontier hotness - explodes into the fray. In a brutal and chillingly economical display of force, Parker proceeds to beat the everloving shit out of these guys, <u>four against one</u>.*

Abby and Jack watch in horror. Grant tries to pull his kids and wife away from the action as-

BAM! Parker SMASHES one into the ground. Another goes SLAMMING into a wall, bones crunching. FLIPS one over his back, shattering through a window. *Leaving just one man standing -- and a GUN ON THE FLOOR between him and Parker.*

Thug 4 looks down at the revolver then up at Parker. Parker just GLARES at him.

SHERIFF PARKER
Don't.

The thug goes running. Our family staring in awe.

ON PARKER- as he walks toward the saloon. Grant approaches.

GRANT
Sheriff. Thank you so much. I'm Grant Carson, the new doctor. Listen, if there's ever anything I can do...

Parker looks at him, nods -- a man of few words. He continues on into the bar.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Well...nice to meet you.

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - CONTINUOUS

Parker enters, heads toward the bar. Selena sees him, FREAKS.

SELENA
Jesus! What happened to you, Josh?!

SHERIFF PARKER
I'm fine. Can I get a whiskey?
(grimaces)
Those guys give you any trouble?

Parker sits down at the bar, taking off his jacket to reveal:

SELENA
Oh my god.

We see what she sees: a BLOOD STAIN on his side. She grabs a bottle of WHISKEY and comes around the bar to help him.

SELENA (CONT'D)
(disinfects the wound)
You got stabbed and you're asking if they gave *me* any trouble? You are some kind of man, Joshua Parker.

Her hand unintentionally lingers on his bare skin. He PUSHES his shirt down, uncomfortable.

SHERIFF PARKER
(cold)
Could I just get that drink?

He's got some walls up, protecting what, we don't know. But Selena retreats a little sad to get his drink.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - LATER

Grant lies propped up on the bed. Emma ICES his bruise.

GRANT
(shakes his head)
Chase -- I don't even want to know what he's gotten himself into this time...

EMMA
I wonder what *we've* gotten ourselves into. We're sure we did the right thing coming here, right Grant?

GRANT
We had a tough first night. This is the right choice, for all of us.

Emma takes the ice away and grimaces. She leans in and KISSES his bruise. She softly kisses her way down his neck...and then over to his lips. She kisses him passionately, Grant's arms find themselves wrapping around her waist, pulling her onto him as she straddles him. Then, as their lips finally part-

GRANT (CONT'D)
What was that for?

EMMA
For tonight. For standing up for us.

GRANT
What- for getting punched?

EMMA
(smiles)
It <u>was</u> a moment.

Grant smiles back.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Don't go anywhere. I'm getting more ice.

INT. ICE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Emma gets ice for Grant. A smile creeps across her face.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Emma returns.

EMMA
Now, Dr. Carson, where-

Shuts the door behind her. Turns to see Grant fast asleep.

EMMA (CONT'D)
-were we?

Emma just sighs.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - SAME TIME

ON JACK- as he lies asleep, the moon necklace around his neck. When we HEAR a familiar NOISE--

The jarring sound of a 19th century steam whistle.

C/U -- Jack's eyes open.

We HEAR it again as Jack makes his way to the window to see -- in the darkness -- the DISTINCTIVE MID-19TH CENTURY MINE TRAIN (#3) we saw in our teaser sitting in the middle of the TRAIN GRAVEYARD the Mayor mentioned. The LIGHTS ON THE TRAIN click on -- except they don't burn like natural light. The light is a familiar BLUISH TONE, glowing on the horizon.

As Jack WATCHES, we PAN over his drawings on the floor to see-

AN EXACT IMAGE OF THE TRAIN GLOWING IN THE NIGHT AS SEEN THROUGH JACK'S BEDROOM WINDOW.

ON JACK'S CURIOUS FACE -- before we CUT TO BLACK.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MORNING

C/U -- Grant's face. His eyes OPEN.

Grant stands and STRETCHES as he looks out the window--

GRANT'S POV -- we SEE Jack on HORSEBACK with a STRANGE LOOKING APACHE (40s) standing next to him.

GRANT
(eyes widen)
Not again. JACK!

EXT. THUNDER MESA - SECONDS LATER

Grant RACES out. ANGLE ON JACK- having the time of his life.

JACK
Dad! He said we can keep it! He taught me how to say 'go'! *Fauo!*

GRANT
Who the hell are you?!

APACHE
I am *Itukala*. Apache name, it means-

JACK
Bear!

Emma joins Grant outside.

BEAR
The horse is from Mr. White.

GRANT
Jack, get down from there!
(to Bear)
Are you crazy putting a sick kid on a horse?!

BEAR
I'm sorry, Dr. Carson. He just -- he didn't *seem* sick.

GRANT
Jack! Down! NOW!

Emma SEES it first. Gently stops her husband.

EMMA
Wait.

ANGLE ON JACK- riding the horse, laughing, not seeming sick in the least. Grant doesn't know what to make of it.

GRANT
Just because he's having a good day doesn't mean he's well, Emma.

EMMA
Yeah, but -- when's the last time you could say *that*?
(smiles)
Just...watch.

ON GRANT AND EMMA-- both sitting there watching. A magical beat of total wish fulfillment, smiles growing on their faces, as they watch their kid play like a normal boy.

Something SPOOKS the horse and Jack flies off into a DITCH.

GRANT
JACK!

Grant, Emma and Bear RACE over. We can HEAR Jack CRYING as Grant gets there to see his son covered in mud and- LAUGHING.

Jack stands up and as he does, the moon necklace SWINGS out from inside his shirt, visible to Bear for the first time.

ON BEAR'S FACE-- as he notices it. A moment of silent recognition. He seems unsettled.

INT. BARN (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant sits in his new research facility, avidly making alterations to his schematics, the journal of Jack's episodes open in front of him as he works.

SHERIFF PARKER (O.S.)
Dr. Carson.

Grant looks up to see Parker.

GRANT
Oh-- I was expecting Chase.

SHERIFF PARKER
After last night, he thought it might be a good idea to give you an official escort. Just to be on the safe side. I'll walk you into town.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

Parker and Grant pass Selena Morales, the bartender, as she heads to open up shop. Parker tips his hat and Selena smiles back, the connection obvious.

GRANT
So, you and Selena, you guys are...

Parker just stares back at Grant as they reach-

CHASE
Hey. Sorry, again, about last night. Some people don't know how to lose.
(re: Parker)
You two getting to know each other?

Parker shoots Grant a glare and moves on ahead. Chase smiles.

CHASE (CONT'D)
He warms up.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Emma is unpacking boxes of Jack's things from New York. As she does, she comes across a pile of his drawings, moving them out of the way and then- stops.

ON EMMA'S FACE-- as something registers. We don't see the drawings, we just see her flipping through them, faster and faster as she begins to look confused. *Even...scared.*

EXT. THUNDER MESA - SAME TIME

Abby walks with Jack.

ABBY
Just us, little man. Mom said there was something she needed to do.

JACK
Hey, did you see the train last night? All lit up?

ABBY
The train? What train?

Jack POINTS. In the distance, we see the train from last night -- except it looks completely broken down like all the others in the train graveyard.

ABBY (CONT'D)
I don't think those trains still light up, Jack. Come on.

Jack stares at the train, trying to make sense of this all.

FROM A DISTANT HILL-- we watch Jack and Abby walking from above. We reverse to realize we're watching them from the perspective of Bear on the horizon. He sits on horseback with a SMALL APACHE WAR PARTY. They speak in Apache:

APACHE WARRIOR (SUBTITLE)
What does it mean?

BEAR (SUBTITLE)
I'm not sure yet...

We PAN DOWN from Bear's face to his chest, where we see hanging: the APACHE SUN/LIGHT AMULET given to him as a boy 34 years ago by his father.

Pre-lap: SFX OF THE WHISPERS OF MADMEN. As we CUT TO-

INT. MINER'S CAMP - DAY

CLOSE ON-- A MINER SCREAMING. PULL BACK TO REVEAL:

A ROOMFUL of SICK MINERS like this. HALLUCINATING, FRANTIC WHISPERING - the source of the sounds we had just heard. Chase and Parker lead Grant past a GAUZY DIVIDER into this makeshift infirmary. We see PATIENTS ALL WITH THEIR FACES WRAPPED AS IF THEY'D HAD PLASTIC SURGERY.

CHASE
We did it to stop them from tearing their own skin off. This here is Hank, he was one of the first far as I recall.

We approach HANK -- his head wrapped in gauze. Chase PEELS back a corner of the gauze. It's disturbing.

GRANT
Leave it on. I want him as comfortable as possible.
(then)
Hi, Hank. My name is Dr. Carson. Do you think you could tell me what happened in the days before you started feeling these symptoms?

HANK
We'd just made it deeper into the mine than anyone had ever been. And then like the wrath of the Lord it struck.

GRANT
Tell me about the initial symptoms...
(no response)
Hank, we can find the right medicine, I can help you, but-

HANK
Medicine ain't gonna help us. This ain't that kinda thing.

GRANT
What kind of thing is it?

HANK
Those Apaches? They don't want us here. It's their land. Their mountain. They cursed us for what we're doing. We shouldn't be here, Doc.
(MORE)

HANK (CONT'D)
(steely)
And neither should you.

EXT. MAIN STREET - DAY

ON EMMA-- as she makes her way down Main, her face buried in Jack's drawings as if looking at a guide map until she STOPS dead in the middle of the street and finally looks up.

EMMA'S POV-- we see a very specific TABLEAU before her: a cluster of buildings, the Church steeple jutting into the sky in the foreground, Big Thunder looming in the background. We TILT DOWN to see: the identical tableau in Jack's drawing.

SERIES OF SHOTS-- as Emma repeats the process. Over and over and every time, we and Emma begin to realize that Jack has drawn eerily accurate representations of this town from a variety of specific vantage points.

She keeps flipping through pictures, getting more and more agitated with each accurate drawing, until finally-

HORSEMAN
MISS!

She's so caught up, she doesn't realize she's wandered into the path of an oncoming CARRIAGE. Emma falls, the drawings scattering around her as the HORSE bridles violently.

EMMA
I'm so sorry, it's my fault!

She collects the drawings from the street, but as she does- lands on ONE IMAGE in particular...and her face PALES.

EXT. GENERAL MERCANTILE - DAY

Abby and Jack enter. Jack stops when he sees the girl from Thunder Mesa, playing tag in the street with the other kids.

JACK
(to Abby)
Can I wait outside?

ABBY
Just make sure I can see you.

INT. GENERAL MERCANTILE - MOMENTS LATER

ON ABBY- shopping for supplies when we hears the front door clang open. Looks up to see: Kiowa entering. Abby's eyes widen. She tries to look natural. Doesn't. When-

KIOWA
You're the doctor's daughter.

Abby looks up at Kiowa, now across from her an aisle over.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
What do you think of Big Thunder?

ABBY
It isn't exactly my idea of a good time.

KIOWA
What is?

ABBY
London? Paris? Maybe the Amazon? Someplace you could really live, have an adventure. See something amazing.

KIOWA
Maybe you came to the right place.

ABBY
I highly doubt that.

Abby checks on Jack, looking out the window to see: Jack racing around, playing tag like a normal kid. Having a ball.

KIOWA
You okay?

ABBY
Yeah, I just -- I've never seen him like that before. Sorry, I have to go get him. He's not supposed to be doing that.

Abby heads for the exit.

KIOWA
Wait -- what are you doing tonight? There's something I think you might want to see.
(off her hesitancy)
Eight o'clock. South end of Town Square. Just say yes.

Abby eyes Kiowa and- NODS. Kiowa smiles as she walks out.

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - DAY

Selena is cleaning behind the bar. Emma enters, approaches.

SELENA
I like a woman who drinks before sundown. What's your poison?

Emma smiles.

EMMA
What's the fastest way to get to the mines on foot?

SELENA
Head south down Main and there's a dirt road with signs on it that'll take you there.
(then)
You sure you don't want that drink? Looks like you could use it.

EMMA
Next time.

Emma hurries out the door.

EXT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - DAY

ON A BILLY GOAT ambling down the mountain. Parker shoos it away, picking flowers from the mountainside. Grant and Chase notice.

SHERIFF PARKER
(looks pointedly at Grant)
For my wife.

ON GRANT-- realizing his earlier faux pas.

SHERIFF PARKER (CONT'D)
Indian paintbrush is her favorite. Don't see it much around anymore.

CHASE
(nods)
We'll head down, you can catch up.

ON THE CARSON BROTHERS-- moving on ahead.

CHASE (CONT'D)
It's good having you here, Grant.

GRANT
Just because I'm here, doesn't mean you and I get to pretend what happened didn't.

CHASE
Grant, I've changed--

GRANT
Tell that to the guys who tried to kill us last night.

CHASE
That was different! Look, I'm sorry about what happened back east.

GRANT
You wanted to offer a formal apology, the time was five years ago.

CHASE
I told you to invest because I thought I could make you some money, Grant. That's all! You're going to let money come before blood?

GRANT
Yes, because that money wasn't *for* me! *It was for Jack!*

As they hear-

EMMA (O.S.)
Grant!

Grant and Chase look up to see Emma at the foot of the trail.

EMMA (CONT'D)
We need to talk.

INT. DINING ROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Emma has Jack's drawings laid out across the table.

GRANT
I mean, he could've seen boom towns like this in a book or-

EMMA
They don't look like Big Thunder. They are Big Thunder.

GRANT
Okay, so, he saw the town, he drew it.

EMMA
Grant -- these drawings were packed in his bag. He drew all of these before we got here.

Grant looks over the drawings. A few catch his eye.

GRANT
Well, what about these? Those don't look like Big Thunder.

EMMA
No, some of them I can't place, but the point is, Jack has some kind of connection to this town. If there's any sort of danger-

GRANT
Why would there be any danger?

EMMA
Because he also drew this.

Emma SLAMS down Jack's final image: a jarring vision of a BLUE LIGHT ERUPTING from Big Thunder and engulfing the town. A SHADOWY FIGURE stands in the foreground, as what look like HUNDREDS OF TINY LEAVES float toward the mountain.

GRANT
What's so scary about that?

EMMA
Look closer.

Grant squints as we realize: those aren't leaves floating toward the mountain--

EMMA (CONT'D)
Those are people.

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant and Emma sit with Jack.

JACK
I was just drawing what I saw in my dreams.

EMMA
What kind of dreams? Happy? Sad? Scary?

JACK
They're usually not scary.

Emma holds up the final drawing.

EMMA
What about this one?

JACK
That's the man with the blue light.

EMMA
What about those people?

Jack smiles, wonder in his eyes--

JACK
They're flying.

INT. HALLWAY (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant stands alone with Emma.

GRANT
I think you're making too much of this...

EMMA
I don't know, Grant. I just-

When-- SFX: the DOORBELL rings, SURPRISING us (and them).

GRANT
(to Emma as he heads to the door)
There's a rational explanation here. There has to be. Let's just- not overreact.

INT. FOYER (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant opens the door to see a mining company EMPLOYEE standing there with an ELEGANTLY WRAPPED BOX.

EMPLOYEE
Delivery from Mr. White.

EMMA
(enters)
What is it?

GRANT
From Abel. He invited us to dinner.

EMMA
Not in the mood for dinner, Grant. Not right now.

Grant opens the box to reveal-- a GORGEOUS EVENING GOWN.

GRANT
You sure?

INT. MASTER BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - NIGHT

Emma changes into her dress as Grant makes his tie.

EMMA
For the record, I'm not going because of the dress. I'm going because I want to talk to Abel about all this.

GRANT
Emma, don't. Listen, if anything else comes up, we'll take another look at all this. But for right now? *Good things are starting to happen for us here.* Did you see that lab they gave us? I made more progress this morning than I could have in a month back home. And you saw Jack on that horse. Besides -- I made a promise to those miners.
(beat)
Please -- can't we still try and give this place a chance?

Emma considers her husband's plea. She turns, sighs.

EMMA
Fine. For now. Zip me.

Grant does. Emma turns back around. She looks completely stunning. Grant takes her in.

GRANT
You look...wow.

Emma holds back a smile.

EMMA
Quit while you're ahead, Doctor.

INT. ABBY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Abby's getting ready for her Kiowa date. A small JEWEL BOX open in front of her. Grant pops in.

GRANT
Abs, you're going to have to stay in with Jack. Mr. White asked us to dinner.
(off her crushed face)
Did you have other plans you want to tell me about?

ABBY
(shakes her head, quietly)
No, it's fine.

Grant nods, leaving a crushed looking Abby. As soon as he's out of earshot, she SLAMS shut the jewel box.

ON JACK-- at his door, a crack open, listening.

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Grant sits next to his wife. Sniffs. Smiles.

GRANT
That perfume. Is that-

EMMA
The one I wore on our first date?
(nods)
I hid it. I didn't want you stealing the spray cap off this one.

EXT. BIG THUNDER STREET - CONTINUOUS

OVER THE SHOULDER OF A STRANGER-- we watch Grant and Emma's carriage pass by. Reverse to see:

Sheriff Parker walking past. In his hand: the Indian paintbrush flowers.

Pre-lap: Wagner's *Parsifal.*

INT. FOYER (ABEL WHITE'S MANSION) - NIGHT

A state of the art GRAMOPHONE plays. ANGLE ON-- Abel, immaculately dressed as always, leads Grant and Emma down an ornate hallway lined with OIL PAINTINGS.

ABEL
How goes the investigation, Doctor?

GRANT
I'm running some tests on some samples. Looking for any substances that might fit the symptom profiles on those miners. We'll figure this out, you have my word.

ABEL
I hope so. If we don't get that mine up and running again at full speed, we won't be able to keep this little town alive.

ON EMMA-- as she NOTICES some of the paintings on the walls are covered. Abel clocks it.

ABEL (CONT'D)
Some of these are so old the slightest exposure to light or air can be quite destructive. But isn't that so often the curse of objects of great beauty? Their frailty.

OFF EMMA'S SUSPICIOUS LOOK--

INT. JACK'S BEDROOM (THUNDER MESA) - NIGHT

Jack lies in bed, drawing. We hear the STEAM WHISTLE as Jack RACES to the window. This time the train isn't just alight in eerie blue -- it actually seems to start MOVING.

INT. LIVING ROOM (THUNDER MESA) - CONTINUOUS

ON ABBY-- sits READING a book. Jack wordlessly passes behind his sister, headed for the door as if in a trance.

The sound of the door opening grabs Abby's attention. She looks up to see Jack opening the door, on automatic, "Close Encounters" style.

ABBY
Jack?

He STARTS TO STEP OUTSIDE -- toward the train yard -- when-

Abby GRABS him. He SNAPS out of it as if in a dream.

ABBY (CONT'D)
Jack! What were you doing?

Jack just stares back. He genuinely doesn't seem to know.

INT. DINING ROOM (ABEL WHITE'S MANSION) - LATER

Grant, Emma and Abel sit at the table. Abel raises his GLASS.

ABEL
To Big Thunder's newest residents.
(they toast)
How are you all getting acquainted?
I know it's a big change.

Grant smiles. Squeezes Emma's hand, sweetly.

GRANT
Sometimes change is a good thing.

ABEL
Certainly seems that way for your son.

Now Emma squeezes Grant's hand, not so sweetly.

EMMA
What do you mean?

ABEL
I saw him going a hundred miles an hour down Main today. Looks like the frontier air is doing him good.

ON EMMA'S FACE-- a decision made. She bites her lip. Then-

EMMA
Well -- not *all* good.

Grant and Abel both eye her.

EMMA (CONT'D)
He's been having dreams -- nightmares -- about the town.

ABEL
Dreams are interesting things. They can express things we might not otherwise know how to. These nightmares, what were they about?

EMMA
He mentioned a blue light.

ABEL
Light? That's not unusual. It can represent enlightenment or spirituality or--

EMMA
It was drawing people toward the mountain.

Grant gets uncomfortable, leans in.

GRANT
Emma--

ABEL
No, Doctor, I understand. Any change in behavior like that must be troubling as a parent. But in my experience, the imagination of little boys knows no bounds, Mrs. Carson. Has anything else unusual happened with your son since he got here?

Abel and Emma stare at each other. Will she mention the drawings? Does he *want* her to? Emma smiles politely.

EMMA
No. But I appreciate your concern, Mr. White.

ABEL
Abel. Call me Abel.

EXT. REAR VERANDA (ABEL'S HOUSE) - AFTER DINNER

Our trio enjoys a drink looking out at a breathtaking night scape of Big Thunder. In the distance, we can just make out a CLUSTER of CAMP FIRES burning against the night sky, Apaches DANCING around them as the SMOKE curls its away toward an almost surrealistically full, bright moon.

ABEL
That's the Hunter's Moon. The first full moon after the harvest. It's sacred to their people. Represents new beginnings. Strangely appropriate, don't you think?

Abel smiles. The sounds of distant chanting waft all the way to the veranda.

EMMA
Abel, if I wanted to learn a little bit more about the history of this town, where might be a good place to start?

ABEL
Well, as far I know, the town was abandoned three decades before I got here in '86. I don't think there's much history. I assumed, like any of these "boom towns", it just went bust and people said to hell with it -- moved on.

EMMA
Or maybe they ran.

ABEL
What exactly would they run from, Mrs. Carson?

EMMA
(smiles)
Emma.

ABEL
If you came to Big Thunder in search of shadows -- Emma -- I think you might be looking in the wrong place.

As the distant drums beat louder, we move to--

EXT. BIG THUNDER CEMETARY - SAME TIME

A small frontier graveyard. We can still hear the drums off in the distance. Parker stands before a headstone.

C/U -- the headstone reads: “LORELEI PARKER. 1858-1888.”

He gently places the Indian paintbrush at the foot of his wife’s grave; emotion registering in his face for the first time since we met him.

MOMENTS LATER-- on Parker as he exits the graveyard. Suddenly- we HEAR a commotion. Parker looks up to see: something going on at the Golden Horseshoe, visible in the distance. He keeps walking in the direction of the Horseshoe...until he hears a SCREAM -- and then BREAKS into a run.

INT. CARRIAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Grant and Emma sit in the carriage on their way home.

GRANT
What was that in there?

EMMA
Big city doctor over for dinner in the middle of a mysterious outbreak that could shut down his mine -- doesn’t it strike you as just a little bit odd that all he wanted to discuss...was our ten year old son?

GRANT
Maybe he was being polite. Maybe the guy wishes he had a son and was living vicariously through us. There’s a million reasons he might’ve asked about Jack and none of them are evidence of anything.

EMMA
There is something weird about this town, Grant. And there's something weird about him. Can't you feel that? Why can't you just trust me?!

He looks at her. Softens. Before he can respond -- the carriage JERKS to a stop.

GRANT
Why are we stopping?

SUDDENLY- the door SLAMS open to reveal:

SHERIFF PARKER
(frantic)
You asked if you could ever pay me back.

He literally PULLS Grant out the door.

EXT. SELENA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Parker drags Grant in the front door, up to-

INT. SELENA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Parker brings Grant to Selena's bed where she lies ill.

SHERIFF PARKER
You want to repay me? Save her, doc. Whatever those miners have got -- whatever it is -- <u>it's out</u>.

OFF GRANT'S TROUBLED FACE we CUT TO BLACK.

<u>END ACT THREE</u>

ACT FOUR

INT. SELENA'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Grant sits by Selena's bedside, applying cold compresses to her. The Sheriff and Chase sit next to him. Emma enters.

EMMA
I brought more ice. How is she?

Before Grant can answer, Selena wakes, hearing Emma's entry.

GRANT
Morning, Ms. Morales. I know this must be scary, but you're going to be fine. I do need your help, though. Can you answer something for me?
(she nods)
Have you spent any time up on Big Thunder? At the mines or--

She shakes her head. Grant stands, turns to Parker and Chase.

GRANT (CONT'D)
This isn't making any sense...

SHERIFF PARKER
It makes perfect sense. Whatever the miners have got is catching and it's getting worse because you aren't treating it.

GRANT
That wouldn't explain Selena. She wasn't in the camps. If this thing was an airborne contagion why did it only travel to her?
(shakes his head)
She's the key. She's the outlier. We find out how she got it, we find out how they got it and we save them.

CHASE
And if we don't find out how she got it?

Grant doesn't answer. We know the answer.

AS EVERYONE EXITS-- Parker lingers with Selena.

SELENA
I thought you didn't have feelings for me.

Parker looks at her -- then reaches out and takes her hand in his own. Holds it, gently.

SHERIFF PARKER
I don't.

Selena smiles.

EXT. SELENA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

ON GRANT CHASE AND EMMA--

CHASE
Well, where to?

EMMA
I should head back. I have to pick up a few things for the house.

Grant nods. Turns to Chase.

GRANT
I think we need to get a drink.

Off Chase's quizzical look--

INT. THUNDER MESA - DAY

The doorbell RINGS. Abby races to answer it to find-

KIOWA
Missed you yesterday.

ABBY
(surprised)
Oh. Hi. Yeah, no, I- I kind of got held up.

KIOWA
What are you doing now?

ABBY
Well, I-

JACK (O.S.)
Go.

She turns to see Jack. Fuck. She's caught.

ABBY
(to Kiowa)
You have to leave.

JACK
No, wait! I'll cover for you.

ABBY
I can't! If you have an attack-

JACK
I'm fine. I haven't had once since we got here. It's the middle of the day. Dad's five minutes away with Chase and Parker. I'll be okay. Just- go.

She smiles, kisses Jack on the forehead and exits with Kiowa.

JACK (CONT'D)
Don't do anything I wouldn't do!

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Emma enters, approaches the LIBRARIAN (female, 20s).

EMMA
Hi, I was wondering where I might be able to find your newspaper archives?

LIBRARIAN
Oh, we don't have an archive, we just have the old letter presses and typesets stored downstairs, but those must be from, I don't know, twenty or thirty years ago.

EMMA
(smiles)
Would you mind if I took a look?

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Kiowa leads Abby deeper into the woods on horseback.

ABBY
Are we there yet?

KIOWA
Just about. Okay, hop off. Close your eyes.

They dismount.

ABBY
What?! I'm not closing my eyes!

KIOWA
You don't trust me?

ABBY
I just met you!

Kiowa takes her HAND. There's a charge. It's electric.

KIOWA
Close 'em. For two seconds.

Abby RELENTS. He leads her out of the woods into a clearing.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
Okay. Open them.

And when she does, we reveal:

THE MOST SPECTACULAR, EPIC WATERFALL YOU HAVE EVER SEEN.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
Look down...

WE SEE THE WATER IN THE LAGOON BELOW GLOWS EVERY COLOR OF THE RAINBOW -- AS IF BY MAGIC.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
Welcome to Thunder Falls.

Abby is breathless. It's visually stunning.

ABBY
How is that possible?

KIOWA
The waterfall -- it was enchanted by an ancient Apache spell.

ABBY
Seriously?

KIOWA
(smiles)
No. The color comes from the algae in the water. But anything the miners can't explain, they either call a curse or a blessing.
(re: the water)
It only looks like this for a month or two, between the wet season and the dry. It's the only time it can grow. But when it does...

Abby takes it all in. Kiowa nods to the lagoon.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
Come on in.

ABBY
Oh, I didn't bring a suit.

Kiowa slips off his shirt. Abby watches him slink into the water.

KIOWA
You coming?

Abby bites her lower lip.

ABBY
(under her breath)
Trouble...

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - DAY

C/U -- WHISKEY being poured into a glass. Reveal:

Grant pouring it. He smells the liquor.

CHASE
Why are we here?

GRANT
Because Selena was.

SHERIFF PARKER
May I ask what exactly we're looking for?

Grant takes a SWIG, SWISHES it around, then spits it out.

GRANT
I don't know yet.

INT. LIBRARY BASEMENT - DAY

Emma opens a STORAGE BOX containing- A SERIES OF RUSTY LETTERPRESSES.

She starts digging through them until she finds what she's looking for: a SET OF IRON TYPESETS.

EMMA
Bingo.

She rapidly starts using the TYPE SET to REPLICATE whatever it was last used to print.

EMMA (CONT'D)
Big Thunder Herald...what was your last story...

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - CONTINUOUS

Grant investigates, taking SAMPLES when- there's a BANGING on the front window. All look up to see:

An ALCOHOLIC MINER pounding on the glass.

ALCOHOLIC MINER
Hey, let me in! I need a drink!

ON PARKER-- as he approaches the door. Opens it.

SHERIFF PARKER
Saloon's closed for the day. Move along.

ALCOHOLIC MINER
Closed?! What the- what?!

The miner HURLS a small GOLD PIECE at him.

ALCOHOLIC MINER (CONT'D)
My money's no good here?!

The gold piece bounces to Grant's feet.

GRANT
Wait! Get him back here!

MOMENTS LATER-- Grant serves the drunken miner.

GRANT (CONT'D)
I'm sorry about that, the Sheriff's not really a people person. I notice you're not ill...

ALCOHOLIC MINER
I'm on the skeleton crew. We got paid, but we ain't been in yet.

GRANT
Got it. Tell me something, do you come here often?

ALCOHOLIC MINER
We all go here.

GRANT
And how do you pay?

ALCOHOLIC MINER
Same as we get paid. Gold. Selena's fine with it, that's why we come.

GRANT
When? When do you get paid?

ALCOHOLIC MINER
Most of it goes off to get processed for the company, but we get first crack, right after it's separated from the ore.

GRANT
(turns to Chase)
How do you separate the gold from the ore?

CHASE
Well, Quicksilver I guess.

GRANT
(takes a breath)
Quicksilver -- which in high doses can cause symptoms of heavy metal poisoning like fevers, seizures, hallucinations and, in some cases, self mutilation.
(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)
And other than the miners, who else would have been in contact with the gold at that stage of the process -- after ore extraction, but before purification?

CHASE
No one except the one place in town that accepts raw gold as payment.

GRANT
The miner's saloon. Selena.

Boom.

EXT. THUNDER FALLS - DAY

C/U -- Abby's clothes in a pile on the bank of the lagoon.

ON ABBY-- her typical late 19th century style white chemise and drawers clinging to her as she wades into the lagoon.

KIOWA
Dive under.

Kiowa dips underwater. Abby does, too.

UNDERWATER-- the bioluminescent colors of the lagoon glow even more brilliantly. Abby and Kiowa share a smile. Before popping back up to find-

ON THE SURFACE-- they break the water to find themselves inches apart from each other.

ABBY
Wow.

KIOWA
(shrugs)
You said you wanted to see something amazing.

It's hot, as they drift even closer, close enough to feel one another's breath on their lips. They look into each other's eyes. Kiowa reaches toward her and tucks a strand of hair behind her ear. It's a moment. They're about to kiss when-

SFX: a small rustling noise.

KIOWA (CONT'D)
(pulls back)
Did you hear that?

ABBY
I think it was just the wind.

Kiowa hesitates. Then-

KIOWA
We have to go! Now! NOW!

ABBY
What?

KIOWA
Come on!

EXT. CORNFIELD - SECONDS LATER

Kiowa, holding Abby's hand, races with her into a massive cornfield.

ABBY
What are we running from?!

ALL WE AND THEY CAN SEE, ARE THE STALKS OF CORN AS THEY COLLAPSE RIGHT BEHIND THEM EVERY WHICH WAY THEY TURN UNDER THE WEIGHT OF THEIR UNSEEN PURSUERS. IT'S "JAWS" IN A CORNFIELD -- AND IT'S FUCKING TERRIFYING.

Whoever is chasing them is catching up when- BAM! They EXPLODE out of the cornfield to safety. Whatever was behind them scampers away into the field.

ABBY (CONT'D)
(shaking)
What the hell was that?!

KIOWA
Goddamn coyotes! You okay?

She nods, looks down at her dress to see- MASSIVE CLAW MARKS.

ABBY
Coyotes, huh?

Kiowa doesn't have an answer.

ON ABBY-- looking both scared...*and exhilarated.*

INT. MINER'S CAMP - NIGHT

Grant is treating the last of the miners. He makes each drink a DARK BLACK SOLUTION. The miner he feeds it to BLANCHES.

GRANT
Activated charcoal. It's going to save your life. Pull the Mercury right out of you.

Chase watches. Shakes his head.

CHASE
You did good today, Grant.

Grant doesn't know how to take a compliment. Shakes it off.

GRANT
Just make sure no one has hands on the gold until after it's purified and you should be fine from here on in.

Chase nods, when Randall appears, hand extended.

RANDALL
You saved my brother's life. Least I can do is offer you a drink. Our own special hooch.

Randall hands Grant a FLASK.

GRANT
Oh, I shouldn't.

RANDALL
C'mon, Doc. One drink.

Grant hesitates, then takes the FLASK.

EXT. THUNDER MESA - LATER THAT NIGHT

Abby, still wet, sneaks toward the back of the house. Tries to open a WINDOW when-

GRANT
Abby?

ON GRANT- tipsy and also trying to sneak in.

ABBY
Dad?

GRANT
Where were you?

ABBY
Where were *you?*

GRANT
(beat)
I won't tell mom if you don't.

ABBY
Deal.

INT. KITCHEN (THUNDER MESA) - MOMENTS LATER

Grant and Abby are SNEAKING through the window, when--

EMMA
Where have you two been?!
(to Abby)
Let me deal with you first, young lady.
(MORE)

EMMA (CONT'D)
You know you were supposed to watch your brother and you just walk out on him?! He was all alone when I got home, Abby!

ABBY
No, but mom-

EMMA
No! I don't want to hear it. You go to you room now.

Abby heads upstairs. Emma turns on Grant.

GRANT
It was just one drink-

EMMA
What? I don't care about that, listen to me -- I went down to the library. I was able to reprint their last broadsheet. Back in June of '56. They had the letter presses still there and-

GRANT
(gently)
Emma, stop. I ran tests on him this morning. It wasn't a fluke. It wasn't a 'good day'. He's *actually* getting better. Lung capacity, heart rate, you name it -- all suddenly within the normal spectrum. Like someone flipped a switch. I can't explain it, but it's happening. Knowing that, tell me now is the moment you really want to turn your back on this place.

EMMA
(holds up the replicated cover)
Who's that?

We see the cover: on it, a picture of none other than ABEL WHITE.

EMMA (CONT'D)
He lied to us. Why? Something else is going on here! I know it! And if he lied to us about that, who knows what else he lied about? What if he's lying about our whole deal?

GRANT
Emma-

EMMA
Take a good look at that picture *from 34 years ago* -- notice anything else odd? Like that he doesn't seem to have aged a day?

GRANT
Does it even say his name there?
(she says nothing)
How do we know it isn't his father? Or his older brother?

EMMA
I'll tell you what I do know, Grant. I know that when that train leaves in the morning -- *we should be on it*.

SFX: BACK DOOR SLAMS.

They both look at each other, move to the window to see: the OLD MINE TRAIN LIT IN THE DISTANCE.

GRANT
What the...

And that's when they see Jack striding toward it.

EXT. THUNDER MESA - SECONDS LATER

Grant RACES out the door.

GRANT
JACK! STOP!

ON JACK-- who just keeps walking. Stepping ONTO the train.

Grant runs as FAST as he can. He's almost there when the train's lights FLARE brighter and SUDDENLY-

THE TRAIN SHOOTS OFF LIKE A BLUE BULLET STREAKING ACROSS THE NIGHT HORIZON -- AND WITH THAT, JACK IS GONE as we CUT TO BLACK.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. THUNDER MESA - NIGHT

ON GRANT-- as he RACES back toward the house. Emma is on the porch now, FREAKING.

EMMA
What just happened?! WHAT JUST HAPPENED?!

GRANT
Get Parker! Get the Sheriff!

Grant LEAPS onto the horse Bear left.

EMMA
What are you doing?!

GRANT
Improvising!
(to the horse)
Go!

The horse doesn't move.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Crap! Uhh -- what's the word...what's the word...fo! Fao! *Fauo!*

BAM! THE HORSE TAKES OFF LIKE A MISSILE -- GRANT HOLDS ON FOR DEAR LIFE. AND THE CHASE IS ON AS GRANT, ON HORSEBACK, RACES AFTER HIS SON SHOOTING OFF INTO THE NIGHT ON THIS PHANTOM MINE TRAIN.

Grant goes faster and faster -- trailing right behind the train as it heads toward the end of its track...*and keeps going*.

ON GRANT-- not understanding how it's possible. Looks down to see: hitherto unseen TRACKS -- BOOM! BOOM! -- SMASHING through the ground, rising up from the dirt as if the very earth were anticipating this train's movements and -- BOOM! -- providing more track as it goes.

Grant doesn't have time to process. He SHOUTS at the horse-

GRANT (CONT'D)
Fauo! C'mon! Fauo!

And the horse SPEEDS up as he looks ahead and---

GRANT (CONT'D)
Oh my god.

ON GRANT-- AS HE REALIZES THE TRAIN IS HEADED FOR AN OBSTACLE: DIRECTLY AT BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN.

In a race for his son's life, he wills the horse close enough to see Jack standing trancelike, staring directly ahead -- at the mountain.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Jack! NO!

The train races FORWARD about to SLAM into the wall of the mountain when-

THE WALLS OF THE MOUNTAIN LITERALLY OPEN UP FOR IT - AS THE TRAIN SPEEDS INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN. NO ONE ELSE CAN GET INSIDE THIS THING, BUT FOR SOME REASON IT OPENED UP FOR OUR KID.

Grant can't even comprehend what's happening.

GRANT (CONT'D)
FAUO! FAUO FASTER!

BOOM! AS GRANT RIDES INTO THE MOUNTAIN, FOLLOWING THE TRAIN.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Emma, with Abby, bangs on the door. It's locked.

EMMA
Damnit! Where is he?!

Realizes-

EMMA (CONT'D)
C'mon!

INT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

JACK'S POV -- WE'RE ON A SUPERNATURAL ROLLER COASTER RIDE FOR THE AGES, AS THE MINE TRAIN CAREENS ITS WAY INTO THE DEPTHS OF BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN. AS IT ROUNDS EACH TURN, SEEMINGLY IMMOBILE WALLS SHIFT OUT OF PLACE, UNLOCKING AS IT WERE, GUIDING THE TRAIN DEEPER AND DEEPER INTO THE MOUNTAIN.

The train heads toward a chasm and -- just as the track materialized beneath it before -- a TRESTLE BRIDGE emerges out of the very rock, guiding the train across safely.

ON GRANT-- chasing after his son through this mobile mountain maze, following it over the bridge. Every time the mine train turns, the labyrinth SHIFTS to open up. LEFT! Another turn. RIGHT! Dad makes the turn, spurring the horse on wildly, knowing that if he misses one turn, one twist, he may lose his son forever.

INT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - CONTINUOUS

ON PARKER-- at the bar. Emma and Abby BURST in.

EMMA
Sheriff! It's Jack, he's gone!

EXT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - MOMENTS LATER

ON PARKER & EMMA-- as they race into the night, toward Big Thunder.

INT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

ON GRANT-- as he pulls up alongside Jack's train car.

GRANT
Jack! Take my hand! You have to take it!

Grant looks ahead and pales. We see what he sees: the train is headed directly for- a PRECIPICE LOOMING OVER A BOTTOMLESS SUBTERRANEAN CANYON. Beyond it, all we can see is darkness.

GRANT (CONT'D)
C'mon! JACK!

It's clear visually: with Grant running parallel to the train, even if spectral tracks emerge, he won't be able to make it onto them with the train. Meaning unless he gets Jack now, the boy could be gone forever.

Grant reaches out, getting close enough to almost grab onto his son's hand if only Jack would reach out. Instead, Jack just stares ahead, trance like.

They're rapidly approaching the chasm. Split seconds left for both of them. Something OCCURS to Grant. He looks to Jack-

GRANT (CONT'D)
Listen to my voice, Jack. I'm right here. I'm always right here!

The familiar mantra SNAPS Jack back to consciousness. Father and son LOCK eyes. Jack's arm SNAPS out toward Grant's outstretched HAND. Just as-

VWOOM! Grant PULLS his son off the car and onto the horse, a heartbeat before the train shoots over the precipice into the depths of the mountain. Grant and Jack, on horseback, come to a screeching halt millimeters from the edge.

GRANT (CONT'D)
You okay?

Jack nods. They hug one another, breathing hard. That's when we hear a sound- Grant looks down to SEE: the spectral train tracks Jack rode in on sinking back into the earth as the PATHWAY that led them to the interior of the mountain BEGINS TO CLOSE SHUT, THE WALLS COMING TOGETHER, "STAR WARS" TRASH COMPACTOR STYLE.

JACK
It's a cave-in!

GRANT
Hold on!

They make a break for it, racing back out the way they came.

EXT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Parker and Emma race up a treacherous mountainside trail. Parker leaps OFF.

PARKER
Path narrows here, gets dangerous.
Stay back.

Emma leaps off.

EMMA
Over my dead body.

She RACES past Parker, up the mountain. Parker follows.

INT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Grant and Jack, on horseback, retracing their steps out of Big Thunder, racing against time as the mountain closes up on itself. As the WALLS come together, the path narrowing, we see dust and debris and rock now SLIDING after them.

Jack looks back as they run.

JACK'S POV -- as we see a the same BLUE LIGHT from our teaser, glowing even more brilliant and beautiful than we remember it.

Jack watches in wonder as the single will 'o the wisp like point of light begins to expand, growing disc like until we realize we're looking at- a PORTAL TO ANOTHER REALM.

ON JACK'S FACE-- astounded as the portal widens...and then we hear a familiar roar. We don't see what Jack sees- we just see his eyes WIDEN as his face morphs from enchantment to terror.

JACK
Faster dad! Faster!!!

SUDDENLY WE SEE- A LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL and in front of it the CHASM they rode in over, except this time -- the spectral bridge has disappeared.

JACK (CONT'D)
We can't make that jump!

The mountain walls are PUSHING back into place behind them, faster and faster, threatening to crush them.

GRANT
We don't have a choice! We can make it! WE CAN MAKE IT!

JACK
No, dad!

The chasm is before them and they're still going full speed.

GRANT
JUMP!

HE PULLS HARD ON THE REINS AND THE HORSE LEAPS INTO THE AIR AS THE BLACKNESS OF THE TUNNEL DESCENDS UPON THEM, THE ROAR CRESCENDOS, A SPLIT SECOND BEFORE-

BOOM! THEY CRASH OUT INTO THE OPEN AIR -- AN AVALANCHE OF SOOT AND ROCK TRAILING BEHIND THEM- JUST <u>BARELY</u> MAKING IT TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE CHASM.

EXT. BIG THUNDER MOUNTAIN - CONTINUOUS

Grant and Jack go tumbling off the horse. When they look up, they see: Emma and Parker racing toward them.

Grant smiles as Parker pulls him up. Emma RACES to her husband and son. They hold each other.

EMMA
That must be a 20 foot jump! What the hell were you thinking?

GRANT
(breathless, then-)
Sometimes you gotta jump first.

Emma tears up. He KISSES her with a passion neither have felt in years as Jack smiles.

MOMENTS LATER- Grant approaches Parker as Emma tends to Jack.

GRANT (CONT'D)
You mind telling me what the hell just happened?! What was that train?!

SHERIFF PARKER
There ain't no train that heads out that way. There's no track.

Grant looks out toward where the track had risen. No track in that direction as far the eye can see. Turns back to Parker.

GRANT
I know what I saw! Okay?

SHERIFF PARKER
(sniffs)
Doc, you been drinking?

GRANT
No, I- yes, but--

SHERIFF PARKER
Best I can do is write a report. You want to a file a complaint, goes to the Federal Marshall's office, but they'll ask for my full assessment and I will have to mention everything.
(sniffs again)
Everything.

Grant just shakes his head. Heads back to Emma.

GRANT
Listen to me -- I should've trusted you about this place. I don't know how to explain what just happened, I don't know what this place is, but I don't want to find out. Let's get the hell out of here, honey.

EMMA
Train leaves in the morning, Doctor.

GRANT
We're going to be on it.

As we SLOWLY PULL UP AND AWAY from Big Thunder until it's just a mammoth black silhouette on the night sky.

EXT. BIG SKY COUNTRY - MORNING

We SEE the same train that delivered them, chugging in the opposite direction.

INT. TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

The Carsons get comfortable for the long ride. Jack looks up to Emma.

JACK
Mama, I can't find my drawings.

EMMA
I'm sure they're packed sweetie.

Jack pouts. Abby stares out the window. Grant notices.

GRANT
Don't tell me you're actually going to miss this place...

ABBY
What? No. I won't miss him at all.
(realizes her slip)
(MORE)

ABBY (CONT'D)
It. The town, it was just--
different than I thought it'd be.

GRANT
More fun?

ABBY
(a far off look)
More...*everything.*

ON EMMA-- puts her hand on Grant's arm.

EMMA
(to Grant)
We're doing the right thing, right?

Grant nods. When we hear- a COUGH.

ON JACK- who coughs AGAIN. And as the train CHUGS away, his coughing seems to get worse. Again and again, each one louder than the one before it.

GRANT
You okay?

Jack nods, but with each second his condition seems to deteriorate. Grant looks out the window, seeing Big Thunder receding in the distance, Jack's condition worsening the further they get. And it's that moment that Grant eyes Emma -- takes a deep breath. They share a moment. Do they do this? Do they have a choice? Grant stands- hesitates. She nods.

GRANT (CONT'D)
Excuse me! Conductor!

EXT. GOLDEN HORSESHOE - DAY

Selena brings in supplies when Parker approaches.

SELENA
Thanks, again. For everything.

We see a warmth in Parker's eyes -- that quickly dissipates.

SHERIFF PARKER
(shrugs it off)
Just doing my job.

He walks past her. And then- sees something over her shoulder. We REVERSE to see: the Carson family, luggage in tow, walking back into town.

AS THEY PASS THE HORSESHOE-

SHERIFF PARKER (CONT'D)
I thought you folks were headed
home.

GRANT
(nods)
We are.

ON OUR FAMILY-- as they walk toward Thunder Mesa, we PULL WAY BACK to FIND: BEAR and KIOWA on horseback, standing at the edge of a nearby ridge -- *watching*.

BEAR (SUBTITLE)
Things are changing faster than we thought.

KIOWA (SUBTITLE)
You have no idea.
(then)
What now?

Bear turns to Kiowa, grim.

BEAR (SUBTITLE)
Day and night cannot dwell together.

OFF KIOWA'S CONCERNED FACE-- we PULL BACK FARTHER to reveal: standing behind them, HUNDREDS OF APACHE WARRIORS ON HORSEBACK, moving unseen into position around the town. WIDEN to see Apaches as far as the eye can see...

EXT. ABEL WHITE'S HOUSE - DAY

Abel sits in his dining room alone when he's joined by-

CHASE
They stayed. Like you said they would.

Chase SLIDES a folder across the table.

CHASE (CONT'D)
I grabbed it before they left. Is this what you were looking for?

Abel opens the folder to reveal: Jack's drawings. He flips through them until he lands on one in particular. It's the scene of their escape from the mountain. Grant and Jack in the foreground, except in this drawing we actually have a view of what was behind them -- what Jack saw in the portal:

The glowing blue disc, but in the center -- TWO BLACK SLITS that look frighteningly...like EYES.

ABEL
Yes it is.

He smiles and we- CUT TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT *