

THE VIOLENCE OF WINE



Screenplay by David M. O'Neill

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"When the only justice left is the kind, you take..."

Genre: Abduction Thriller – Present Day – Native Lands - Cartels

Writer/Director: David M. O'Neill

Producers: Shawn Kasinger – Native Nations, Grant Bradley – Aristofilms

Comparables: Hell or High Water, Sicario, The Missing

Audience: Adult 18–49, interested in socially conscious crime dramas, high-intensity thrillers, and Native storytelling.



Logline: When a mixed Crow teenager vanishes into cartel hands, her father, ex-U.S. Army sniper, and battle-hardened Federal agent is forced to defy impenetrable legal jurisdictions where Native myths collide with cartel violence.

Market: "The Missing meets Sicario — set in the jurisdictional dead zone of the Crow Reservation Central Montana, where hidden cartel terror meets the mythic weight of Native history."



SYNOPSIS

When fifteen-year-old Tyler Featherchild Aarons, daughter of a white FBI agent and of a Crow mother, sneaks out to a hidden rave party on the reservation, she vanishes into the violent machinery of an unsuspecting cartel pipeline which cuts through Central Montana. Days later, three of her friends are pulled out from the Bighorn River.

Tyler, unknown whether dead or alive is nowhere to be found remains or otherwise.

David Aarons, Tyler's father, a highly decorated U.S. Army sniper and seasoned Chicago FBI Investigator married into the Crow people through Tyler's mother, Debra Yellowhawk. Grief ruptures the marriage as Tyler is considered gone. Debra retreats inward and turns back toward her people while David churns with one burning, single obsession — to find his daughter or that of her remains and to bring her home.

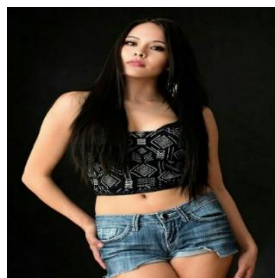
While on temporary administrative leave from the Bureau for several forceful arrests, Aarons travels back to Central Montana to pursue his daughter's cold case and finds himself buried through a confounding maze of guarded, secret, byzantine reservation politics. He then learns a cartel presence has nested like a cancer inside the scant legal Crow jurisdiction and is the source of both drug export and human trafficking. His search and recovery mission is slowed by the blends of silence, ambiguity, generational trauma, suspicion, and pride - a Crow Nation within a nation that can offer little help.

With all options exhausted, David embraces his combat training along with a military style suicide search and destroy task the cartels could never expect, targeting both product and supply routes - the kind of attacks where there's no going back once you begin; the kind that may reunite Aarons with his daughter, his wife, and the sovereign Crow ... or, forever mark him and all family marked targets of the Sinaloa.

Tyler Yellowhawk Aarons



Levi Mashone



Emily Hannigan



Karen Longee

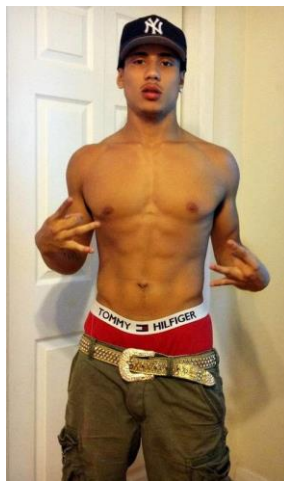


"For they eat the bread of wickedness and drink the wine of violence" Proverbs 4:17.

Abducted at a reservation teen barn rave by the cartel's youthful lieutenants, an innocent night out is now much more for the unsuspecting adolescent and her friends leading to a harrowing recovery mission straddling cartel trafficking activity, its violent rank & file, all while extending deep inside the mystical Crow Reservation Territory with little or no police oversight.



SEBAS



TONO



ALEXANDRO



Reservation Raves



Cartel Infiltration

Central Montana



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DRUG AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING ROUTES



KEY CHARACTERS

- **David Aarons** – FBI specialist; estranged father whose grief turns into obsession.



- **Debra Featherchild** – Tyler's mother, estranged wife, Crow tribal member; a spiritual counterpoint to David's vengeance, later becomes an active associate to her husband's retaliation and impossible mission.



- **Capuchin Priest** – brother to Debra Featherchild, moral compass, and reluctant ally. Shares with David secrets of the res and plays his part in a bold escape away from the res.



- **Dog Soldiers** – Native warriors embodying ancestral justice, and long-awaited vengeance.



- **Barbara Fasteagle - Newspaper Reporter** – exposes the systemic failures surrounding Native disappearances.



DIRECTOR'S VISION

The title draws from the cruel legacy of alcohol — first used by outsiders to pacify, poison, and disempower Native nations. On the Crow Reservation, “wine” becomes a metaphor for exploitation in all its modern forms: drugs, cartels, and the systemic violence inflicted both from within and without.

The phrase frames the story as not just a crime thriller, but as a generational wound — the unsuspected violence that enters a people disguised as pleasure, profit, or escape.

The Violence of Wine offers a stunning, visual cinematic backdrop of Central Montana along with a lesser-known narrative tale of reservation-cartel infiltration. Told through an abduction thriller structure, VOW brings together varying and conflicting worlds that have rarely been explored in a market-familiar formula. Climaxing in a completely unexpected way, it becomes the resolve of the Crow and surrounding Native traditions who hand the cartel its own long-awaited justice.

Films like, *Hell or High Water*, *The Rider*, *No Country for Old Men* come to mind.

The juxtaposition of the narrative's colliding opposites and the visceral quality of these extremes are where the dramatic accounts and visual powers are forged, i.e., an abducted teen, possibly trafficked, three other dead friends, and where in a land we learn the Crow Reservation is once-more subverted by outsiders, this time pernicious, cartel operators who add to a world of jarring, confusing, oblique complexities, exclusive, compromised-characters, inside untold and uncharted conflicts.

Visually, wide-open landscapes contrast with intimate handheld moments, creating a film that breathes both in rhythm and pacing of reservation life contrasting with its opposing forces, i.e., cartel members in a mix with the Native Crow, Crow youth pulled between both traditional and encroaching worlds, warpaint verses western teen make-up kits, lost languages and ancient ways of life which strain against time to be relevant.

My approach with the camera will be generally an unobtrusive one, a voyeur always on the hunt for the visceral, sweeping Montana vistas, authentic Native settings, and juxtapositional storytelling led by contrasting forces inclusive of its human intimacy.

Mood will reflect natural light, muted palette, moments of poetic stillness before violent eruptions.

The score will have the cinematic size as a James Horner yet nuanced throughout with Native influences and specifically Native instruments. As worlds collide from their various places, the score will reflect and accompany from those places, i.e., Southern Mexican for the cartel, the blend of Crow rappers for the kids on the Res, climaxing in their near-death mercenary mission and the overpowering attack of the Cheyenne Dog Soldiers.



David M. O'Neill

Visual Style Notes Include:

Tone/Palette: Warm prairie colors — ochres, deep greens, muted browns, soft golden light.

Symbolism: Wine as a motif of violence/temptation; Cartel's operations intersecting sacred land.

Fonts/Style: Handwritten title for authenticity (like Debra Featherchild's journal), clean sans serif for body.

Music:

Opening: Ethereal Native instrumentation with subtle string undertones (e.g., flute, water drum)

Tension/Cartel: Low, driving percussion with minor key violin.

Emotional beats: Sparse piano, cello, or acoustic guitar layered with ambient prairie soundscapes

Short curated concepts for tone, pacing, and sound texture:

“Elegy for the Arctic” – Ludovico Einaudi (*for spiritual grief*)

“The Beast” – Jóhann Jóhannsson (*Sicario*) (*for tension and dread*)

“The Rider” – Nathan Halpern (*for prairie melancholy*)

“Traditional Crow Nation drumming & flute motifs (*for authenticity*)

“Blood and Wine” – original motif suggestion combining low strings + Native percussion

Themes & Tone:

Family & Loyalty – the bond between father and daughter, fractured yet unbreakable.

Tradition vs. Modernity – the Crow Nation's spiritual identity against the modern world's corruption.

Loss & Redemption – facing grief, reclaiming purpose.

Justice & Violence – the blurred line between vengeance and salvation.

The Sacred & The Profane – holy land violated by modern evil.

Tone - visceral, grounded, and cinematic — evoking *The Missing* and *Sicario* with spiritual depth.



SCREENPLAY STRUCTURE

Act 1:

Tyler Featherchild Aarons, a teenager on the Crow Reservation, is abducted by cartel recruiters. The law is ineffective.

Act 2:

Her father, David Aarons, a former FBI specialist, launches a methodical campaign to dismantle the cartel's operations while navigating tribal resistance and personal grief in search of the remains of his daughter.

Act 3: The cartel is drawn out by his sabotage of supply lines, exposing cartel leadership, bringing all forces to a head.

Act 4: In a violent showdown, the Cartel Army closes in on Aarons when wife Debra Yellowhawk joins his side in a joint fatal mission culminating in a violent, strategic showdown on sacred land where the enigmatic, once powerful Dog Soldiers appear from the foggy mists and lay way waste to the unsuspecting cartel freeing the couple's escape.

Themes:

Family, loyalty, justice vs. law, Native traditions, violence, loss, human trafficking.

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CHARACTER MAPS AND FUNCTIONS

Character	Description	Function
David Aarons	FBI Specialist, white man married into Crow Nation	Empathetic, skilled, driven by family, morally complex
Debra Featherchild	Ex-wife, Crow tribal member	Strained family dynamics, connected to traditions, joins in vengeance.
Tyler Featherchild	Missing daughter	Catalyst for story, humanizes stakes
Capuchin Priest	Moral compass, provides spiritual grounding	Symbolic, assists investigation
Dog Soldiers	Tribal warriors assisting David	Honor-bound, tactical expertise, a score to settle.
Newspaper Reporter	Chronicles events, exposes corruption	Adds external tension and moral reflection

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Stakes & Social Relevance:

Epidemic of missing Indigenous youth.

Drug trafficking & forced labor on Native lands.

Familial & tribal justice vs. U.S. law.

Personal & moral stakes for David and Debra.

Societal stakes for communities impacted by cartel operations.



Why Now:

Current relevance: Indigenous rights, missing persons crisis, U.S.–Mexico cartel impact.

Global audience appeal through visceral crime narrative and universal themes of family & justice.



BLACKLIST COVERAGE AND AWARDS:



THE VIOLENCE OF WINE is an engaging crime thriller that blends elements of the crime and psychological thriller genres into a commercially-accessible story. The story is told through the eyes of DAVID AARONS, who is desperate to unravel the investigation of his missing daughter, all while a meth ring in which a cartel has been using Native-American land for their operations. This is what makes this story absolutely, remarkable: there are macro and micro stakes to the A and B plots, which deal with real-world issues such as human trafficking, addiction, forced labor, and identity.

David's pursuit to find his daughter gives his story wonderful drive, while almost making him remarkably empathetic and sympathetic. Not only this, but the reasoning for his POV exists on an organic level, which allows for organic dialogue that would otherwise feel too much like exposition. The story has urgency without the need for a literal ticking clock, as David's desperation compounds, which exhibits the writer's maturity as a storyteller. There is plenty of octane coursing through the veins of the script, which oscillates with some tension-fraught scenes, as it crescendos into a hellacious third act, yet pays off in spades by the resolution.





David M. O'Neill
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THE VIOLENCE OF WINE confronts a national epidemic through the lens of a father's heartbreak and courage. It is both an urgent thriller and a poetic meditation on land, loss, and justice.



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