

Fort Hell
by
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FADE IN:

EXT. NORTH AMERICAN CONTINENT - DAY

Rolling plains viewed from above, moving towards hills near a lake.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
(Native American
language -
subtitles in English)
Our ancestors existed peacefully
for centuries. At one with both
nature and the land...

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Primitive teepees clustered around a large fire. Native Indians of all ages and gender.

SUPER - THE AREA THAT WILL BECOME KANSAS

SUPER - MID 17TH CENTURY

NARRATOR (V.O.)
Until the first coming of the
white man...

The CHIEF of the tribe stands near the fire, supervises the cutting up and cooking of buffalo meat. Suddenly, riders gallop into the village, leap from their mounts.

As one speaks urgently to the Chief, gesturing out to the plains, an old man, a SHAMAN, is helped from one of the horses. He wears strange objects around his neck, carries a gnarled staff.

He limps towards the Chief, and bows his head in greeting.

CHIEF
Where have you traveled from,
stranger? My warriors tell me
they found you wandering. Are you
a spy for the pale skinned ones,
who are two days march from us?

MURMURS from the tribe.

SHAMAN

No, great leader of men. I have come from lands to the south, towards the sunrise. From a land where the great water meets the sand. And where swamp makes the very ground damp.

(beat)

But these white skins come from due south. I am no friend of theirs. Rather, I come to help you repel them.

He pauses, looks about at the villagers.

SHAMAN

But we must make plans with haste...for they are only one days march from here.

The crowd gets LOUDER, minor panic that can spread fast. The Chief knows this. He speaks calmly, without fear.

CHIEF

We will fight them. We are proud warriors.

SHAMAN

I do not doubt the courage and fighting skills of you and your tribe, great bull but...

He pauses, looks out to the plains, at the unseen approaching enemy.

SHAMAN

They wear robes of steel that protect them from lance and arrow. They carry weapons that kill from afar.

More crowd uneasiness.

CHIEF

Maybe we can meet them in peace. Trade with them.

SHAMAN

Maybe, yes, maybe...but I have seen the lust these white man have for gold, for the minerals that lie beneath our lands. They believe there is an entire city of gold in this area. Quivira they call it.

(MORE)

SHAMAN (CONT'D)

(beat)

They will not bargain with you,
mighty one. They will simply take
what they desire.

The tribe is in UPROAR now. The Chief looks at his Council.
They confer. Several shrug their shoulders... 'what can we
do'?

A young WARRIOR steps forward.

WARRIOR

O great chief! How do we know
this stranger speaks the truth?
How can we trust him?

SHAMAN

Well said, young one. Trust
nobody! A good philosophy on life!
But I do not lie and I do not
seek to deceive you. I have come
to help you and I bear powerful
magic.

CHIEF

Why do you seek to help us? Are
you after positions of power?
Maybe you are drawn by the bright
metal we dig for.

SHAMAN

No, wise bull. I desire no reward.
I have seen the pain these white
man called spaniards cause in my
lands. I would not wish their
cruel ways on any of my brothers.

(beat)

You may keep me captive until
they arrive, even slay me now.
But I swear on all the gods blood
that I am your only hope.

He sits on the ground, calmly watches as the Chief
consults with the elders.

At last...

CHIEF

Very well. We will listen to your
guidance.

SHAMAN

You and your council are indeed
wise, chief. However, you must
know that my magic requires many
of your finest warriors.

CHIEF

You are free to take some. But I do not see how that will help us. You stated the enemy approaching will overwhelm even our bravest men.

SHAMAN

True, lord. But I did not say I would be using your finest...living warriors.

A BUZZ amongst the tribe. the chief looks puzzled. The shaman limps to him, whispers in his ear for long moments. The Chief GASPS, looks mortified.

CHIEF

My people will not be happy.

SHAMAN

I know, courageous leader. But they must assist in my endeavour. Or else all your tribe will be dead by morning.

The Chief stares at the ground, eyes closed. Finally he looks up and nods.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The Spanish SOLDIERS emerge from the mist. The village is silent, totally deserted, but the fire burns strongly.

The Spanish COMMANDANT raises a gloved hand. Halt...

EXT. HILLS - NIGHT

The entire tribe watches, hidden amongst the rocks. Infant mouths are covered by anxious parent's hands.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The party of soldiers continue through the village, towards the valley beyond.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
The Spanish soldiers laughed,
confident in their show of power.
They knew the tribe watched but
it mattered not...

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The soldiers dismount, prepare to enter the mine. Guards are left at the entrance. Armed, torches lit, the party makes their way into the darkness.

INT. CAVERNS - NIGHT

The soldiers move along dark tunnels, hewn into the very rock. Armor SCRAPES along the walls. The PADRE walks with the Commandant, carrying a large crucifix.

PADRE
(in Spanish, with subtitles)
Who knows what pagan filth lies
within? Yet, The Lord God in his
wisdom will protect us from evil.

COMMANDANT
And he will give us strength to
wield our weapons on our foes.

They continue on, deeper into the caves.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
But their God could only watch
as the shaman summoned a force
unimaginable...

INT. CHAMBER - NIGHT

The soldiers enter a large chamber, which is the minehead. Torchlight reveals the shaman standing amongst biers. These hold dead Indian warriors, wrapped in tribal blankets.

Scattered about the cavern are gold nuggets...hundreds, possibly thousands of them. Some of the soldiers CRY out in Spanish upon seeing the treasures.

The Commandant steps forward, raises his saber. The soldiers quickly get back into military mode. The shaman whispers an invocation, his voice RISING with each word.

Suddenly there's movement behind him. A stirring...

POV - BEHIND THE SHAMAN:

The Commandant's eyes freeze in horror. The Padre raises the crucifix. Around them, the soldiers begin to panic. SHOTS ring out, the air fills with flame and smoke.

The Padre takes a torch from a soldier. Something lunges at him, teeth sink into his arm. He SCREAMS in pain, turns and flees.

END POV

INT. CAVERNS - NIGHT

The Padre runs, stumbles down the passage. He passes dark openings, from which things move. A great MOANING reverberates through the tunnels. Soon replaced by an echo of SCREAMS.

The Padre whispers as he runs.

PADRE

The Devil has released the very
dead to prey on the living.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The guards cluster around the entrance, peering in, the noise ECHOING out. They step back as the Padre emerges.

PADRE

Quickly! The Commandant needs
your help. He sent me back to
watch the horses.

The guards don't hesitate. They run into the mine. The Padre gets his breath back. He takes two small barrels that are strapped to one of the horses.

Suddenly, the animals are spooked by SCREAMING from the mine, which now sounds closer. They rear up, breaking their binds, and stampede down the valley.

INT. CAVERNS - NIGHT

The Padre places a barrel a few meters down the passage. He pulls a wooden plug from the other barrel, and pours black gunpowder around the first barrel. Then he walks backwards, laying out a trail of the powder. The NOISE and chaos within the mine grows closer...

EXT.MINE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The Padre moves back out the opening, laying the powder. He stops, throws the barrel back into the passage, where it comes to rest near the other one.

He takes a flint and stone from his robe, kneels down. Frantically, he strikes the flint above the powder. He glances up into the mine. Dark shapes are faintly visible.

At last, a spark! It splutters, causing the Padre to sob. But a flame catches, and soon the powder fuse is burning.

The Padre runs to nearby rocks, throws himself behind them, as the EXPLOSION lights up the night. There is an almighty BANG within the tunnel.

Shattered rock and flame BLOW OUT from the opening. The tunnel roof collapses, sending tons of rock down.

When the dust settles, the Padre rises, panting, COUGHING. He sees the crucifix on the ground nearby. Picks it up.

He wedges the crucifix into the rockfall that now seals the mine. Makes the sign of the cross, and whispers prayers.

It is then he notices his wounded arm. No blood drips now, the flesh has become rotted already.

Suddenly, movement from the side of the mine entrance. The old shaman limps out from a hidden side opening. He sways on his feet, physically and mentally spent.

SHAMAN

(In Spanish)

Your soldiers are dead. The creatures I summoned have vanquished them.

He walks closer, sees the wound.

SHAMAN

You have been bitten by them. Now
you will become like them.

PADRE

You...how do you know our
language, heathen? What black
magic do you worship?

The shaman staggers, falls to one knee. Still, he looks
keenly at the Padre.

SHAMAN

Yes, black magic indeed. I
learned it in the lands where
your people first landed. In
Florida. Here I learned your
speech also.

PADRE

Well, I have stopped your evil,
with powder and The Lord God's
hand. And I will not become one
of these creatures.

He takes out a knife. There's movement again behind him.
He turns. The whole Indian tribe has come into the valley,
watching. Several warriors draw down bows on the Padre.

The Padre moves quickly. He cuts his own throat, his body
falling over the rocks. One hand stretches out to the
embedded crucifix, then drops.

The Indian Chief steps forward to the shaman, who as
collapsed on the ground.

CHIEF

You have saved us, wise one.

SHAMAN

But at the cost of my own health.
I fear...

(beat)

Quickly, you must behead the
priest. Or else his body will
rise again to kill. And you must
ensure the undead remain sealed
in the mine. The white man's God
has stopped them from breaking free.

CHIEF

Yes, but we must__

SHAMAN

No! Listen to me...if they escape, they will spread across all man's lands, both white and red. You and your descendants must stay here and guard this valley. I will sleep now, for a long time.

(beat)

But maybe someday I will awake again. This then is my reward for helping you.

He loses consciousness. The young warrior approaches.

WARRIOR

Is he dead, great leader?

CHIEF

No, I think not. He rests after his labors.

He looks about the valley then to the tribe.

CHIEF

You heard the shaman. Our destiny starts today as keepers of the valley. But first we must deal with the white priest.

He nods to the warrior. The young brave takes an axe from his belt, and they approach the Padre's corpse. Suddenly, the body shudders, and his legs scrabble at the rocks.

The warrior leaps forward, puts a foot on the Padre's back. The Chief grabs the hair, pulls it tight. The warrior raises the axe.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

From that moment, the hills were known as...

The axe falls.

INT. BARRACK - DAY

A hand drawn map showing a lake. In the midst of symbols representing hills, a small 'X' is marked.

THWACK!

The point of a knife embeds itself in the middle of the 'X'.

GARNER (O.S.)
 Suicide Bluffs.
 (beat)
 More Indian gold than you fuckin'
 shitkickers can carry.

SUPER - KANSAS TERRITORY

SUPER - JUNE 1867

The barrack is little more than a medium sized room. Twenty troopers are crammed in here. Hammocks are slung from the main support timbers. Other beds are simply blankets on the dirt floor.

Several PRIVATES sit around a table where GARNER(27) has stuck the knife. LEE(20) cuts his toenails with scissors; BUSH(21) peruses a newspaper.

The others are COULSTOCK, TINDALL and MCKAGAN, all mid twenties.

LEE
 Shitkickers? That what you think
 we are?

GARNER
 Fuckin' right. Country boys with
 no fuckin' idea about the world
 or nuthin'. Ain't entirely your
 fault. Just the way it is.

Bush looks up, indignant.

BUSH
 I ain't no damn idiot. I can read
 and write!
 (beat)
 Well, I can read anyway...

LAUGHTER. Coulstock claps him on the shoulder.

COULSTOCK
 Nothin' wrong with
 being...uninformed, Garner. Can
 keep a fella from gettin' into a
 heap o' trouble.

More LAUGHTER. Coulstock gets serious as he examines the map.

COULSTOCK

So...tell us more about this Indian gold.

LEE

Probably a heap of horseshit.

He doesn't look up but is ready for Garner, who moves with ugly speed. The knife is in his hand and at Lee's throat. Simultaneously, Lee hand blurs, and a revolver appears in it.

There's a stunned silence in the barrack. The observers don't dare breathe. Finally...

BUSH

So what happens now, ladies?

Tindall, not the sharpest tool in the shed, SNICKERS.

TINDALL

Well, jeez, Mr. Garner here might shave ol' Lee.. Didn't know he was a barber.

The tension has eased but the two stare at each other. Garner finally grins - zero mirth in it - flips the knife in the air. He catches it, sheathes it.

Lee says nothing, his hand blurs again, the gun's gone. He resumes trimming his nails.

GARNER

You're damn quick, boy. I could use you. Need a good crew to help me with the gold.

Lee glances up, shrugs.

LEE

Two things...how you gonna trust anyone here? You mention gold and you got men getting excited, driving them mad.

TINDALL

Hell yeah! My pa was at the 'Frisco gold rush in '49. Said fellas were selling their own sisters to buy equipment.

LEE

And secondly...I ain't a fuckin' boy.

Garner shakes his head as he folds the map and stows it.

MCKAGAN

Garner, we only been in this shithole for twelve hours. You gonna get in a whole lotta trouble poking around, lookin' for gold.

BUSH

Where'd you get the map?

GARNER

Off'n old prospector in Louisiana. He'd got it off'n old Indian.

LEE

Old Indian corpse, I'll bet.

GARNER

No, he was alive. But, yeah, dead is the only state Indians should be in...

MCKAGAN

You mean...Kansas state?

The others LAUGH. Except Tindall. He frowns...

TINDALL

Hey, look, I agree with Mr. Garner here. Fucking Indians killed my cousin's family in Nebraska. Scalped 'em. Raped the women. Cut off my cousin's ba___

COULSTOCK

Tindall! Shut that kind of talk! We got newblood soldiers here. They don't wanna hear that shit.

Garner stands up, looks around.

GARNER

Coulstock, them new boys better listen to that shit. They gotta learn how to handle themselves out here.

(beat)

It ain't fuckin' West Point.

BUSH

Thats true. West Point don't have these crazy chalk rocks just west of here.

He holds the newspaper up.

BUSH

Been reading about in here.

GARNER

They need to add some
advice...how to keep your balls
intact in this area.

LEE

You're gettin' outta line again,
Garner.

Garner steps towards him. Lee casually puts his boots back on. A TROOPER standing near the open door suddenly straightens.

TROOPER

Ten-hutt!

All the men get to their feet, as First Sergeant DOHNT(25) enters the barrack. He's tall, slim and handsome, a fair man but tough when needed.

The troopers like him already; Garner hates his guts...

DOHNT

As you were, men. I'm sure you're
all still weary from the journey
here, so...stay seated.

The men relax as Dohnt surveys the room. Garner stares at him with unbridled hatred. The sergeant is aware of this.

DOHNT

All settled in, Garner?

GARNER

Very nicely...sir. I haven't been
with a more pleasant bunch in ages.

DOHNT

Yes, I've heard you've
had...troubles in other
detachments. Captain Hayes was
reading your file this morning.

Lee GRUNTS, a neutral sort of sound.

BUSH

Ah, sir? Some of the new recruits
are worried about the local Indians?

DOHNT

Worried? Of course they should
be! A man with no fear is a poor
fighter.

GARNER

Exactly what I tried to tell them...sir. This ain't no Sunday school picnic, the greenhorns shoulda__

A young trooper, WINTON, interrupts.

WINTON

Sir, we ain't yellin', no way in he...um, well, we ain't! It's just that me and Hawkins and Goldson, well...well, sir, we just come straight from the training camp.

DOHNT

I understand that. So does the captain.

(beat)

He'll address you all on the parade ground in ten minutes. I think all questions will be answered.

He nods, walks out. Garner spits, narrowly missing McKagan's leg.

GARNER

Fuckin' bootlicking sergeant. Give him stripes and he acts like the biggest toad in the puddle.

COULSTOCK

Why not say it to his face?

GARNER

Maybe I will someday.

He walks to his hammock, checks his kit. Around him, the troopers get ready for parade. It's a tight squeeze in the barrack when everyone's up and about.

BUSH

Hey, quit poking me in the ass! I ain't a fuckin' sheep.

A trooper blushes amidst roars of LAUGHTER.

LEE

Gotta watch them Nebraskans, Jeffrey my boy.

TINDALL

Hey, at least we get some. Better than playing pecker solitaire like you Virginia shits.

COULSTOCK

Alright, zip it up and let's move...

EXT. FORT - DAY

The sky is brilliant blue and seems to go on forever. The troopers blink as they emerge from the barrack. The sun already beats down hard.

The 'fort' isn't a classic fort structure. There's no wall, no secure gates. Rather, it's a collection of rough buildings facing each other on the dusty plain.

More troopers come out of another barrack. When the whole troop lines up facing a small cabin, there's forty men. Two Indian SCOUTS edge out of the stables, hunker down, watching.

The cabin door opens. Sergeant Dohnt walks out quickly to the side of the troops, calls them to attention.

DOHNT

Troop...ten...HUTT!

Another man walks from the cabin. This is Captain MICHAEL HAYES(35), a tall man with a solid build. He exudes authority and his uniform is spotless, despite the dust.

The captain walks along the lines of men, appraising them. Finally he stands out in front, nods to Dohnt.

DOHNT

Troop...at ease.

The men relax but remain in formation. Garner is near the back. He gazes off across the plains, towards a line of hills nearby. Sweat already forms on his brow.

Its as quiet as a cemetery. No sound at all from the surrounding landscape.

HAYES

Thank you, Sergeant.

(beat)

Men, I won't keep out in this sun too long. I know it was a tough ride out here for most of you, and I commend you all.

He paces back and forth as he speaks, looking at the ground.

HAYES

You'll find I'm a fair man. Life on the plains is hard and I've never seen any benefit from pushing men in my command to their limits. If you give me the respect I am entitled to, I'll treat you right. However...

(beat)

Some men at other forts I've commanded made the mistake of thinking I was a soft touch.

He stops, swings around to look at them. His voice rises, and they all have his attention. Even Garner...

HAYES

But I will NOT tolerate any foolishness, be it merely pranks or soldiers letting off steam. That leads to poor discipline, which leads to accidents...or worse.

(beat)

We have a job to do here. It hopefully won't lead to direct confrontation with the local Indians, so lets make sure that's the case.

(beat)

This...fort...used to be a station, a supply depot. Now that the trail is getting busier, more supply wagons will be pushing through to Fort Wallace.

He begins pacing again.

HAYES

We'll be riding on patrols, liaising with the local tribe...

He looks to the sergeant who gestures to the scouts. They shuffle to the side of the assembly. Both wear cavalry uniforms but their hair is long and braided. One wears a battered top hat.

HAYES

...and generally keeping the peace. There's been word of younger elements of the tribe talking war and ignoring the elders. It'll be our job to work with them, sort out any problems.

(MORE)

HAYES (CONT'D)

(beat)

However, if they don't listen...then I won't hesitate to use force. So, Sergeant Dohnt will ensure daily weapons drill is carried out each day. We will be ready for any trouble.

(beat)

Any questions, issues?

Silence again. Some of the greenhorns glance quickly at each other but no one speaks.

HAYES

Very well...Sergeant Dohnt, you may dismiss them.

He salutes, receives one back from Dohnt, then walks back to his cabin.

DOHNT

Troop...ten...hutt!

(beat)

Disss...miss!

(beat)

Alright, men. You received your work detail earlier. Lets get to it.

The soldiers break rank. Some head to the stables to feed and water the horses. A few go back to the barracks to clean inside.

Others go to the armory to clean rifles. And still others take up sentry positions on the edges of the buildings.

Dohnt approaches Garner, who is staring out at the hills again.

DOHNT

Garner? I need you for a special detail tomorrow. It's an important job and I need an experienced hand to lead it.

GARNER

Well...sir. I guess I'm your man seein' as you're asking me that nicely. What's the job?

DOHNT

Water wagon. The river nearby is getting low so we have to get our water from yonder lake. Four man operation.

He points to the nearby hills.

DOHNT

It's about three miles that way.

Garner smiles, nods.

GARNER

Fine by me...sir.

He hawks up a wet one, spits off to one side. Dohnt's lips harden but he doesn't move.

DOHNT

Pick three responsible men from your barrack. Fully armed. Leave before dawn when it's cooler.

GARNER

Yessir.

DOHNT

And Garner?

GARNER

Yessir?

DOHNT

No trouble out there. Get the water and straight back to the fort.

Garner feigns surprise.

GARNER

Of course, sergeant! You can trust me.

Dohnt nods, walks off. Garner watches him, then turns back to survey the hills. He takes his map out, checks it.

GARNER

Right next to that ol' lake...yessir.

(beat)

Indian goldmine...I'm a coming for you...

Suddenly, a shadow falls on the map. The Indian scout with the top hat has...materialized right in front of him and is in his face! Garner YELLS, steps back.

GARNER

Fuck a cow! What the hell you doing? Get outta my...

He trails off, shivers at the look in the scout's eyes. Then the man speaks in broken English.

INDIAN SCOUT 1
 Those hills...are haunted. Very
 bad ground. Do not be
 tempted...to go there.

GARNER
 I...the fuck?

He hurriedly folds the map, puts it away. He's completely spooked.

INDIAN SCOUT 1
 You go there...you will bring
 death. Death to yourself...and
 for the whole world.

GARNER
 Shut the fuck up, you savage son
 of a bitch! You ain't nothin but
 a maggot. You can't scare me with
 your ghost stories.

He's recovered some of his mojo now and pulls his knife. The scout doesn't move a muscle.

GARNER
 Now get outta my sight before I
 gut ya.

Suddenly, there's a flurry, a blur of movement. The scout now has the knife and holds it at Garner's throat! Garner can only stare into the Indian's dead eyes from inches away.

INDIAN SCOUT 1
 No...you will not kill anybody.
 The ones who sleep will kill YOU...

Garner blinks and the scout has gone, vanished! The knife is again in Garner's hand. He looks about vaguely...

GARNER
 What the fuck...?

He sees something, a figure near the stables. It's the scout staring back at him. Then, he steps out of sight.

Garner takes deep breaths. Walks slowly towards the barrack.

By the time he reaches the door, he's recovered, and in no time is his normal self. He opens the door. The SOUND of chat and chores floats out.

GARNER
 Ok, listen up, you goddam showers
 of shit...I need three fuckin'
 men for water fetchin', first
 thing in the morning.

He disappears inside, closing the door. There's a silence.

GARNER (O.S.)
Well, jeez, don't all fucking
answer at once.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAWN

The sun is just rising as the water party leaves the fort. Garner sits on the wagon, guiding two horses pulling it. A large metal tank sits on the wagon bed, a handle pump attached.

Tindall sits next to Garner. McKagan and Bush ride horses alongside. All have rifles and revolvers.

TINDALL
So this Indian gold mine? You're
saying it could be in those hills?
Right next to the lake?

GARNER
Yep. Just sitting there waiting
for some enterprisin' gentlemen
like us to retrieve it.

MCKAGAN
I'll be damned.

He gazes ahead to the hills, which become more distinct as they get closer.

TINDALL
But...how come them Indians left
it there?

Garner doesn't reply straight away. He hawks, spits one out over the head of the horses.

GARNER
Well, you see, Tindall, the thing
is...those Indians were nothin'
but savages. Godless fucks. They
didn't appreciate the treasures
they dug up and simply...well,
you know...

He waves a vague hand.

BUSH
So it wasn't anything to do with
the mine being haunted by demons?
The gold cursed?

Garner looks around in surprise. Bush rides right next to him, grinning.

GARNER

What in hell you gabbing about,
Bush?

Tindall and McKagan are in all ears too.

BUSH

The Indian scouts at the fort?
One of them was telling me the
local history. How some Spanish
soldiers came couple of hundred
years back and got killed.

MCKAGAN

Doesn't sound too spooky.

Bush shrugs.

BUSH

That old scout seemed pretty
intense about it. Like he was
warning me.

TINDALL

Hey, Garner...didn't I see you
talking to one of them scouts?
You looked like you was shittin'
ya pants there about something.

Garner gives him the bad eye...'shut the fuck up'.

GARNER

Bah, that piece of shit scout was
trying to scare me off. Probably
after the gold himself.

McKagan LAUGHS. Bush continues to ride close, staring at Garner.

BUSH

I'm a little confused here...

GARNER

I would be too, first night in a
barrack with farmboys. Big
decisions...

Everyone LAUGHS, Bush the loudest.

BUSH

Yeah, well, what I was
saying...you strike me as a bit
of a lone wolf.

GARNER

That I am. Keeps me sane...and
alive.

BUSH

Well, that may be. But...I'm
sorta intrigued by why you're
telling us all about this mine?
I mean, for all you know, we
could go searchin' for it ourselves.

TINDALL

Hey, that's right. You done
practically told us where it is.
Shouldn't be too hard to find.

McKagan brings his horse in one from the other side. He's
getting excited too.

MCKAGAN

Hell yeah! Them scouts might
point us to it, if we give 'em
some of the gold.

Garner absorbs all this talk, holds up a hand.

GARNER

Gentlemen...there is a reason I
haven't kept this secret. Several,
in fact.

(beat)

Firstly, it woulda been hard to
keep it under my hat for long.
I'm gonna be off looking for it.
Sooner or later, one of the
officers would notice. So, I knew
I'd need the help of you good men.

He pauses, looking ahead over the plains. The hills are
only about a mile away now. The sun is up fully. And it's
starting to burn in its relentless way.

A brief glint, a reflection off the lake's surface perhaps.

GARNER

And I knew that ol' treasure
would be too fuckin' heavy to
haul off by my lonesome.

He spits a massive gobfull out past Bush, then looks at him.

GARNER

So, as I told Mr.Lee in the
barrack yesterday...I'm putting
together a crew to help me
acquire the gold.

(beat)

Understand now?

Tindall and McKagan look silently at each other, then nod. Bush rides along, thinking, mulling things over...

GARNER

Bush? You in?

At last, Bush takes a deep breath, nods.

GARNER

Good man.

TINDALL

Fuck a Yankee...we gone be rich.

MCKAGAN

Hell yeah. Then we can get outta the fucking army. Buy a big farm.

BUSH

Garner? No one will get hurt, will they? I don't wanna get in any trouble.

GARNER

Nope. It's all gonna be above board. I'm actually gonna put a claim on the land where the mine is. Make it all legal. I done all my homework on it.

He whips the reins, pushes the horses into a trot.

GARNER

Get on there!

(beat)

Fellas...? We got work to do.

The small party ups the pace as the lake and surrounding hills come into view.

EXT. LAKE - DAY

The lake is about two miles in length, narrow at the end near the hills. The water is relatively clear. A few trees line it. To the already hot soldiers, it's an oasis...

Garner pulls the wagon up close to the water, under the shade of a tree. The horses dip their heads gratefully and drink.

The others dismount and let their horses drink too. Garner climbs in the back of the wagon, feeds out the hose to Tindall, who throws an end into the water.

Garner starts working the pump. Soon, a steady stream of water begins pouring into the tank.

GARNER

Okey doke...she's a goer. Bush, get yourself up here and take over.

BUSH

I...hey, I don't mind doing some work but, dammit, you only just started.

He climbs up. Garner gives a few more pumps. Claps Bush on the back.

GARNER

I'm in charge of this here detail. Don't worry, I'll be kicking in for my share of the toil.

He jumps down, stretches his back. Kneels to cup some water from the lake and drinks. Tindall is lying on the ground near the water, hat over his face. McKagan leans against the wagon, lights up a cheroot.

GARNER

But first I gotta go check out them hills. And see if I can't find a little ol' gold mine.

TINDALL

Shit, I'll do double duty on that fuckin' pump if it means you finding it.

MCKAGAN

Good, you can take my shift. I'm gonna go for a swim after I finish my smoke.

Bush LAUGHS as he works on the pump. Garner takes a leather bag from the wagon, stows it on the saddle of Bush's horse. He checks his revolvers in his belt.

BUSH

Hey Garner...shit, man, take care of my horse, ok?

Garner swings up onto the horse.

GARNER

Relax. Look, he likes me already.
(beat)
Besides, pretty soon you'll be able to buy as many fuckin' horses as you want.

TINDALL

Fuck yeah! Hell, when I get my farm, I can breed thousands of the fuckers and sell 'em to the fucking U.S army.

Everyone LAUGHS. Garner touches the brim of his hat.

GARNER

Adios, gentlemen. I shall be returning shortly with the keys to the kingdom of gold.

He nudges the horse with his knees, trots off. The others watch him go.

MCKAGAN

You trust him? What if he finds a small whack of treasure and just keeps on riding?

BUSH

He might just do that, sure. He's a cagey one.

He continues to work the pump.

BUSH

But somethin' tells me he'll come back. He'll need us.

EXT. HILLS - DAY

Garner leads the horse towards the rising hills. They're actually quite steep cliffs, the bluffs from his map.

Before he rides into the valley within, he stops, looks back at the lake. He sees the wagon and the soldiers around it. A shiver passes through him...he frowns.

Then, shrugging his shoulders as if to free himself from his reverie, he urges the horse on. The lake disappears from sight.

He's in a valley now, the cliffs on his left. He peers ahead. There's no trees or vegetation here, it's a dead place.

He slows the horse to a walk, pulls out the map, examines it. He looks around to get his bearings. Nods and smiles.

GARNER

A little further along. And
another small valley to the left.

He pats the horse between the ears. The animal SNORTS,
shakes its head.

GARNER

Easy, girl. Take us to this place.

He continues on.

EXT. VALLEY OF THE MINE - DAY

The entrance to the cursed valley is marked by totems on
poles. Animal skulls hint at sacrifices by a desperate tribe.

Garner rides up and looks into the narrow defile. The rock
looms on either side in tones of claustrophobia. The very
air seems to hang dark, and indeed there is a foul odor
all about.

Garner dismounts. The horse shies, spooked for whatever
reason, and Garner has a hard time controlling her.

GARNER

Whoa there.

He leads the horse into the valley, along a rough trail.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Garner ties the horse up to a jagged boulder. Walking to
the rockfall, he spots the crucifix immediately. He
crouches on the shale, examines it.

GARNER

Spanish silver if I'm not
mistaken. And pretty damn old.
Guess that prospector was tellin'
the truth.

(beat)

Hell, this could be worth a
fortune itself.

Garner takes hold of the crucifix and heaves. He's a
strong man but...it doesn't seem to want to move. He gets
better leverage and yanks hard.

With a rusted SCREECH, the cross is freed from it's long vigil...

INT. TEPEE - DAY

The interior is dim, barely visible. A flap across the entrance is partially drawn. On a musty buffalo robe on the floor, lies a figure wrapped in tattered blankets.

Suddenly, the figure sits up and begins WAILING. It's the shaman!

He's impossibly old and wrinkled, beyond imagining. His eyes open - they are like deep wells of learning and pain.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

The ECHOES of the shaman's cries drift over the valley. Garner looks up in alarm. At the same time, the very earth RUMBLES for a moment beneath his feet.

GARNER

What the fuck...?

He stands holding the crucifix. Another tremor SHAKES the ground, and rocks begin to tumble from the mine entrance.

INT. TEPEE - DAY

The shaman falls silent. He struggles to stand up. The flap opens and a tall, fine looking Indian woman in her early twenties enters. This is BURNING KNIFE, the unofficial 'chief' of the tribe at the moment.

Her eyes widen at the sight of the old man. Her fingers touch an amulet around her neck, and she whispers to herself.

SHAMAN

(in Indian language)

The sleep of the undead ones has been broken. I have awoken to combat them.

He sways on his feet. The Indian woman rushes to his side, supports him. She gazes on his face in wonder.

BURNING KNIFE

Ancient One...is it...is it true that you have been sleeping for many moons? Since before the time of my parents?

SHAMAN

I have, child. Even further beyond their forebears have I drifted in the void. Waiting it seems...

He closes his eyes, waits. A new strength appears to spread through his body. His eyes open. They are alive, vividly blue.

SHAMAN

What year is it by the white man's reckoning? Do you know?

Burning Knife nods.

BURNING KNIFE

Eighteen sixty seven, master. My father works for the white soldiers at the fort nearby. When I was a child, the tribe captured a white woman. My father made me learn their language so I could one day know their ways and secrets.

SHAMAN

Your father was wise.
(beat)
Soldiers?

He pauses for a moment, eyes shut again, concentrating. Finally...

SHAMAN

Yes. I see it in my visions and dreams. A white soldier has opened the old mine. And now they are released.

BURNING KNIFE

They, Great One? Of who do you speak?

SHAMAN

What? Have your tribe no sense of their history? Your ancestors were anointed guardians of the tribe! By myself, fully two hundred years ago.

Burning Knife shrugs in shame. The shaman looms over her, glowering.

BURNING KNIFE

We only knew parts of
the...legends. Over the
years...people have left us. Many
have died.

Her head drops. She cannot look him in the eye.

BURNING KNIFE

We are barely able to survive.
the buffalo are scarce...the deer
gone. Even the fish in the lake
have vanished. And the white man
continues his progress deeper
into our lands every day.

The shaman stares at her. His face softens. He takes her
chin gently in a wizened hand, tilts her head up.

SHAMAN

I understand now the hardships
you have faced. And the evil that
lay in the mine has been slowly
responsible for the ill luck of
the tribe. It's influence has
been seeping out over the long
years, and now it is fully free
of its bonds.

BURNING KNIFE

What can we do, master? Is it too
late?

SHAMAN

Only you have kept the faith it
seems, child. the rest of the
tribe have grown weak, the men
become like children and slunk
away. This happens.

(beat)

But sometimes the past does not
vanish behind us like the dust
from a buffalo herd. Sometimes
the past is thrust forward to the
present. To now...

He takes her arm, walks to the teepee entrance. She pushes
the hide open. The day is warm, the sky blue.

But over the nearby valley, a black haze forms.

SHAMAN

You must ride to the mine. You
must find the white soldier there
and help him.

Burning Knife nods.

SHAMAN

You will bring him here, then we shall go to the fort. The white men have weapons and numbers there. Though even that may not be enough....

EXT. LAKE - DAY

McKagan is in the wagon, pumping water. He's doing it slowly but making an effort. Tindall splashes about in the lake. Bush sits on the shore, removing his boots.

BUSH

Ok, Tindall, your turn on the pump. I'm gettin' in that water. It looks mighty fine.

TINDALL

Just give me a minute, will ya? I got to take a piss.

McKagan LAUGHS. Bush stands up, starts taking his uniform off.

BUSH

Aw, come on now. That ain't good. I don't wanna swim in your mess.

Tindall LAUGHS, wades in. He wears long johns, and kicks water at Bush. Bush finishes undressing to his ljs, and dives headlong at Tindall. He misses and belly flops into the water. The others LAUGH.

BUSH

Damn, this water is like God's own fountain.

TINDALL

I doubt it, buckwheat. Not unless'n God pisses in his too!

The all round LAUGHTER is cut off by a low RUMBLE from the cliffs. The ground, even the water quivers for a few seconds.

MCKAGAN

The fuck...?

TINDALL

Was that one of them...earth trembers?

BUSH

Tremors is the correct word. As
in earthquakes.

He stares across the water to the cliffs. There's a silence.

MCKAGAN

Maybe Garner was climbing around
up there and let loose a heap of
rocks. Or he was playing around
with some of that dynamite shit.

TINDALL

Fuckin' fools gold. Prob'ly got
himself squished like a fuckin' bug.

BUSH

Yeah, but he might need our help.
Should we go have a look for him,
perhaps?

The three contemplate this course of action. Finally...

TINDALL

Thought you wanted to have a swim?

BUSH

You're right. We'll give him
twenty minutes. Then he's on his
own.

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

Garner stands in front of the mine. Rocks have fallen away
to expose a man-sized gap. The earth SHAKES once more then
all is still.

GARNER

If I had any sense, I'd hightail
it back to the fellas, and leave
this place to the ghosts.

(beat)

Yeah, that's what I'll do...

He turns back to the horse, prepares to mount up. But the
crucifix in his hand gets caught on the saddle. He steps
back down, takes a good long look at it. SIGHS.

GARNER

Fuck it, I've come this far, I
guess.

He checks his pistols again, takes the torches from the
saddle.

He starts tying the crucifix to the saddle but ends up slipping it into his belt.

GARNER

Best not to leave it out here.
Never know who's sniffin' around.

He ain't fooling anyone, especially himself...

GARNER

Ok. I'm all set.

He clammers onto the rocks, peers into the hole. The sunlight only penetrates a few feet.

A stench almost solid drifts out. Garner gags, spits. He strikes a flint to light the torch. It splutters before catching. He enters...

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Burning Knife strides to her horse. She has two knives in her belt, and carries a war lance and torches. Other members of the tribe stand dumbly...watching.

She secures her weapons, gets on the horse. As she stares at the villagers, the shaman hobbles out of the teepee. Burning Knife guides the horse to him. He hands her an ancient axe.

SHAMAN

This weapon has special powers.
you will need it to fight them.

FLASHBACK - the axe falling on the Padre's corpse.

Burning Knife nods, stows the axe in her belt.

SHAMAN

They can be hurt with knife,
lance and the white man's gun.
But only decapitation will truly
kill them. And do not let them
bite you or you will become like
them.

BURNING KNIFE

I understand, Old one. I will not
fail you...

She looks at the pathetic remains of the tribe.

BURNING KNIFE

Or my people.

She rides out of the village.

INT. CHAMBER - DAY

The inner chamber is unchanged after two hundred years - the gold, the biers. But many preserved corpses litter the ground, some clad in Spanish armour.

Suddenly, a long-dead torch bursts into flame! The caverns RUMBLE, dirt and rock fall from the walls.

Movement amongst the bodies. Indian warriors rise again. And their former dead foes, the Spanish soldiers, stand with them.

The undead Indians wear tattered garments of hide. Plaited, ruinous hair adorns ravaged faces. The teeth are sharp, like fangs of a beast. They carry ancient weapons - bows, arrows, lances.

The undead Spaniards wear rusted armour that is a poisonous green/black color. Their faces are also hideous, and they carry rusted muskets.

All shuffle about slowly, but with a common purpose.

One Indian rears back it's head and MOANS loudly. It ECHOES out of the chamber and up the tunnels...

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

Garner advances cautiously, torch held before him. The ground movement has ceased, but the quiet is no less disturbing.

He sees passages branching off but the main tunnel is easily marked with old bits of torch on the walls, at intervals.

Suddenly, the MOANING hits him, a wall of invisible hate. Garner shivers, takes out a revolver.

GARNER

It's just the wind, that's all.
Yeah, there'd be all sorts of
openings and shit...

He stops for a moment, listening. From behind him comes a faint SOUND. Like footsteps...

Torn between two evils, he continues on.

INT. MINE - DAY

The undead make their way out of the gold chamber. Torches flame on as they head towards the mine entrance. Most wander with purpose, following the tunnel unerringly.

But one, a Spanish soldier, veers off into a side passage, bumping into the rock walls.

INT. SIDE PASSAGE - DAY

The undead Spanish soldier stumbles along. The light is dimmer away from the now-lit trail.

Suddenly, the SOUND of water from a blind corner. The soldier steps into a large crevasse and falls...

Silence...

Then a faint SPLASH.

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

Garner sees light ahead, the SOUND of feet. He turns a corner and stops. Another bend in the tunnel. The MOANING starts again, and nearby torches come alive with fire.

Garner takes deep breaths, raises his gun.

GARNER

It's only Indian guards...yeah,
that's it. Nothing supernatural
here, that's a load of horseshit.
I'm up for it.

INT. UNDERGROUND RIVER - DAY

The Spanish soldier is carried along, scraping rocks in the water. Ahead, a faint light appears...

INT. TUNNELS - DAY

Garner steps around the bend of the tunnel...and faces a nightmare.

Dark shapes lumber towards him, decaying hands outstretched.

GARNER

Damnation! What sort of fuckin' creatures...?

He starts firing his revolver, the SHOTS loud in the tight confines, reverberating from the walls. Some of the front undead take lead and stagger. But it doesn't really hurt them. The merciless press forward continues.

As Garner changes weapons, the torch slips from his grasp. Two Indians lurch forward at him. He steps back, stumbles on a rock, and falls to one knee. He can only watch as a creature is almost on him.

CRUNCH! The point of a war lance drives over Garner's head, straight into the Indian's ruined face. Garner looks up in wonder, squeezes off a shot at the second attacker. It's enough to slow it down.

Burning Knife withdraws the lance, swings the axe to take off the creature's head cleanly. At the same time, she drags Garner back by the collar. He gets to his feet, still firing into the throng. The front casualties momentarily stall the advance.

Garner studies his rescuer.

GARNER

The fuck? I've been saved by an Indian...woman.

BURNING KNIFE

No time for talk, white man. We must flee to your fort.

Garner gives her a quick once over and likes what he sees.

GARNER

An Indian woman that speaks pretty good English. Lawdy, what a fuckin' day this is turning out to b__hey!

Burning Knife grabs his collar again, takes off back up the tunnel. He has to half run, half stumble to follow.

GARNER

I...wait a minute, will ya?

She pauses briefly, releases him. Studies him for the first time.

GARNER

We can whip these fuckin' critters, ok? They look like demented old Indians, full of disease. Prob'ly some of them lepers I've read about.

Suddenly, an arrow hits the rock wall near his face. He gasps, looks down as it hits the ground. It seems to dissolve into nasty spikes of iron that ricochet around the tunnel.

GARNER

Christ on a steamboat...these things are armed?

BURNING KNIFE

Quickly. These creatures are evil. They once were fine warriors, now...

She tugs his arm, then heads towards the entrance.

BURNING KNIFE

We must re-seal the cave. They are too strong for just two of us.

The pack of Indians are moving again now, getting closer. More arrows fly with a vicious zipping sound. Garner gets off more SHOTS then follows Burning Knife, shaking his head.

GARNER

One day I'll fuckin' learn to stay outta trouble...

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DAY

The soldier and the Indian race out into the valley. Garner sees that their horses are tied up nearby.

BURNING KNIFE

You have thunder sticks?

GARNER

What? Oh...you mean dynamite?

BURNING KNIFE

Yes.

GARNER

Well, yeah I do. On the horse,
in my pack.

(beat)

Why would you assume that?

BURNING KNIFE

You're a thieving white man. goes
with the territory.

GARNER

I...

BURNING KNIFE

Quickly now. You must blow the
rock down again and seal it with
the white priest's cross.

Garner frowns, thinking of the gold. But the SOUNDS of
pursuit quickly help his decision. He takes out three
sticks of TNT.

BURNING KNIFE

Hurry.

Garner nods, takes out his flint, strikes it on a rock.
Burning Knife holds the fuses below. One catches. Garner
takes it, lights the second stick, then hurls them both
into the mine. They dive for cover.

KABOOM!! Rocks fly, whizzing past. More of the cliff
crashes over the entrance. burning Knife is already on her
feet. She takes the crucifix from Garner's belt, slams it
into the rubble.

GARNER

Will that hold them? What are
those things? You said they were
Indians?

BURNING KNIFE

They are undead. And it may not
be enough. The shaman spoke of
other ways out of the caves,
passages that lead into the lake.

GARNER

The lake? Shit, my men are by the
water.

BURNING KNIFE

An underwater river joins the
bottom of the lake.

GARNER

Would these...creatures be smart
enough to find it?

BURNING KNIFE

Who knows? We will return to the shaman first. I must tell him more about the undead and how much power they have gained.

She leaps onto her horse in a single deft movement. Garner mounts up with a more relaxed manner.

GARNER

You speak good English for an Indian.

BURNING KNIFE

A white woman was captured by my tribe when I was younger. She lived as one of us for years, becoming like a mother to me. My father urged me to learn her language, so as to know the mind of the white people.

GARNER

Your father sounds like a wise man. 'Know your enemy', right?

BURNING KNIFE

Yes. He is at your fort now, working as a scout.

GARNER

I...damn...does he wear a silly looking hat? Spooky old kind of guy?

BURNING KNIFE

Yes, that is him.

She turns her horse's head up the valley, moves off. Garner rides up alongside, staring at her. She lifts her head, looks back at him, a faint smile on her lips.

Something is forming between these two unlikely allies...

BURNING KNIFE

You fight well for a thieving white man.

She spurs her mount on.

GARNER

I fi...why you...

He LAUGHS, whips his horse to follow. They disappear down the valley.

GARNER(O.S.)

So how does this shaman of yours know so much about the critters?

BURNING KNIFE(O.S.)
 He summoned them. Two hundred
 years ago.

A silence.

GARNER(O.S.)
 (fainter)
 I knew this was gonna be a crazy
 fuck of a day...

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

POV

Moving through dim water, up towards the light.

Movement ahead...

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Tindall pulls the hose from the water, stows in the wagon.
 McKagan stands up, tosses his cheroot in the lake. Bush
 is about twenty foot out, chest deep.

MCKAGAN
 Time to git back, boys. Don't
 want the captain on our case.
 Bush? Outta there, ya damn fish.

Bush LAUGHS, splashes water.

BUSH
 I could stay in here all day,
 yessir.

TINDALL
 What about Garner?

MCKAGAN
 Fuck him. Twenty minutes is up.
 He can face up to the captain.
 If he ever comes back.

Bush starts wading in. Suddenly he YELPS in pain, kicks
 at the water. He surges to the shore.

BUSH
 Damnation! Something bit me!

Sure enough, there's a nasty wound on his left ankle. The other two look at it.

MCKAGAN
Catfish, maybe?

TINDALL
They don't have teeth.

MCKAGAN
Some do. Seen one chew a dog in half once.

TINDALL
That so? Fuck, I'd like to see something like that. Would really be__

BUSH
Hey, shut up with your shit. I dunno what fuckin' bit me but it fuckin' hurt, ok? And it felt like...well, like something grabbed my foot then bit it.

He looks angry and sheepish at the same time, if that's possible. The others look at each other before breaking into LAUGHTER.

MCKAGAN
I've also heard about these killer eels that have got like, really long leg things. And they can run faster than a fucking jackrabbit.

Bush slowly puts his uniform on, but he's sorta smilin' now too.

TINDALL
You prob'ly got snagged on a tree branch.

MCKAGAN
Yeah. You'll live. We'll get you back to the fort to be patched up.

Bush nods, sits to put his boots on. He dabs at the wound with his sock but there's no blood.

A faint SPLASH makes them all look around. Something is emerging from the lake - a figure. Tindall grabs his rifle. The other two draw their revolvers.

The undead Spanish soldier slowly wades in. The armour is a sickly green, with rust and god knows what else. An iron helmet surrounds a pale decaying face. The figure gets to the shore.

BUSH

I'll bet that's what bit me. Some sort of crazy fuck.

MCKAGAN

What the hell is he doing in the lake?

TINDALL

Jesus...look at his face.

(yells)

Hey you...get the fuck away from here.

The creature doesn't move, just stares at them with lifeless eyes.

BUSH

Shoot the fucker. Shoot it and let's get the fuck back to the fort.

MCKAGAN

Well, look, hold on a minute. We can't just__

BANG! Tindall's rifle goes off as the figure moves forward. The bullet hits him fair in the chest, punching through the armour. The creature rocks back but doesn't fall.

Now Bush fires his pistol twice - BANG...BANG.

Same result. The creature sways but relentlessly, slowly, edges forward. The MOANING starts.

McKagan climbs onto the wagon. Bush gets in too, while Tindall scurries onto the other horse.

MCKAGAN

Fuck this. We're outta this shithole!

(beat)

Hi...YARR!

He urges the horses, the wagon lurches off. Bush has to grab on tight to avoid toppling out. As they head off over the plain, the frightened troopers stare back.

The figure watches them go. After awhile, it wades back into the water, and faces the cliffs.

A high pitched KEENING sound comes from it's ravaged throat. Over and over again.

It's not just random noise. More of a...calling.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Garner and Burning Knife ride into the village. Teepee flaps open a little, Indians peer out in fear before hurriedly closing.

The shaman hobbles out from his teepee.

Suddenly, the SHOTS from the lake! The shaman pauses, lifts his head, as listening to the very wind.

GARNER

That has to be my men! Shit,
maybe they've...those things.
Escaped through the lake?

BURNING KNIFE

Wise One? Can this be true?

The shaman holds a hand out...'quiet'. Finally...

SHAMAN

Yes. They will all be free soon.

He looks up at Garner.

SHAMAN

You are the one who opened the mine.

It's a statement more than a question. Garner winces.

GARNER

I..yeah. But don't worry. Burning
Knife here has given me the
lecture about the 'white man's
greed'.

The shaman smiles. It feel reassuring to Garner in a way.

SHAMAN

I do not understand all you say.
But I sense that in your heart
you are not a bad man. The white
man's fascination for gold is
long chronicled. Perhaps it lies
dormant in all men's blood.

GARNER

Yes, well, possibly. I ain't up
on the latest studies.

(beat)

I've heard that you are the one
who...created these creatures?

Now it's the shaman's turn to ponder. Burning Knife's eyes widen with surprise but she looks at Garner. He's intent on the old man.

SHAMAN

Yes. But my purposes were for the good. I...

He's lost for words and can only glance at Burning Knife wryly.

GARNER

I guess we have something in common then.

There's a silence, filled with contemplation.

GARNER

So, old man...how the hell do you stop these things?

LATER

The shaman sits in front of Burning Knife on her horse. Garner rides alongside as they leave the village.

GARNER(O.S.)

You ain't really two hundred years old, are ya?

SHAMAN(O.S.)

No.

GARNER(O.S.)

Ha! Thought it was a bit far fetched.

Silence.

SHAMAN(O.S.)

I'm two hundred and seventy years old.

A GROAN from Garner.

EXT. FORT - DAY

The wagon approaches the buildings of Fort Monument. Troopers with rifles watch them from the perimeter.

MCKAGAN

Remember...don't say nuthin'
about shooting that...that thing.
If it was an Indian, it could
cause us some trouble.

BUSH

Didn't look like we hurt it
anyway. I got a bad feeling about
it though. I don't reckon it was
human.

TINDALL

You been listening to Garner and
his fuckin' ghost mine too much.

They ride into the centre of the fort. Sergeant Dohnt sees
them, and crosses from near the office.

MCKAGAN

Fuck. Bush, go get your foot
looked at. Tindall and I will
transfer the water, and handle
the sergeant. Hopefully...

Already Dohnt is fuming. He starts YELLING halfway to them.

DOHNT

Where the hell have you men been?

TINDALL

Collecting the water, sir!
Wagon's fuller than a bed tick
in a straw mattress.

DOHNT

I...well, yes, I can see that.
But you should've been back hours
ago.

He glances around, frowns.

DOHNT

And where the hell is Garner? I
knew I couldn't trust him.

Bush sidles off towards the infirmary, but the sergeant
isn't fooled.

DOHNT

Bush! Why are you limping?
Where's your other boot?
(beat)
Damnation! I can't trust any of
you! A simple task and you...

He gets in McKagan's face.

DOHNT

The captain will be very disappointed.

BUSH

I cut my foot, sir. While swimming in the lake. Tear strips off me, sir, Tindall and McKagan were just pumpin' the water.

MCKAGAN

That's right, sir. It was mighty hot and we'd all been workin' hard.

Dohnt takes this in, seems to calm down a bit. Bush slinks off again, and makes it to the infirmary.

DOHNT

Well, ok. But what about Garner? Was he swimming too? Perhaps he drowned? I can only hope...

MCKAGAN

No, sir. I mean, we don't know where he is. He went off on a...how do you say it...reconnaissance mission into the Indian valley.

TINDALL

Yeah, that's right. Said he was lookin' for...renegades or sumthin', sir.

Dohnt nods. The situation isn't overly bad.

DOHNT

Oh yes. Mr. Garner. The perfect soldier, protecting us all. He__

INDIAN SCOUT 1(O.S.)

He has opened the tomb of death.
He has released the undead warriors.

The soldiers are startled to see the scout near them. It's Burning Knife's father. His top hat is as outrageous as ever. And, as usual, he has simply appeared from nowhere.

He points out past the buildings, towards the lake.

INDIAN SCOUT 1

They are coming. They will be here before sunset.

Tindall and McKagan look at him then each other, with eyes like goggles. Dohnt shivers despite himself.

DOHNT

Now what? Jesus christ, do I have to suffer a whole troop of fools today?

TINDALL

He's a crazy Indian, sir. Been spookin' us since day one.

MCKAGAN

Yep. Made threats to Garner too.

DOHNT

That true? Did you...

He looks around, baffled. The scout has gone. Now he's somehow crouching in the doorway off his dingy hut, with his fellow Indian. They are chanting, passing their hands over some kind of feathered amulet.

Dohnt rubs his eyes. He's tired.

TINDALL

Can we go sir? We better get this water unloaded.

Dohnt nods, waves an arm in their direction. He walks back to the office.

DOHNT

This was supposed to be a nice, easy detail...

EXT. LAKE - DAY

Garner, Burning Knife and the shaman arrive at the lake's edge. The horses dip their heads to drink gratefully.

GARNER

The men have gone. Maybe they were just shooting at a wolf. Or a rattlesnake or sumthin'.

BURNING KNIFE

No. There have been no animals for a long time now. The evil that dwells in the mine has seen to that. And my people starve...

SHAMAN

You are right, child. The white men were shooting at the undead.

(beat)

The Zonbi have arisen.

GARNER

I don't...wait...did you say
'Zonbi'?

He edges his horse closer.

SHAMAN

Yes. That is what they are called.
Zonbi.

BURNING KNIFE

You sound as if you have seen
them before?

GARNER

Yes, I...well, something like this.

He leans towards the shaman.

GARNER

You said you came from Florida.

SHAMAN

Yes. Two hundred years ago. I
recall it like it was yesterday.

GARNER

Well, yes, that's another subject
entirely, but...I'm from
Louisiana, which is near there.
From the swamp country.

(beat)

I've seen people moving like
the...things in the cave. With
no emotion or control over
themselves.

SHAMAN

It sounds like the undead.

GARNER

Ok, but not exactly. These swamp
folk weren't dead. They had been
made to drink a potion of some
kind. Then bad folk would command
them to hurt other people. They
used them like toys.

BURNING KNIFE

I think we should get to the fort.

She glances around at the water uneasily.

BURNING KNIFE

I don't like this place.

Suddenly, the shaman whips his ancient head towards the
cliffs. A CHANT emerges from his lips.

Garner turns in the saddle, spine gripped in fear.
The surface of the water bubbles, about thirty feet out.

SHAMAN
They have come. We must flee.

GARNER
Aw, come on...it's just a shoal
of fish, it's...

He's not fooling anyone, least of all himself.

The surface roils. Steam forms and rises. Figures move into view, heads bobbing. Soon, a mass of the Indian warriors are revealed wading into the shallows.

GARNER
Jesus christ almighty...

He pulls out his revolver.

BURNING KNIFE
We cannot fight them here. They
are too many.

GARNER
For once I'm agreeing with ya.

The shaman breaks off his chant.

SHAMAN
Ride, white man. Your fort is our
only chance now.

INT. BARRACK - DAY

Tindall and McKagan enter. A few other troopers play cards at the table. Lee argues with Coulstock who LAUGHS as he shuffles. Hawkins sits in too.

LEE
It ain't humanly possible. Four
straights in a row? Damn...

COULSTOCK
Sometimes Lady Luck dances with
ya. Other times she kicks ya in
the balls.

Everyone LAUGHS, except Tindall and McKagan. They slump wearily on their beds, pull their boots off.

LEE

Welcome back. How was the lake?

TINDALL

Fine.

COULSTOCK

Where's Bush and Garner?

TINDALL

What are you, the fucking captain?

MCKAGAN

Hey, woah now...it's ok.

Coulstock lays the pack down.

COULSTOCK

Only asked a simple question.

LEE

Yeah. You fellas look mighty jittery. What's up?

MCKAGAN

Nothing, nothing's up. We's tired, is all. Damn hot out there.

TINDALL

Look, Coulstock, I'm sorry for jumpin' on ya. Been a long day.

Coulstock nods, 'I hear ya, no problem'. He resumes shuffling, starts dealing to Lee and Hawkins.

TINDALL

As for our comrades...Bush cut his foot swimming.

(beat)

And we don't know where Garner is.

Lee looks up from his cards.

COULSTOCK

Disappeared, hey? Maybe he did find his Indian gold.

LEE

Prob'ly ran into a heap of deep shit, knowin' him.

HAWKINS

Hey, keep dealing them cards out, will ya? I'm puttin' together a crazy fucking hand.

LEE
 Won't matter in the long run,
 Hawkins.

HAWKINS
 Yeah? Why's that?

LEE
 'Cos Coulstock here has an ace
 up his sleeve.

He winks at Coulstock who keep a straight face. Hawkins frowns.

The barrack door opens again. Bush limps in, his right foot bandaged. He sinks down onto his bedroll.

COULSTOCK
 Heard you had a stoush in the
 lake. How's the foot?

BUSH
 I'll live. Got a coupla stitches in.

He lays down, stares at the roof.

BUSH
 I don't feel too good. Think I'll
 have me a nap.

He falls quiet, nods off. Tindall and McKagan exchange glances.

HAWKINS
 Son of a bitch!

He slaps his cards down.

COULSTOCK
 Missed out on that flush, huh?

He finishes the deal, checks his own cards.

COULSTOCK
 Damn. I got nuthin'. Lee?
 (beat)
 You got jacks or better?

LEE
 I got fuckin' jack shit.

He sits back, watches Tindall and McKagan, who huddle on their beds, checking their weapons.

Suddenly, the sound of HOOVES from outside, horses ridden hard. Goldson gets up from his book, peers out the door. The afternoon light beams around him.

GOLDSON
Looks like Garner...

Tindall and McKagan look up.

GOLDSON
And...looks like he's brung in a
couple of Indians.

Coulstock and Lee get up quickly, move to the door.

COULSTOCK
What is that fucker up too now?

LEE
Let's go find out.

They exit, followed by the other troopers. Tindall and Mckagan look nervously at each other, then they too go out.

Bush remains on his bed, motionless.

A moment later though, he begins to toss and turn...

EXT. LAKE - DAY

The undead creatures wade from the lake. There is about thirty of them.

All are in various stages of decay. The majority are Indian warriors, clad in remnants of tribal wear. Some wear a mere loincloth, showing their ravaged flesh.

The rest are Spanish soldiers, no less frightening, perhaps even more in their ancient armour.

All have one thing in common - their eyes burn an eerie red, the pupils black and lifeless. Twisted mouths are filled with bestial teeth.

No one 'leads' this deadly force. Rather, the undead surge forward with a common goal: to kill all who they find, as per the shaman's original, long-ago purpose. They are drawn by the blood of the living...

Rusted weapons complete the nightmarish picture. The axes, knives, lances and arrows may look old and unusable. So too, the old muskets carried by the spanish.

But they are far deadlier than they were in their bearer's real life. Filled with evil and menace.

EXT. FORT - DAY

It's an odd scene in the centre of the outpost:

Garner helps the shaman from Burning Knife's horse. She nimbly dismounts...

Dohnt storms from the Captain's office, face like thunder...

Most of the troopers have come from the barracks. A lot of them have weapons in their hands. Not pointed at the newcomers, but not relaxed either...

DOHNT

Garner! What the hell are you doing? You'll be court-martialled for this!

Garner turns to Dohnt, a weary look on his face. Burning Knife and the shaman size up the fort.

SHAMAN

We must ready a defense. I will tell you how to deal with the creatures. They are hard to kill.

DOHNT

I...who is this old man? Garner, speak up.

Garner salutes him.

GARNER

Sergeant, I don't have time to explain fully. And you won't believe me anyway. But a force is heading our way and we must prepare to fight. Or it will mean certain death for us all.

(beat)

Where is the captain? We must__

DOHNT

He's sleeping! And he gave explicit orders not to be disturbed unless it was important.

GARNER

Goddammit man, this is important!

Coulstock and Lee come forward.

COULSTOCK

What is this shit, Garner?

LEE
Where's all the gold?

DOHNT
Gold? What...Garner? Right,
that's it...you're under arrest.
And so are these savages.

He draws his pistol, points it at Garner.

DOHNT
Coulstock...Lee! Take him to the
lockup. That's an order!

Suddenly, he pitches forward with a grunt, as Tindall
clocks him with his revolver. He stares down at the prone
officer, then up at Garner.

TINDALL
Is there a heap of them fuckin'
things coming here?

GARNER
You seen 'em? You shot at them?

TINDALL
Yeah. Fucking guy in old armour.
Didn't even feel it.

He shudders.

GARNER
They're coming alright.

He raises his voice, looks around at the troopers.

GARNER
Ok, listen up! We gotta get ready
to fight but there's some things
you need to know about the
creatures we'll be fighting...

At the rear, two younger troopers, CHRISTIE and DAVIS talk
to each other.

CHRISTIE
Lord in heaven...that Indian
squaw a mighty fine lookin' thing.

DAVIS
Hell yeah! I wouldn't mind taking
her home to the farm. Could plow
her sweet furrow all fuckin' day.

They both TITTER. Garner's voice can be heard in the
background, explaining the danger ahead.

CHRISTIE

I'll fight you for her! Pistols
at twenty paces.

They LAUGH again.

DAVIS

Fuck no. Maybe she has a sister?
Maybe we could share. I...

A shadow falls across them, as Tindall and McKagan quietly loom. Tindall speaks softly but with a steel in his voice.

TINDALL

I hope you're both listening to
Garner. I really hope you what
to do when these creatures hit
this fort.

MCKAGAN

That's right. It may not save
your life but it may prolong it
by a few minutes.

Tindall's eyes are all over the shop. He's pretty close to the edge of insanity. McKagan seems to be riding shotgun on that wagon too...

CHRISTIE

Hey, we're only having a bit of
fun. We're ready to fight like
everyone else.

DAVIS

Fuck yeah. You ain't no better
than us.

Tindall and McKagan look at each other. They shrug, turn around. Christie and Davis glance at each other too, before moving closer to the front. Garner's voice becomes clearer.

GARNER

...important to take their heads
off! Shooting them in the chest
or legs will only slow them a
little. The killing shot has to
be in the head.

TROOPER(O.S.)

We only got a couple of shotguns
between us. Ones we kept over
from the war.

MURMURS amongst the troop. Verging on a mass panic. At the rear, the forgotten Dohnt stirs, sits up and rubs his head. He gets to his feet, pushes through the soldiers.

DOHNT

No! We got crates of brand new
coach guns in the armoury.

All swivel to the sergeant.

DOHNT

Captain Hayes made sure they were
shipped with our normal weapons.

LEE

How much ammo for 'em?

DOHNT

Five hundred shells. Fresh from
the factory in Washington.
Coulstock...Lee...take two others
and go get them please.

CHEERS from the soldiers. Garner extends a hand to Dohnt,
who eventually shakes it.

GARNER

I'm sorry you was hit. This ain't
no joke. I'm gonna need all your
experience in setting up a defense.

Dohnt nods.

DOHNT

I'll rouse the captain. He'll
understand.

He hurries to the office. Garner turns back to the men.

GARNER

One more thing.
(beat)
If these creatures bite you, you
will become one of them. If you
see a fellow soldier bitten, kill
him immediately.

Tindall's face becomes even paler.

TINDALL

Bush got bit! He was swimming in
the lake.

GARNER

What? Where is he now?

MCKAGAN

In the barracks.

The office door slams as Hayes and Dohnt emerge. The
Captain takes in the scene calmly but with an uncertain
look in his eyes.

HAYES

Garner? What the devil have you
been up too now?

Suddenly, the sound of HOOVES from the edge of the fort.

The sound of high pitched SCREAMING. A trooper staggers
up, falls forward. A nasty arrow protrudes from his back.

Even as they watch, it dissolves, burning the flesh like
acid.

SHAMAN

They are here already! But how
did...

He limps slowly towards the fort's perimeter, un-noticed
for the moment.

HAYES

Sweet Jesus. Someone help him.

Tindall steps forward, LAUGHING hysterically. He puts his
pistol to the man's head, blows his brains out.

TINDALL

He's safe now. But the rest of
us are fucked.

Before anyone can move, he places the barrel in his own
mouth, and pulls the trigger. BANG!

DOHNT

Fuck sake!

More YELLING now, from behind the crowd of men. SHOTS are
fired, as troopers disperse in all directions.

Bush bursts from the throng, snarling, blood already on
torn lips. His face is partially decayed.

GARNER

Oh, fuck.

HAYES

Has the whole world gone mad?

He tries to pull out his revolver, as Bush lunges at him.
Garner gets off a couple of shots, but Bush is like a
locomotive. Unstoppable...

He crashes into the captain, both men falling to ground.
More SHOTS ring out in the background, from the edge of
the fort.

Coulstock and Lee arrive with the crates of guns. Garner
nods, beckons them and they head off towards the main
point of attack.

Dohnt fires at Bush but it does nothing. A geyser of blood erupts from Hayes's neck as Bush rips into him.

DOHNT

Oh, god, captain, no!

Hayes slumps back. Bush chews his face before rising, eyes seeking a new victim.

Burning Knife steps forward, swings her axe. It takes off Bush's head neatly. His body topples over. There's no blood, just a horrible stench.

MCKAGAN

We gotta cut the captain's head off!

DOHNT

Is there no end to this?

He's almost sobbing. Burning Knife raises the axe again, as Hayes sits up, eyes feral and mad. But Hawkins appears from behind, wielding a gun that resembles a small cannon.

BOOM!

The Captain's head explodes, causing another foul odour to escape. Hawkins pats his gun.

HAWKINS

My daddy's LeMat. Saved him plenty o' times against the fuckin' Yankees.

He looks again at the corpses of Bush and Hayes before vomiting on Dohnt's boots. The SOUND of horses ridden hard gets louder. Burning Knife looks around frantically. See the shaman and runs to him.

BURNING KNIFE

You must find shelter, wise One. This fight is not for you.

SHAMAN

Horses. They have summoned their dead mounts. That is how they travelled here so fast. Their power has grown beyond the mere life that I gave them.

BURNING KNIFE

We can defeat them. We must. Did you not say the very world is threatened by their existence.

The shaman nods as Garner leads the soldiers past him.

GARNER

Get the old man in the water wagon. Tell him to keep his head down.

The shaman starts to sway, stumbles on his feet.

SHAMAN

I may...yet help you before this...is over.

He falls unconscious. Burning Knife picks him up gently, carries back to the wagon near the armoury. Garner watches her then turns his attention back to the job.

Two Indian warriors on horseback storm towards the fort. They fire the deadly arrows towards the waiting troopers. Men fall in agony, the acid smoke eating into their bodies.

The main group of soldiers watch in horror, rooted to the spot. All except for Christie and Davis. They nod silently to each other, melt into the background.

Lee and Coulstock run up, holding a crate between them. The other crate is carried by two of the men. Lee has a cavalry sabre in his free hand. It's wickedly sharp.

GARNER

Where did you find that?

He frantically opens the crate, checking the progress of the incoming horsemen.

LEE

In the armoury. Standard issue. A bit of extra steel never went astray.

He takes a gun in his other hand, races to meet the warriors.

GARNER

Jesus, Lee...don't be so__

He sprints after Lee, wielding a coach gun and his revolver. Coulstock distributes the rest of the shotguns. Burning Knife takes off behind Garner.

Lee YELLS to the Indians, mad with battle lust. A horseman veers to take him. Lee waits until the last minute, then steps aside, the horse on him.

The undead Indian turns to swipe at him with a vicious looking axe.

Lee hacks at the horse's forelegs, the impact almost jarring the sabre from his grip.

The hideous animal goes down, sliding in the dust, catapulting the rider forward.

Before it can rise, Lee swoops in with the sabre, decapitating it. At the same time, he blows the horse's head to pieces.

The troopers pause for a moment, stunned. Lee turns to them, YELLS.

LEE

That's how you do it, boys. They might look scary but they can DIE!

GARNER

Jesus, look out!

The second horseman is almost upon Lee. He swings around, lifts the gun. He manages to get a shot off. The horse takes it in the chest but only slows momentarily.

The Indian warrior leaps off, brandishing a barbed knife. Lee fends off the attack with the gun barrel. The creature raises the knife but Burning Knife is there. Her axe bites deep into the Indian's back.

Lee thrusts the gun forward point blank, the creature's head evaporates. The riderless horse continues to run, directly into the milling troopers.

It targets a man, attacks him. The soldier SCREAMS as the horse bites his arm off clean at the shoulder.

Coulstock puts a barrel to the horse's head and kills it. He then quickly finishes off the stricken trooper.

LEE

Garner, I owe your...girlfriend.

BURNING KNIFE

I would've done the same for any of you.

She glares at Lee Lee who salutes her, before stealing a glance at Garner. He smiles back at her before getting back to the task at hand. The soldiers are keen now, though no less scared.

GARNER

Men, these things aren't invincible. If we work together we can whip them.

CHEERS from the troop.

DOHNT

Good work, Lee. I'll make sure
you get a commendation for
bravery. If we survive.

LEE

Mighty kind of you, Sergeant. But
who the fuck is gonna believe us?

He LAUGHS, with the maniacal logic of the adrenaline crazed.

TROOPER(O.S.)

The rest of them are here! More
horses too!

Garner, Lee and Dohnt quickly from the troopers into some
kind of line. The main group of Indians become visible
near the edge of the buildings.

There are ten horses, undead, crazed. Each mount carries
two of the warriors. Arrows already swoop from the air
towards the soldiers.

Further back from the horsemen come the Spanish undead on
foot.

GARNER

Pick your targets men. Keep
moving if you can. Work together.

Then the nightmare force is upon them...

SHOTS ring out, punching into the lead horses. More arrows
fly back, taking down the odd soldier.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Indians leap from their mounts, landing on troopers,
biting, ripping...

Lee fights like a madman, slashing, shooting...

Garner maintains a steady fire, leaving the coach guns to
finish off the wounded warriors...

Burning Knife wields her axe, felling Indians like wheat
before the scythe...

END MONTAGE

Despite their attempts, the band of troopers grows smaller.
Most of the dead are shot with the deadly arrows or
stabbed with knives and lances.

Any that are bitten are killed by their fellow troopers...when possible.

GARNER

Fall back! Back to the horses.

The troopers turn and run, Lee and Dohnt forming a rearguard action.

The trooper's horses are corralled at the northern end of the fort.

GARNER

If we can get on horseback we can stop them!

Lee, Dohnt and Burning Knife are right behind him now. The water wagon is on their left. The pursuing warriors, now reinforced by Spanish soldiers overwhelm a group of troopers, including Coulstock.

Suddenly, Christie and Davis run out from behind the buildings on the right hand side, heading towards the horses.

GARNER

Thank god! Christie, Davis! Cover us. We...

He trails off, watching in amazement as the two troopers mount up, then herd the other horses from the small yard. They fire SHOTS in the air, scattering the animals out into the prairie.

LEE

Fuck! You fuckin' yella pricks!
You're dead meat!

Garner stops, looks back at the advancing Indians. Dohnt hasn't seen the disaster unfold - he's FIRING his revolver at the pursuers. One takes a bullet to the chest then launches a war lance like a javelin.

It hits Dohnt in the belly, straight through, exiting about a foot out his back. Burning Knife SCREAMS in frustration. Lee spins around, calmly reloads his coach gun.

The three of them face the oncoming group of undead Indians and Spaniards,

LEE

Well, we gave it a good shot.

GARNER

Yep. Let's take some of these freaks with us.

He reaches out to Burning Knife, touches her arm. She looks into his eyes, smiles.

Then they prepare for their last stand.

Suddenly, CHANTING from the water wagon! The shaman stands up unsteadily. He holds his palms out towards the creatures. They in turn stop, turn their heads as one towards the old man. Its like they are in a trance.

BURNING KNIFE

He is...controlling them. Perhaps
he can kill them.

GARNER

No. I think he's giving us a
chance. Quickly!

He rushes forward, amongst the paralyzed warriors. Methodically, he starts BLOWING heads to pieces with the coach gun. Lee follows, ripping off the helmets of the Spaniards before killing them.

The shaman's voice begins to quiver, his legs grow weak, Abruptly, he falls back into the wagon. The spell is broken but the work is done.

Burning Knife dispatches the final Indian with an axe swipe. The corpse crumples to the ground, as the head flies off. Garner turns in a circle, scanning for more creatures.

But there's a...silence over the fort now. Garner can see bodies scattered about the buildings - the undead, troopers, the odd horse.

He slumps to the ground. Lee kneels beside him.

BURNING KNIFE

We've done it. We've stopped them.

She holds a hand out to Garner. Their eyes meet.

GARNER

Better check on the old man.

He nods to the wagon. The horses remain hooked up, almost as if they were guarding the shaman...

Another horse SNICKERS, trots around the corner of the kitchen. Lee rises, takes the reins, calms the animal.

LEE

Easy, boy. Looks like they all
didn't scatter.

He mounts up, looks about.

LEE

So, what do we do now? Head to
Fort Wallace, report...this?

He waves a tired hand at the scenes of death. Garner gets up slowly, stretches his back.

GARNER

What would you tell them? That we were attacked by a tribe of dead Indians?

LEE

Well, I...live Indians, dead ones, they won't know any difference.

GARNER

Still gonna be a hell of explaining to do. And we're the only ones left by the look of it.

LEE

Except for Goldson and Hawkins.

He spits in the dirt.

LEE

Fuckin' yellow bastards. If I ever run into them...

Burning Knife is at the wagon, leaning over the shaman. She waves back, nods.

BURNING KNIFE

He's still breathing.

Her raised voice ECHOES in the dead fort. Garner shivers.

LEE

What'll we do then? Just...vanish?

GARNER

Yep. Well, not straight away.

(beat)

We'll go get some of the gold first.

LEE

You...I don't think your Indian lady friend will take kindly to that.

Garner walks to the wagon. Lee nudges the horse along.

GARNER

Oh, I disagree. She suggested it. As long as we leave the bulk of it to help the tribe, well, we can head off mostly anywhere.

LEE

You and her? White man and a redskin? No offense intended.

GARNER

None taken. World's changin', Mr.
Lee. I'm just goin' along with it...

Lee grins, extends it into a LAUGH. He claps Garner on the shoulder. They are nearly to the wagon. Burning Knife climbs onto the seat.

BURNING KNIFE

Are we ready to g__?

The sound of wild SCREAMING shatters the quiet. The trio look in all directions, trying to locate the source.

Suddenly, a shadow from above! The sound is coming from a figure on the roof of the kitchen.

It's Coulstock. Covered in blood, decaying, frenzied...infected. He wields an Indian war lance, and SCREAMS again as he leaps from the roof.

The lance hits Lee in the chest, driving down with Coulstock's momentum. The point passes down into his body, into the horse's back, pinning him.

The animal's SCREAMS mingle with that of Lee and Coulstock. It topples over, Lee still impaled to it. Coulstock falls to the ground, gets up with chilling speed. Burning Knife watches, stricken dumb with horror.

GARNER

Jesus, no...

He leaps at Coulstock, who tackles him in mid-air. Both roll across the ground, crashing into Lee's horse. The coach gun is jarred from Garner's hand. He fends off the crazed soldier snapping teeth, as they wrestle.

BOOM! Coulstock's head explodes. Garner feels the body go limp, sit up. Lee releases the smoking weapon, face pale. Blood and vomit ooze from his mouth. He gropes in his belt for his pistol.

Burning Knife leaps from the wagon. The dying horse continues its hideous noise.

GARNER

I'm ok. I'm alright.

He winces as he gets to his feet. Burning Knife touches his cheek. They both turn to the stricken Lee.

BANG! A single revolver shot. The horse's CRIES stop abruptly.

Lee gently lays the pistol down. He's alive. Barely. The lance merges from his chest like it's a part of him. He's on his side, one leg still under the dead horse.

He COUGHS up more blood as Garner kneels next to him. Burning Knife sobs, watches helplessly.

GARNER

Fuck, man...

LEE

Yeah. Lousy luck. Who woulda...thought my buddy... Coulstock would do me in?

Hi face is as white as a sheet. He COUGHS again.

GARNER

Don't try and...

LEE

Save it. I'm...fucked. At least I didn't...turn into one of them...fuckers.

His eyes flicker but he frowns, looking at Garner's shirt. He lifts his head, drags Garner down for a better look.

LEE

Shit...

GARNER

What is it?

LEE

You've been...bitten.

His eyes close, head slumps. Garner stares at him then feels his shoulder. Burning Knife steps forward, fear in her eyes.

The fabric of Garner's uniform is torn and bloodied on his left shoulder.

BURNING KNIFE

Is that...

GARNER

I don't know.

He grabs the fabric, rips it. The wound is small, but puncture marks are visible. Already, the flesh is darkening...

BURNING KNIFE

No. No, it's not...fair.

She clutches Garner, lips trembling.

BURNING KNIFE

After all we've been through, it's not...

Garner doesn't hesitate.

GARNER

Leave me now. Take the old man.
Get the gold.

Burning Knife starts to cry.

BURNING KNIFE

No, Perhaps you won't turn.
Perhaps__

GARNER

Stop it.

He YELLS with a fury.

GARNER

Go!

Burning Knife stands, walks to the wagon. She looks back at him. Shakes her head.

GARNER

Jesus christ...women.
(beat)
Well, kill me then. Either kill
me or leave.

She doesn't move.

GARNER

Ok, I'll do it myself.

He stands up, tries to manouevre the coach gun against his head. It's awkward. He throws the gun down.

GARNER

Fuck it.

He takes Lee's revolver, puts the barrel to his temple.

GARNER

Go. Please.

She runs back to him, draws her knife.

BURNING KNIFE

I'll do it. But not with the gun.

Garner sits on the ground. Burning Knife kneels, faces him. The knife hovers over his chest. She hesitates.

GARNER

Do it. For me.

He leans forward to kiss her, grabs her hands with his. She tries to pull back the knife back but their lips lock.

He pulls her back onto him.

The knife slides easily into his chest. Garner breaks the kiss, gasps. He kisses her again, until the knife is in to the hilt.

Burning Knife sits back, weeps.

GARNER

Thank...you.

His eyes glaze over, head slumps to one side. Silence descends on the fort once more.

Burning Knife stays beside Garner's body for long moments.

Finally, she gently removes the knife.

BURNING KNIFE

I will not leave you for the animals. I shall bury you in tribal ground.

She lifts his body to a sitting position, gets her shoulders under his chest. With a massive effort, she stands, bears him to the wagon. As gently as she can, she lays him next to the shaman.

She climbs onto the buckboard, gees the horses. Without looking back, she guides the wagon out of the fort.

The sun crawls down the western sky, almost hovering over the cliffs...

EXT. MINE ENTRANCE - DUSK

The wagon pulls up about thirty metres from the shattered opening. Burning Knife jumps down, fumbles through Garner's battered pack. She takes out a stick of dynamite and a flint.

At the mine entrance, she packs the dynamite into the rocks. She sees the rusted crucifix and pulls it free. Working the flint, the fuse is lit, and she hurries back near the wagon.

KABOOM.

For the third time in twenty four hours, the rocks fly. Burning Knife waits until the dust and debris settle. She climbs back on the wagon, moves it closer to the opening.

As she retrieves a torch from the ground nearby, the shaman's eyes open in the back of the wagon. Burning Knife hears him stir.

BURNING KNIFE

Wise One?

SHAMAN

My child...

He sits up, very slowly, limbs creaking with age. He looks at Garner's corpse. Shakes his head sadly.

SHAMAN

Your white soldier is dead. I feel your anguish.

BURNING KNIFE

Yes. He was very brave. He was...bitten by the undead. He gave his life so the infection would not spread. It died with him.

The shaman sighs.

SHAMAN

My actions in the past have caused great tragedy here.

BURNING KNIFE

You were only trying to help my people, master. Now the creatures are gone, we can use the gold for good purposes.

SHAMAN

Yes. It belongs to you by right and bloodline. But the white man's progress across the land may never see our people, of any tribe, live free again.

He sighs again.

SHAMAN

I will rest again. I grow weaker. My time to leave this earth is close.

He lowers his head to the wood, closes his eyes.

BURNING KNIFE

I will gather all the gold I can find. Then we shall leave this place.

She quickly lights the torch, takes a leather bag, heads into the mine.

LATER

Burning Knife emerges from the mine, head down, hauling a full bag of nuggets. She looks up, freezes in surprise, then glum resignation.

The trooper Davis sits on a horse next to the wagon, rifle aimed at her. Too late, she registers another horse nearby. Empty saddle.

CHRISTIE(O.S.)

How do again, Indian princess.

She drops the bag, whirls to her left. A rifle butt fills her vision, then...blackness.

LATER

Burning Knife's eyes flicker open. She's tied to one of the wagon wheels, facing out. Her clothes are still on, but torn. Christie's face looms over her.

CHRISTIE

We gotta thank you for loading up all our gold. Mighty kind.

Davis SNIGGERS. Burning Knife turns her head. He's at the back of the wagon. Garner's body and the shaman lie on the ground.

DAVIS

We had to move your friends. They were takin' up valuable space for the rest of the gold.

He glances at the mine, shivers.

DAVIS

Glad to be out of that fuckin' cave. Bad smell in there.

Burning Knife suddenly spits in Christie's face. He grins, slowly wipes it off.

BURNING KNIFE

Cowards. Filthy animals.

CHRISTIE

I love a feisty piece of tail. Heard good reports about squaw gash.

His hand lashes out, strikes her left cheek hard. Her eyes water but she stares defiantly back at him.

CHRISTIE

Besides, you need a good man now
your boyfriend got himself killed.

He glances at Garner's body, notices the shaman is
stirring. Davis wanders over, gives the old man a kick.

BURNING KNIFE

Leave him alone. He's defenseless.
He's__

DAVIS

Ha! He's the one that brung those
fuckin' things alive. He's a damn
witch or somethin'. Evil...

CHRISTIE

Yep. Fuckin' regular medicine man.

He looks back at Burning Knife.

CHRISTIE

He can watch us give you a royal
going over. Then you're both dead
meat.

BURNING KNIFE

What makes you think either of
you can get it up? You're both
vermin.

Again she spits at him. It lobs in his eye. He squints,
ROARS at her. Punches her mouth this time, splitting her lip.

The shaman opens his eyes, sits up. He takes in the
situation. Christie snarls, kicks the shaman's leg in
anger. Then he grabs Burning Knife's vest, RIPS it off.

CHRISTIE

Kill the old fuck now. She can
watch it.

Davis stares at Burning Knife's naked chest.

DAVIS

Damn...mighty fine cat heads.

CHRISTIE

Shut up and shoot him.

The shaman begins to chant softly, watching Burning Knife.
One hand moves furtively behind his back, hovers over
Garner's face.

DAVIS

What are you mumbling? Saying
your prayers?

BURNING KNIFE

Yes. He is preparing to meet his
ancestors.

She sees the hint of a plan in the shaman's eyes, nods slightly. She looks Christie in the eye, grins. Holds her thumb and forefinger an inch apart.

BURNING KNIFE

I bet your pecker is no bigger
than this.

Christie fumes, starts undoing his trousers.

CHRISTIE

You're gonna be taking it
sideways, bitch. And in both ho...

He stops in the act of tearing off her hide skirt.

There's movement behind the shaman...

DAVIS

Oh fuck...oh lord.

He swings the rifle to the left. The shot goes wide as a figure hits him like a train.

Garner...

An undead Garner. Snarling, frenzied. Full of pure rage and teeth.

In a blur, Garner takes Davis's head in his decaying hands, wrenches violently. A loud CRACK, and Davis slumps to the ground.

CHRISTIE

Fuck no...

He turns to run. But Garner swoops on him, grabs him by the arm. Christie SQUEALS, tries to break free.

Garner reaches down to pick up Burning Knife's axe. In a single motion, he flings Christie to the ground, plants a foot on his chest, and brings the axe down into his face.

Christie's SCREAMS are cut off, as blood sprays up onto Garner. He leaves the axe embedded, turns to Burning Knife.

She holds her breath, waiting. The shaman crawls towards them.

Garner moves towards her, stares into her eyes. She forces herself to look deep into his. His face is ravaged, rotting, but she sees a flicker of recognition.

His bloodied hands reach out to her. She doesn't flinch as he almost tenderly covers her upper body with the remnants of vest. His fingers fumble at the ropes that bind her.

He bends to her feet, unties them. He stands for a moment, swaying, before collapsing to the ground. He's out to it.

The shaman places a hand over Garner's face, chants again. Garner's face ripples, his normal features restored. Burning Knife kneels over him, weeps.

SHAMAN

Do not cry brave warrior.

BURNING KNIFE

He has saved us . Now he is gone again.

SHAMAN

No. I will raise him as he was.
And his spirit will replace mine.
(beat)
Farewell.

He lies back, becomes very still. His withered features shrivel even more. His whole body turns into a cloud of smoke. It forms into the shape of an eagle.

As Burning Knife watches it fly off, a GROAN from beneath her.

GARNER

Damn, have I had the craziest dream.

He sits up, looks about in wonder. Burning Knife hugs him in pure joy. He takes in the wagon, the bodies of the troopers.

GARNER

Well, maybe it wasn't. No, the creatures..at the fort. Lee...we_

She silences him with a hand across his mouth.

BURNING KNIFE

Hush. Not now. I will tell you in good time. For now I just want to enjoy being with you.

Garner gets to his feet, stretches his aching body. His knife wound is gone, healed up.

BURNING KNIFE

I thought I'd lost you.

They embrace and kiss for a long time.

EXT. VALLEY OF THE MINE - DUSK

Garner and Burning Knife sit on the buckboard of the wagon. The shaman's body lies in the back.

GARNER

Ready?

BURNING KNIFE

Yes. We will bury him in my village. Leave some gold there for my people to better themselves. Hopefully.

GARNER

And then?

BURNING KNIFE

Then maybe you can show me your homeland.

GARNER

Sounds mighty fine to me.

They kiss again. Garner takes up the reins.

The wagon moves up the valley, as the sun slips behind the hills.

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

A riderless horse trots towards the gates of a large fort.

SUPER - FORT WALLACE KANSAS

SUPER - ONE DAY LATER

Troopers watch from above the gates. The horse is weary, covered in dust.

TROOPER 1(O.S.)

That looks...yeah, I think it's Captain Hayes's horse. From Fort Monument. See the white blaze on her forehead?

(beat)

Open the gates! And someone fetch Colonel Jones.

EXT. FORT - DAY

The legs of the troopers are visible as they gather around the horse.

TROOPER 2(O.S.)
Poor girl looks hungry.

TROOPER 3(O.S.)
Sure does. Been out there for
awhile by the look. And
somethin's had a go at her.
Coyote, maybe.

(beat)
Back leg's got a nasty bite on it...

The horse rears it's head up.

The eyes glow with the red madness of the undead...

FADE OUT.

The End.