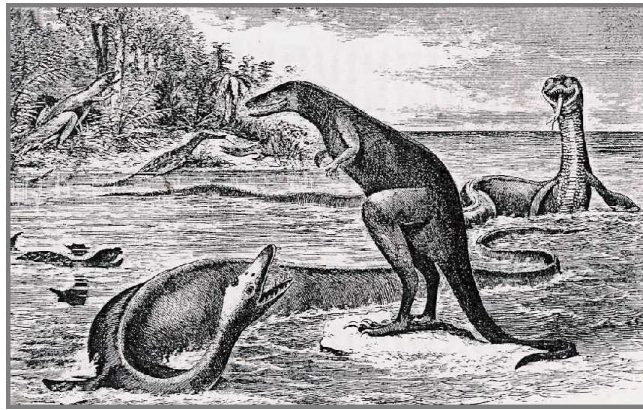


BONEWARS

Written by

Alex Baglio

A true story. Only the facts have been made up.



ajbaglio83@gmail.com
(347)-515-7976

FADE IN:

SUPER: PART ONE, EVOLUTION

EXT. MUDDY DIRT ROAD - NIGHT

A torrential down pour. LIGHTNING STRIKES. Illuminating a large painted sign, it reads:

"1 CENT TO SEE, FREE TO BELIEVE. THE CARDIFF GIANT!"

SUPER: 1869, CARDIFF NEW YORK

A carriage CHARGES past the sign, SPLATTERING mud over the lettering.

Bounding down the road, the carriage heads toward the BRIGHTEST building in town, a barn on the hill.

INT. DOUGLAS HULL'S BARN - SAME TIME

CLINK, CLINK, CLINK.

Sopping wet FARMERS, drop PENNIES in a milk pail as they enter into the barn.

Holding the milk pail, is DOUGLAS HULL (34). He is dressed nicely and completely dry. Hull can barely hold up the pail. He smiles.

DOUGLAS HULL

Yes, yes, step right up to see a genuine miracle my friends! Taller than Goliath whom David slew! Cardiff's own, giant!

The people look in awe at the centerpiece of the barn, a GARGANTUAN statue of a naked man sitting. The top of its head skims the rafters.

DOUGLAS HULL (CONT'D)

Take your seats ladies and gentlemen, Father Morgan will be here at any moment!

EXT. DOUGLAS HULL'S BARN - SAME TIME

The carriage stops outside the barn. Two FIGURES in black, one rail thin and small, the other tall and barrel chested. They step out of the carriage into the downpour.

INT. DOUGLAS HULL'S BARN - MOMENTS LATER

One FARMER at the front of the crowd takes off his hat. A dog gnaws on a bone at his feet.

The Farmer outstretches his hand, his palm grazing the giant's knee.

DOUGLAS HULL
No touching sir! Nobody may touch
the giant.

THUNDER CLAP, The figures in black enter the barn, sopping wet. Hull holds out his penny bucket. They walk past him.

DOUGLAS HULL (CONT'D)
Excuse me- A cent for entry,
gentlemen.
(sternly)
Gentlemen!

The figures head straight for the giant. The crowd parts around them.

The dog stops gnawing its bone, watching the figures go by.

The figures turn to face the crowd, they take off their hats.

The smaller one is EDWARD DRINKER COPE (30) blonde short hair and a Van Dyke mustache. He smiles at the crowd.

COPE
Now friends, what gets left behind
after we're gone? What's left to
remember us?

The crowd is confused.

The taller figure, OTHNIEL MARSH (40), stands almost as still as the statue; he's balding and has a full salt and pepper beard that covers his neck. He holds a BRIEFCASE.

MARSH
Bone is-

COPE
Bone is all that can survive time,
it is the core of our being.

Cope pats Marsh on the back. Marsh is red in the face.

COPE (CONT'D)
That core is a fossil.

Hull pushes to the front of the crowd.

DOUGLAS HULL

No peddlers, no solicitors, they
don't want what you're selling.

COPE

These people don't want fact?

DOUGLAS HULL

Of course they do! A priest is
coming to authenticate the giant.

COPE

They don't want science, Mr. Hull?

DOUGLAS HULL

Science has its place yes, but
these people have put their faith
in the Lord.

COPE

You charge a penny to see a
miracle? Residents of Cardiff, do
you smell that? The sickening
stench a... Well my associate says
it better.

MARSH

A- hu-

Marsh looks at all the eyes facing him, Marsh closes his
eyes, forcing the words out.

COPE

Get it out.

MARSH

A humbug!

The crowd gasps.

COPE

I love it when he does that.

DOUGLAS HULL

I'm going to have to ask you two
strangers to leave.

COPE

Oh! An introduction is in order,
Edward Cope, first federally
recognized paleontologist.

Hull looks to Marsh.

MARSH
Doctor Othniel Marsh.

COPE
The second federally recognized
paleontologist!

DOUGLAS HULL
What? You're frauds.

COPE
Just doing a thorough investigation
on the authenticity of your find.
Unless however...

DOUGLAS HULL
It's the genuine article.

Marsh kneels down at the giants feet, he opens his briefcase,
a variety of small tools are inside.

DOUGLAS HULL (CONT'D)
Nobody is to touch the giant until
Father Morgan arrives. Sir do you
hear me? Dr. Marsh?

COPE
(whispering)
Say something.

Marsh will not look back at Hull.

COPE (CONT'D)
It never hurts to get a second
opinion.

Hull pushes past Cope over to Marsh.

Hull grabs Marsh by the shoulders, SHOCING Marsh away from
the statue base.

COPE (CONT'D)
Dr. Marsh please resume your
examination.

DOUGLAS HULL
If you step one foot closer to my
property.

Hull puts his hand at his side, he takes out a REVOLVER,
pointing it at Marsh.

The crowd is dead silent.

Marsh quickly closes his brief case.

COPE

Dr. Marsh finish your examination.

Cope closes his eyes, stepping between the revolver and Marsh. Cope opens his eyes, for just a moment and sees--

The abyssal barrel of the gun, Cope is barely holding it together.

COPE (CONT'D)

Our work is paramount Mr. Hull.
It's your right to peddle nonsense
on your land but claiming it's
real? People of Cardiff, just look,
when a creature dies it turns to
bone. Now why does this giant lips?

The crowd murmurs.

DOUGLAS HULL

Oh quiet down everyone.

While Hull is distracted Marsh shaves a bit of dust off the knee of the giant, Marsh looks over the dust.

MARSH

(muttering)
Chalk.

Marsh holds up the dusty finger to Cope.

Cope looks over and nods.

Marsh opens a barn door looking out into the rainstorm.

Hull switches targets, pointing the revolver at Marsh.

Marsh is frozen.

COPE

Everyone! My associate may be able
to the authenticity of this giant
once and for all.

Hull CLICKS the hammer.

Cope puts his hand up to the barrel of Hull's gun.

MARSH

Mr. Cope. Let's test it.

DOUGLAS HULL

Test what?

Marsh writes takes out a checkbook.

MARSH

Does ten thousand dollars sound
good, Mr. Hull?

The crowd is astonished, Hull is frozen. Cope moves out of
the way of the gun, Cope sighs.

Cope takes a deep breath.

COPE

You all heard him! Ten thousand
dollars if it's real!

DOUGLAS HULL

How do we know?

MARSH

Does anyone have a bone? Chicken,
cow, any bone?

Farmer from the crowd takes the bone the dog was gnawing on
and hands it to Marsh.

Hull reaches for the check. Marsh closes the book.

COPE

Bone does not flake in water. If
this giant is made of bone, it will
not flake in the rain. Understand?

Hull is petrified but he nods.

Marsh opens the barn door WIDE. Cope signals the crowd over.

Everyone helps PUSH the huge platform the giant rests on into
the rain.

EXT. DOUGLAS HULL'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

LIGHTNING STRIKES!

The crowd watches Marsh place the dog bone down next to the
giant. The crowd and Marsh stand outside watching the statue.

They watch the bone intently, the rain beats down on all of
them.

INT. DOUGLAS HULL'S BARN - CONTINUOUS

Hull and Cope watch from inside. He slowly raises the revolver up.

COPE

Mr. Hull this is the wrong choice.

Cope puts his hands up.

Hull puts the gun to his OWN temple.

DOUGLAS HULL

I'm-- I'm ruined. These idiots have been listening to Father Morgan's nonsense about god creating land and sea. They banned me from services because I know, I showed the truth of evolution! I made the giant to show them how WRONG that pompous pastor was!

COPE

Well, evolution is an unproven theory Mr. Hull.

DOUGLAS HULL

This whole charade, I've lost friends, money, now my dignity.

Cope puts his arm around Hull.

COPE

Well you cheated them fair and square.

Hull looks up, terrified at Cope.

Hull runs to the bucket of pennies, he throws open the curtain behind it. Seven more buckets of pennies. Hull grabs as much as he can carry, and books it out the back door.

Cope watches Hull run out into the night. Hull PLUMMETS into an unseen hole, the rain fills in the charlatans footsteps, his mud trail disappears.

CROWD MEMBER (O.S.)

The nose fell off!

CROWD MEMBER 2 (O.S.)

A day's wages to see a fake?!

The angry mob comes rushing into the barn, one holds the nose of the statue in her hand.

Cope points out the front door. The mob heads out into the rain. A few stragglers stay behind, SMASHING the "Cardiff giant" sign.

Cope and Marsh smile at each other. They FOREARM SHAKE each other's hands with a wet slap.

GORDON (V.O)
That was it. That's when I knew
they were my story.

FLASH! Cope and Marsh are blinded for a moment. They cover their eyes.

GORDON (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't move, you'll ruin the
exposure.

Standing behind a camera is GORDON BENNET JR (23). He's completely dry, perfect skin and glasses. He holds a pencil and paper in his hand.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Gordon Bennet Jr. New York Herald!

MARSH
We know.

GORDON
Dr. Marsh and Mr. Cope, this last
debunking was electrifying! This
time could I get a statement?
Please? You two are good copy!

COPE
Well thank you but we've read your
paper, Mr. Bennet. It's --

MARSH
Swill. Your news is swill. We have
a meeting back in Washington
Gordon. Good day.

Cope and Marsh walk out of the barn. Gordon SNAPS his pencil.

GORDON
Let's not be rash men! Just one
statement over a meal? You want
this story out there!

Cope looks back at Gordon.

MARSH
Absolutley not.

COPE
It's one meal.

INT. SMALL RESTAURANT PORCH - NIGHT

Gordon, Cope and Marsh sit at a small table eating. The mob looking for Hull runs by the porch.

Gordon has his notebook out, he sits across from the two men.

GORDON
Well Dr. Marsh you've barely touched your food.

MARSH
We have to get back on the road.

GORDON
So Dr. Marsh, you began studying paleontology when?

MARSH
This is trite.

COPE
Well I've doing this work since forever since, well as long as I can remember. It's been my calling, learning of our future from the past.

GORDON
Oh that's good. Can I quote you on that Cope?

Cope nods. Gordon writes that down.

MARSH
Well when I was young my uncle George took me in, he had life long connections to Yale and gave me an extensive education there.

Gordon doesn't write down with the same excitement as he did for Cope.

MARSH (CONT'D)
Why aren't you writing that down?
It's the same question.

A silence is shared by the men.

GORDON
So after this current hoax busting.
What's next for you?

MARSH
As I said, we have the meeting --

Cope leans over the table, almost blocking Cope.

COPE
Cataloging a new species perhaps?
We may go deep into Indian
territory, exhuming our history
from behind enemy lines! Perhaps
one day, our work may be in
museums! Side by side with the
break throughs of our day!

Cope goes on but we can't hear him. Marsh is just sitting
there STEWING.

Gordon is eating up everything Cope is saying.

MARSH
This is absurd! Cope we're men of
science, why are we humoring him?

GORDON
Well you want to get the word out?
What good is your discovery if
nobody knows it happened?

COPE
Exactly. You're being a real pain
in the knee about this.
(to Gordon)
Sorry about him. Where were we?

MARSH
The patter of your voice can be so
grating sometimes. You understand
that Cope?

COPE
At least you can hear me when I
speak mumble mouth.

Marsh and Cope bicker back and forth. Gordon is grinning ear
to ear, writing down EVERYTHING they are saying.

GORDON (V.O)
You have to understand, these guys
are the top of the top of the top.

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C. - DAY

A horse-drawn carriage passes by the Capitol Building. Well dressed men and women promenade around the well-manicured landscaping.

GORDON (V.O)
 If could get them to work WITH us
 instead of chasing them all around
 America we'd be making money!

The carriage passes by the HALF FINISHED Washington Monument.

GORDON (V.O) (CONT'D)
 Together they're dynamite. This
 Cope guy --

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

Cope sits in the carriage, he writes furiously on paper supported by his knees. He's curled in a ball.

GORDON (V.O)
 He's the quickest scientist I've
 ever seen, publishes new findings
 every WEEK. No doctorate BUT a
 brilliant mind! Our unstoppable
 force!

Cope pokes a hole through the paper into his leg, pricking himself.

GORDON (V.O) (CONT'D)
 Oh Dr. Marsh. Yale professor,
 quickest tenure in the history of
 the school. A whole museum is being
 built to house Marsh's fossils! Is
 Marsh's uncle on the Yale board?
 Yes. But, nobody can buy that mind
 of his. He's... stubborn for good
 or ill. Our immovable object.

Marsh shakes his head. He sits across from Cope looking out the window.

INT. GORDONS OFFICE - DAY

Painted on The office window:

"NEW YORK HERALD EDITOR: GORDON BENNET."

A bit lower down, painted on with less skill:

"CO-EDITOR: GORDON BENNET JUNIOR"

The office is exceptionally neat; a few choices articles of national tragedies framed on the wall.

Gordon looks to a man blocking the window who ashes a cigar right by Gordon's face.

This is GORDON BENNET SR. (50)

Gordon Senior lets out a MIGHTY cough as he looks out over smaug choked NEW YORK.

GORDON SR.

I'm not publishing nonsense about a couple of bone nuts.

GORDON

But dad --

GORDON SR.

This is a fad, Junior. Sure, it sells well now, but this dinosaur stuff is nothing.

GORDON

People want to believe in the amazing.

GORDON SR.

Then tell people to go to church. We're a newspaper. That's how it is. When you run this zoo you can run it however you'd like. Even into the ground.

GORDON

Cope and Marsh are front page stuff.

GORDON SR.

Are they at war? Are they rattling the very soul of this nation?

GORDON

Not yet.

Gordon Senior, his patience thinning, places his hands on his son's shoulders.

GORDON SR.

Have I taught you nothing, Junior? What makes something a story?

GORDON
 (sheepishly)
 When something goes wrong.

GORDON SR. (CONT'D)
 When something goes wrong.

GORDON SR. (CONT'D)
 Did something go wrong?

GORDON
 No, they were incredible.

GORDON SR.
 What about that Hull fellow?

GORDON
 He ran out the moment they tested
 on the giant. Nobodies seen him.
 He's missing.

GORDON SR.
 Well that's the end of it then. I
 don't want to hear another word on
 this fools errand. Not one word.
 Understand me?

Gordon Jr gets an idea.

INT. PRINT ROOM - DAY

FINNEGAN (19) pushes his glasses up with his palm, his hands
 full of metal TYPE. He looks through a drawer of hundreds of
 metal letters.

Gordon comes up behind him.

GORDON
 Finnegan!

Startled, Finnegan drops all the letters he was holding.

GORDON (CONT'D)
 You're not done with the science
 section yet?

FINNEGAN
 Not anymore...

GORDON
 Great, I'm editing my article.

FINNEGAN
 Mr. Gordon I can't be adding words,
 this has to be out by tomorrow.

GORDON

Oh no, not adding. Switching. I need you to switch one word.

EXT. SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION - DAY

The carriage stops in front of this brick castle. It stands tall over lightly forested area. On the grounds are dozens of men walking and talking.

One man looks through a telescope at the afternoon sun. He instantly recoils, covering his eye.

Cope hops out of the carriage, holding the door for Marsh.

COPE

Oh the air... Just take that in. It's good to be back!

Marsh walks past Cope into the building.

COPE (CONT'D)

What do you say? A celebratory meal? A drink?

Marsh looks at his pocket watch.

MARSH

Why did you convince me to stop for that stupid interview. We're already late!

COPE

For what -- that's today?

INT. POWELL'S OFFICE - DAY

Through the window we see the HALF FINISHED Washington Monument again. JOHN WESLEY POWELL (50) sits at his desk. He has a large beard and one arm, nothing below the elbow.

POWELL

You've both given a lot to the Smithsonian. Dr. Marsh, taking a field position must've been quite the culture shock from a professorship at Yale.

Marsh and Cope sit across from Powell.

MARSH
It's certainly a learning
experience.

Powell taps rhythmically on a large wooden box.

POWELL
Mr. Cope, you have given every
waking moment to this place.
(He pauses)
An old goat like me doesn't have
much expedition left in him. At
this point, most of my colleagues
are--

COPE
Retired?

POWELL
(Chuckling.)
Dead.

Marsh gives Cope a look.

POWELL (CONT'D)
I need someone to run the
institute. I want to make sure this
place is left in good hands.

MARSH
Why are you telling us?

COPE
Us? Really? Incredible! We'll lead
it into calmer waters. Sail for a
brighter--

POWELL
No slow down, Mr. Cope. I'd like to
name you both my successor.

Cope is ecstatic!

MARSH
You'd "like" to Mr. Powell?

POWELL
I begged and begged. Congress has
only given us enough in the budget
for one head.

Powell grabs a PRYBAR from under his desk.

COPE

Mr. Powell? I don't follow.

Powell YANKS the top off the wooden box with his foot and one arm.

POWELL

Nobody is losing their position gentlemen. Yet. I have one more specimen I'd like you two to oversee.

Powell drops the prybar. He HEAVES the ELASMOSAURUS skull

It's the size of a microwave, it looks like the Loch Ness monster's head except for its teeth. Long, spaced apart spears.

POWELL (CONT'D)

This one was found on a dig in Kansas. Geologists didn't know what to do with their "Dragon" and got it shipped back here.

Marsh and Cope stand up. They fawn over the skull.

COPE

Look at the teeth on her!

MARSH

Long, separated by about a half inch. Probably aquatic.

POWELL

This one is of particular interest to President Johnson. He heard "Dragon" and wants it in the Smithsonian.

MARSH

A dinosaur in a museum? Really? How novel.

POWELL

Once it's cataloged, I'll name a successor.

Cope and Marsh look at the skull. Then each other.

POWELL (CONT'D)

That won't be a problem gentlemen?

MARSH

Not at all.

Cope goes for the forearm shake.

Marsh hesitated for a moment.

Marsh clasps Cope's forearm.

SUPER: BONEWARS

EXT. SMITHSONIAN HALLWAY - A BIT LATER

Cope and Marsh walk down the hallway; they peer through an open door labeled "GEOLOGY LAB." It's massive.

A mid-20s GEOLOGIST, with a patchy beard, steps out of the lab waving a newspaper.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST

"Mr. Edward Cope and his associate
found the Cardiff Giant to be
carved of chalk, a simple statue."
What will the paleontology
department do next?

MARSH

Associate?

Marsh wilts. Cope SNATCHES the paper from the Young Geologist. Cope scans the paper.

"NEW YORK HERALD" at the top.

Cope scans further down.

"By Co-Editor Gordon Bennet Jr."

Cope rolls his eyes.

Marsh looks over the paper. He doesn't see his name once.

COPE

When was the last time Geology was
front-page news?

Someone yells from in the lab.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST

Since we became a real science,
Edward!

COPE

What does it matter? Nobody knows
who you are.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST
We're scientists, we don't care
about being in the news!

Cope turns to Marsh.

COPE
Finally you two may have some
common ground!

MARSH
Slow down Cope.

Men in the Geo lab laugh as they look over the newspaper.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST
"Cope and his associate." I guess
it's a one man program!

Cope clenches his fists. Marsh puts a hand on Cope's
shoulder.

MARSH
It's not worth it.

COPE
No! This will not stand! You're a
scientist in your own right, and
this is completely out of line!

MARSH
Not it's ok.

COPE
No Doctor, it's not.

Cope breezes past Marsh into—

INT. SMITHSONIAN GEO LAB - CONTINUOUS

Cope thunders into the cavernous room. It glitters, precious
stones line the wall.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST
Oh, we upset him!

Cope stops at a display case of GEODES. All are labeled and
dated. None are opened.

COPE
Well these are quite boring.

YOUNG GEOLOGIST
They're geodes. Crystals form on
the inside.

Cope opens the case. The geologists stop laughing.

COPE
Really?

Cope palms a geode.

He SMASHES the geode into the ground, SHATTERING it into
purple shards.

COPE (CONT'D)
Oh my, they're beautiful!
Exceptionally so! News worthy!
Doctor Marsh slays a giant in a
thunderstorm while you dandys play
with pretty rocks!

Cope HURLS geodes onto the floor, smashing them!

INT. POWELL'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

Powell sits at his desk writing, we hear Cope's yelling.
Powell takes off his reading glasses, opening his office
door, he listens to the commotion.

INT. SMITHSONIAN GEO LAB - SAME TIME

COPE
Well this is real science then!
Look world, the color blue! Haha!
Some real breaking news right here!
What would humanity do if they
didn't know the inside of this rock
was blue! Really quite useful.

The geologists surround Cope.

COPE (CONT'D)
Marsh discovered the largest sea
reptile to ever live on Earth and
you can't put a drop of respect on
his name? Now you may pummel my
intelligence all you like gentleman
but --

Young Geologist CRACKS Cope across the head. Cope braces
himself against a nearby desk, clearly off balance.

Cope rolls up his sleeves.

COPE (CONT'D)
 Doctor Marsh! Marsh I require some
 assistance!

Marsh doesn't move.

SUCKER PUNCH, Cope is down on the ground, he writhes, the
 shattered bits of geode SLASH his face and arms.

EXT. SMITHSONIAN HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cope is THROWN out of the room, he skids across the hardwood
 floor. Marsh waits in the hall, he helps Cope to his feet.

EXT. CRAMPED LAB - DAY

A wooden door at the end of the hall labeled "PALEONTOLOGY."

INT. CRAMPED LAB - CONTINUOUS

The room is minuscule compared to the geology lab. It's full
 of diagrams of dinosaurs and fossils.

Cope sits in a chair. Marsh TWEEZES bits of geode out of
 Cope's arm.

COPE
 Oh, that was funny! They'll get
 another! They almost bleed funding.

Marsh empties the geode bits into the trash. Refusing to
 making eye contact with Cope.

MARSH
 We do not. We do not have the
 luxury. Tantrums do not a credible
 scientist make.

COPE
 Tantrum is subjective! War is
 tantrums, love is tantrums! Who
 ever wins gets to say they were
 calm and brave and studious while
 the loser throws a tantrum!

MARSH
 If the tantrum over shadows the
 victory? What then?

PLINK, a bit of geode dropped on the table.

Marsh dabs Cope's arm with a wet cloth.

COPE

Well that doesn't happen. Nobody becomes a titan just to squabble. What does it matter man? We're scientists we don't make news. Right?

MARSH

Flirting with death? Ruining others research for what? Is that science to you?

Cope brushes the cloth away.

COPE

I almost died in that barn. I could smell the gunpowder, I saw the bullet.

MARSH

You gave me enough time to debunk it.

Marsh goes back to tweezing. Cope winces, as Marsh roots around in him.

COPE

Without me there would be no debunking.

Marsh's tweezers slip on a bit of geode.

MARSH

Anything worth doing is always risky Cope.

Marsh gets the tweezers around the geode, blood oozes from the cut. Marsh slowly pulls it out.

COPE

You didn't risk anything. The giant, my life! Down the hall, my pride. That's a story! Take a risk once in your life.

MARSH

What you do isn't science Cope.

COPE

What do I do? What's my title then?

MARSH

Only one of us has a doctorate.

COPE

At least they know my name,
associate.

Cope swats the tweezers out of Marsh's hand. They clatter to the floor.

Plucking a few shards out his arm, Cope walks to a pile of large wooden boxes. He silently opens it.

Cope and Marsh empty the box of bones.

COPE (CONT'D)

She's waited long enough.

MARSH

Whatever she is.

DISSOLVE:

The bones are placed all around the floor of the lab. The two men sit next to each other at the same desk.

Marsh flips through a large book, taking notes. Cope slowly separates bone from rock with a chisel.

DISSOLVE:

The boxes are gone. The office's ENTIRE floor is covered in a long, snake like, spinal column.

Cope moves the skull to the short end of the spine.

Marsh moves it back to the pile of unorganized bones.

Cope moves it back.

DISSOLVE:

Marsh holds a ruler while Cope tip toes around the bones, he squats, eye level with the creature while Marsh is measuring and writing distances. Cope nods.

DISSOLVE:

Cope has dark circles around his eyes. Precisely placing the last bone of a flipper at one side of the fossil.

DISSOLVE:

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Cope grabs a chicken bone off his plate, gnawing off the last of the meat.

The cuts on Cope's arms have healed.

Marsh sits across from him, his meal finished, his silverware crossed on his plate.

COPE

Once we can string the bones together-- If we can... This is a big one.

MARSH

I needed to get out of that lab.

COPE

Before we become specimens?

MARSH

Precisely.

A WAITER places a check down on the table.

Cope looks at the check, then back to Marsh.

Cope smiles.

Marsh sighs. He takes his check book out his jacket.

GEORGE PEABODY, (80), walks through the restaurant to Cope and Marsh's table. He leans HEAVILY on his cane.

UNCLE GEORGE

It's nice to see my nephew has the same eye for charity as his uncle.

MARSH

Cope you've met Uncle George.

Cope wipes his mouth of chicken bits.

COPE

Don't believe I've had the pleasure. Your reputation proceeds you.

UNCLE GEORGE

Only good things I hope.

Cope gives Marsh a look. Marsh shakes his head.

COPE

Oh of course, of course. Care to sit down?

UNCLE GEORGE

Oh no, at my age, if I sit down, I may never get up.

Marsh mouths along, having heard this joke a thousand times.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)

Mr. Cope I don't mean to intrude-

Cope offers George his seat. Uncle George declines.

Cope leaves.

MARSH

Good to see you.

UNCLE GEORGE

Surprised?

MARSH

This far down from Yale... Why are you here?

UNCLE GEORGE

Walk with me Othniel.

INT. SMITHSONIAN STAIRS - NIGHT

Powell and the geologists stand, dressed to the nines, they pile into a carriage.

Cope walks past them back into the building.

POWELL

He lives! The boys and I are heading out for a drink, care to join our merry band?

Cope looks at the jolly men, he looks down at the cuts on his arm.

COPE

I have to refuse I almost got this creature sorted out.

POWELL

Well, good on you! Gentlemen, burning the midnight oil.

(MORE)

POWELL (CONT'D)
(to geologists)
I'll catch the next coach.

The geologist carriage heads out into the night.

POWELL (CONT'D)
About the promotion. It's the same
salary. Just more work.

COPE
Why are you telling me this?

POWELL
You're a brilliant scientist.

COPE
But?

POWELL
You could do so much more out in
the field.

COPE
So Marsh has the position?

POWELL
I don't know.

COPE
Just tell me. Are you resending the
offer? Is this about the geodes?
What did they tell you?

POWELL
They didn't tell me anything. I
heard it all from my office Cope.

COPE
So one defense of my character and
I'm out of the running? Seems like
that level of integrity would
qualify me!

POWELL
The Smithsonian requires a steady
hand to navigate. Picking my
successor from the smallest of our
departments is already suspect in
congress. Don't prove them right.

COPE
I won't sir. I'll prove that
nobodies right. You just watch!

Cope heads into the Smithsonian while Powell goes out the front gates.

EXT. HALF FINISHED NATIONAL MALL - SAME TIME

The gas lit streets illuminate the reflecting pool, the half finished Washington monument is silhouetted in the water.

A duck flutters into the pool, the reflection of the monument ripples, two figures, Marsh and Uncle George sit on a bench.

Uncle George throws bread to the ducks.

MARSH

You've never come to visit me ever.
I don't mean to be intrusive--

UNCLE GEORGE

Intrude away! Say something for yourself for once in your life.
(looking to Marsh)
You're brilliant Othniel. I took you in from your despot father because I saw greatness!

FLASH CUT:

YOUNG MARSH, 6, slowly leads his FATHER, early 20's, up the creaky stairs in an old house. Marsh's dad stumbles, he clutches a bottle in his hand.

Marsh places a blanket over his father very carefully.

The door opens. YOUNG UNCLE GEORGE, mid 40's stands siloetted by a gray morning, he walks over to Marsh, standing over him.

BACK TO SCENE.

MARSH

He wasn't a despot.

UNCLE GEORGE

Well, I came down here to bring you back to Yale.

MARSH

I'm on leave.

UNCLE GEORGE

You do so much good work here but you're above this. Point to your office. Point to the Smithsonian.

MARSH

It's just past the monument.

UNCLE GEORGE

I don't see it. This? What you see is real power, real brilliance, a real legacy!

Marsh reaches for the bread bag. George SWIPES it away from him.

MARSH

I'm up for promotion actually. May be running the Smithsonian. Who ever finishes this last dinosaur will get it.

Uncle George leans in.

UNCLE GEORGE

My boy! Why didn't you say that?

MARSH

It's not final yet.

UNCLE GEORGE

It's almost a closed deal, then. How long until that's done?

MARSH

It's a large specimen, only just finished its flipper. Another year or so. Cope and I will get it done.

Uncle George slumps back on the bench.

UNCLE GEORGE

That fool won't wait for you. You live in the shadow of a man half your size. He's a lobotomite and a clown.

MARSH

He's headstrong at times yes, but we're partners.

Uncle George grumbles. He takes a NEW YORK HERALD article out of his bag.

UNCLE GEORGE

"Mr. Edward Cope and associate." At Yale you'd be more than just an associate I'll tell you that much.

MARSH

Once I run the place we'll have clearer boundaries set.

UNCLE GEORGE

Utterly spineless.

MARSH

Excuse me?

UNCLE GEORGE

I say leave your supposed partner to listen to my blatherings and you do, I say-

FLASH CUT

We're back with Young Marsh and Young Uncle George in the house. Uncle George puts his hands on Young Marsh's shoulders.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)

I offer you an oppurtunity my boy.

BACK TO SCENE

MARSH

You expected me to refuse? I was a child and he was a drunk!

UNCLE GEORGE

Oh, we can call him a drunk but despot is too far?

MARSH

You came halfway down the country to insult me?

UNCLE GEORGE

Tell me something Othniel. Why bones?

Marsh takes a moment to think. He looks over at the ducks.

MARSH

To make this world make sense. To show where we came from.

UNCLE GEORGE

You want to tell that story? You want that power?

Uncle George throws a few chunks into the reflecting pool.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)
Othniel you want power.

MARSH
What?

UNCLE GEORGE
Nephew.

George stands, he leans on the bench, he motions out over the reflecting pool, bread flies around him.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)
You have the backing of Yale, with
god as my witness, you will have
all the resources J.P Morgan can
muster behind you. You could enrich
this world like none before you!
All you need is one thing!

Marsh stands at eye level with his uncle.

Everything goes quiet.

George offers Marsh the bread bag.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)
You need to take control of this
story.

Marsh slowly takes the bread bag out of George's hand. The ducks all watch Marsh with anticipation.

Marsh reaches his hand into the bag. He throws the bread over the pool.

The ducks go wild.

FLASH CUT:

Young Marsh walks out of the dilapidated home hold Uncle George's hand, Young Marsh looks back at his past out father.

George goes to close the door to the home. Young Marsh STOPS him.

Marsh closes the door himself.

INT. CRAMPED LAB - NIGHT

Cope places the skull of the Elasmosaurus on the floor, the creature now has a huge tail and small neck.

Standing up, Cope looks the dinosaur up and down, he rubs his eyes.

Marsh BARGES into the office, he clears his desk.

COPE
Well hello friend! How are we
doing?

Marsh grabs his papers off the desk.

COPE (CONT'D)
That's research for the specimen!
Marsh-- Where's your Uncle?

MARSH
Outside. We're heading back to
Yale.

COPE
I thought you were on leave.

MARSH
Plans change.

Cope blocks Marsh from taking anything else from the office.

COPE
Something changed? What's changed?
We're working together on this.

MARSH
The specimen is yours now.

Marsh, towering over Cope, reaches past him grabbing a few more papers.

COPE
This isn't like you.

MARSH
I've realized I'm more useful back
home then here.

COPE
What do you mean? We're partners!
Did you tell Powell? Did you tell
anyone?

MARSH
I've sent out the necessary
communications.

Marsh heads for the door. He steps right over the fossil on the floor. Cope blocks the way out.

COPE
Marsh you can't leave! You're my--

MARSH
I'm your what? Associate?

COPE
I didn't write that article.

MARSH
You didn't discredit it either.

COPE
Well we just got back!

MARSH
So you'll send out a telegram tonight? Write an open letter to the readers of the herald? Tell Mr. Powell?

COPE
Well I'm in a precarious position.

Marsh palms the door knob.

MARSH
This isn't personal Cope. It's for science.

COPE
We got into the paper Marsh! We can leverage this for good, just stay here, please. You don't just strike out on your own.

MARSH
Maybe I do now.

COPE
You and I know that's Hogwash, mumble mouth.

Marsh takes out a LETTER from his jacket pocket.

MARSH
I wrote a letter if you weren't here. In case I didn't see you when I left, explaining my reasoning. A proper good bye.

Marsh TEARS up the letter in front of Cope, throwing the SHREDS in his face.

Marsh pushes past Cope. Marsh stomps down the hall holding his papers and instruments.

Cope watches him leave. Cope looks back at the fossil on the floor behind. The empty sockets of the skull stare back.

Cope closes the door to the lab. He walks to his desk and sits down, burying his head in his hands.

CUT TO:

INT. CRAMPED LAB - DAY

KNOCK, KNOCK! Cope JOLTS awake at his desk.

Cope's fingers are splattered with ink. A packet sits in front of Cope with a short necked dinosaurs picture on the cover.

He looks out the window of the lab, it's noon.

Cope stretches and rises from the chair, he grabs the packet and walks steps over floor fossil and opens the door.

EXT. SMITHSONIAN HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gordon stands there smiling with an envelope in his hand.

GORDON

Just the man I wanted to see!

COPE

Gordon, it's been a long night-

GORDON

It certainly has! You're debunking of that giant has been the talk of the town!

Gordon hands Cope the envelope. He opens it.

It is full to bursting with cash.

COPE

What is this?!

GORDON

This is your cut for the front page story. Call it a finders fee.

Cope closes it quickly, he looks around the hall, to see if anyone saw.

COPE
I can't take this!

GORDON
You can! You earned this! Our readers know you. They. Want. More.

COPE
I'm not a show pony Gordon. I'm a scientist.

GORDON
Whatever you are is FLYING off the newstands! We can barely keep that giant story on shelves!

A few scientists stride through the hall. They take notice of Cope and Gordon.

GORDON (CONT'D)
This is the start of a fruitful partnership!

Cope shakes the envelope.

COPE
(whisper yelling)
This is bribery.

Cope throws the wad back at Gordon. It's raining money.

GORDON
I'll just give your cut to Dr. Marsh then!

COPE
Then godspeed my friend!

Cope walks deeper into the Smithsonian. Gordon follows him.

Cope shakes the packet at Gordon.

GORDON
Edward Cape?

Cope looks at the title page, misspelled his own name.

COPE
It has been many late nights!

GORDON
If only you had an editor...

COPE
I don't need an editor! What matters is the idea, the feeling behind it!

GORDON
So you're rushing?

COPE
Gordon I have real science to publish, I'm not a reporter.

GORDON
Thank god. We wouldn't accept those phonetical errors.

COPE
Know that I'm being quite gracious right now and could call security. Leave.

Cope thunders down the hall away from Gordon.

GORDON
So a check next time?

Gordon waves pleasantly to the scientists walking down the hall, once they're gone, Gordon walks out the way he came, pissed.

GORDON (V.O) (CONT'D)
He refused all of it!

GORDON SR. (V.O)
Leave these men alone son!

INT. NEW YORK HERALD OFFICE - DAY

Gordon Sr. Sits behind his desk coughing, Gordon stirs a drink for his father. Gordon Sr. GULPS it down.

GORDON
Marsh went back up to Yale.

Gordon Senior massages his throat.

GORDON SR.
Tastes like shoe leather.
(hoarsely)
So he left?

Gordon nods.

GORDON SR. (CONT'D)
Well congratulations son. You drove
apart the very reason that story
sold copy. Move on.

GORDON
Don't you see? This is what we've
been waiting for.

EXT. MARSH'S YALE OFFICE - DAY

Marsh sits at his desk, peeling an apple with a knife, his
doctorate behind him, and small bird skeletons, and a few
animals in jars dot the wall.

Marsh is slowly grading papers on his desk.

MARSH
As much as I don't agree with
Darwin's approach I think assigning
his papers as required reading will
provide a more well rounded
education.

DEAN, a bit younger than Marsh, he has completely sweat
through his starched shirt. A nervous ball of a man.

DEAN
These are unproven theories! You
can't expect the whole department
to match your curriculum. Right?

MARSH
I don't. You don't have to agree
with any of it. It is still fact.

A knock at the door. Marsh opens it, looking down he sees a
small package.

Marsh unwraps it, it's a leather bound book labeled "AMERICAN
SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL."

MARSH (CONT'D)
You don't have to agree with me Dr.
Dean you do have to read it.

Marsh points to the book.

MARSH (CONT'D)
This is from my post in Washington
published twice a year.

(MORE)

MARSH (CONT'D)

The most "cutting edge" science. I don't have to agree with it. It is fact.

Marsh hands Student the book.

Marsh grabs reading glasses from his desk.

Dean cracks the book open.

MARSH (CONT'D)

Get on some gloves Doctor! You'll sweat through the page.

Marsh goes back to peeling the apple.

DEAN

A new dinosaur species! It's the front article.

Marsh slips, cutting his thumb with the knife. He drops the apple.

Marsh takes the book looking at the article.

It's by Cope. A picture of a short necked, long tailed dinosaur.

MARSH

He published it?

DEAN

Doctor Marsh?

MARSH

How? So little time.

Marsh drops the book, shaking.

Marsh collapses at his desk.

MARSH (CONT'D)

That creature was... How did he?

Marsh is hands are shaking.

DEAN

Marsh? Are you alright?

Marsh DARTS out of his office.

EXT. YALE QUAD - CONTINUOUS

Marsh huffs and puffs past students and the well manicured campus. Marsh runs OUT the front gate to a MANSION slightly down the road.

EXT. PEABODY MANSION - DAY

Marsh holds a suitcase on the porch of a very large home. Smoke billows from the chimney.

Peabody hobbles out of the home.

UNCLE GEORGE

For the last time Othniel you're making a mistake!

MARSH

He couldn't have done it that fast.

UNCLE GEORGE

You're on track for tenure, missing lectures on such short notice?

MARSH

Thanksgiving's a three day weekend. I'll be back in time.

The carriage pulls up to the front of the home. Marsh steps in.

MARSH (CONT'D)

He published in 3 months. That's unheard of, even for Cope. Hes flown too close to the sun on this one. I can feel it.

Uncle George tenderly holds Marsh's hand.

UNCLE GEORGE

It's one article.

MARSH

He's presenting it to President Johnson. A specimen that should've taken a year he bringing forth in a few months!

Marsh closes the door of the carriage. Uncle George protests, we can't hear him. The carriage rides off.

INT. THE SMITHSONIAN SHOW ROOM- DAY

The large, Greco inspired building, it's still under construction.

Cope and Powell's steps echo through the room, they're dwarfed by the chamber.

At the center of the room sits the short necked ELASMOSAURUS skeleton suspended above the ground at waist height.

COPE

When is he getting here? I'm going to jump out of my skin!

Cope adjusts his spiffy jacket. He looks over the cuff links. Golden dinosaur skull cuff links.

POWELL

I knew you'd like them! I wanted to celebrate this. You're going places Edward. You really are.

COPE

To the top! Thank you Powell. Really... I cannot thank you enough.

Cope is jumping up and down. Powell puts his one arm on Cope's bicep, steadying him.

POWELL

I know how many sleepless nights this was. I want you to know, I know I'm leaving the survey in the right hands.

MARSH (O.S.)

Cope!

COPE

Marsh? Marsh!

Marsh's footfalls thunder through the room. Cope goes in for a forearm shake.

COPE (CONT'D)

Without your notes I struggled a bit but I was able to find-- Oh! I'm rambling-- Ah! What are you doing back?

Marsh answers with a simple stop at the wrist shake.

POWELL
The big Yale man has time for us!
It's nice to see you.

Marsh breezes past Powell and Cope to the Elasmosaurus fossil.

Marsh looks over every inch of it. Slowly and methodically.

COPE
Ah-- double checking my work.
Somethings never changed.

Marsh kneels by the skeleton. He buries his face in his hands and SCREAMS! The sound reverberates through the hall.

MARSH
You built it backwards.

COPE
I'm sorry?

POWELL
Dr. Marsh?

Marsh gets up. He gets right in Cope's face.

MARSH
You put the head on the tail.

COPE
I'm sorry?

MARSH
Look at the vertebrae!

COPE
I--

MARSH
LOOK AT THE VERTEBRAE YOU SPINELESS
FOOL!

POWELL
Dr. Marsh I'm going to ask you to
leave.

MARSH
You rushed. You published after
barely having the fossil. You
wanted the discovery, the legacy!

COPE

You up and leave for three months
without a goodbye, only to come
back to insult my work?

MARSH

This isn't about you. This is about
science.

COPE

You pounce on me now? You grow a
backbone now? Talk about spineless.
I HAVE BEEN YOUR SPINE! The
geologists, the giant! You. Left. I
understand you have a life outside
of this. I understand that you left
"for science" I understand that. I
cannot begin to fathom the
scientific reason for coming back
down here. If this is you
collecting some debt I believe it
was paid when I HAD A GUN TO MY
HEAD FOR YOU!

MARSH

I will not live in the shadow of a
man half my size!

COPE

Is that you or your Uncle talking?

POWELL

He's right.

Cope and Marsh look to Powell. The skull now lies at the
long, serpentine tail.

POWELL (CONT'D)

It's a perfect fit. Look.

The room starts spinning around Cope. He teeters grasping
onto Marsh's jacket.

Marsh swats him away.

Cope falls to the ground. He peers into the eye sockets of
the Elamosaurus.

PRESIDENT JOHNSON (O.S.)

The first dinosaur in a museum!
What a sight to behold!

Powell puts a hand on Cope's shoulder.

Powell looks Marsh dead in the eye.

POWELL

I'd like us to part ways amicably.

Powell walks to welcome the president in the distance.

Cope kneels on the floor motionless.

MARSH

Cope. It's all for science.

Marsh walks away.

COPE

You've never been in real danger--

Marsh stops.

SUPER: PART 2, SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Cope stands to face Marsh, Cope walks over, the two men stand chest to chest, Cope looks into Marsh's eyes.

COPE (CONT'D)

You will be.

Marsh walks out of the room.

Powell and PRESIDENT JOHNSON (early 50's) He's got a bulbous face. Lots of hair on the sides not much on top.

Four extremely stoic men stand around him at all times. The men envelope Cope.

EXT. SMITHSONIAN - MOMENTS LATER

Marsh descends the steps swiftly.

Gordon Bennet waits at the bottom of the steps.

GORDON

They won't let me in! Can you believe it? I'm a security issue now! Ha!

Marsh walks past Gordon without a thought.

GORDON (CONT'D)

I heard something in there. Roofs got a hole y'know? Doctor Marsh? c'mon?!

Gordon pops up from sitting, he follows behind Marsh.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Oh ho, ho! Something massive
happened. Consequences beyond my
comprehension.

Marsh keeps walking away.

GORDON (CONT'D)
Well I'll take a statement from Mr.
Cope then.

MARSH
Whatever that's worth now.

GORDON
He always was the face of your duo.

Marsh turns around. The autumn leaves blow by his feet.

Gordon raises an eyebrow.

MARSH
No Gordon don't worry. I have your
story.

INT. CRAMPED LAB - NIGHT

Cope's former lab is empty. He sits at his barren desk.
Powell knocks on the open door.

POWELL
Everything in order?

COPE
No.

Cope takes a deep breath he walks out into—

INT. SMITHSONIAN HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Cope stands disheveled with Powell.

Young Geologist reads the newspaper.

Front page reads: "BONE BLUNDER, DISGRACED PALEONTOLOGIST
PUT'S HEAD ON TAIL"

It's the front page story.

POWELL

I'm really sorry. I can't justify the expense of sending the fossils up to New York with you. You'll have to start again.

Powell walks Cope to the front door.

Powell gives Cope the forearm shake.

POWELL (CONT'D)

I never understood why you two did this.

COPE

It's a Roman handshake. After Caesar's death, they'd do it to check the other man didn't have a dagger in his sleeve.

POWELL

Just because the promotion is off the table doesn't mean you have to leave Cope.

Cope puts the box of his stuff down at his feet.

COPE

I can't stay here anymore. I can't wait for the bones to come to me anymore.

Powell brings Cope in for a hug.

POWELL

Where to now?

INT. PRINT ROOM - DAY

KA CHUNK! Workers, their hands covered in ink, set type on printing presses everywhere in the warehouse.

Gordon walks with a disheveled Cope through the room of newspapers.

GORDON

And that concludes the tour!
Welcome to the Herald.

Gordon opens a door at the back of the warehouse.

GORDON (CONT'D)

--And this is your lab.

There is nothing in the room except a chair and desk.

COPE
I have nothing to study.

GORDON
We'll get on that.

GORDON SR. (O.S)
So this is the scientist whose been
making all our money?

Gordon Sr. Sits in a wheel chair, he pushes himself forward
in it, slowly. He coughs.

COPE
Edward Cope. A pleasure.

GORDON SR.
Gordon Bennet Senior. Editor of the
Herald.

Cope turns to Gordon Jr.

COPE
I thought you were--

GORDON
Well coeditor.

GORDON SR.
The people. They like your story
but they want a little more meat on
its bones. So we found you some
bones.

Cope looks at the sea of newspapers around him.

COPE
I'm not a reporter Gordon. Gordons?

GORDON
No of course not. You're a
scientist. Do you know the
difference between a scientist and
a journalist?

COPE
Respect?

GORDON
You get to tell us the story. News
is gone in a day.

(MORE)

GORDON (CONT'D)
 Every paper you see, is old news
 the SECOND it's typed.

COPE
 You can move on. That's
 liberating.

Cope takes a paper off the assembly line. The fresh ink sticks to his fingers.

GORDON
 It's debilitating. Nothing we do
 here is forever. It's quite
 difficult to be remembered. Not for
 you though. Go out into the
 frontier, uncover a lost creature,
 publish its story. That's forever.
 If I can capture--

GORDON SR.
 Shut up Junior.

Gordon puts his head down.

COPE
 Without the survey I don't have my
 old contacts, my old team. Even if
 I did my. My reputation...

GORDON SR.
 There's a field in New Jersey.
 Farmer found bones in the mud.
 Bigger than anything he's ever
 seen. There's a team waiting for
 you.

COPE
 Right outside?

GORDON SR.
 Got anything to study yet?

COPE
 No.

GORDON SR.
 Then get across the river and dig
 up whatever's in Jersey!

Cope weaves between printing presses out the door.

Gordon waits for the door to close. He waves a man over to him.

GORDON
Send a telegram to Dr. Marsh. "Cope
at Haddonfield Farm N.J. New
Species. Get there."

GORDON SR.
Oh you scoundrel!

Gordon Sr. wheels at his son.

GORDON
You said "make it go wrong" I don't
want to here now--

Gordon Sr. Raises his arms.

GORDON SR.
We're going to make so much money
off these idiots. SO MUCH!

Gordon Sr's cheers turn into a coughing fit, he coughs up
blood on himself.

GORDON
We have to get you to a doctor!

GORDON SR.
And let this city know I'm on my
out? I won't have it.

GORDON
Your sick!

Gordon Sr. goes to the door.

GORDON SR.
I'll be in my office.

GORDON
Absolutley not!

GORDON SR.
Are you deaf? In my office Junior,
and that's where I'll stay!

EXT. YALE QUAD - DAY

Marsh holds Uncle George as they walk along the gravel paths.

UNCLE GEORGE
Right here is where we'll put your
muesuem.

(MORE)

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)
I always liked the shade AND from
the north gate, it's the first
thing students see.

MARSH
We're really building it.

UNCLE GEORGE
Your legacy is forming, stay the
course my boy, stay the course.

MESSENGER BOY, mid teens, runs up to the Marsh.

MESSENGER BOY
Telegram for Dr. Marsh.

Messenger hands Marsh a slip of paper, he reads it over.
Uncle George squints to read it.

UNCLE GEORGE
I forgot my glasses, what's it say?

MARSH
"Dig in Jersey. Large Femur. Cope
en route."

Marsh rolls his eyes.

UNCLE GEORGE
Stay the course my boy.

MARSH
He's making a mockery of us. If
you'll excuse me for a moment
Uncle, I have a few arrangements to
make.

UNCLE GEORGE
He's dragging you back.

MARSH
Whatever he finds, he won't know
what to with it. I'll be back in a
moment.

Uncle George sits down on a nearby bench. Marsh walks with
purpose across the quad.

UNCLE GEORGE
Are you going to kill him yourself?

MARSH
Your checkbook will.

EXT. MUDDY FIELD - DAY

Cope looks over the rained out field. Pockets of brown water dot the land.

Men follow behind him, carrying out crates. Cope has both hands free, for balance of course.

Cope avoids a few slips, his clothes pristine. He's focused intently on his footwork. Cope places a foot on a rock.

His foot SLIPPING, Cope falls in the mud, completely covered.

WILKINS (O.S.)

You must be the paleontologist!

Cope, startled, falls face-first into the mud.

ANOTHER ANGLE

WILKINS, a bear of a man a little younger than Cope. He's got lush sideburns; his face is all scarred up. He sits on a mossy stump, he writes a letter in his lap.

COPE

How could you tell?

Cope wipes himself off. He gets to his knees, placing his hands on the ground, OH, way more mud than expected, Cope's hand goes 2 feet down into the stuff, he's on the ground.

WILKINS

I'm almost done with this, trying to keep up correspondence with my wife. Just got married actually!

Wilkins looks up from writing to see Cope writhing in the mud, trying to get back to his feet.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Jed Wilkins at your service!
Demolitions expert, fiddle player
and novice poet!

Wilkins reaches down, Cope grabs his gloved hand, sliding the glove off, Wilkins has THREE FINGERS on his hand.

Cope is mortified.

Wilkins takes off his glove, revealing a THREE FINGERED hand.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Some people get put off by this,
just want to get ahead.

(MORE)

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Just born without em' not an accident. Not the devil. Just so we're on the same page.

COPE

Uh huh.

Wilkins puts his glove back on.

WILKINS

If my wife can get past it I assume you can to Mr. Cope?

Cope nods.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Good! Well, let me show you what we're working with Mr. Cope.

Wilkins and Cope trudge deeper, they summit a muddy hill.

Before the two men lies a stew of mud.

Tools and a few men sit waiting. One messes with a PICKAXE.

CRESTING the brown soup of mud is a femur tied to ropes.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

There it is. We just needed a few more folks to help it out. We already tried the horses, they got stuck.

Cope and Wilkins walk down the hill to the main mud pit.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

We know it's huge so I'm thinking we just pull.

Cope slips on the hill. Wilkins catches him, practically holding him until they reach the bottom.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

We feed the rope back, tying double fisherman unless you'd prefer figure eight; it's your dig; I'm just helping.

Cope wipes some mud off of him, he sheepishly waves to the waiting men at the bottom of the hill.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

If none of that works of course, we can always try to blast it out.

(MORE)

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Just a few caps, nothing crazy. Was that what you were thinking?

Cope and Wilkin's stand at the edge of the mud pit. Cope slowly nods.

COPE

(no confidence)

Exactly what I would've done.

Wilkins smiles. He slaps Cope on the back with his gloved hand.

WILKINS

I knew I liked you.

Wilkins yells up the hill to the men.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Great! Fitz, Jean, Deaf Billy,
BILLY-- DEAF BILLY! There you are.
Listen when I say your name...
Everyone get as much rope as you
can, we're going in.

Cope stands on the edge of the pit, watching.

The man pull on the rope, up to there chests in mud. Sinking deeper and deeper in.

Wilkins is closest to the fossil, he howls.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

Oh! I felt it move! Just a little--

The men tug, the edge of the fossil crests the mud. At that moment, Wilkins goes UNDER the mud.

Wilkin's hand comes up from the mud, struggling, then back down.

COPE

Get him out!

FITZ

He got tangled!

COPE

Stop pulling!

FITZ

If we stop--

(grunting)

We may never get it out.

The men pull.

A bone breaks the surface of the mud again. Wilkins writhes.

Cope looks to the fossil, rising from the mud, an ancient obelisk dwarfing the men.

Cope looks to Wilkins, he is now under the femur.

COPE
Get him out!

FITZ
If we stop pulling we lose them
both sir!

INT. UNDER THE MUD - CONTINUOUS

Wilkins struggles, surrounded by darkness. He claws up, seeing the base of the femur.

Wilkins reaches for it.

INTERCUT: ABOVE THE MUD

The femur falls backwards into the mud.

UNDER THE MUD

The bone falls, pinning Wilkins. He screams, his mouth instantly FILLS with mud.

THE SURFACE

Wilkins arm disappears under the femur.

COPE
He's pinned down!

Cope grabs the pickaxe and runs out into the mud.

Cope brings the pickaxe over his head. He brings the pickaxe down. He sees the femur in detail.

Cope hesitates, barely scratching the bone.

UNDER THE MUD

Wilkins sees Cope's boot. In a panic, he grabs for it.

THE SURFACE

Cope goes under, enveloped by the brown abyss.

UNDER THE MUD

Cope gets his feet under him; he reaches down, grabbing Wilkins by the arm.

Cope reaches for the passing femur above him.

He grabs a loop of rope holding the bone, Cope holds on for dear life.

Cope reaches for Wilkins three fingered hand, they sink deeper and deeper. Wilkins disappears under the mud.

Cope opens his mouth to breath, his throat fills with mud.

Wilkins descends deeper, his foot touches a ROCK.

Wilkins, with all his might, he pushes against the rock, he goes up, he sees Cope struggling to breath.

One last lunge, Wilkins pushes once more into Cope, breaking free of the mud.

THE SURFACE

Cope heaves, Wilkins THROWS UP mud. Cope looks to the men who stopped pulling.

Wilkins wipes throw up from his mouth.

WILKINS

Next time, we use dynamite.

EXT. EDGE OF MUD FIELD - A BIT LATER

A farmhouse with a creaky WINDMILL spins, Cope and the laborers stand on a dirt road.

Cope goes down the line, shaking the men's hands, he saves Wilkins for last.

COPE

These are quite the find gentlemen.
Thank you!

WILKINS

Absolutely.

Cope steps up into a carriage, he rides down the road away from the men.

Wilkins and his men load the fossils into wooden boxes, nailing them shut.

Wilkins takes the letter he was sending to his wife and slips it into the wooden box.

WILKINS (CONT'D)
Send it down the road.

FITZ
Mr. Cope's office is the other way.

WILKINS
We got a telegram from his office saying to send them to Yale. Look.

Wilkins shows the men the telegram.

FITZ
What kinda nonsense is this?!
Where's your spine Wilkins?

WILKINS
Right here.

Wilkins fishes out a check from his pocket and shows the men.

WILKINS (CONT'D)
That's what the other guy paid!

The men's eyes widen.

WILKINS (CONT'D)
Each.

INT. COPE'S LAB - CONTINUOUS

The room is full of chisels, books, brushes and diagrams. Not a single fossil.

Cope paces around the lab.

Gordon swipes his finger across a dusty shelf.

COPE
The bones should be here by now!

GORDON
You haven't published anything.

COPE
I can't publish, without specimens!

GORDON

Then we publish that story.

COPE

This doesn't make sense! Where did they go?

INT. GEORGE PEABODY'S KITCHEN - LATER

Marsh pours stew into two bowls.

UNCLE GEORGE (O.S.)

Othniel!

Marsh spills a bit of the soup.

INT. GEORGE PEABODY DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Marsh brings the soup to Uncle George's seat at the end of a huge dining room table.

UNCLE GEORGE

I thought we were done with these.

The 7 foot femur from the mud pit sits on the other end of the dining room table.

MARSH

It's a temporary home. It's being relocated.

UNCLE GEORGE

To where?

MARSH

When our museum is finished it can go there. It'll be on display.

UNCLE GEORGE

Do you know what it is?

MARSH

Looks to be a Hadrosaurs femur.

UNCLE GEORGE

So you're not finding anything new? You're just holding it?

MARSH

For science.

UNCLE GEORGE

Lies. The only reason that's there
is Cope wants it.

MARSH

It's a precautionary measure! He
can't be trusted!

Uncle George sips the stew.

UNCLE GEORGE

For science? You've already won! He
has no federal backing. He's
licking his wounds with those swill
mongers in New York. You have real
power! How did you even get this
one?

MARSH

Anonymous telegraph, actually.
Heard he was digging, sent a man to
verify they were digging New Jersey
and re direct it to me paid top
dollar.

UNCLE GEORGE

Oh, so that's my money being spent
here!

MARSH

It always is.

Marsh motions to the huge mansion.

UNCLE GEORGE

I got this far by playing smart.
All I want is for you to do the
same. You don't do that by paying
bone by bone.

Uncle George takes a deep slurp of soup.

UNCLE GEORGE (CONT'D)

Own the land its buried on. Make a
show that this is yours.

Marsh looks at the steam coming off the soup.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

Steam billows out onto the platform. Marsh claps his hands together.

UNCLE GEORGE (V.O.)
If this is your battle, your war,
then win.

A group of very well-dressed, very young men surround him.

Marsh speaks over the sounds of train whistles and the clamor of passers-by.

MARSH
You have once been my students. I
am now trusting you as my partners.

STUDENT
Will we be compensated for the
trip?

MARSH
There will be student credit, yes.
South Dakota is nothing like Yale.
It is as plentiful as fossils as it
is in savagery.

STUDENT
Then why are we digging on the
reservation?

TRAIN CONDUCTOR (O.S.)
All aboard!

MARSH
It is where fossils are.

Marsh hops onto the train. The young men pepper him with questions. He does not respond.

INT. COPE'S LAB - NIGHT

Cope, in his empty lab, scribbles out a letter, he is hunched over his desk.

Gordon looks into the office from outside.

GORDON
Everyone who is someone went home
ages ago Cope. Get some rest.

Gordon looks at the ground, covered in crumpled wads of paper.

COPE
Marsh thinks he got one over on me correct?

GORDON
I think he did.

COPE
Well somehow he KNEW I'd be at that field, he knew! Somehow... There's no way for me to find him so I'm sending a letter back to our old supervisor, see if he can give me anything to go from.

Cope looks back at Gordon, almost pleading.

COPE (CONT'D)
Gordon, how did he know?

GORDON
My friend you're going batty in here.

INT. NEW YORK BAR - NIGHT

Two men bare knuckle box in a makeshift arena of tables. Men wave money around as the two boxers go at it.

Down the bar, we see Gordon and Cope drinking.

Gordon throws his arm around Cope.

GORDON
30,000 copies! One issue! You're a household name Edward Cope.

Two drinks are placed in front of Gordon and Cope.

COPE
I didn't even get the specimen. Marsh wins again.

Cope sips the drink, his face sours.

GORDON
You can't handle good scotch?

COPE
Too firey.

Gordon laughs, almost falling off the stool.

GORDON

The great Cope's got a baby throat?

Cope gets out from under Gordon's arm. Cope looks at the bareknuckle boxing match.

COPE

He must be getting desperate.
Buying out bones? Switching supply
routes? I mean-- that's downright
devilish!

(taking a big gulp of
beer)

I mean... I haven't published a
paper since the Smithsonian! So am
I really even a paleonto--

GORDON

Uh huh. Edward, we're out of the
lab, out of the office. No more
shop talk, let's just have some
fun.

One of the boxers hits the other square in the jaw. He
collapses to the floor. The betting men grow still.

Cope looks over at the boxer, he's bleeding on the ground.

COPE

What can I really do?
(hiccups)

I can't make a living on losing!

Men start to drag the downed boxer out of the arena. The
pushes them back.

Using a table for support the boxer gets up.

GORDON

Sure ya can! Oh! DRINKS UP!

Everyone at the bar raises there glass. The losing boxer
SLIDES clean across the bar and onto the floor.

GORDON (CONT'D)

Listen Cope.

COPE

I am, you're drunk.

GORDON
No, shh, shh not to me. Eavesdrop a
little.

Cope leans in to a conversation behind him.

BAR PATRON (O.S)
Is that the fellow from the Herald.

BAR PATRON 2 (O.S)
Shhh! No that's Marsh. Cope is the
one that got kicked out--

Gordon motions out to the crowd.

GORDON
They want more!

COPE
I'm a joke.
(pause)
Gordon if it's ok with you. I'm
going to crawl into this glass and
never leave.

GORDON
Oh we're not stopping now!

COPE
I can't do this anymore. My only
lead on him is Powell, why would he
respond Gordon? I'm a spot on his
reputation! There's no use.

Cope get's up from the bar stool, he heads for the door.

Gordon drunkenly grabs for him, missing.

One of the boxers throws a wild punch. The other hits his
head on the side of the arena and falls to the ground.

Cope turns around, hearing the thud against the ground.

The crowd groans, they start exchanging money.

The boxer on the ground holds up his hand.

Cope watches intently.

Slowly, the boxer rises from the ground, bracing himself
against the wooden siding of the arena. He stands, supporting
himself on the side of the arena.

Gordon sees Copes fascination, he stumbles over to Cope.

GORDON
They love an underdog.

The boxer slowly lets go of the siding of the arena, he raises his fists, ready to fight again.

The crowds cheer shakes the bar itself!

Gordon looks at Copes reaction.

COPE
I have your next story.

Gordon smiles.

INT. GORDON'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Gordon and Cope pour over documents in the messy office. Framed New York Herald articles of national tragedies line the walls.

Cope rubs his eyes, he walks over to the window and opens it. It's sunrise.

GORDON
(shielding his eyes)
Too much light. Too early.

COPE
So we have nothing on where Marsh is? Not at all?

GORDON
I have access to public records. I can't find anything.

COPE
Then send a message to Yale!

GORDON
The telegram office isn't open yet.

Cope looks out at the city awakening. He looks down at the street.

A MAILMAN lugs a huge sack to the front entrance of Herald.

COPE
Mails here!

GORDON
What?

Cope runs out of the room and down the stairs.

INT. NEW YORK HERALD LOBBY - MOMENTS LATER

Cope is searching around the Mail mans bag as he sorts mail. He keeps giving Cope side eye.

COPE
Incredible!

Cope comes up from the pile with an envelope "WASHINGTON D.C." is on the return address. Cope shows the Mail man the letter, Mail man just politely nods and gets back to work.

Cope tears open the envelope.

POWELL (V.O)
It's good to hear from you after so long! I've read the headlines and am sorry to hear that you two aren't on better terms. I don't know if you've heard but, due to your more public profile --

FLASH CUT:

INT. BOARD ROOM - NIGHT

Powell stands at the head of a large board room, many men sit around the room smoking and listening.

POWELL
All in favor?

The men put their thumbs DOWN. Powell nods.

POWELL (CONT'D)
Well by process of elimination.

BACK TO SCENE

INT. NEW YORK HERALD LOBBY - SAME TIME

Cope reads in shock.

COPE
No...

POWELL (V.O)
I do hope you understand, it was a group vote and not just I.
(MORE)

POWELL (V.O) (CONT'D)

As to where he is now, I give this information tentatively. I hope it can be the first step to rebuilding the bridge between you two.

INT. GORDONS OFFICE - LATER

Cope SLAMS his hand down on Gordon's desk.

COPE

He said the Ogala reservation, South Dakota.

GORDON

A reservation? Oh that's good copy.

COPE

What for? It's dangerous.

GORDON

It's technically it's own nation. If any crimes WERE to be committed on that land such as stealing his findings... Can't be tried in the U.S. Hit him where it hurts. His bones.

Cope is getting riles up, bouncing on his heels.

COPE

I'm going to get whatever he's dug up. Bring it back. He wants to ruin me? For science? Oh no, this is all glory for him. He's lost his way.

Gordon is writing down everything Cope says furiously.

GORDON

We'll get a train ticket, a team--

COPE

No team-- This is just me, grabbing a wagon, grabbing the fossils. Getting out.

GORDON

That's suicide!

COPE

No, that's good copy.

GORDON
 He's learning! Go pack up your
 things, I'll have everything set up
 shortly.

Cope leaves the office.

EXT. NEW YORK HERALD PRINTING ROOM - LATER

Gordon sits next to Finnegan in the back corner of the
 printing room, men walk by with metal boxes of letters.

GORDON
 Did you get all that? I want that
 to Marsh as soon as we can.

FINNEGAN
 Yes Mr. Bennet.

GORDON
 Please Mr. Bennet was my father.

FINNEGAN
 He's been in his office all night.

INT. RIGHT OUTSIDE GORDON SR'S OFFICE - A BIT LATER

Gordon stands with Finnegan, Gordon knocks on the door.

GORDON
 Dad? Everything all right.

No sound. Gordon tries to open the door. Locked.

Finnegan takes a key ring off his belt and unlocks the door.

FINNEGAN
 Oh the smell...

INT. GORDON SENIORS OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Gordon opens the door, Gordon Sr sits, dead and contorted in
 his chair.

FINNEGAN
 Oh my god!

GORDON
 You stubborn old man.

FINNEGAN

We need to stop the presses! We have to call the police.

GORDON

No. Get the morning paper out.

Gordon looks at the husk of his father.

GORDON (CONT'D)

It's what he would've wanted.

Gordon smiles.

GORDON (CONT'D)

My first motion as EDITOR.

INT. FOSSIL TENT - DAY

The sun bleeds through the torn canvas of the fossil filled tent. Marsh arranges bones on a table.

He steps back, taking a look at the whole fossil. It's an incomprehensible mess. Marsh grumbles to himself.

A CACOPHONY of yelling jolts Marsh out of his brooding.

Marsh grabs his hat, throwing open the tent flaps.

EXT. FOSSIL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Before Marsh, kneeling, lies a battered and bound Yale STUDENT, no older than 20. A group of Native Americans surround the boy.

The N.A's part.

CHIEF RED CLOUD (mid 40's) A tired face much older than his years, shoulder length black hair. He walks right up to Marsh.

RED CLOUD

You have broken our one rule Dr. Marsh.

BATTERED YALE BOY

It was an honest mistake Professor.

MARSH

Chief Red Cloud you cannot bludgeon my men for digging in the wrong spot.

RED CLOUD

He did it all on his own. We saw
him pocket this.

Red cloud takes a small nugget of gold from his pocket.

RED CLOUD (CONT'D)

He fell down the hill. We didn't
beat him. If that's what you're
implying.

Marsh leans down to the battered student.

MARSH

(to the student)

We are in there territory. So we
shall follow their laws.

(looking up)

Chief Red Cloud? What do you do to
thieves of sacred property?

RED CLOUD

Usually? Cut off their fingers one
by one--

BATTERED YALE BOY

What?!

RED CLOUD

A good cup of hot oil in the eyes.

The Yale boy looks around at the Native Americans. They nod
somerly.

BATTERED YALE BOY

Dr. Marsh please no!

RED CLOUD

And a mile drag by their ears
behind a buffalo until... Well.

The Yale boy faints, falling at Marsh's feet.

Marsh, Red Cloud and the N.A's laugh.

MARSH

Take him to the doctor to see about
the bruising. Chief, that was your
best yet!

The N.A's wake the Yale boy up and take him deeper into the
bustling camp. Red Cloud and Marsh go into the--

INT. FOSSIL TENT - CONTINUOUS

RED CLOUD

Yes well, I try. In seriousness Dr. Marsh. Nobody is to be on the Black Hills. I let you onto our land because you were here for the bones. They are greedier.

MARSH

Yes, greed is the greatest poison of the white man.

Marsh pours Red Cloud a glass of water. He declines.

RED CLOUD

Do not mistake my humor for levity Marsh. Those hills are sacred to all the Sioux. If they see another white man on that land. They will not only kill your men. You will cause war for my people.

Red cloud looks over the bones on one of the tables.

MARSH

I understand. Once I return, my new position in our government should allow you more protections. I promise.

RED CLOUD

I've heard enough promises from your people. Keep them away from the Black Hills.

Red Cloud walks out of the tent.

Marsh goes back to examining the fossils.

RED CLOUD (O.S) (CONT'D)

A message for you out here doctor.

A folded paper falls through the tent slip.

Marsh walks over, he opens it.

"COPE COMING ALONE"

Marsh rips the message in half. He leans against the side of the tent, sinking to the floor.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - SUNSET

Steam billows onto the train platform. Cope emerges out of the mist, suit case in hand. He adjusts his suit jacket.

Cope looks around. Flat forests as far as the eye can see.

The train pulls out of the station. He's alone.

Cope unfolds a map from his pocket.

COPE'S POV:

Cope's finger follows a route "BOZEMAN TRAIL" to the "OGALA RESERVATION"

EXT. BOZEMAN TRAILHEAD - NIGHT

Cope looks up from the map. A dirt path into the darkness stretches out before him.

Cope takes a confident step down the trail.

A coyote HOWLS in the distance.

COPE
Absolutely not.

Cope instantly reverses course, heading into the warm light of town.

INT. SALOON - NIGHT

Cope sits pensively at the bar. The room is barely alive. A few men play cards at a table. That's about it.

Cope places two pennies down on the bar.

The BARTENDER slips Cope a drink.

Cope takes a swig. It's disgusting.

The Bartender goes for the pennies. Cope swats his hand away.

BARTENDER
Excuse me partner?

COPE
Too fiery.

BARTENDER
Well that's your purgative.

COPE

I'm not paying for this. I barely drank it.

BARTENDER

I can't afford to give folks freebies. Look around.

COPE

That's well and good but--

Bartender reaches under the bar. He comes up with a double barrel shot gun.

BARTENDER

Two pennies, two Barrels. Your choice.

Someone gets up from the poker table.

WILKINS (O.S)

Now that's no way to treat an out-of-towner!

Wilkins black gloved hand rests on Cope's shoulder.

COPE

Wilkins?

WILKINS

One and only. Mr. Cope, you sure make an entrance. Robert, please. He's gotta big brain, It'd be a pain scrubbing that outta your floorboards. Let the man refuse your drink in peace.

Bartender lowers the shotgun. He swipes the pennies.

COPE

What are you doing here?

WILKINS

Sent out by Gordon. Thought you may need a bit of help.

COPE

So you know why I'm here?

WILKINS

'Course!

COPE

Let's go! Under cover of night.

WILKINS

Under cover of night the Sioux will pepper your hide. Let's get you a bed and we'll regroup in the morning. I got a room upstairs.

INT. WILKINS ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Wilkins opens the creaky door to a room with a desk, bed and bucket.

WILKINS

Make yourself comfortable!

Cope puts his luggage down he sits on the bed.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

You get some shut eye. We'll get him tomorrow!

Wilkins grabs a letter from the desks drawer and pockets it.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

I gotta send this one off to the wife, post office closes at sundown.

COPE

Your wife is one special lady then! Do you have a photograph?

WILKINS

Nothing actually. Just keep her in my heart.

Wilkins opens the shutter, orange light covers his face.

COPE

It's incredible really, how fate brings us together again.

WILKINS

Indeed it is.

COPE

An bizarre coincidence!

WILKINS

Oh I gotta get going!

Wilkins runs out of the room, SLAMMING the door shut.

Wilkins opens the door a crack.

WILKINS (CONT'D)
Big day tomorrow.

COPE
See you then!

Wilkins closes the door slowly.

COPE (CONT'D)
A remarkable coincidence.

Cope gets up from where he's sitting, he paces around the room.

The light from the shutter dissipates.

Cope still paces.

EXT. SALOON - SUNRISE

Wilkins helps Cope onto a horse.

Wilkins grabs a large bag, placing it on the back of his horse.

COPE
The reservation is a days ride down
the Bozeman trail.

WILKINS
Wonder what fossils we'll pull up!

COPE
You still writing to your wife
Wilkins?

WILKINS
Every day.

COPE
Fascinating.

The two head off out of town. A wind blows through the plains rustling the tall grasses.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION DIG SITE - DAY

Marsh helps a group of students stack crates into a covered wagon.

Red Cloud rides up on a horse, flanked by Native American guards.

RED CLOUD

You're leaving sooner than expected
Dr. Marsh. Not that we're
complaining.

MARSH

Change of plans Chief Red Cloud.
Too many injured men. Just have to
get back East.

RED CLOUD

Don't lie to me Doctor.

MARSH

I wouldn't think of it.
(pause)
Thank you for your hospitality. If
I don't see you before we leave.
Farewell.

RED CLOUD

Then farewell.

MARSH

Yes indeed.

Red Cloud sees Yale men moving wooden crates still in there
underwear.

RED CLOUD

Did they know you were leaving?

MARSH

Well, a change of plans, I have an
appointment down in Washington.

Yale men are RIPPING up stakes, they claw canvas off of tent
frames.

Red Cloud looks Marsh up and down. Marsh shrugs.

Fossils jut out from the half excavated rock. Red Cloud
points to them.

RED CLOUD

You came to take these from us. Why
leave any?

MARSH

We'll find more. Rest assured.

RED CLOUD

I sense you're not just leaving.
You're running.

MARSH

"You sense" that superstition may
work on my men, Not I.

RED CLOUD

You're sweating through your shirt.

Marsh did do that.

MARSH

We're leaving tonight.

EXT. FOREST OVERLOOK - NIGHT

Cope and Wilkins sit at a campfire overlooking Marsh's camp.
Cope looks out over the tents below, pondering.

Wilkins writes by the light of the fire.

Cope sees the covered wagon loaded with fossils. ARMED guards
stand beside it.

WILKINS

What's the plan Mr. Cope?

COPE

Haven't figured that out yet. That
was always Marsh's specialty.

WILKINS

He's a thinking man...

Wilkins finishes writing. He takes out an envelope.

COPE

Your wife Wilkins. What's her name?

Cope turns around, he walks towards the sitting Wilkins.

WILKINS

Judy Wilkins.

COPE

What does she do?

With every question Cope gets closer.

WILKINS

Seamstress.

COPE

Where?

WILKINS

Saratoga.

COPE

Is she faithful?

WILKINS

Something the matter Mr. Cope?

Wilkins get's up, Cope at his chest level. OOPS! Wilkin's dropped the letter in the fire.

Cope reaches into the fire, his hand BURNS.

Cope pulls up the smoldering envelope.

"Yale UNIVERSITY" is barely legible, the envelope blows away in Cope's burned hand.

Cope looks up. Wilkins points a gun at Cope's chest.

WILKINS (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry about this.

COPE

Enough! Every time a gun's in my face it's because of him! Every time I've teetered on the precipice of death it's Marsh! "Oh he's brilliant" He risks nothing! There is no losing for him!

WILKINS

I don't want this to get ugly Mr. Cope. I'll just take you back to town. Get on a train back to New York.

COPE

Ugly? We're past ugly Wilkins. This is grotesque! This is petty and dirty. This is war.

Cope grabs the end of the revolver. With his other hand he swipes the embers from the letters across Wilkins face.

COPE (CONT'D)

How much is he paying you? Enough to keep humanity in the dark about where they came from? How much?!

BAM! A chunk of Cope's palm is gone. Cope screams. A mix of primal fear and rage.

Cope grabs a log from the fire, it SIZZLES on contact with his shot hand, cauterizing the wound.

He brings the wooden spike down on Wilkins head.

Wilkins stumbles. He aims the gun right at Cope's head.

Cope swats it away with the log.

The two men struggle, their shadows silhouetted against a rock by the campfire light, Cope hits Wilkins in the stomach with his club.

Wilkins falls to the ground.

Cope stands alone, He pants. He looks down, his shirt is covered in blood.

COPE (CONT'D)
Oh god...

Cope checks if Wilkins is still breathing, very faintly.

COPE (CONT'D)
I'm so, so sorry.

Cope mounts Wilkins horse.

COPE (CONT'D)
It's for science Wilkins

EXT. BOZEMAN TRAIL - CONTINUOUS

Cope sees in the distance a covered wagon FULL of wooden crates.

Cope dismounts the horse, he slowly makes his way to the back of the wagon.

Cope looks inside, he sees a HUGE dinosaur footprint imprinted in rock. It sits on top of a box.

GUARD 1 (O.S)
Just check if we left anything.

Cope hears footsteps coming around the wagon. He climbs into the back and opens a large crate and gets in it.

INT. CRATE - CONTINUOUS

Cope is in total darkness.

GUARD 1 (O.S)
Yup, everything's in order.

Cope waits for the footsteps to disappear. He grabs the matchbook from his pocket and LIGHTS it.

For a moment, we see Cope is surrounded by DYNAMITE, the flame of his match DANGEROUSLY close to a fuse.

Cope, in a panic, blows out the match.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION GATE - SOME TIME LATER

The covered wagon is parked next to a half finished tent.

Cope peeks out the top of his crate. He is surrounded by Tipi's and half taken down tents.

Cope runs around to the front of the wagon.

He gets on the front and whips the reigns.

The wagon heads off deeper into the camp.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION - NIGHT

Red Cloud walks around the village smoking his pipe.

He watches Cope gallops towards the Black Hills.

Red Cloud shakes his head. He puts the pipe away.

RED CLOUD
I told them.

Red cloud walks into his Tipi. He comes out with a rifle.

RED CLOUD (CONT'D)
The greed of some people.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION DIG SITE - NIGHT

Cope looks at the mountain of rock. A few fossils stick out the stone.

Cope smiles, he unloads the dynamite from the wagon.

INT. FOSSIL TENT - NIGHT

Marsh is awoken from his slumber by the sound of horses gallop up to his tent.

MARSH

It's the middle of the night!

Marsh springs from bed, he grabs a rock hammer off his desk. Marsh storms to the tent flap, he THROWS it open.

EXT. FOSSIL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Red Cloud and his men brandish rifles, they are all mounted.

RED CLOUD

One of your men is making a mad dash for the Black Hills.

MARSH

What?

RED CLOUD

He just went by through camp!

MARSH

Who? Describe him!

RED CLOUD

Short, big hat, black gloves--

MARSH

Wilkins? He's off site he's deal with--

RED CLOUD

Who?

Marsh steadying himself against a support beam of his tent.

MARSH

When he rode. Did he hold the reins in a fist.

RED CLOUD

I'm sorry?

MARSH

In a fist! His fingers, all his fingers around the reins! Were they in a fist or did his fingers stick up?

RED CLOUD

A fist.

MARSH

Arm yourselves.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION DIG SITE - NIGHT

Cope finishes twisting both wires onto the BLASTING MACHINE.
The fuse runs back to the dig site.

Dynamite sits nestled next to partially excavated bone.

Cope looks into the wagon. Full to bursting with fossils.

In the distance, Marsh rides along side Red Cloud and his men.

Over the cacophony of hooves Marsh's voice booms.

MARSH

Cope you lobotomite, show yourself!

Cope stands up on the seat of the wagon. He holds the blasting machine.

MARSH (CONT'D)

You believe a simple incendiary device can scare us? You're lost man! Your absurdity careens towards-

-

RED CLOUD

No, no pontificating, no speeches.
Men!

The men point to the rifles at Cope. Cope waves around the blasting machine.

COPE

Now I don't know most of you, BUT
You are going to let me go!

The men look to Red Cloud.

MARSH

Cope. Put the plunger down and get down from there.

Marsh's horse canters forward a bit. Cope holds the plunger of the machine.

COPE

No. You took everything from me.
You take pleasure in it. Say it's
all for the good of science.

MARSH

It is...

COPE

It is not! You don't discredit your
colleagues in front of the
president "for science." You don't
steal from me "for science." I
almost died Marsh, clearly this
isn't for science for you.

MARSH

That is not--

COPE

Admit it!

Cope tightens his grip on the blasting machine.

Marsh looks up to the full moon in the sky.

UNCLE GEORGE (V.O.)

If this is your battle, your war,
then win.

Marsh looks Cope in the eye. The two men SINK into the ground
a bit, they don't notice this.

MARSH

You're right Cope. A scientist
would never stoop this low.

Cope SLAMS down the blasting machine. KA-BLAM! A FLASH OF
YELLOW LIGHT! DEBRIS AND DUST GO EVERYWHERE.

A bit of fossil BURIES itself under Marsh's knee cap, popping
the bone, barely held by Marsh's sinew.

Marsh falls to the ground on the knee. A CRACK!

The stone CRUNCHES deeper into Marsh's leg.

MARSH (CONT'D)

AHHH!

The horses spook. Red Cloud and his men cover their mouths as
the cloud of dust consumes them.

Red Cloud gets off his horse. He and his men drag the screaming Marsh away. Red Cloud covers Marsh's mouth.

RED CLOUD
Don't breath it in!

Cope rides off through the dust, barely controlling the horse.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION - CONTINUOUS

Cope is breathing quickly. He coughs into his hand. Cope looks down. Blood.

EXT. OGALA RESERVATION GATE - CONTINUOUS

The wagon barrels through the camp!

RED CLOUD (O.S)
Bring him down! Shoot him!

From all sides bullets fly though the canvas of the wagon.

Cope snaps the reigns again. The horse is terrified.

Cope laughs/coughs his way down the dirt trail.

CUT TO BLACK.

SUPER: 15 YEARS LATER.

SUPER: PART 3, EXTINCTION

EXT. SMITHSONIAN - DAY

Marsh walks with a cane to a carriage in front of the building. The sounds of a brace CLINK under his clothes.

Marsh is bald and gray now (65).

Marsh looks out at the National Mall. The Washington monument is three quarters of the way done.

Marsh opens the door to the carriage. He tries to get his bum leg up on the step.

DRIVER, early 20's, hops off the front of the carriage.

DRIVER
Doctor Marsh, let me help you.

MARSH

I'm fine!

Marsh tries again. He can barely bend his leg.

DRIVER

Doctor please.

MARSH

Fine I said! That mean something different to you?

Marsh struggles. It's like watching a flipped turtle.

DRIVER

Doctor Marsh, the senator isn't known for his patience.

Marsh looks the driver up and down.

Marsh relents. Driver helps him into--

INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

Marsh watches Driver close the door. Marsh looks down at his leg.

INT. PRINT ROOM - DAY

Cope holds a box of personal affects. He walks past rows of type setters.

Cope is rail thin, his mustache and beard wispy white. He looks sick in the eyes.

Gordon on the other hand, has aged quite gracefully.

GORDON

Full time at Yale!

COPE

No more adjunct for me. Accommodations, an office, the works.

COPE (CONT'D)

Since Marsh is floundering at the Smithsonian. Well they needed someone to fill the position.

GORDON
Even after all you did... Still
coming out on top.

COPE
Well the papers seem to have
forgotten some of the less pleasing
details.

GORDON
It's been a pleasure.

Cope walks past him through the ware house door.

EXT. DOCKS - CONTINUOUS

Gulls caw above Cope. The Hudson river stretches out behind
him.

GORDON
You can telegram whenever you need
something!

Cope doesn't look back but answers.

COPE
I can.

GORDON
You're good copy!

COPE
I know.

Gordon keeps talking, we can't hear him. Cope walks away
pleased.

INT. YALE LECTURE HALL - DAY

Cope stands in front of a room of students. He writes on a
very full chalkboard.

On each students desk lies a fossils of one kind or another.

COPE
Now these are from my personal
collection so let's be careful.
Take a good look. This is all
that's left of us we pass. Our
loves or hate. Gone. Unless it can
somehow pierce the bone.

(MORE)

COPE (CONT'D)

Fossils left by dinosauria or other creatures come in two forms. Fossils like you have before you and imprints. The outline of a creature that was preserved, a footprint, trail--

Cope enters a coughing fit.

STUDENT

Are you alright Professor Cope?

Cope leans against the desk. His coughs echo through the lecture hall. Students look at each other.

It's a wet, retching cough.

He pounds his chest. Getting the last of it out.

COPE

My apologies. Where were we?

INT. SENATORS OFFICE - DAY

Marsh sits in the room with the flag on the wall. Across from him SENATOR PETERS. Late 50's. He looks over a large piece of paper.

Marsh lurches up from the chair. He point at the bottom of the paper.

SENATOR PETERS

"Persons without proper accreditation or titles must turn all dinosauria or fossils of any kind over the federal authorities upon request." What am I passing this for?

MARSH

Just want it on the books in case of fringe cases. Private collectors, hoaxers. You know.

SENATOR PETERS

I see...

MARSH

Good.

Marsh grabs his cane. Helping himself up. He limps out of the office.

MARSH (CONT'D)
Your compensation will be delivered
discreetly.

SUPER: 4 MONTHS LATER

INT. COPE'S YALE OFFICE - DAY

Cope sits in his office surrounded by fossils. A knock at the door.

COPE
Come in.

COPE (CONT'D)
Dean!

DEAN
Mr. Cope... I just wanted to give
you fair warning. Due to new
regulations we'll have to move your
fossils to another location.

COPE
Regulation?

DEAN
All privately held fossil
collections are to be moved to
government sanctioned sites.

COPE
What? You're Yale!

DEAN
We're a private institution.

COPE
So?

DEAN
Someone from the Smithsonian is
coming up to see the move
personally.

COPE
So a law was signed to move MY
fossils to a government approved
sight?

DEAN
It's the law Cope. You'll still be
able to access them.

COPE
Where are they being moved?

EXT. PEABODY MANSION - DAY

Cope watches as his fossils are moved in crates into the dilapidated home.

Dean holds a clipboard, looking into the crates.

COPE
A government sanctioned spot was
Marsh's childhood home?

DEAN
It's the law sir.

COPE
It's Marsh.

INT. SMITHSONIAN GEOLOGY LAB - NIGHT

Marsh limps into the Geology lab. The room is huge but feels small. Piled up to the ceiling are displayed fossils. The geologists barely have anywhere to work.

Marsh motions in two movers carrying another giant box.

MARSH
Take them all out. These are moving
to my private collection.

MOVER
Sorry sir, these are being moved to
the Smithsonian archives. New
regulations just passed. Sorry.

INT. YALE PRESIDENTS OFFICE - DAY

Cope sits in front of NOAH PORTER, he's gone gray, looks like he's never laughed, he polishes a name plate with his breath.

He sits it down on the desk facing Cope.

"REV. NOAH PORTER III, PRESIDENT"

COPE
He get's the government to move my
fossils to his home. This is
targeted harassment!

REVEREND PORTER
He's a tenured professor, you just
got here Dr. Cope.

COPE
Doctor?

REVEREND PORTER
Well yes, every professor has a
doctorate at Yale.

Cope looks to see if the doors closed.

COPE
(whispering)
Reverend, I don't have a doctorate.

REVEREND PORTER
Of course you do. For teaching here
we gave you an honorary one in
paleontology for our records.

COPE
You can do that?

REVEREND PORTER
We're Yale Cope.

Porter rises from behind his gargantuan desk. He pours himself
a drink.

REVEREND PORTER (CONT'D)
We can do anything.

COPE
So I have an honorary doctorate?

REVEREND PORTER
It's a title, but it doesn't mean
anything outside of this
institution. Same as your
predecessor.

COPE
Professor Marsh has an honorary
doctorate?

REVEREND PORTER
His uncle was a very generous man.
God rest his soul.

COPE
Yes I can see that. Thank you
Reverend.

Cope puts out his hand for a shake. He spasms. Coughing up a lung.

REVEREND PORTER
Are you ok doctor?

COPE
Better than ever!

INT. HERALD OFFICES - DAY

The door reads: "GORDON BENNET JR. CHIEF EDITOR"

Cope practically dances in front of Gordons desk.

Gordon sits bemused but annoyed.

GORDON
So he's a fraud?

COPE
The whole time! "Oh Dr. Marsh"
"Please make way for Dr. Marsh"
It's honorary! Which means--

GORDON
He can't keep the fossils? So?
Cope, let it rest. You're at Yale,
you won! Why are you dragging this
up again?

COPE
He's toying with me.

GORDON
He's making a smart financial move.

COPE
But now he's losing all of his
fossils because we both have
honorary doctorates! Don't you see?

Gordon looks up from his desk at Cope. Gordon's not impressed.

COPE (CONT'D)
He shot himself in the foot trying
to shoot me in the foot!

Cope waves around the paper. We see the words "ESTATE SALE."

COPE (CONT'D)

He's going to sell them before the government can have them. Pathetic right? This is front page stuff!

GORDON

Well. Not anymore.

COPE

What do you mean? This is delicious irony.

GORDON

It's old hat. It's bad print. I'll publish it somewhere in the back, for old times sake but that's all.

COPE

That'll pay nothing! I'm going to buy the fossils at the auction! I need that money.

GORDON

You want me to buy Marsh's garbage for what? To be repossessed by the government in a month? What kind of investment is that?

COPE

They're not garbage! They're history! It's for science!

GORDON

They're garbage Cope! Always were, they were a fad that America played with and broke like a toy on Christmas!

COPE

Its good copy...

GORDON

I have a paper to run Cope. Don't embarrass yourself.

Cope doesn't budge.

GORDON (CONT'D)

I'm not giving you my money. You are both crazy. You deserve each other! Get out.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- Cope walks out of "QUAKER NATIONAL BANK."
- Cope dictates to someone operating a telegraph
- We follow wires from New York, the B.G whizzed past, the wires go past the white house, past the capitol building, into the Smithsonian!
- Marsh sits in an auditorium. His fossils sit on the stage.
- An AUCTIONEER, motions to a fossil on stage.

INT. SMITHSONIAN AUDITORIUM - DAY

The auditorium is barely full. Cope sits in the back, in shadow.

Cope lifts his hand up.

AUCTIONEER

Another sold to the gentlemen in the backrow. Leave some for the rest of us.

The small audience politely laughs.

Marsh turns around, he can't see Cope.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Next up.

Another fossil gets wheeled out.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

This was found in the Como bluffs of Wyoming. Starting the bidding at 200. 200! Do I hear 300?

Auctioneer points around the room.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

400? Do I hear 450? 450, going once, twice, sold to the same gentleman in the back.

Marsh looks back into the shadows of the auditorium, dumbfounded. Marsh grabs his cane. He slowly gets up.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)

Now this next one is our final piece, Some say Dr. Marsh's career started with it.

The Elasmosaurus Skull is wheeled onto the stage.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
We'll start the bidding at 650.

Marsh hobbles through the audience, using the seats to hold himself up.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
Do I hear 700?

Cope in the shadow raises his hand.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
700! Do I hear 750?

Marsh stumbles down Cope's aisle.

AUCTIONEER (CONT'D)
800! Do I hear 850?

Cope raises his hand again. Marsh now stands over Cope.

AUCTIONEER (O.S) (CONT'D)
Sold to the gentleman in the
backrow!

EXT. PEABODY MANSION - DAY

Cope holds a clipboard. He walks onto the porch of the mansion.

COPE
Well everything's here! I'll have
the men move it tomorrow.

The porch is covered in loose and boxed fossils.

Cope coughs into his hand. He won't stop.

Marsh uses the wall and his cane for support. He gets to the door frame.

Marsh looks the coughing Cope up and down.

MARSH
Sit down.

COPE
I'm fine.

MARSH
I'll get you some water.

Cope sits down in a rocking chair. Marsh limps forward to a water pump on the lawn.

Cope looks out at the grey sky. No leaves on the trees. The mansions lawn full of crab grass and weeds.

Marsh pumps, water sputters out of the spigot into a cup.

COPE
You really kept this place
together.

Marsh looks at Cope.

Marsh pours the cup on the lawn.

Marsh hobbles back, he sits in a rocking chair next to Cope.

They are surrounded by fossils.

MARSH
It's just petty what you're doing.

COPE
Don't pass bills that take away my
bones.

MARSH
It was for science!

COPE
Who else does that law apply to?
That was you, twisting the knife!
Just to get me one more time.

The two men sink, slowly down. The ground consuming them.
They don't notice.

COPE (CONT'D)
After the stealing and lies you
spread. You're obsessed!

MARSH
You could've come back from that.

COPE
I did.

MARSH
That stupid paper? It was hogwash,
all of it!

COPE

I will be remembered as champion of
the people.

MARSH

You'll be remembered as an ankle
biter who ruined my life.

The ground has covered there legs.

COPE

How? After all we did for science?!

MARSH

What did you do? I spent a lifetime
cleaning up after you! You took
away everything from me!

COPE

Same to you!

Cope spits at the ground, which at this point is up to his
neck.

The ground is up to there noses. Cope and Marsh look at each
other. They sink beneath the ground.

The air is still. Only the piles and piles of bones remain.

THE END.

