

OUTPOST 22

(A Tall Tale)

Written by

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FULL SHOT -- CLOSE UP

Bright red paint on some sort of textured surface.

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

A large, beautifully painted buffalo hide, depicting the bucolic bounty of the western plains rendered in Indian representational style, is stretched and mounted on a bone frame -- inside an empty tepee.

A bitter wind batters the tepee's interior.

*A.O. -- (Beautiful, ethereal, echoic, unreal -- an eerie chorus of Apache chanters sings a Ghost Song.)*

The wind continues its assault.

The image lingers.

TO BLACK:

All is suddenly dark and silent but the fading haunting ghost song.

FADE IN --

A sparkling stream burbles past, nestled in a foothill landscape.

Its waters ever-so-slowly become streaked with veinous strings of blood. More and more blood mingles within the rivulet.

*A.O. -- (A disturbing, demonic, guttural mantra -- the song of the Shadow Warrior -- replaces the haunted strains of the Indian Ghost Song. Demon drums punctuate the sinister murmuring).*

INSERT OVER --

***In 1864 King Woolsey, a prominent citizen out of Prescott Arizona and a contingent of fellow citizens, requested a meeting with the chiefs of the greater Apache tribes. Eleven chiefs responded and came out of the mountains with their most celebrated braves to talk.***

*After all were seated, Woolsey signaled his men to kill every Indian possible. So many were killed that day, the stream where the engagement took place ran red with the blood of those who died -- thus, the massacre of "Bloody Tanks" commenced the longest, most ferocious and bloody of all the Indian wars. It was a horrifying precursor of things to come.*

FADE TO BLACK:

INSERT --

*"The only good Indians I ever saw were dead."*

*-- General Phillip Henry Sheridan, 1869*

INSERT TITLE -- **OUTPOST 22**

FADE TO BLACK:

A.O. -- A man's voice, giving a speech of some kind, shouts from a distance.

FADE IN -- FULL SHOT

EXT. THE AMERICAN FLAG OF 1879 -- AFTERNOON

It undulates, captured in a warm June breeze.

ANGLE DOWN TO REVEAL --

The ceremonies for the West Point graduating class of 1879 are winding down.

In the distance, the academy's superintendent is giving the closing address from a podium and gallery built on the main steps.

He is flanked by a contingent of plumed-hatted officers and a throng of important-looking dignitaries.

FULL SHOT -- CLOSE UP -- A GOLD AND RUBY CLASS CUFFLINK, ON A UNIFORM

**(Inscribed: 1879)**

TRACKING --

The cadets' stone-like faces reflect the gravity of the ceremony.

FAVORING TWO CADETS --

They pass a silver flask of schnapps back and forth, oblivious to the proceedings.

*Scene Note -- (It is the first time we see the protagonists, Victor and Charles, displaying their insubordinate natures).*

WIDE SHOT --

The Commander's commencement speech, barely audible, echoes out over the open quad.

FULL SHOT -- THE COMMANDING OFFICER

SUPERINTENDENT

(speechifying)

... Some of you, no doubt, will build careers behind a desk. Some of you will become gifted authors, strategists, thinkers-in-arms.

(joking, smiling)

Yet others of you will become celebrated bean counters...

The anxious cadets chuckle and there are whistles.

SUPERINTENDENT (CONT'D)

(serious)

But, there are some of you, a small portion of you, who shall do great things, who shall fight the glorious fight, leading those under you into history!

The Cadets respond with a cheer.

SUPERINTENDENT (CONT'D)

(Steps back and salutes the class)

I salute you class of '79 -- officers all. May destiny and the Lord be your guide.

He doffs his crimson-plumed hat.

SUPERINTENDENT (CONT'D)

Thus, I give you cheers and the best of luck to all of you.

The entire class rises to their feet.

SUPERINTENDENT (CONT'D)

HUZZAH!!!

The class returns his call with a roar.

The Officer returns.

SUPERINTENDENT (CONT'D)

HUZZAH!!!

The cadets roar again.

On the third cheer, the cadets let fly their caps.

SLOW-MO: THE CAPS FLOAT INTO A BRIGHT AZURE SKY

PAN -- THE CAMERA DRIFTS INTO THE SUN'S BLAZING BALL

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A SMOKE-CHOKED PUB -- EVENING

The sun's fire has morphed into a gas cigar lighter. The flame escapes from the torch held in a small bronze nude's outstretched arms.

PULL BACK --

A cadet-graduate puffs on a cigar, rolling the fat stogie in the flame.

SLOW SWEEP --

The place is wall-to-wall drunken cadet-graduates, boisterously celebrating graduation.

ZOOM -- FAVORING OUR TWO CADETS --

Victor and his best friend Charles sit with others of their class at a large table against a back wall.

Swigging ale and rum, they drink to their freedom and to what the future may bring.

*Character Note -- (Charles Van Deere has been friends with Victor since early childhood. He is a sly, cynical, dissolute young man. He is a quick rake with the ladies and fancies himself an intellectual elitist. Charles was not much for academy life and was written up more than anyone in his class who was allowed to graduate. It certainly didn't hurt that he came from an old-rich, New York Dutch family. He was never above sliding by on his tall, blond good looks and/or exploiting his family's powerful name to get ahead).*

*Character Note -- (Victor Harvey IV, son of New York Senator Victor Harvey III, has an artist's heart and an artist's mind, not at all suited to a regimented, upper-crust military life. His dad graduated third in his class at West Point. His father's father had come in second in his class the second year of West Point's existence. He had a brother who was a Captain in the Navy. To say Victor's dismal showing of 150th out of a class of 164 did not make points with his family, especially his father, is putting it mildly. On top of that, Victor was a card-carrying member of the Indian Management Reform Movement, which irritated his hard-line Senator father to distraction.)*

Charles leans out, grabs a comely barmaid and sets her on his lap, spilling her tray of ale over Victor's head.

The table of graduates fall about, laughing.

She snickers and throws him a small towel.

The barkeep fills stein after stein with sudsy ale from brass "tappers" styled like horse's heads.

A huge oil painting of a nude Asian beauty adorns the wall behind the smoky bar.

A tiny stage curtain opens up and two cute, scantily clad raven-haired tarts perform an insipid love song -- accompanied by an out-of-tune parlor piano and a sickly sweet violin.

*Their Song -- **The shy little finch comes out of the rain and flavors the air with the sweetest refrain.***

***She snuggles against my white swollen breasts and between my deep cleavage she builds her a nest.** (And so on)*

The testosterone-fueled pub breaks out in whistles and howls.

FAVORING -- CHARLES AND VICTOR

The barmaid agreeably plants a thick wet kiss on Charles' lips -- then leans over and does the same to the still-dripping Victor.

BARMAID

(giggling, to Victor,  
in a thick Irish  
accent)

You're a sweet one, ain't ya. Why  
don't you and your blond friend come  
'round later?

Victor smirks at her.

Charles is all for the plan.

CHARLES

(not a little tipsy)  
Sounds good to me, darling. Will  
you bring some of your friends? Our  
little party needs expanding... N'est-  
ce pas? Comprenons, mon petite  
cherie?

BARMAID

(dripping with  
salesmanship)

Oh, yeah, I gots lots of pretty,  
willing friends. They'd like you  
two.

CHARLES

Better and better. Throw in some opium, perhaps some absinthe, I will supply the greenbacks and we have a deal then, yes?

Charles takes a pouch from his waistcoat. It is stuffed with \$20 gold pieces.

The barmaid's eyes widen as Charles hands her two golden coins.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

A down-payment then.

She looks at his diamond and ruby ring, flashing in the lamplight.

CLOSE UP --

It twinkles in her conniving eyes.

The bar manager looks over at the bartering pair, yelling at his coquettish employee.

BAR MANAGER

(barking)

Liza! Whore your ass on your own time! Get back to work!

The whole bar erupts in laughter and catcalls.

The barmaid smiles at the two Cadets.

BARMAID

So, will I see you handsome gentlemen later, then?

The two nod and smile.

BARMAID (CONT'D)

(faux-demurely)

Meet me at Madam Peal's, down at the end of Hamilton Street.

(sarcastically)

I'm sure you two fine gents know where to find it.

They both nod.

CHARLES

(chuckling looking at Victor)

Everyone knows that barnyard.

She slides out of Charles's lap and, straightening herself, demurely retrieves her tray.

She returns to the bar -- whereupon, the barkeep immediately fills her tray with fresh flagons of ale.

Victor looks at Charles in faux-disgust.

VICTOR  
 (chuckling, to Charles)  
 You are Beelzebub, Charles. Opium?  
 Isn't whoring scandalous enough for  
 you?

CHARLES  
 (throwing up his hands,  
 laughing)  
 What is this I hear? You're an  
 Officer, aren't you? Time to act  
 like one.

He grabs his drink.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 Really, you're a boor at times,  
 Victor.

He downs his mug of rum and slaps the vessel down on the wooden tabletop.

A friend of our protagonists, Langsley, leans across the table.

LANGSLEY  
 (in a low voice)  
 You two lads up for a third party  
 joining in?  
 (grinning)  
 Seems like there's enough to go  
 'round.

Charles slaps his mate on the shoulder.

CHARLES  
 (loudly, laughing)  
 Surely, Langsley. I know the all  
 tarts can't wait to get an eye of  
 your spotty rump.

The table of fresh officers fall over themselves laughing.

Langsley takes a good-natured swipe at Charles.

Victor shakes the residual ale from his shoulder-length locks, spraying sheets of it over his companions.

VICTOR  
 (laughing)  
 I could do without that image bouncing  
 around in my head.

The barmaid is hard at work behind the intricate cherry-wood, bar.

Victor looks over at her.

She is lovely through the brume of tobacco smoke.

He looks at her cleavage.

She smiles.

He smiles back, continuing to stare at her ample ivory bosom.

FULL SHOT -- HER CLEAVAGE

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. A ROOM -- EVENING

A FOLD IN A SMOOTH, WHITE, SILK, CURTAIN --

*A.O. -- (The sounds of sex, laughter -- a tiny gathering of libertines).*

PAN TO -- THE CRIMSON VELVET DECOR OF THE ROOM

FAVORING CHARLES

Charles is having sex with the bar-wench tart on a beautiful expansive bed.

A half-dressed Victor is sharing a hookah and absinthe with a sweet-faced whore. She strokes his member with her foot, hidden under the Turkish side-table.

Langsley has passed out with another trollop -- both naked and lost within the plush scarlet cushions of a love seat.

Victor looks into his consort's lovely eyes.

She smiles at him -- almost coyly.

Meanwhile, Charles and his lady are climaxing in the corner.

CHARLES

(ecstatic)

God! I love you... Nasty bitch, nasty bitch.

They both collapse in a sweaty, giggling heap.

Victor's whore takes his face gently in her hands and soulfully kisses him.



VICTOR'S WHORE  
 (with a French accent)  
 You are a lovely boy, no? Aren't  
 you lovely.

VICTOR  
 (sniggering, slurry)  
 You're mistaken. I'm a rotten boy --  
 Rotten as they come.

She smiles at him knowingly, as they share a glass of  
 absinthe.

VICTOR'S WHORE  
 So, cherie, are you going off to be  
 a warrior now? That is such a  
 tragedy, such a nice face to waste  
 and such a beautiful mane of hair.

Suddenly --

Her voice becomes surrealistic, echoic. The drugs are taking  
 hold of his faculties and warping his perceptions.

VICTOR'S WHORE (CONT'D)  
 I would hate to see it hanging on an  
 Injun's trophy belt. Such a tragedy  
 that would be...eee...be...eee...

*AUDIO Note -- (Her voice trails off into an electronic wash).*

Victor is stuporous from all the opium and absinthe ingestion,  
 and drifts into an enchantment.

The tart's face suddenly begins morphing between cartoon  
 creature-heads and her own.

Victor eyes droop, as he drunkenly grins at the hallucination.

Her face fades altogether, into a formless mass and then  
 into a nightmarish coyote-creature.

**Victor's Absinthe Dream --**

**And, just as suddenly, the whore appears to him as an  
 astonishingly beautiful Indian Princess, festooned in gold,  
 silver and turquoise.**

DREAM PRINCESS  
 (in a soft, ethereal  
 whisper)  
 Nkêêz, nkêêz.

Victor's eyes start to drift up into his head.

He tries to focus on the strange apparition.

VICTOR

(slurring)

You're beautiful, my darling. A beautiful vision.

DREAM PRINCESS

(insisting)

Nkêêz, nkêêz.

As the hallucinations take firm hold of his senses --

The ceiling floats away and she shows him a stream, cascading from the sky.

CLOSE UP -- VICTOR'S FACE

His eyes widen, his face fills with amazement.

Then -- His features clench in horror.

REVERSE ANGLE --

The Maiden's eyes turn to pools of pus and blood, streaking her features in a mockery of her beauty.

The stream fills and then spills blood, bone, viscera, everywhere. It washes the empty room in an horrific image that surrounds him and the ghostly apparition.

DREAM PRINCESS (CONT'D)

(screaming in agony)

Nkêêz, nkêêz! Dh'nkêêz!

CUT TO:

EXT. A SOLITARY MESA, IN A NIGHTMARE, DALIESQUE, DESERT -- EVENING

A lone bonfire burns upon the mesa's edge.

Victor finds himself surrounded by the fierce shadows of Indian warrior spirits. The vision is transcendent, beautiful and terrifying.

They dance around him, leaping high over his head.

They fly through the air like manic acrobats.

Their faces are all shadows, unformed, disturbing.

Victor is staked and tethered to the ground with leather bindings.

They chant in a monstrous sing-song mantra.

Victor tries to make out features, but they change from vaguely animal to vaguely human.

Their chant becomes deeper, more intricate, contrapuntal, mesmerizing.

They remove long daggers from their sheaths, cutting away his undershirt.

Victor looks into one of their amorphous faces.

One appears to him as his French whore, she softly speaks:

DREAM WHORE

Cherie, they must do this to you so  
you may enter the sacred ground --  
without shame... It may hurt some.

The phantom warriors thrust their blades deep into Victor's chest, solar plexus and stomach.

His neck violently arches, as he screams out in utter pain.

CUT TO:

INT. THE ROOM AT THE BROTHEL -- MORNING

CLOSE UP -- VICTOR'S FACE

Victor is jolted awake by some serious-looking military police.

He looks over to his friend Charles, who is being shackled and led from the room.

VICTOR

Charles! What's this!?

He looks to Langley who is naked and slumped over the love seat face down -- a large pool of dark blood surrounds him.

CLOSE UP -- LANGLEY'S FACE

Langley's death-mask face is white, his eyes staring in opposite directions -- his throat cut to the bone.

A whore stands over the body, crying.

VICTOR'S WHORE

(plaintively)

He tried to kill me! He was going  
to kill me! We had to do something!  
(pointing at the other  
whore.)  
She killed him.

The other whore growls at her.

## OTHER WHORE

You lying cunt! It was her idea all along. I'm innocent!

One of the MPs speaks in a low voice to her, as she and her companions are shackled and led from the room.

## MILITARY POLICEMAN 1

You're all lying whores who're going to hang.

The whores start to wail.

Langley's whore bursts into sobs, struggling with the officers.

## LANGLEY'S WHORE

(screaming)

We're innocent! He was going to kill us!

Another officer slaps her.

## MILITARY POLICE OFFICER 2

(yelling)

Thieving sluts! Take 'em out of here!

A military police officer helps Victor to his feet and shackles him.

Victor is still in a stupor and has no idea of resistance to the bizarre goings-on.

One MP speaks to him.

## MILITARY POLICE OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)

Lieutenant Harvey, you and Lieutenant Van Deere are under arrest for dereliction of duty, desertion and neglect in the death of a fellow officer. Do you understand the charges?

Victor nods, but is a mass of confusion, as they lead him from the awful scene.

They throw him and Charles in the back of a black paddy wagon.

FULL SHOT --

The iron doors slam shut.

Passers-by jump out of the way as the coach roars up Hamilton Street.

INT. GENERAL PURLINGTON'S OFFICE -- DAY

*Character Note -- (General Purlington is a large, imposing figure and a respected military administrator).*

CLOSE UP --

He is tapping his fingers on a bust of Lincoln, looking out over the grounds of a military compound.

PULL BACK --

He turns and takes a seat behind his baroque, eagle-motif-carved oak desk, glaring at the young men through snake-eyes.

REVERSE ANGLE --

Victor and Charles stand stiffly at attention.

Purlington turns to them, leaning further back into his squeaky leather chair -- sucking on his bone pipe -- deep in black thought.

GEN. PURLINGTON

(frustrated,  
exasperated)

Gentlemen, Gentlemen... What is to be done with you? How long have you two been Lieutenants? A day and a half? I think you've set a precedent.

(his voice slowly  
rises to a burn)

Now then -- a fellow officer is dead? In a brothel? Killed by prostitutes, while you two puffed away on opium like filthy Chinese shits?! Is that about the meat of it?!

Charles interjects.

CHARLES

(beleaguered)

If I may sir, we're innocent. You must realize this... They meant to rob us, slit our throats... Langley caught them... and, well, they caught him off guard. That's the truth of it... Sir.

The General bangs his hand on the table.

GEN. PURLINGTON

(yelling)

Put a stopper in it, Lieutenant. I should hang the both of you worthless shits with those sluts of yours.

(MORE)

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
I may, anyway. And your fathers  
could do nothing about it.

Victor and Charles are frozen with dark fear.

Charles rubs his neck.

***INSERT SCENE -- (He sees himself swinging on a hemp rope  
right next to his whore).***

BACK TO:

Victor throws a puzzled glance at Charles.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
(puffing like a dragon)  
If this gets out, it's going to cause  
a huge scandal, feed countless  
editorials, bring shame and  
embarrassment to your good family  
names.

(he rises and paces)  
So -- obviously, something will have  
to be done, and done cleverly. Is  
this clear to you two idiots?

VICTOR & CHARLES  
Clear, Sir.

GEN. PURLINGTON  
(looks hard at the  
both of them)  
You two may have forgotten the fact --  
your fathers are very, very prominent  
citizens and I'm sure you half-wits  
would agree, reading about it in the  
morning papers will not do.  
(shakes his head)  
Not do at all.

They look at their feet.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
(aggravated)  
Am I still making sense?!

The two young men continue to stare at the ground.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
(yelling again)  
WELL, AM I?!

Charles slightly raises his eyes.

CHARLES

Sense? Yes, Sir. Very much so,  
Sir.

The General looks to Victor.

GEN. PURLINGTON

Well, Lieutenant -- what have you to  
say for yourself?

Victor shakes his head.

VICTOR

I'm sorry, General, I have not much  
memory of any of it -- until I woke  
up, of course.

GEN. PURLINGTON

Lieutenant? Woke up? You slept?  
You slept while Lieutenant Langsley  
was having his throat slit?

(shakes his head again,  
huffing)

This story gets better every time I  
hear it.

He returns to his squeaky leather chair.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)

Well, where you two are going, there  
won't be much time for sleep, for  
whores, or opium.

(gritting his teeth)

Only time for killing Indians or  
being killed by them.

The two young Lieutenants look at each other, stunned.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)

(scornfully)

I have wired your fathers about this  
depraved affair and the consequences.  
Their response is to send you...  
Officers... to a corner of the country  
where no one will be the wiser... At  
least until this all fades from  
memory.

CHARLES

But, Sir... I think it would be...

GEN. PURLINGTON

(angrily)

Shut your open flap, Lieutenant Van  
Deere...

He holds his thumb and index finger a millimeter apart.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
You are this far from courts-martial  
and twenty years hard labor.

He retrieves some paperwork from a wooden filing cabinet.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
Here are your court-martial release  
papers. Sign them, and no charges  
will be filed --  
(pointed)  
For now.

He hands them the paperwork, which they sign hurriedly.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
(businesslike)  
I am assigning both of you to one of  
the outposts under Camp Apache's  
jurisdiction in the Arizona Territory.  
I will leave your final assignments  
to your fathers' discretions and I  
will give the Sergeant Major at Arms  
your final sealed orders. Do you  
accept these terms?

VICTOR & CHARLES  
Yes, Sir!

GEN. PURLINGTON  
(dripping with contempt)  
There is a chapel on the compound  
grounds, and I expect the both of  
you to drop by and pay your respects  
to the God that gave you two rich,  
powerful fathers.

The pair look at their feet, shuffling and shrugging.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
(still angry)  
AT ATTENTION, TROOPERS!!

They stiffen up, staring straight ahead.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)  
You two are to meet with your parents  
tomorrow, and the next morning you  
are to board the next troop transport  
out of New York. That is all...  
Dismissed.

The two young officers make their 180-degree turn and head  
for the door.



GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)

(adding)

And, Gentlemen -- try not to get  
killed.

They both stand stoically.

GEN. PURLINGTON (CONT'D)

(his hand to his ear)

What was that? I can't hear you.

They look at one another, then to the General.

CHARLES & VICTOR

YES, SIR! SIR!

EXT. THE VAN DEERE MANSION -- LATE AFTERNOON

*Scene Note -- (The grounds are quintessentially upstate New York, Ivy League, and the rolling hills are lovely through the early evening tule-fog).*

The Van Deere mansion sits like a huge marble and stone castle.

ZOOM IN --

The dining-hall windows are tall, arched and luxuriously draped.

We see that within, there are people sitting at a long dinner table.

INT. THE MAIN DINING HALL -- SAME

There is a somber dinner-party winding down.

The cavernous dinning hall is as ostentatiously extravagant as one would expect.

Charles and Victor are sitting between their promised fiances.

The two ladies are frowning at their future fathers-in-law.

PULL BACK --

At each end of the long table both patriarchs are sitting flanked by their wives, other children, future in-laws, a few relatives and guests.

A great going-away feast has been set, yet no one is eating.

They all sit in an uncomfortable silence.

Charles's father stands, hastening the servants to remove the untouched feast.

A servant removes an entire roasted pig from the table.

Victor looks directly into its seared face.

FULL SHOT --

Its eyes are sewn shut.

VAN DEERE  
 (somberly, to the  
 servants)  
 I think we're all finished here.  
 You may clear the table.

Looking to his family and guests.

VAN DEERE (CONT'D)  
 Ladies, children, the men will retire  
 to the smoking-room now.

The chairs scrape the floor as the party rises from their seats.

Charles's fiancée begins to weep and both women grab their promised young men, hugging them with all their strength.

Charles's fiancée pleads with his father.

CHARLES'S FIANCEE  
 (tears welling up in  
 her eyes)  
 You can't send him away. I won't  
 let you!

Victor's fiancée is more reserved.

VICTOR'S FIANCEE  
 (whispering to him)  
 I don't know what you did, but you  
 will come back to me -- won't you,  
 Victor?

VICTOR  
 Of course, Darling. Don't worry --  
 six months is such a short time.

The young men's mothers and fiancées begin to tear-up.

Senator Harvey interjects.

SENATOR HARVEY  
 (sternly)  
 Ladies, if you would kindly retire  
 to the knitting room. There will be  
 time for tears later.

His words only intensify the teary downpour.

INT. THE SMOKING ROOM -- MOMENTS LATER

The men enter the sumptuous smoking room from the outside hall.

Senator Harvey retrieves a hefty bottle of Napoleon brandy from beneath the bar.

Van Deere hands out snifters as the Senator pours heavy shots.

One of the guests (a Cavalry Colonel) lights a huge Cuban stogie from a flip-top brass gas lighter -- fashioned in the image of an Indian chief's head.

WIDE SHOT --

A large oil painting of the "Battle of Little Round Top" hangs behind the wet-bar.

A bust of President Grant rests atop a Greek pedestal.

Charles and Victor take seats at the far end of the room gulping down their shots of brandy.

*Scene Note -- (The air is heavy in the room and the awkward silence does nothing to alleviate the wayward young officers' anxiety).*

Senator Harvey's brother (Samuel) approaches Charles and Victor.

*Character Note -- (Sam is an impeccably dressed dandy. He is a successful novelist and a notorious libertine. His older straight-laced brother, Sen. Harvey, next-to-loathes him).*

He puts an arm around his nephew, Victor. And leaning into Charles --

SAM

(in a low voice)

Being the black sheep of this family,  
I can understand exactly what you  
two are going through. Trouble is,  
you got caught.

(smiles)

First rule of bad behavior: Never  
get caught.

SENATOR HARVEY

(irritated)

Sam! Keep your asinine asides to  
those silly novels you write.

Sam is offended and sneers back.

SAM

So -- You just pack them up and send them into the middle of that dirty, sick little war.

(pointed)

You may be burying them both before this is over, Brother.

VAN DEERE

(sneers back)

Shut up, Sam, or get out.

SENATOR HARVEY

It's clear, they've finally taken things too far. It's time they accept responsibility for their actions.

(turning to Victor,  
exasperated)

Victor... How on earth did you and Charles think you could stumble through life without consequences?

Victor is offered more brandy by a sympathetic Sam, which he immediately belts back.

VICTOR

(resigned)

I fully accept responsibility for my indiscretions, Father, and will do my duty to the family and the family name. You have my word.

He nudges Charles with his elbow.

CHARLES

(facetious, smirking)

Oh, yes, absolutely, definitely. We will... do our duty.

Poppa Van Deere has had enough.

He walks over and slaps Charles hard.

VAN DEERE

(driving a point)

You two are damn lucky you have us as fathers, or else you two would be facing a long stretch at hard labor.

Charles holds his red swollen cheek.

CHARLES

(calmly, but still  
defiant)

I'm sorry I haven't lived up to your expectations, Father. I'll try harder.

VAN DEERE

You better boy, as God sits on his throne, you better.

The Colonel puts his hand on Van Deere's shoulder, calming the scene.

He swirls the brandy in his snifter, smiling at Victor and Charles.

THE COLONEL

If I may, gentlemen -- Sending them to fight the scourge of heathen savages is the best thing you could do in these circumstances. We can't keep the press from your doorsteps forever.

(looking hard at the two young men)

And besides, they need to feel what it's like to be honorable men --

(brisk, turning his back)

Or you'll lose them to Satan's temptations, it's sure. Then?...

(waving his hand)

They're lost to you.

All the men, save Victor, Charles and Sam, agree.

SENATOR HARVEY

(raises his glass towards Van Deere)

A toast to the safe return of our sons. May they grow into honorable men.

They all raise their glasses.

Sam relights his cigar, refilling Vic's and Charles' snifters.

SAM

(under his breath, to Victor and Charles)

And for God's sake, don't go and get yourselves killed.

EXT. NEW YORK GRAND STATION, MILITARY TERMINAL -- MORNING

FULL SHOT --

The face of a giant black locomotive engine -- **U.S. ARMY** painted across its head, two crossed American flags anchored at its sides -- steams and hisses like a primordial beast.

TRACKING -- THE TRAIN TERMINAL

Troops kissing loved-ones goodbye, boarding the train and grabbing their duffels, hurry onto the train.

A howitzer cannon is being craned and secured onto a flat-bed car.

Horses are being herded into a boxcar. One of them rears and panics.

Three men try and calm the animal but it vaults the guide fence.

WIDE SHOT --

The horse bolts down the terminal, as people leap out of its way. It races down the corridor, the sound of its hooves echoing off the tiled walls.

EXT. ENTRANCE -- NEW YORK CENTRAL STATION -- MOMENTS LATER

A black, expensive-looking coach pulls up to an officers' gate-entrance.

Charles and Victor emerge from the coach dressed in their uniforms. They are closely followed by their fathers and promised fiancées.

Attendants grab the young men's duffel bags.

A Sergeant Major meets the party at the main gate of the officers' terminal.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

(formally)

Senator Harvey, Dr. Van Deere, I can't tell you how honored we are to have two fine new Lieutenants in our regiment.

(looks to Victor and Charles, saluting, smiling, all sunshine)

Lieutenants Harvey, Van Deere, it's a great pleasure to meet you. We need West Point men in our regiment.

Victor half-heartedly returns the salute.

Charles ignores him.

VICTOR

The pleasure is mine,  
(trailing off)  
Sergeant Major...?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
Gaffe' Sir, Sergeant Major Gaffe'.  
 It's French, Sir. Pronounced Coffee  
 with a G, Sir.

VICTOR  
 Of course, Sergeant Major.

The two fathers take the Sergeant Major aside, as Charles  
 and Victor say their sweet good-byes to their teary fiancées.

VAN DEERE  
 (aside)  
Sergeant, I think you know that we  
 need you to take these two under  
 your wing -- show them the ropes.  
 Keep them learning... And keep them  
alive.  
 (smiling)  
 Do you read me, Sergeant Major?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Oh, yes Sir. Like the Bible, Sir.

SENATOR HARVEY  
 And there may be a promotion in it  
 for you, Gaffe'. Maybe some monetary  
 encouragement will insure our good  
 will, yes?

The Senator hands Gaffe' two wax-sealed envelopes.

SENATOR HARVEY (CONT'D)  
 Give these to our sons before you  
 reach Prescott Station.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Leave it to me, Sir. You can trust  
 me to task, Sir, I'll have 'em prim  
 and prime for you when they return.  
 I'm their protector, Sir.

Van Deere lays his arm around the Sgt. Major's shoulder.

VAN DEERE  
 That's what I like to hear...  
 (mispronounces his  
 name)  
 ... Goffee.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Gaffe', Sir...

He hands him a pouch of \$20 gold pieces.

VAN DEERE

There's more in it for you if you keep our bargain and keep it under your cap. Clear?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Yes, Sirs, Dr. Van Deere, Senator Harvey. Say no more.

Charles's fiancée weeps on his shoulder.

Victor lovingly kisses his promised.

The conductor walks down the terminal ringing his bell.

CONDUCTOR

All boarding! All boarding!

The Sergeant Major hastens the two young Lieutenants along and they board the train.

FULL SHOT -- THE ENGINE'S FACE

It lurches forward like an iron animal as it pulls out of the station.

CLOSE UP -- THE ENGINE WHEELS

The wheels grind, sparking the steel tracks as they find traction.

EXT. N.Y. TRAIN TERMINAL -- SAME

Van Deere, Sen. Harvey and the tearful fiancées watch, as the train departs.

VAN DEERE

(looking to Sen. Harvey)

Well -- it's all for the best. Can't say those two are worth a Chinaman's shit.

SENATOR HARVEY

(grinding his cigar

out with his boot)

If they live? -- They'll be a fine set of proper gentlemen.

Both girls burst into a flood of tears.

INT. OFFICERS CAB -- MOMENTS LATER

Gaffe' shows them to their berths.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

There's an upper and a lower here.



He demonstrates by pulling the top berth down and locking it back into position.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
Comfy as a bug in spring, right?

The two nod, but are visibly irked at the whole affair.

CHARLES  
(bleakly)  
Fine, Sgt. Major.

VICTOR  
That will do nicely.  
(grinning)  
I have the top, Charles.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
Well, then... I'll be off to make sure the troops are settled in. Don't want 'em cryin' for their mothers -- See you in a tick -- Sirs.

Gaffe' exits the cab.

A brief moment later --

FULL SHOT --

Three odd-looking commissioned officers enter the cab and take seats opposite Charles and Victor.

*Character Note -- (One is a bespectacled, bookish desk-worm. The other two are tall, thin twins, spit and polished up, in their neat, bright uniforms).*

They all smile at one another.

FULL SHOT -- OUT THE CAB WINDOW

The train steams through 1870s N.Y.C.

INSERT -- **Train Trip: Day 1**

The strangers are all smoking on long bone pipes, silently.

The cab quickly fills with an acrid smog.

Victor and Charles begin to cough, but the Petty Officers seem indifferent.

Victor gets up to open the window but, of course, it's stuck.

He returns to his seat.

VICTOR  
Excuse me, gents. I can't breathe.

PETTY OFFICER 1  
 (leaning forward)  
 Excuse me, Sir? You can't leave?  
 Certainly you can.

He slides the cab door back.

The smoke wafts out into the corridor, stunning two passers-by, sending them into a coughing fit.

Charles is not amused.

CHARLES  
Soldier! He said he can't breathe.  
Snuff those pipes!

They sit, immobile, staring straight ahead.

Charles takes out his side arm and shoots a hole in the window, then points the gun at the three Petty Officers.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 I said pipes out!! NOW!

All three Petty Officers quickly tap their pipes on their boots.

PETTY OFFICER 1  
 (disgruntled)  
 Well, you could have asked.

INT. OFFICERS CAB -- DAWN

FULL SHOT -- CAB WINDOW, COMPLETE WITH BULLET HOLE

Victor's monogrammed silk hanky, stuffed into the bullet hole, flutters in the headwind.

INSERT -- **Train Trip: Day 2** -- Late Morning

The terrain has changed to monotonous farmland.

The three Petty Officers are sound asleep, sawing thick logs, farting, one is drooling.

REVERSE ANGLE --

Charles and Victor are splayed out on their berths in two of the most uncomfortable sleeping positions possible.

Miles and miles of miles rush by the windows.

EXT. THE TRAIN -- SUNSET

It rushes down the tracks, ever westward, into a setting sun.

EXT. THE TRAIN -- NIGHT

The train heads into a black landscape.

INSERT -- **Train Trip: Day 3** -- Early Morning

Our heroes are still crashed-out, slogged, spent, in their pull-down berths.

*Scene Note -- (On a long train ride, as this would be in those days, there was not much to do but snooze, read, eat, piss and shit. Troop trains were not known for comfort).*

Sgt. Maj. Gaffe' quietly pokes his snoot in the cab and sees Victor and Charles still sleeping soundly.

The three Petty Officers are starting to rouse themselves, yawning, stretching.

There are only two pull-downs per side, so one of the twins is curled up on the floor.

Gaffe' recognizes them, grinning.

They recognize him.

They're all smiles.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Ahh, you three. Where are you stationed this time out?

PETTY 1

(wiping the sleep  
from his eyes)

Out of Camp Apache, the usual shit,  
Sgt. Maj. You should know.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

(chuckling, pointing  
at Vic and Charley)

I'm going to be nanny-sitting these  
fine gents.

Victor and Charles are still in dreamland.

PETTY 2

(smiling)

New meat to the grinders, eh, Gaffe'?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

(in low a tone)

Just the opposite. These two lads'  
daddies are New York bigwigs.

(MORE)

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 They're going to make my world a lot  
 easier to deal with, if I can keep  
 them alive.

(chuckling)  
 I guess they got themselves in a  
 patch of trouble and they have the  
 need to lie low.

(whispering and in  
 confidence)  
 One of them is a Van Deere.

The Petty Officers recognize the name.

PETTY 3  
 (nodding)  
 A Van Deere? Well, ain't you the  
 lucky cock.

PETTY 1  
 Better milk the butter out of that  
 one, Gaffe'.

They all laugh, as the two young Lieutenants slumber on.

PETTY 1 (CONT'D)  
 Where did you say they'd be stationed?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 I didn't, but I would think --  
 somewhere safe, up in the northern  
 frontier, I suppose. Safe and surely  
 sound. Wouldn't want lady luck to  
 run out on me, would I?...

(looks both ways,  
 sneaking)  
 Take a peek at this.

He shows them his purse of Van Deere gold; they all smile.

Again, the three Petty Officers laugh out loud.

PETTY 3  
 (incredulous)  
Safe? There is no safe place. You've  
 heard about the uprising?

PETTY 2  
 (slyly)  
 You've been away too long, Gaffe'.  
 The renegades say they're going to  
 kill every white fool or trooper  
 they can find until we kill them...  
 all of them. Kill 'em like rabbits.

PETTY 1

(agreeably)

You surely have your work cut out for you, Gaffe'. Might as well figure one of 'em gettin' hurt.

PETTY 2

Ol' man Van Deere ain't gonna like that.

PETTY 3

I got a fiver says they both get it.

PETTY 1

You're on.

(looking to Gaffe')

Gaffe', you want in?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

The Lord is my guide, Corporal. I know my luck is blessed and that's my wager.

Victor and Charles slowly wake from their catnaps, groggy.

Gaffe' puts a halt to all conversation.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)

(shushing them)

Now put a stopper in it, lads.

Charles and Victor are stiff and not a little grumpy.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)

(agreeably, smiling)

Lieutenant Harvey, you need to inspect the troops. Lieutenant Van Deere, you can take inspection tomorrow morning. Captain's orders.

Charles turns over and groans.

Victor stretches.

VICTOR

Captain who?

CHARLES

Go away, Gaffe'.

Victor tries to straighten himself; it isn't working.

He is having a terrible bout with morning hair and his face is greasy and smudged with dirt, as he places his hat unsteadily on his head.

VICTOR  
 (sleepy, yawning)  
 I need to piss, Sgt. Major.

Gaffe' smiles at Victor.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (pointing)  
 Officer's toilet down the corridor.  
 (puzzled)  
 You haven't pissed in two days?  
 (laughs, shaking his  
 head)  
 I'll catch you up in a tick, Sir.

Victor makes his way down the narrow hall in a semi-stupor.

He can't find the toilet no matter where he looks.

He traverses another cab -- No toilet in sight.

Non-commissioned officers are falling out of their berths,  
 knocking into Victor as he searches to relieve himself.

There is no toilet anywhere.

Victor continues down to another cab.

EXT. BETWEEN PASSENGER CARS

As the train races down a spectacular gorge toward a vast  
 open plain, Victor sees a soldier taking a crap into the  
 wind.

The crouched soldier, saluting and chewing on some vile oily  
 tobacco, juice dribbling down his chin, smiles at Victor.

He grimaces, in midst of a major bowel movement.

Victor shrugs and decides to piss downwind.

INT. TROOP CAB

A baby-faced farm-boy soldier, pressed against the window,  
 marvels at a vista unlike any he has ever seen.

When -- A large turd glances off the glass, smearing it in  
 brown, yellowish excrement.

FULL SHOT -- REACTION OF THE SOLDIER

A sickened sneer cramps his face.

INT. TROOP CAB -- SAME

Victor enters the enlisted men's and conscript's cab.

There are bedrolls strewn on the floor and hanging over the seats. It is a chaotic mess.

The cramped-in troopers are milling about, smoking or playing cards across the aisles. They try making coffee, biscuits and salted bacon on a crude iron stove set in a corner.

In assorted colors, some are still in their long johns.

The cab is fogged in a suspended haze of substances.

A Sergeant sees the bars on Victor's epaulets, and snaps at his troops.

CAVALRY SGT.  
Troopers! Attention!

The cab comes to attention.

Victor is taken aback that his presence should elicit such a reaction. He lifts his shoulder, checking the stripes on his uniform, reminding himself of his higher rank.

VICTOR  
(plain spoken)  
Where is Sgt. Maj. Gaffe'?

CAVALRY SGT.  
Sorry, Sir. Who, Sir?

VICTOR  
Gaffe', Sgt. Gaffe'?

CAVALRY SGT.  
Don't know, Sir. Don't know the gentleman.

VICTOR  
You don't know him?

CAVALRY SGT.  
Know, Sir? No, Sir.

VICTOR  
(exasperated)  
Gaffe', Sgt. Maj. Gaffe'!?

CAVALRY SGT.  
Oh, you mean Gaffe', Sir.  
(pronounces it  
completely different,  
"Goffae")  
Haven't seen him this fine morning,  
Sir. Would the Lieutenant like to  
inspect the troops now?

Victor looks about the car at the troops.

They resemble teen-age rabble rather than a disciplined fighting troop.

They all salute Victor.

The Sergeant salutes.

Victor wearily returns the salute.

VICTOR  
(disheartened)  
Where you headed, Sergeant?

CAVALRY SGT.  
(enthusiastic)  
Camp Apache, Sir -- and then points  
unknown.

Victor smirks, as a conscript hands him some coffee.

VICTOR  
(pleased)  
Thank you, Private.

He takes a sip -- then notices small yellow beetles floating to the surface.

CLOSE UP -- BEETLES IN THE COFFEE

He hands it back to the private.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
A little strong for me, Private.  
Thank you.  
(to the Sergeant)  
Can these troopers ride?

CAVALRY SGT.  
(in a steadily rising  
voice)  
Ride? Oh -- Yes, Sir. They're all  
rancher-boys. They can ride and shoot  
like the devil -- and they're ready  
to kill some filthy buckskin sons o'  
bitches... Ain't we boys!?

The troopers light up a cheer.

VICTOR  
(tongue in cheek)  
Delightful.

Victor turns, heading back up to the Officer's cabs.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
Carry on, Sergeant.



CAVALRY SGT.  
Aren't you going to inspect the  
troops? Sir.

Victor looks at the still-at-attention company.

VICTOR  
I don't see any need, they look  
splendid, Sergeant. Carry-on.

Saying this -- The train suddenly lurches forward and then backward and forward again, knocking everyone standing to the ground.

Victor catches himself, looks out a window and sees an awe-inspiring sight.

A massive herd of buffalo dashes across the tracks.

There is gunfire.

He sees a big bull fall.

CLOSE UP -- A BUFFALO BULL SKIDS INTO THE DIRT --

The troopers run to the windows and become excited at the fanastic sight.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
Keep these troopers here, Sergeant.  
No one gets off the train.

CAVALRY SGT.  
I'll keep 'em quiet, Sir. Count on  
it.

EXT. TROOP CAB -- MOMENTS LATER

Victor rushes out the car-cab and jumps from the railing of the still-moving train.

CRANE SHOT -- REVEALS THE OPEN PLAINS AND THE SEA OF BUFFALO

TRACKING -- FOLLOWS VICTOR AS HE RUNS TOWARDS THE TURKEY-SHOOT

Victor sees Charles, with other commissioned officers, brandishing rifles, taking pot-shots at the onrushing herd.

The shooting-gallery participants seem in some sort of blood-frenzy, laughing and shrieking like children on Christmas morning, as animal after animal falls to the ground.

WIDE SHOT --

Victor runs up to Charles, slapping the rifle muzzle aside, grounding his shot.

CHARLES  
 (indignant)  
 What are you doing!

Victor yells above the chaotic din.

VICTOR  
 (to his fellow officers)  
 Cease fire!... Goddamn it -- Cease  
fire!

The herd rushes by the engine and continues over a rise.

Troopers spill out for a look at the carnage.

Gaffe' appears out of nowhere.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (yelling)  
 Everyone back on board! Now!

The engine begins to steam back up, its whistle plaintively cries out to the magnificent fallen creatures.

It slowly moves up, shoving buffalo carcasses off the track

CONDUCTOR  
 (leaning out)  
 All on board!!

Charles gives Victor a scornful glance as they hop back on the railing and the train pulls out.

CHARLES  
 (disgusted)  
 Really, Victor... You are a boor  
 sometimes.

CUT TO:

WIDE VIEW --

The buffalo carcasses are left to rot like worthless fodder.

Some are still alive, writhing, twitching, convulsing in the throes of death.

In no time -- vultures are landing on the remains, commencing nature's morbid clean-up job.

CRANE UP --

Dozens of beasts lie dead as the train slowly disappears over a rise.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. THE GIGANTIC OPEN PLAINS -- DAY

A.O. -- The lonely sound of a train whistle -- and a high wind.

FADE IN --

WIDE SHOT --

The train is a tiny caterpillar lost in an immense sea of grassy waves.

EXT. AN INSIGNIFICANT WATER-STATION TOWN -- LATE AFTERNOON

In the distance, a water-tower hovers over the tracks.

INSERT -- **Train Trip: Day 4**

The thirsty train steams towards the water-tower.

There are tepees and thatched huts dotting the landscape, their hide exteriors vibrating in a stiff breeze.

Raggedy Indians (mostly women, children and the elderly) emerge from the tepee town, dashing towards the train, waving trinkets, blankets and smoked meats for sale to the troopers.

FULL SHOT --

A huge pile of buffalo skulls lines the rails.

A contingent of Chinese rail workers and their families have built a small tent-town right alongside the tracks.

DETAIL SHOTS --

A Chinese lamp swings in the dusty wind.

There is a large canvas-and-hide tent, housing an open kitchen.

Several Chinese patrons sit on stools, eating noodles with chopsticks.

They hardly take notice of the train-load of troopers, content to cook, eat, chat and smoke their pipes.

A naked Chinese toddler points and giggles at the troopers disembarking.

*Scene Note -- (There are no white people in sight besides the train-load of troopers).*

The troopers exit for a stretch after the long haul and seem elated for a break from the long, monotonous ride.

The livestock doors are thrown back.

Livestock are led to watering troughs beside the tracks

*(The horse flatbeds have a water trough built in.)*

A thick hose quickly fills the troughs with sparkling water -- then swings over to the livestock bins.

The giant main hose's spigot is positioned over the engine's water cap.

A crewman quickly breaks the flange and unscrews the cap.

Water gushes from the spigot and into the thirsty engine tank.

There is a huge pile of wood beside the tracks.

A railroad crew begins tossing wood up to the stackers.

FULL SHOT --

Victor and Charles emerge from the Officers' coaches.

Charles sniffs the air.

CHARLES  
I smell noodles and fresh meat.  
(looks to Victor  
smiling)  
Shall we?

VICTOR  
Sounds charming.

They amble over to the open Chinese kitchen.

Flies seem to be everywhere (on everything) yet no one takes notice.

Charles looks to the (apparent) proprietor and holds up two fingers.

*Character Note -- (The proprietor is an ancient but spry man, with a long grey beard and a white, ass-length ponytail.)*

At first, the small man ignores him.

CHARLES  
(insistent, waving  
his two fingers)  
Sir! Two! Two noodles!

Still, his request is ignored.

He takes out a twenty dollar gold piece and tosses it to the Chinese man -- who miraculously catches it, like a martial arts trick.

The man kisses the gold piece, bowing low to Charles.

Two huge bowls of steaming noodles instantly appear.

The two young Lieutenants take no notice of this, or the flies, sniffing at their bowls like they've entered heaven.

Both Charles and Victor, starved for real food, have no trouble using the chopsticks, and attack the tasty noodles like starved wolves.

A young squaw, no more than 15, approaches them. She is hawking blankets and jewelry.

A baby gurgles in her papoose.

Her wide beautiful face is smeared with dust and dirt.

INDIAN GIRL

(with an almost  
impenetrable Indian  
accent)

Soldier boys, buy?  
(smiling sweetly to  
Charles)

Buy? Soldier boy.

Charles instantly produces two \$10 gold pieces and purchases two wonderfully patterned woven blankets.

CHARLES

(tossing one to Victor)

These will keep us warm. As opposed  
to to Army crap.

(quizzically to Victor)

Aren't you going to buy something  
from this filthy angel?

Victor gives her a \$20 gold piece for a thin bracelet of silver, soft gold, onyx and turquoise -- which he slips onto his wrist.

A tear streams down her cheek, as she kisses the two and moves on.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(sarcastically)

She'll waste it on whiskey.

They both chuckle.

Sergeant Gaffe' approaches, waving at the two men.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

(saluting)

Sorry, Sirs.

(MORE)

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 I know I've been absent a lot lately  
 but, it's a big job keeping these  
 recruits in line.

CHARLES  
 Understandable, Sgt. Major.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (dutifully)  
 Yes, Lieutenant. By-the-way, Sirs,  
 I neglected to give you your sealed  
 orders. Forgive my negligence.

Victor and Charles look puzzled, grimacing at Gaffe'.

Gaffe' hands both Lieutenants wax-sealed envelopes.

CHARLES  
 (finishing his noodles)  
 Not a problem, Sgt. Maj.

He stands motionless, as Victor and Charles slurp their  
 noodles.

There is an uncomfortable silence.

Victor finally speaks.

VICTOR  
 Very well Sgt. Major, dismissed.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (concerned)  
 I would suggest you read your orders  
 before we board...  
 (taking out a pocket  
 watch)  
 Which will be in about fifteen  
 minutes, Sirs.

Gaffe' turns, motioning to the milling conscripts to return  
 to their appointed train coaches.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 (ordering)  
Everyone! -- back on board -- get  
 cracking -- now!!

Horses and other livestock are quickly loaded back onto the  
 flatbeds and boxcars.

CLOSE UP -- VICTOR

REVERSE ANGLE -- VICTOR'S POV

Victor sees a trooper and the Indian girl arguing over a blanket.

The trooper violently pulls it away from her and she grabs it back.

ON CHARLES --

Charles is oblivious to this and turns, walking up a ridge to relieve himself.

ON VICTOR --

Victor rushes over to break up the minor fracas.

He sees the trooper brutally slap the Indian girl to the ground.

The helpless infant spills from the papoose.

The trooper begins kicking her as the infant wriggles and bawls on the ground.

Victor, stepping up to the trooper, removes the side arm from its holster and presses the muzzle against the trooper's skull, cocking the hammer.

VICTOR

One more blow, Private -- and I'll paint the dirt with your brains.

TROOPER

(quickly raising his hands, pleading)

No, Sir -- please, Sir. The bitch was trying to gyp me. I'm square on this.

Victor motions for her to move away, uncocking the hammer of his revolver.

The Indian girl smiles at Victor and, retrieving her child, runs back towards the encampment.

Victor angrily kicks the trooper aside.

VICTOR

Dismissed, Private!

The trooper scowls at Victor.

CLOSE ON THE TROOPER --

TROOPER

(biting his words)

Yes, Sir!

(MORE)

TROOPER (CONT'D)  
 (under his breath)  
 Indian lover.

As the whistle screams, Charles catches up to Victor.

CHARLES  
 (blasé)  
 Trouble with the rustics?

Victor returns his gun to its holster.

VICTOR  
 (forlorn)  
 This has got to get better... I'm  
 having no fun at all.

FULL SHOT -- THE TRAIN

The train continues on its journey into the hills.

Back at the Chinese kitchen --

The old cook sees the two unopened wax-sealed envelopes that  
 have been carelessly left behind.

He opens them to see if any money is inside and, seeing none,  
 tosses them into the fire pit.

ZOOM IN -- THE FIRE PIT'S FLAMES

CUT TO:

INT. THE TRAIN'S FURNACE

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

A two-man wood crew, smudged with charcoal, is heaving logs  
 into the boiler.

EXT. THE TRAIN -- DUSK

The gas floodlights on the engine's head flame on, throwing  
 out two yellow beams into the dark purple hills.

The train puffs and chugs its way into a liquid starry night.

TO BLACK:

INSERT -- **Prescott Station, Arizona Territory**

INT. THE TRAIN -- MORNING

Throughout the train, everyone is asleep.

Troopers, conscripts, officers snooze and snore as the train  
 rocks them like a mother's womb.



Guards nod at their posts.

CLOSE ON --

In a corner of a troop car, rotting food is being shared by a covey of rats.

Sgt. Maj. Gaffe', head thrown back, snores like an angry bull.

INT. VICTOR'S AND CHARLES' CAB -- SAME

Victor and Charles are asleep in their compartment.

INT. THE ENGINE CAB -- SAME

The Engineer has a hand on the throttle, swigging whisky with the other. He hands it to the boiler-man, who also takes a deep swig.

EXT. PRESCOTT STATION -- CRACK OF DAWN

INT. PRESCOTT STATION -- SAME

CLOSE UP -- THE TELEGRAPH MAN'S EYES

The train's shrill whistle wakes the telegraph man from his sleep.

He bolts up in his cot and, stumbling over to the telegraph machine, taps out a wire that the transport has finally arrived.

-- PRESCOTT STATION

The approaching train's lamps can be seen from the station dock.

A beautiful desert dawn frames the scene, as the sun clears the eastern hills.

CRANE SHOT --

The sleeping town spreads out onto the scrub-land in a riot of boomtown clutter as --

The train pulls into the station dock.

*Scene Note -- (Prescott is a semi-organized mess of wooden structures, half-finished buildings, canvas tents, tepees and what-have-you).*

There is a large troop bivouac near the station.

EXT. PRESCOTT STATION -- SAME

Steam gushes from the train's hot under-chassis as it squeals to a halt.

INT. THE TRAIN -- SAME

Everyone is jolted awake.

The officers, fresh troops, horses and livestock disembark.

EXT. MAIN STREET, PRESCOTT -- SAME

The town is just stirring to life.

A cadre of silver miners, their loaded pack-wagons, donkeys and horses, lazily trot up the dusty street.

A stray dog takes a shit in the road.

TRACKING -- THE MAIN STREET STORE FACADES

Store proprietors are opening their shops for business.

The sun begins to bathe the waking frontier town.

A barber-tonsorial shop owner tosses a sleeping drunk from his doorstep onto the esplanade.

The drunk turns over and, filling his pants with a torrent of piss --

DRUNK

I'll fuck you! I'll fuck you!!

He turns over, passes out and unceremoniously slips off the raised sidewalk.

From across the street --

A trio from the brothel, **The Hotel Sapphire**, spill out onto the walk, tipsy, singing.

*Scene Note -- (They are off-duty officers soused after a night's tear).*

TRIO

(stridently and out  
of tune)

Oooh, twist the rye. Oh, twist the  
rye. Corn and sugar, spit the demon's  
eye... Oh, twist the rye, twist the  
rye, drink the dawn, 'til the well  
runs dryeee!

They head toward a funky-looking restaurant across the way, with a sign announcing: **10c BREAKFAST 6 TO 10.**

FULL SHOT -- THE CHURCH STEEPLE

The bells announce another morning, another day in frontier-land -- for real.

EXT. CAMP PRESCOTT'S MAIN GATE -- SAME

Fresh troops, Officers, et al., begin pulling into the camp bivouac.

Victor and Charles pull up to the gate in a covered supply wagon.

A trooper stops them at the main checkpoint. His name is Corporal Limmings.

*Character Note -- (Limmings is a slender, sinister, bespectacled, rodent-like creature).*

LIMMINGS  
(in a thick New Orleans  
accent)  
1st Lt. Harvey, 2nd Lt. Van Deere?

Victor and Charles nod.

FULL SHOT -- THE SKY

Thunderheads quickly roll in out of nowhere.

There is a cloudburst. It begins to rain.

ON LIMMINGS --

LIMMINGS  
The Commander wants to see you two,  
Grab your duffels and follow me --  
(mocking)  
Sirs.

They climb down off the wagon and instinctively follow after Limmings.

The rain increases.

FOLLOWING THE TRIO --

CHARLES  
(warily)  
And who are you, Corporal?

LIMMINGS  
(terse)  
Limmings, Sir.

VICTOR

(amused)

Like the animal? You know the one  
that marches off cliffs?

LIMMINGS

That's not very funny, if you will  
excuse my boldness, Sir.

Charles is irritated.

CHARLES

Where are we going, Corporal?

LIMMINGS

(humorless)

Camp Commander.

It's raining harder now.

CHARLES

We're tired and hungry, Corporal.  
Train trip was hellish. Can't this  
wait?

Limmings hurries them along.

LIMMINGS

Afraid not... Sir. Keep up, please.

The rain intensifies.

In silence, the trio walks down what seem to be endless rows  
of soggy tents full of waking troopers.

A bugler sounds reveille as the three pass him by.

The downpour soaks everything while thunder groans in the  
distance.

Victor and Charles look at each other, bewildered at the  
situation.

They continue through the endless maze of troop tents.

Suddenly before them --

Two troopers jump from their cots and run from their tent,  
into the sudden storm, covered with fire ants. They roll in  
the mud, screaming.

They skirt around the mess.

The trio continues on --

A trooper dumps out his toilet pan, splashing muck onto  
Victor's boots.

The trooper, seeing what he has done, stiffens and salutes the Lieutenant with a stupid smile pasted across his face.

With the torrent soaking him --

TROOPER  
(grinning)  
Mornin', Sirs.

Victor half-salutes the gap-toothed Private.

FULL SHOT --

The bugler repeats his insistent cadence.

WIDE SHOT --

The Camp begins to stir to life, as a thunderhead unleashes its fury from above.

Again, reveille blasts, barely heard between thunder claps.

The trio do their best avoiding the swarm of troopers.

WIDE SHOT -- THE SKY

Just as suddenly as they appeared, the huge thunderheads rush on, torn by the jet stream, bringing the downpour to an abrupt end.

The sun streams through the clouds.

ON LIMMINGS --

He guides them to a large log block-house (Command Headquarters) sitting at the head of the bivouac.

A giant, tortured dead tree sits 20 yards to the right of it.

Two corpses swing slowly from a thick, stump-like branch on the ancient tree.

CHARLES  
(looking at the bodies)  
So -- this is Hell and welcome to  
it?

LIMMINGS  
(ignoring him)  
Follow me, Sirs.

ON THE CORPSES --

Both have signs hung on them: **1) Cowardice** and **2) Deserter**

CLOSE UP --

Maggots pour from the eye-sockets of one of the unfortunate bodies.

FAVORING --

A vulture suddenly lands on the other corpse and starts picking at its head.

FULL SHOT --

A coterie of Comanche Indian scouts have gathered around the tree, enjoying the fresh sunlight and a brief respite between storms. They light up smokes and show off their quick-draw techniques to one another.

*Scene Note -- (They are dressed in smoothed buckskin trousers, white shirts, vests and bandannas, looking fresh as daises. They are in stark contrast to the dirty, waterlogged, miserable troopers that surround them.)*

They stop and stare at the passing trio.

Victor and Charles try not to make eye contact, gawking instead at the hanging copses.

A big, handsome Comanche Buck (a swirling, patterned, intricate luck-stain adorning his neck and right shoulder) smiles and winks at the young, green Lieutenants. He throws a kiss towards them.

*Scene Note -- (Staining the skin with designs using indigo ink was a mark of honor in some Indian rituals).*

Lighting-quick, he flips his side arm from its holster, whipping it behind his back and then -- dead-on -- blows the vulture's head into paste.

The carcass lands before him with a thud.

The Scout winks and throws them another kiss.

The other Scouts nod their head in agreement that, indeed, that was a great shot.

EXT. COMMANDER TRENTON'S HEADQUARTER -- BLOCKHOUSE

He storms out of blockhouse to see who fired the round.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
(indignant)  
Who fired that shot!? I want to  
know... NOW!

No one within earshot pays much attention.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
What pig-fucker fired that shot!?

The Big Buck raises his hand.

COMANCHE SCOUT  
(in a heavy dialect)  
That my shot, Sir.

The other scouts snicker.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
(barking)  
Those bullets aren't free! -- Who  
are you trying to impress, anyway? --  
You goddamn savage. Get packed up!  
You're moving out in the morning.

They all stand and stare at the raging Trenton.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
(empirical)  
I said, get packed up! Or no  
goddamn brandy. Understand?

The Big Buck and Trenton have a stare-down contest -- and Trenton wins.

The scouts mumble amongst themselves and throw out a couple of curses, dispersing.

Trenton sees Limmings and the two Lieutenants.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
Limmings! Get your woman's ass in  
here.

He heads back into the blockhouse and they follow.

*Character Note -- (Commander Trenton is a hardened, unrepentant Indian fighter. He is the type of Commander white men would feel comfortable dying for no matter how silly the reason. He instills respectful fear in those under him. There is a demented, yet understandable, quality to his nature).*

INT. TRENTON'S OFFICE -- SAME

Trenton walks over to a large map of the Arizona Territory, as they enter his lair.

There are stick-pins dotting the surface.

He sticks one in the silver-mining city of Silverton and writes **Massacre -- 20 Dead** in soft-lead pencil.

He turns, as the trio stands before him at attention.

Trenton looks to Limmings.

COMMANDER TRENTON

Well?

LIMMINGS

Sir!

COMMANDER TRENTON

Who and what are these?

LIMMINGS

Lieutenants Van Deere and Harvey,  
Sir!

The two Lieutenants chirp in tandem.

VICTOR & CHARLES

Reporting for duty, Sir!!

Trenton is terse and pithy.

COMMANDER TRENTON

(severe)

Very well -- I don't have time -- I don't -- or patience, or sympathy for anyone -- Out here, I am God. No gods before me. Only me. Am I making myself clear, Lieutenants?

VICTOR & CHARLES

Crystal, Sir! Yes, Sir!

COMMANDER TRENTON

(Pacing, waving his arms)

The goddamn heathens have risen from the grave again. Those goddamn Savages!! You kill them and they turn into ghosts... and they haunt you like -- Pig-fuckers!

(he looks into their faces)

... Boys, good boys, are dying out here... And they're not dying like Christians!

(shakes his head)

Horrible!! What they do to the ones they don't kill. Jesus wept!

Victor and Charles have turned pale with shock. "What is going on?"... fills their features.

He pounds his fist against the map.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)

I need officers! Goddamn it! I need good goddamn officers! Even pig-fuckers like you two will do!



Limmings leans over the desk and whispers something to the ranting Trenton.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
 (in a low voice, with  
 a foot-in-mouth look)  
 Oh, that Van Deere... Oh, shit...  
 the New York Van Deeres...? Yes, I  
 forgot.

Victor and Charles look quizzically at one another.

Limmings continues to whisper to the Commander.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
 (in a lower voice)  
 Senator Harvey's son? Oh, my dear...  
 Lord... Shit. That's right. Limmings  
 why didn't you...

They both turn and smile at the two confused Lieutenants.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
 Dismissed, Limmings... Oh, and find  
 that good-for-nothing Gaffe'. Tell  
 him to double-time it over.

LIMMINGS  
 (dutifully)  
 Sir, yes Sir!

Trenton rounds his desk and puts his hand on Victor's shoulder, taking him aside while ignoring Charles -- for the moment.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
Harvey -- I am a great admirer of  
 your father. He knows that the Indian  
 problem has one outcome and one  
 outcome only... And, you know what  
 the outcome is, don't you, son?

Victor looks uninterested, shrugs his shoulders and smirks at Charles.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
 It's us or them, son. It's a harsh  
 justice we deal out here.  
 (squinting into  
 Victor's eyes)  
 Your father has a firm grasp on this  
 ... Yes?  
 (slaps him on the  
 shoulder)  
 This is all out war, Son... all...  
 out... Holy... War!

Charles looks over into a corner where a long Apache magic-stick is decorated with the scalps of dispatched braves.

He turns and makes a face at Victor.

Victor tries his best to stifle a laugh.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
Oh? So this is funny to you,  
Lieutenant?

VICTOR  
No, Sir, to the contrary, Sir.

CHARLES  
(interjecting, yet  
politely)  
No sir, we don't find this funny at  
all. But, permission to speak, if I  
may, Sir.

Trenton nods.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
Permission to speak.

CHARLES  
(snide and with utter  
confidence)  
If you ever want to get out of this  
shit-hole you call a command, Sir, I  
would suggest that you start kissing  
our very important hindquarters.

Charles removes a timepiece from his coat.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Right about now, will do... Sir.

Trenton's neck becomes visibly red as he calmly walks behind his desk, slow-burning to a glow. He takes a seat.

He looks up at the two Lieutenants, up and down, coming to a boil.

He looks like he is going to explode, maybe kill the two young men where they stand.

He puts his head in his hands and sighs.

He opens a desk drawer and removes a beautiful Colt .45, placing it on the desktop.

Charles is starting to look as if his confidence in his own bullshit is fading.

FULL SHOT -- THE CARVED ELEPHANT IVORY HANDLES

The white ivory gleams in the dappled light.

Victor and Charles look nervous.

Trenton reaches deep down into the desk-drawer. (Who knows what he's going to pull out next?)

Beads of sweat appear on Charles' and Victor's brows.

Visions of the two hanged men drift into their mind's eye.

QUICK CLOSE-UP -- ONE HANGED MAN'S GHASTLY, RAVAGED FACE

CUT TO:

Trenton pulls out a large shape.

The two young men wince.

It is a bottle of expensive Napoleon brandy that Trenton places next to his gun.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
(proudly)  
1810 Napoleon. The best.

He produces snifters.

Victor and Charles heave a sigh of relief.

Trenton sets the three snifters down and pours a hefty shot in each.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
(chuckling)  
You have a full ball-sack, Boy --  
Pull up a seat, Gentlemen.  
(offering)  
Cigar?... Cuban. They roll them on  
whores' asses, you know.

The atmosphere changes.

They all enthusiastically light up.

Sgt. Maj. Gaffe' enters the office and snaps to attention.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
Sir!

COMMANDER TRENTON  
At ease, Sgt. Maj.

VICTOR  
Where have you been Gaffe'?

Gaffe' looks lovingly at the brandy bottle.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Making supply allocations, Lieutenant.  
 Always busy, work's never done.

Gaffe' keeps staring at the brandy bottle.

Trenton relents to Gaffe's thirsty eyes.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Very well, Sgt. Maj. pull up a seat,  
 here.

Trenton hands him the bottle.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Thank you, Sir.

Gaffe' reaches into his coat, removes a collapsible tin cup and quickly fills it.

He takes a deep swig.

He leans back, sighing, as if he's tasted heaven.

Victor and Charles look at the Sgt. Maj. with mixed curiosity.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Gaffe' what are the orders for these  
 two?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 I gave them their sealed orders before  
 we reached Prescott.

Trenton looks to the two young men.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 You have your orders with you,  
 Gentlemen?

Victor and Charles suddenly remember the two envelopes Gaffe' handed to them.

CUT TO:

The Chinese cook, at the water station, tossing the envelopes into the fire.

The wax-seals bubble and melt.

CUT TO:

SPLIT SCREEN --

Both Charles' and Victor's fathers sit at their desks, writing the duty orders for their sons.

VOICE OVER -- one fades into the other.

SENATOR HARVEY

Dear Commander... Sir, I would like to introduce you to my son, Victor...

VAN DEERE

... Charles. He has found himself in a shameful spot of trouble and I need to rectify the situation within your utmost confidence. You will assign him to Camp Apache, 6th Cavalry detachment where he can...

SENATOR HARVEY

... face the realities of manhood and the challenges of command and hopefully...

VAN DEERE

... learn what it is to be a soldier of honor...

SENATOR HARVEY

Do your job well and you will be rewarded.

VAN DEERE

Yours, Dr. Hansieg Van Deere esq.

SENATOR HARVEY

Senator Victor Harvey III.

They slide the notes into envelopes, sealing them with wax.

They stamp "U.S. Army" into the soft wax.

CUT TO:

Victor and Charles shrug their shoulders.

VICTOR

We lost them, Sir.

COMMANDER TRENTON

You lost them?

CHARLES

Damn, Victor. We left them at the Chinaman's kitchen.

COMMANDER TRENTON

(pacing again)

Don't panic, Trenton, don't panic.  
I don't dare send a wire to your  
fathers that you two nitwits lost  
your orders. They'd buck me to  
Private... Hmm... Must use logic.

He pours himself another brandy and takes a swig, thinking.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)

I'm sure your fathers would want you  
safe. Agreed, Sgt. Major!?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Safe and sound as an iron trap, Sir.

COMMANDER TRENTON

There must be somewhere safe in this  
goddamn Territory.

VICTOR

Will we keep our scalps, Sir?

CHARLES

With our various appendages intact,  
Commander?

Trenton steps up to the map.

COMMANDER TRENTON

This may take some incentive to help  
my thought processes along.

CHARLES

This may help sharpen your brain,  
Sir.

Charles tosses a leather pouch of \$20 gold pieces on the  
desk.

Trenton hears the chink of many gold pieces and without  
turning around --

COMMANDER TRENTON

Gaffe', get over here!

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Sir!

They both scan the map, their backs to the young Lieutenants.

Victor and Charles confidently pour themselves more brandy.

They clink their glasses.

Trenton and Gaffe' talk quietly.

Gaffe' points to an isolated northern outpost -- Outpost 22.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 Why not Outpost 22, Commander? A bunch of women and children up there -- last time I heard.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Who's the officer in charge there, Sgt. Maj?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Major Faust, 3rd Cavalry. Sir, I'm sure Faust could use a couple of West Point grads.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Yes, Faust. He's a good man. 3rd Cavalry, a bunch of reb farm boys stationed there, right?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 So, what's the harm? Maybe these two wet bottoms...

turns and looks at the two young men, who are lighting up cigars, paying no attention.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 ... will learn a few things from Major Faust without getting themselves killed.

Turning back to the map.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 We'll be able to pull the wool over their old men's eyes. They've already paid for my attentions to their precious, wayward sons.

Gaffe' shows him the pouch of gold coins.

Trenton is enthusiastic.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Gaffe', you're a genius -- for a complete idiot.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Thank you, Sir. I think.

They both turn and face Victor and Charles.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
 Very well, Lieutenants.  
 (MORE)

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)

You two will leave with tomorrow's supply train. It's a hundred and fifteen miles northeast of here. A good three days on the trail... But the Commanding Officer is a good one. He'll get you there in one piece.

He points to the map.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)

There's a shit-spit silver-mining town about five or ten miles from you.

He points to a town above Tuba City, a place called **Argentum**.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)

Plenty of gambling, whores and cheap whisky. It's relatively quiet. No rampaging savages.

(paces, a little,  
thinking)

Gaffe', you will accompany them.  
Yes?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

I'm their guardian angel, Sir.

COMMANDER TRENTON

And, if I hear you're anything less, I'll make things nasty for you, Gaffe'. Clear?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Crystal, Sir.

Trenton salutes.

COMMANDER TRENTON

See you in six months, Lieutenants.

(placing his index  
finger on his nose)

Gentlemen, we will keep this contract to ourselves, agreed?

Victor and Charles salute.

CHARLES & VICTOR

Sir! Yes, Sir.

CHARLES

We're grateful, Sir. We're not really the Indian-fighter types, Sir.



VICTOR  
Not at all, Sir.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
Yes, Lieutenants, I can see that.  
Troopers, dismissed!

As they leave, Trenton grabs the pouch of gold coins.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
Sgt. Maj. A word, please.

Gaffe' turns as Victor and Charles exit the office.

He removes half the gold coins and tosses the remaining contents to Gaffe'.

COMMANDER TRENTON (CONT'D)  
Keep them safe, Gaffe'.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
(resigned)  
Will do, Commander, Sir. Safe as  
Christ's milk.

COMMANDER TRENTON  
I hope so...

EXT. ROAD OUT OF PRESCOTT -- AFTERNOON

REVERSE ANGLE --

The head of a long supply-wagon train pulls over a ridge.

CRANE UP -- CONT.

Prescott is seen in the distance.

A coterie of Comanche scouts trots over the rise. The Big Buck is among them.

He looks back at Victor, who is trying to control his wagon team without much luck.

Victor looks up, as the Big Buck continues to wink and smile towards him.

Victor tries not to make eye contact.

Victor's wagon traverses the rise with Charles (looking splendid on his mount) trotting close behind.

He catches up to Victor's wagon.

ON CHARLES --

Charles takes a swig from a flask, offering it to Victor -- who takes a swig, trying not to notice the amorous looks he thinks he's getting from the Big Buck.

Charles picks up on this, shaking his head and chuckling, as he rides on ahead.

CHARLES

Why Victor, I think he likes you.

Victor is not amused, attempting to keep his wagon in line with the others.

The trail descends.

The wagon train snakes into the open desert.

LONG SHOT --

The wagon train is framed by an expansive desert valley, as it shambles along the dusty trail.

EXT. THE GREAT DESERT PLAIN -- LATER -- DUSK

The wagon train circles in on itself in a defensive posture, forming that evening's encampment.

Distant buttes are silhouetted in purple twilight.

The sun's radiating spires lick the rosy-pink sky, as it sinks over the horizon.

Troopers build a central bonfire.

It roars into existence.

Troopers fill sacks with dirt and build fortifications.

Indian scouts and troopers begin patrolling the perimeter amid the gathering gloom.

Two Indian scouts share a rolled cigarette, as others build cooking fires. Everyone else starts settling in for an uncertain night.

A trooper removes a canvas drop-cloth covering a Gatling gun.

Another trooper breaks open an ammunition case.

They load the machine gun and point it out towards the open desert.

A squaw is stirring a large pot of bean and corn chowder.

EXT. VICTOR'S AND CHARLES' CAMPSITE -- MOMENTS LATER

*(Thanks to Gaffe', Victor and Charles have their own wagon; things could be worse).*

Gaffe' approaches their campfire.

Two chickens are charring on spits.

Gaffe' looks at the ruined supper, kicking it over into the flames, shaking his head in disgust.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
(scornfully)  
Fools.

Gaffe' peeks into the hooded wagon and finds our heroes already half drunk.

They have helped themselves to a case full of brandy stamped:  
**CAMP DEFIANCE ONLY**

Charles looks up.

CHARLES  
(smiling)  
Sergeant Major! Come in, come in.  
Welcome to our shit-pile.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
Sirs, I think your dinner is ruined.

VICTOR  
To hell with it, Gaffe'. Look what  
we've found.

CHARLES  
Take a bottle for yourself.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
(disgusted)  
I think that was for the Comanche  
scouts, Sir. That's how we pay them,  
you know. They aren't going to much  
like you two drinking their wages.

Charles tosses Gaffe' a \$50 gold piece.

CHARLES  
Pay the brutes off. The brandy stays  
with us.

Gaffe' indignantly makes like he is going to throw the coin back in Charles' face, but catches himself and instead, stashes it in his breast pocket.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (gravely serious)  
 It's about honor, Lieutenant. Honor  
 is all we have to give them.

He climbs onto the backboard and into the wagon, gathering  
 up the case of brandy.

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 They don't want your gold. They  
 want the brandy, 'cause it's  
 honorable. Understand? They will  
 cut a man's Adam's apple out and  
 show it to 'em for less...  
 (exiting the wagon,  
 facetiously)  
 Sir!

Gaffe', the case of brandy on his shoulder, looks back at  
 the two green Lieutenants.

His head is silhouetted, illuminated against the glowing  
 campfire, throwing streams of orange and yellow fingers  
 through the smoke.

He looks like a prophetic visionary from some other century  
 as he plainly states --

SERGEANT GAFFE' (CONT'D)  
 Reveille at 5, inspection at 6, we  
 move out at 7. I will wish you a  
 good evening, Lieutenants.

CHARLES  
 Hold on Gaffe'.

Charles takes one last giant swig, taps the cork back in and  
 tosses the bottle to Gaffe'.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 Wouldn't want to antagonize the  
 natives, would we?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (politely)  
 Evening, Lieutenants.

An Indian scout sees Gaffe' has returned with the missing  
 brandy and gives out a whoop.

They slap him on the back with affection.

He hands them their case of brandy.

COMANCHE INDIAN SCOUT 1  
 (disgusted)  
 Et aut ha'ty, Gaffe' Tn^nkda puue`t.

INSERT -- SUBTITLE

**"KEEP THOSE MORONS IN LINE, GAFFE'.**

Gaffe' answers them in their own tongue.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
Eu` ahe aht^a ehea, ehek eknuht,  
whupum. Eht whupum.

INSERT -- SUBTITLE --

**"I do what I can do. Trust me, they are worth money to me.  
Lots of money."**

Sergeant Gaffe' throws Scout 1 the gold piece.

The Scout bites on it and tosses it to the Big Buck.

The Big Buck steps forward.

BIG BUCK  
Tu`enkt unknta-he' he, ah untah

INSERT -- SUBTITLE --

**"THEY'RE ASKING FOR IT."**

BIG BUCK (CONT'D)  
Yahh, tehen. Ahtehw-a kuhu'eh.

INSERT -- SUBTITLE

**"Maybe we should teach them a lesson."**

The other scouts chuckle.

Gaffe' is not amused.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
You stay away from them! Hear me?  
He'h heht? Stay away, or you'll  
find yourself at the end of a rope.

The Big Buck flings the gold piece into the darkness.

BIG BUCK  
Don't need rich white soldier gold.  
Buys the Devil. We let them alone  
'cause we like you, Gaffe'.

He looks to his comrades.

BIG BUCK (CONT'D)  
Eeht kuhu'eh deh Apache ahtaaoh!!

INSERT -- SUBTITLE --

**"We'll see how they wet themselves when Apache attack!!"**

They all laugh, whoop and slap him on the back.

The scouts move on and disappear into the shadows.

Gaffe' stands looking back at Victor's and Charles' wagon, shaking his head.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Fucking twits.

(looks towards heaven)

I do have my work cut out for me,  
don't I, Lord?

EXT. THE ENCAMPMENT -- LATER -- LATE EVENING

CLOSE ON --

The bonfire has become large, glowing embers, barely illuminating a star-choked night.

Troopers and scouts patrol the perimeter.

The bugler blows taps.

The Big Buck and two of his fellow scouts are on guard patrol.

As they pass Victor's and Charles' wagon, the Big Buck peeks in.

He sets a bottle of brandy next to the sleeping pair.

Victor is startled awake, catching the Big Buck in the act.

BIG BUCK

(smiling, as always)

For you, Little Rich White Soldier.  
Next time... ask.

He winks at Victor and continues his patrol.

Victor sinks into his bedding and pulls the Indian blanket over his head.

EXT. THE ENCAMPMENT'S OUTER DEFENSES -- LATER

On the horizon, out on the desert plains, an eerie glow flickers atop two tall twin buttes -- giving the appearance of blazing eyes in the night.

Two scouts are behind a sand-bagged barricade, gazing at the weird sight and sniggering to themselves.

Two troopers are next to them, manning the Gatling gun.

One trooper looks over at the scouts and points to the spooky lights on the horizon.

TROOPER 1  
Hey... Big Chief. What's that out there?... Apaches?

The two scouts laugh, as Scout 2 points out into the darkness.

SCOUT 2  
 (sniggering)  
Those? Those... 'Eyes of Coyote.'

The other scout rakes his finger across his throat.

SCOUT 3  
 (smiling fiendishly)  
 Szeet-ueta... zut.

The troopers are puzzled.

TROOPER 2  
 What the hell is he saying, Chief?

Scout 2 smiles, his teeth white as pearls in the dim light.

SCOUT 2  
 He say, two die tonight. Two eyes?  
 Two die.

The two troopers hurriedly check over their machine gun, making sure it's fire-ready.

They both glance over at the scouts, smiling broadly.

TROOPER 2  
 (faux-confidently)  
 It ain't gonna be us, Chief.

The two scouts chuckle at the troopers' naivety.

The troopers snigger nervously, as frowns of fear slowly fill their expressions.

WIDE SHOT --

The "Eyes of Coyote" continue burn into the blackness of the horizon.

EXT. THE ENCAMPMENT -- PRE-DAWN NIGHT

The camp is asleep, save for the guards.

Troopers on guard duty are nodding at their posts.

A.O. -- Strange sounds of the desert fill the evening air.

A trooper shakes himself awake upon hearing distant, bestial grunts.

Dark figures move amongst a rock-fall skirting a nearby cliff.

A shadowy figure moves like supernatural liquid -- silhouetted against a cliff-face.

FULL SHOT --

A fierce coyote head, made into a mask, covers a Shadow Warrior's face.

*Scene Note -- (Shadow Warriors -- in Apache lore -- are said to be the fierce spirits of those who have fallen in battle. They protect the Apache Nation and are considered vengeful ghosts ever vigilant to their mission).*

ANGLE DOWN --

In intricate ritual make-up, another Shadow Warrior peers out like an unworldly apparition, blending into the rock-face like a chameleon.

He disappears from the frame like a wisp.

Two troopers at their post talk in low tones, while the Milky Way arches across the domed sky above them.

Out of nowhere -- they are set upon by two Shadow Warriors who silently pull them into the darkness.

A.O. -- The sound of a sharp blade sliding over soft flesh -- then wet grunts, punctuate the night air.

INT. VICTOR'S AND CHARLES' WAGON -- SAME

Charles is sawing logs.

Victor is in the middle of a dream.

CLOSE UP --

His eyes roll under his lids in a deep REM state.

**VICTOR'S DREAM SEQUENCE --**

**CAMERA SWOOP --**

**He is in a desert culvert.**

**WIDE SHOT --**

**The sky looks like a demented Dali painting.**

**A furious skirmish is raging.**



There are dead troopers all around him.

Some are horribly mangled, but it is hard to make out much through the haze of gun-smoke.

A trooper turns his face towards Victor. He has an arrow through each eye.

ZOMBIE TROOPER

(frantic)

Don't come here! You'll die here.  
Get away -- get away while you can!

He pushes Victor away and runs madly into a wall of bullets.

Victor sees Charles on a rise, firing madly down at something.

Victor crawls toward him over bodies of dead troopers, as arrows and bullets zing passed his head.

He grabs Charles and looks into his face.

Charles swings his head, looking hard at Victor. His expression is demonic.

CHARLES

(shouting)

They all have to die! It's us or them!... It's us or them! Victor, can't you hear me!? Get up! Get up!

Victor looks down and sees the object of Charles' rage.

It is the Dream Indian Princess from Victor's absinthe-opium vision.

As Charles keeps pumping shots into her, she looks to Victor.

DREAM PRINCESS

(pleading)

Nkêêz, nkêêz! Enk t-hah, nkêêz,  
nkêêz.

He looks back at Charles, whose face has turned into a coyote's.

FULL SHOT -- A GRINNING DEMONIC COYOTE FACE

CUT TO BLACK:

A.O. -- BUGLER'S REVEILLE

CUT IN -- CLOSE UP

Victor's eyes are pinned back, as reveille rips through his head like a shriek from hell.

The sun is barely up and it streams through the dust into Charles' and Victor's wagon.

Victor looks out of the wagon and sees the Big Buck staring at him.

Charles wakes up with a start, as Victor looks back at him.

CHARLES  
(grumpily)  
Goddamn, Hell's trumpet!

Victor swings his head toward the Big Buck, but he has disappeared.

WIDE SHOT -- A MORNING SKY

TELEPHOTO -- A BALD EAGLE

A huge, beautiful bald eagle soars through the morning skies.

It flies to its nest on a cliff-ledge, a fat rabbit in its talons.

It feeds it to its hungry eaglets and they rip it apart.

EXT. THE ENCAMPMENT'S CENTER -- LATER

The troops line up for roll call.

Victor and Limmings inspect the troops.

They look to Gaffe'.

VICTOR  
Sgt. Maj., are we to inspect the troops this morning?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
As it suits your pleasure, Sir.

Charles, yawning and disheveled, approaches. He points to the troops waiting at attention.

CHARLES  
I can't make any sense of this. I'm off for coffee.

He unceremoniously walks off towards the smoky chuck wagon.

Gaffe' takes off for a group of lagging recruits.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
You filthy lazy shits. Get in line. Right now! Troopers!

INT. COLONEL MAGDALINE'S WAGON.

Magdaline emerges from his wagon in grand Nero-style.

*Character Note -- (No one has seen the elusive Colonel Magdaline since the wagon train pulled out of Prescott. The Colonel is a slothful, puffed-up, overweight hedonist. He is as amoral a commanding officer as can be imagined. The only things he cares about are his cut from the supply deliveries and his baser instincts.)*

He looks up into the sun, sliding on a pair of oval, thick-lensed sunglasses. He walks to a water pouch while taking out an ivory toothbrush.

He vigorously gives his bicuspid a brushing, spitting, looking up at his troops, a sneer in his eye.

He neatly replaces the prized brush into a leather slipcase, tucking it into a hip pocket.

COLONEL MAGDALINE  
(bellowing)  
I need some fucking coffee!!

A naked squaw looks out from inside his wagon, pulling a blanket over her bouncing breasts.

He braces himself, shaking off the brisk morning air.

The sycophant, Limmings, appears out of nowhere.

He smiles like the bespectacled rodent he is.

He hands Magdaline a megaphone.

Magdaline points it towards the sleepy, milling troops.

COLONEL MAGDALINE (CONT'D)  
Where are my fucking officers?!!

Gaffe' appears and foists Victor in front of him.

Victor nervously salutes.

VICTOR  
Colonel, Sir.

COLONEL MAGDALINE  
(returning the salute)  
Who are you?

VICTOR  
Lieutenant Harvey, Sir.

COLONEL MAGDALINE  
Well?

VICTOR

Well, Sir?

COLONEL MAGDALINE

(brusquely)

Take roll call, you annoying idiot.  
I'm needing breakfast.

He looks Victor up and down.

COLONEL MAGDALINE (CONT'D)

Report anything strange to Limmings  
here... Lieutenant... um... You are...

LIMMINGS

(leans over)

Harvey, Sir. Lieutenant Harvey.

COLONEL MAGDALINE

Yes, yes, Harvey. Report whatever  
discrepancies you may come upon to  
Limmings. Carry on.

Magdaline clears snot from his nose.

It splats on Victor's nice, shiny boot.

VICTOR

(still at attention)

Sir?

COLONEL MAGDALINE

(oblivious)

Very good. Carry on.

The Colonel throws the megaphone to Victor and stumbles  
towards the chuck wagon.

INT. COLONEL MAGDALINE'S WAGON -- SAME

The Colonel's pretty, half-naked Indian concubine rifles  
through his things, looking for anything of value.

She finds a gold watch.

She stuffs it up her vagina.

She throws on a buckskin robe and slips out of his wagon,  
unseen.

EXT. THE ENCAMPMENT'S CENTER -- MOMENTS LATER

LONG SHOT -- THE TROOPS CALL OUT

Limmings produces a clipboard. He and Victor check down a  
long list of names.

The troopers shout out, "Present.

Their voices echo off into the desert wastelands.

**"Emerson, John, Private, Collingsworth, Edward, Private 1st class, Thompson, Jeppard, Private 2nd class..." etc.**

EXT. A DISTANT MESA TOP

On the edge of an immense cliff, three Apache Shadow Warriors sing in a guttural mantra.

We can see them only from their tanned backs, as they look down upon the wagon train encampment, which appears ant-like and miles below.

Their backs are intricately stained in skull and beast motifs.

A.O. -- The troopers' voices are a barley audible echo, as they continue to sound off roll call far far below.

The Apache Shadow Warriors continue their eerie song.

A scorpion crawls over the back of one of the chanters.

Then -- There is another and another -- Soon, all three chanters' backs are covered with scorpions, as their mantra continues.

At their feet are the heads of the two unfortunate troopers they dispatched the night before, their caps still securely pulled on their heads. Their faces have been ritually peeled back and the skin, muscle and sinew carefully pinned, revealing the fresh, grinning bone beneath.

CUT TO:

THE ENCAMPMENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Charles is mounting up.

Victor approaches and grabs the horse's reins.

VICTOR

(concerned)

Charles, there are two missing Privates. They've disappeared.

CHARLES

(impatiently)

Well then -- tell the Colonel.

(beleaguered)

Gaffe' suggests I move this train out and learn some tricks of command.

(smiling)

Really Victor, that man is a trial.

He rides off yelling.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 (ordering, to anyone  
 within earshot)  
 Let's move this goddamn shit-pile  
 out!

Victor returns to his wagon to move out.

Limmings approaches Victor's wagon, as the train slowly  
 uncoils its defensive ring.

He checks over a list on a clipboard.

LIMMINGS  
 (matter-of-factly)  
 Lieutenant!... Privates Hansen and  
 Dodds are missing.

VICTOR  
 (quizzical)  
 Where are they, then?

LIMMINGS  
 (in all seriousness)  
 Dead. I would imagine.

Shock fills Victor's features.

VICTOR  
 I'm not sure I'm getting you,  
 Corporal. Dead? Shouldn't we report  
 this to Magdaline?

LIMMINGS  
 Maybe later. Let's not bother him  
 just yet. He has a hell of a  
 hangover.

Victor is dumbstruck by what he is hearing.

VICTOR  
 (anger tinges his  
 voice)  
 That's not right, Corporal. Is it?

Victor jumps from the buckboard, walking towards Magdaline's  
 wagon but -- the diminutive Limmings stands in his way.

LIMMINGS  
 (hard)  
 If I were you, Lieutenant, I would  
 tend to your wagon. You may have  
 noticed -- we are moving out, Sir.

A scout brings over Limmings' horse and he mounts up.

LIMMINGS (CONT'D)

(plainly)

I wouldn't worry too much, Sir.

This is war.

(controlling his mount)

It will all work out in the end.

He rides off with his scout escort towards the head of the train.

Victor shakes his head as he climbs the headboard of his wagon.

He sees the bottle of brandy the Big Buck left, retrieves it, uncorks it, and takes a huge swig.

VICTOR

(to himself, sick to his heart)

This is no fun, no fun at all.

He moves his wagon out.

ON GAFFE' AND CHARLES --

Gaffe' rides up to Charles, who is getting the troops and wagons organized as best he can.

GAFFE'

(to Charles)

Some advice?... Watch out for Magdaline. He's a devil's son.

Gaffe' rides on.

ON MAGDALINE --

Magdaline has returned to his wagon, climbing onto the buckboard.

COLONEL MAGDALINE

(barking at Charles)

Lieutenant, I don't want to have to come out there and keep this train moving! If I do... Your head will roll... Am I making myself perfectly clear to you!?

CHARLES

Yes, Sir... Perfectly clear.

COLONEL MAGDALINE

Good, see it stays that way.

He hands the reins to a supplicant driving the team, and disappears into the back of the wagon, pulling the drape closed.

Gaffe' signals the bugler to sound out departure.

FULL SHOT -- THE BUGLER

He spits out an insistent martial call.

The wagon train slowly returns to the dusty trail.

EXT. A HUGE OPEN DESERT VALLEY -- AFTERNOON

The wagons snake through a spectacular "John Ford-esque" landscape.

A line of six Shadow Warriors, on their mounts and silhouetted against a huge yellow sun, follow the wagon train's progress from a far ridge.

The train comes to a large fork in the trail.

A mangled sign points to Camp Defiance to the northeast and Outpost 22 to the northwest.

Colonel Magdaline and the bulk of the supply train head to Fort Defiance in the northeast.

While -- Victor's, Charles' and Gaffe's smallish contingent heads towards the northwest corner of the Arizona Territory -- onward to Outpost 22.

*Scene Note -- (There are three wagons, five non-commissioned officers, three scouts [the Big Buck among them] food, medical and military supplies and a small company of mounted Cavalry headed to Outpost 22).*

On they move -- through the desert vista towards the isolated outpost nestled in the Arizona foothills.

The trail narrows and descends into the badlands -- unforgiving, scarred by erosion and baked by the sun.

A pack of coyotes howls at the small wagon train as it passes by.

A trooper takes a potshot at them and they scatter.

POV A LINE OF GIANT RED ANTS --

The giant wheels, horses and men are like moving buildings next to the busy insects that march, oblivious, alongside the trail.

A trooper gnaws on hardtack and swigs water.

FAVORING HIM --

HORSEBACK TROOPER

This is shit!



Another trooper beside him, nods on his horse.

Gaffe' comes up behind him and boxes his ear.

His horse rears and he topples off, embarrassed.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

(tersely)

Mount up trooper and stay alert.

(yelling at the troops)

All of you stay alert -- or your  
Mommies will wail at your funerals.

Victor is nodding at the reins of his wagon team.

Charles rides by and throws water on him from his canteen.

CHARLES

Attention, Lieutenant!

VICTOR

(Startled and annoyed)

Jesus, Charlie, I'm awake.

CHARLES

Gaffe' says the scouts think there  
may be hostiles about. Keep your  
powder dry.

VICTOR

You're joking? Hostiles? I thought  
we were going somewhere safe. Are  
we safe?

CHARLES

Not sure. The scouts aren't sure.  
They say they may be Navaho traders,  
they may not be. Stay awake.  
Something about Ghosts -- Shadow  
Warriors or something.

VICTOR

Shadow Warriors?

CHARLES

Scouts say they can't be killed.  
They say they're already dead. Tribal  
nonsense if you ask me.

VICTOR

(shakes his head in  
disbelief)

This is getting better by the minute,  
Charlie.

CHARLES  
 (laughing)  
 You can tell your fat little  
 grandchildren how you fought Indian  
 ghosts.

He makes a spooky sound but, Victor is hardly amused.

VICTOR  
 (resigned)  
 Here, drink this.

Victor tosses him the brandy bottle.

Charles brings the bottle to his lips.

CHARLES  
 (Facetiously)  
 For honor and country, I drink to  
 thee.

He takes a big swig and tosses the bottle back.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 (pinching his face in  
 disgust)  
 Goddamn, that's good. Hide it  
 somewhere...  
 (laughs)  
 Somewhere dark.  
 (declaratory)  
 Tomorrow, you ride point.

Victor frowns.

VICTOR  
 (frustrated)  
 Point? To Hell with riding point.  
 (smirking)  
 You seem to be taking this all in  
 stride. I feel like Dante exploring  
 Hell. You ride point.

Charles swings his horse around.

CHARLES  
 My gloomy little Victor, let's try  
 and survive this. Shall we?

He rides off to point.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE BADLANDS END -- LATE AFTERNOON

The badlands finally give way to a less-tortured landscape.

Over a rise, the terrain changes to rolling hills of barrel cacti and giant saguaros.

WIDE SHOT --

In the distance -- thin columns of dark smoke rise on the horizon.

The small train comes to a halt.

Gaffe' and Charles spread a map over a buckboard.

CHARLES

(perturbed)

I thought you knew your way around,  
Sgt. Maj.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Seems to me, we should be reaching  
that gorge... Here --

(points to map)

By dusk, Sir. No later, Sir.

CHARLES

What about the smoke in the northeast?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

I'm pretty sure we're on Navaho land,  
Sir. They're probably burning off  
scrub. I wouldn't pay it much mind.

CHARLES

That may be, Sgt. Maj. But, I'm  
sending out a patrol, anyway. I  
need to get Lieutenant Harvey off  
his spotty ass.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Are you sure, Sir? The scouts think  
we should keep moving.

CHARLES

I do believe I rank you.

(ordering)

Gather some volunteers, Sgt. Maj.  
and I'll assign Lieutenant Harvey.

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Very good, Sir. But I would advise  
moving on.

CHARLES

Set a perimeter, Sgt. Maj. We'll  
still make that gorge by tonight.

ON CHARLES --

Charles approaches Victor's wagon, on a mission.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

Mount up, Victor. You're going on a scouting patrol.

VICTOR

(drinking again)

It wouldn't have anything to do with that smoke over there, would it?

CHARLES

How astute you can be sometimes.

VICTOR

Well, you're so righteously curious... why don't you go? Can't you see? -- I couldn't care less.

CHARLES

It's only a few miles away, Victor. And as I am a 1st Lieutenant and you are a 2nd Lieutenant -- Mount up!

VICTOR

And, if I don't come back?

CHARLES

I'll inform your father... Now get moving, 1st Lieutenant.

VICTOR

I'll move -- but I have a nasty feeling about this.

ON GAFFE' --

Gaffe' has assembled a ragtag patrol of green recruits and two scouts. The Big Buck is among them.

DETAIL --

They check their firearms and ammunition.

As Charles and Gaffe' secure the temporary camp, Victor and his small patrol move out to investigate the smoke columns.

They disappear over a hill.

EXT. A DESERT CLIFF -- LATE AFTERNOON

ANGEL DOWN -- A CULVERT -- REVEALING --

A large troop of vultures is feasting on a body.

EXT. A DESTROYED APACHE ENCAMPMENT -- CONT.

FULL SHOT --

Glowing embers --

PULL UP --

The remains of tepee huts smolder in a wide gully.

PAN TO REVEAL --

A large Apache encampment has been razed to the ground.

There are bodies everywhere.

TRACKING -- THE BODIES

It is a scene of horrible, soul-freezing slaughter.

No one -- men, women, children -- was spared the holocaust.

Victor surveys the shocking scene.

The Big Buck rides up beside him and, sniffing at the air --

He slowly turns his head towards Victor.

BIG BUCK

This is Faust magic. He leave this  
as warning.

(shaking his head)

Bad Spirit Magic. Not good for the  
soul of men.

VICTOR

(looks at the Big  
Buck with disgust)

Major Faust? Why would he kill women  
and children? This is madness.

The Big Buck's expression changes to that of deep concern.

BIG BUCK

(looking at the ground)

This war, good medicine for bad  
spirits. Stay close, Little Rich  
White Soldier.

(smiling)

Bad medicine rub off -- not happy  
for you.

The Big Buck looks to his partner and they both ride down to  
explore the carnage.

Victor calls out to a noncommissioned officer.

VICTOR  
Corporal, follow me. The rest of  
you, stay alert.

The two head down the hill with the scouts.

The scouts dismount, picking through the rubble.

Victor and his Corporal dismount.

One of the scouts finds a huge Bowie knife and shrieks his  
delight to the Big Buck.

BIG BUCK  
(smiling and shrieking  
back)  
Heee, ta^hae!

Victor walks among the bodies.

Some have been savagely ravaged. Faces have been burned or  
hacked away.

A.O. -- A baby's muffled cry is heard.

The Big Buck discovers an infant, still alive, under a young  
squaw's bloodied body.

He holds it up by its heel and laughs, as it wails, wriggles  
and screams.

His partner removes his Colt .45 from its holster and places  
the muzzle to the infant's tiny head, cocking the hammer.

Victor takes his side arm out and points it at the scout.

VICTOR  
Hold there, or I shoot!

Victor walks over to the Big Buck and demands the bawling  
child.

The Big Buck looks at him.

BIG BUCK  
This little oun^cha bring you bad  
luck, Little Rich White Soldier.

VICTOR  
(angry)  
I'm the judge of that.  
(taking the infant)  
Mount up.

Victor takes the infant carefully in his arms and uses his  
chest belt to secure it.

FRAMED --

The patrol heads back to the small wagon train.

ANGLE DOWN TO --

The camera lingers on the sickening scene they are leaving behind.

EXT. A DRY RIVER GORGE -- EARLY EVENING

The sun drifts below the western horizon.

The company pulls up, circles its wagons and prepares for that evening's camp.

EXT. THE CAMP -- EVENING

Charles, Gaffe' and the scouts share an after-dinner aperitif around the central campfire.

Guards patrol the perimeter.

Victor is in his wagon caring for the Apache infant.

He adjusts the oil lamp to a low setting.

The Big Buck sticks his face into the covered wagon and hands Victor a small water pouch with a spout on it.

BIG BUCK

(smiling)

Cactus milk. Give to the oun^cha.

Victor smiles but says nothing.

BIG BUCK (CONT'D)

This is good for Little Rich White  
Soldier, you have soul after all.

He turns and walks back to the campfire.

CLOSE ON --

Victor holds the spout to the child's mouth and it suckles away.

**MIND'S EYE -- VICTOR**

**INT. VICTOR'S DREAM HOUSE -- A BEAUTIFUL MORNING**

**He sees his fiancée waking up next to him.**

**She shows him their child.**

BACK TO:

CLOSE ON --

Victor smiles at the infant -- then there is a noise.

He looks up, half expecting to see the Big Buck has returned --

Instead, he is staring at a nightmarishly fierce Shadow Warrior.

Victor jumps back -- startled at the sight of the fearful wraith.

*Note -- (The Shadow Warrior's face is obscured by his coyote mask. He is intricately painted, amorphous and not of this earth).*

He points an archaic silver-trimmed flintlock pistol at Victor's head -- cocks it and motions him to hand the child over.

SHADOW WARRIOR

(in an insistent  
whisper)

Enh yua eetah. Eet^eah, eetah! Auh  
et -- eetah.

Victor hesitantly hands him the child.

The Shadow Warrior gently sets the child beside him and motions to Victor to come to him.

Victor is frightened, but -- the warrior has the mysterious gun pointed at his head so he complies quickly.

Lighting quick -- the Warrior slashes Victor across the fatty part of his cheek, deeply to the bone.

Victor flies backwards, as shock numbs his expression.

CLOSE ON --

As blood spurts from the open gash, he sees the Shadow Warrior looming above him like a ghoulish apparition.

SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)

Ut^he hen tah-ha hett'e.

POV -- VICTOR

The Warrior's coyote face begins to shiver and ripple.



SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)  
 (in an echoic whisper,  
 within a broken  
 dialect)  
 This scar save you... Save you from  
 white-devil-spirit. Save you from  
 our deep sorrow.

He whispers an invocation that fades into gibberish.

SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)  
 Emp^aoh tee yah^ehe et hah...

Victor loses consciousness.

TO BLACK

FADE IN --

INT. VICTOR'S WAGON -- MORNING

POV-- VICTOR

The swarthy visage of Gaffe' comes into focus.

REVERSE ANGLE -- GAFFE'

He is crudely stitching up Victor's angry wound and not at all daintily.

POV -- VICTOR

Charles comes into frame.

Victor is woozy, as his consciousness fades in and out.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 He's lost a lot of blood.

POV -- VICTOR

Charles' face changes into the Indian Princess, into the Shadow Warrior, into a coyote's and back.

CHARLES  
 (softly)  
 Victor, who did this?

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Who did this, Son?

Victor only smiles and nods, as his eyes roll back in his head.

CHARLES  
 Where's the Indian child?

POV -- VICTOR

The faces of Gaffe' and Charles fade...

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(echoic)

I told you not to give him that much  
laudanum.

Victor passes out.

TO BLACK:

FADE IN --

As the small wagon train pulls over a hillock, dotted with scrub-pine and manzanita -- Outpost 22 appears out of the late morning ground-fog like an ugly, ominous, tar-stained, pine-log keep.

*(The outpost is small but well fortified, with a deep trench dug around the tall pine-log siege-walls. Sentry turrets are at all four corners.)*

The wagon train passes the abandoned remains of an Indian village. Nothing remains but tepee skeletons and rotting hides.

FULL SHOT --

A sign arches above the gates, announcing: **OUTPOST 22 -- U.S. ARMY.**

Slowly flapping above the fort, in an anemic breeze, is a tattered 'OLD GLORY.'

There are tall, thin, iron pikes on either side of the heavy wood and iron gates. Stuck on the pikes are two mummified Apache Warrior heads complete with bright red bandannas.

The gates swing back and a small troop rides out to meet the approaching supply train.

Victor guides his wagon team forward looking gloomy. The side of his face is swollen and bandaged. He takes a chug from the brandy bottle, wincing.

The Big Buck rides by Victor's wagon.

BIG BUCK

Little White Soldier... Not worry.  
Oun^cha better off now. Shadow  
Warrior not kill Little Rich White  
Soldier.

(smiling, with a wink)

Good... have better luck now.

The Big Buck calls to his comrades and they ride on ahead.

*Scene Note -- (**Inside** -- The fort has an open assembly-ground -- a medium-size, two-story wood-and-stone blockhouse -- a stable that houses forty horses -- a large sturdy canvas tent, housing the hospital. There is the troop bunkhouse and a wood and iron-hinged battlement that rings the compound).*

The wagons pull up alongside two small howitzers, being meticulously cleaned and primed by recruits.

Excited recruits appear from every corner. Some let out cheers of joy (The mail is in).

They all start shouting for mail.

TROOPS

Mail! Mail!

A corporal, from his wagon, throws a mailbag to the post Sergeant who immediately starts calling out names.

FULL SHOT -- THE TROOPERS' FACES

The soldiers are all starved and all smiles for a little news from home.

Recruits unhitch the wagon teams and lead them to the watering troughs.

The horses swing their heads, edging for a space at the trough.

Charles and Gaffe' dismount, as a stable-master immediately appears, taking their horses.

STABLE PRIVATE

(saluting and grabbing  
the reins)

Sgt. Major... Lieutenant. Major  
Faust is expecting a report. We had  
no idea you were coming so soon.  
Telegraph lines have been down for a  
week now. Thank Christ you're safe --

(saluting)

Sirs!

Victor pulls the brake and jumps from the buckboard.

He has forgotten about his wound, which rudely reminds him as he hits the ground.

VICTOR

(touching the bandages)  
Goddamned, son-of-a-bitch!!

He sees Gaffe' and Charles.

Gaffe' waves him over and the three enter Faust's lair.

They are greeted at the door by post Chaplain, Applebee.

*Character Note -- (Captain Chaplain Applebee is a tall reedy gentle sort, but nervous and totally out of place in his own skin. He wears a priest's collar under his uniform.)*

APPLEBEE  
 (nervously biting on  
 his thumb)  
 Gaffe', it's good you're finally  
 here.

He salutes Victor and Charles and they answer.

APPLEBEE (CONT'D)  
 (cordially)  
 Lieutenants.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 (angry)  
 What is the good Major up to,  
Applebee? Lieutenant Harvey, here,  
 is witness to a massacre. Has Faust  
 finally lost his mind?

APPLEBEE  
 (concerned)  
 I know, I know... He's really stirred  
 up the wrath of God and the hornet's  
 nest.

Applebee looks to Victor and Charles. He nervously glances  
 back and fourth, between Gaffe', Victor and Charles.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
 Oh, I'm sorry. Applebee? Lieutenants  
 Harvey and Van Deere.

APPLEBEE  
 (shaking their hands,  
 heartily)  
Lieutenants. I'm the post Chaplain  
 here.

He looks at Victor's wound -- which is oozing blood-fluid  
 through the dirty bandage and dripping off his chin.

APPLEBEE (CONT'D)  
 That's quite a nasty cut you have  
 there, Lieutenant. We should have  
 that looked at.

VICTOR  
 I'm fine, really. I'm fine.

APPLEBEE

(reassuringly)

No, I insist you have that looked at. Infection is something you don't want out here.

Looks to Charles and Gaffe'.

APPLEBEE (CONT'D)

The Major is expecting you. He's down the hall and up the stairs. I'll take the Lieutenant to the infirmary -- Follow me, Lieutenant.

Applebee leads Victor away, leaving Charles and Gaffe' to face Major Faust.

They pass through the officer's mess hall, through a hallway and stop at the bottom of a flight of stairs.

A.O. -- At the top of the stairs, sounds of several people can be heard laughing behind a door.

Then suddenly, the laughter stops.

Gaffe' and Charles look at one another.

The door of Faust's office bursts open and two big Navaho scouts, guns drawn, stare down at the two startled men.

Major Faust sticks his head between them.

He immediately recognizes Gaffe'.

*Character Note -- (Major Faust is an urbane tall, darkly sinister megalomaniac. He wears a jet-black uniform with golden eagle epaulets, an unusual broad-brimmed flat-top hat and a pair of impeccable knee-boots. His hair spills over his collar and onto his shoulders. He lost an eye at Vicksburg and wears a fancy leather eye-patch. Charming on top, evil to the core and a wily, canny, ruthless Indian-fighter, Faust is the definitive white-devil soldier.)*

MAJOR FAUST

Sgt. Major. Good to see you made it in one piece. Come on up.

Looks at Charles.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

Who's that with you?

CHARLES

Lieutenant Van Deere, Sir.

MAJOR FAUST  
 (chimes in his head)  
 Of the New York Van Deeres?

CHARLES  
 Yes Sir, the same.

MAJOR FAUST  
 (amused, to Charles)  
 I'm honored...  
 You just out of West Point, then?  
 What on God's earth are you doing  
 out here?

CHARLES  
 Yes, Sir. Haven't figured that out,  
 Sir.

MAJOR FAUST  
 Well, then, of course. The both of  
 you, come up.

Charles and Gaffe' are still leery of the two large Indians  
 staring down at them and walk -- hesitantly, up the stairs.

They enter Faust's lair.

INT. MAJOR FAUST'S OFFICE -- SAME

MAJOR FAUST  
 (to Charles,  
 apologetically)  
 Lieutenant, please excuse the clutter.  
 We do our best here -- out in the  
 wilds.

The two men pass by the scouts.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
 Oh, don't mind them, they smelled  
 Apache on you... I suppose.

The Navaho scouts move to one side, sniffing at the pair as  
 they pass into Faust's lair.

*Scene Note -- (His office is large, dusty and dingy. It is  
 lined with bookshelves, stuffed with military books,  
 Shakespeare, Socrates, what-have-you).*

In a corner there is a narrow cabinet. On top and under a  
 glass dome, is the head of an Apache Warrior -- complete  
 with bright orange headband and eagle feather. It is so  
 perfectly and lovingly preserved, it looks alive.

Charles glances at some book titles lying on a desk -- such  
 as: **The Bible**, Milton's **Paradise Lost**, **MacBeth**, **Dante's  
 Inferno**, **Moby Dick**.

He smirks.

He then spots the head and his expression changes to that of revulsion.

Faust sees this.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

It was either him or me, Lieutenant.  
Thought I'd keep him around to remind  
me -- I do this job for God, country  
and honor. Taxidermist did a great  
job -- Don't you think?

Faust looks at the head.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

I honor his spirit by keeping him  
close... Sometimes, he talks to me.

Charles looks distressed.

Faust bursts out laughing.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

(to Charles)  
Had you going, didn't I, Son. He  
doesn't talk to me...

He puts his chin in hand and strolls to the window.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

... anymore.

He smiles, exposing two gold front teeth.

He walks over to the one window in the office and motions to the Navaho scouts to come and look.

They join him.

SHOT -- OUT FAUST'S WINDOW

Two troopers peel back the buckboards of Victor's and Charles' wagon.

One holds up two carbine rifles and another holds up boxes of ammunition hidden within the buckboards.

Navaho Scout 1 slaps Faust on the back in satisfaction.

But the other Navaho scout sees the Big Buck talking to his Comanche compadres in the foreground and voices his discontent.

NAVAHO SCOUT 2  
 (in disgust, spitting)  
 Um tooph etah. Navahah etteh uoph.  
 Comanche Indian.  
 (shakes his head,  
 looks to Faust)  
 Faust, they are not to trust.

MAJOR FAUST  
 I trust them just fine. You have  
 your rifles -- be content with that.  
 That's the trouble with you savages --  
 None of you get along.

He walks over to a cabinet and unlocks it.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
 (nonchalantly)  
 If it wasn't for us, you'd wipe each  
 other out.  
 (grinning)  
 You should be happy we white devils  
 keep you from killing each other.

The scouts sneer at him.

From the cabinet, he throws them a bottle of fine brandy and  
 their attitudes suddenly change.

Faust throws his arm forward and flattens his hand out,  
 clenches it and thumps it to his solar plexus -- as a sign  
 of a done deal.

FAUST  
 Chuntah unch.

He holds out his hand and they, begrudgingly, shake it.

On their way out Scout 2 looks back at Faust.

NAVAHO SCOUT 2  
 You watchself, Faust. Apache kill  
 you one day.

They both eye Charles up and down, jeering at him on their  
 way out.

MAJOR FAUST  
 So -- Lieutenant Van Deere -- I'll  
 have quarters set up for you right  
 away.  
 (yelling)  
 Corporal!!

An underling runs up the stairs.



UNDERLING

Sir!

MAJOR FAUST

Have quarters set up for the  
Lieutenant, here.

UNDERLING

We have none... Sir.

MAJOR FAUST

(in a slow burn)  
Well, then make some.  
(barking)  
Clear!?

UNDERLING

As crystal, Sir!

Faust takes a seat in a squeaky buffalo-hide chair.

He bids the two to pull up a seat.

MAJOR FAUST

Now -- I need a full report from you  
two.

(squinting, his dark  
eyes fiery)

Tell me, Lieutenant Van Deere, why  
are you here, anyway?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

Senator Harvey's son is also here,  
Sir.

MAJOR FAUST

(semi-shocked)  
The Senator Harvey?

SERGEANT GAFFE'

The same. Sir.

MAJOR FAUST

(leaning back)  
Well... I take pride in having such  
luminaries under my command. But --  
this is not making much sense.

Gaffe' looks at Charles, who is still staring at the head  
under glass.

Faust looks to Charles and clears his throat, waiting for an  
answer.

Charles looks over.

CHARLES  
Excuse me, Sir. Would you happen to  
have some extra brandy?

Faust narrows his eyes and not in a good light.

Gaffe' sees this.

SERGEANT GAFFE'  
(diplomatically)  
Perhaps, I can explain, Major.

INT. HOSPITAL TENT -- MOMENTS LATER

Applebee ushers Victor into the hospital tent.

Several men are on cots in different states of distress (a broken leg, the flu, a gunshot wound, etc.).

In a partitioned corner, the post's Doctor is doing a postmortem on a body with the assistance of a squaw -- her back turned to us.

A.O. -- *BUZZING FLIES*

A.O. -- *The Shadow Warriors spooky guttural mantra saturates the scene.*

SLOWLY TRACKING ALONG -- THE MUTILATED BODY

*Scene Note -- (The naked body of a trooper is in a nightmarish state of mutilation. His skin, from head to toe, has been deeply, intricately carved with swirls, stars and geometrical shapes. Some parts, such as the mouth and stomach, have been peeled back like a bloom, revealing the muscle and bone-structure beneath. The chest has been cracked, the heart laid open and the organ carved to resemble a flowering cactus rose).*

The Doctor is writing something in a journal, as he looks up at Applebee and Victor -- who stare at the horrible sight.

He turns --

(A.O.) -- *As the unearthly song abruptly stops.*

DR. CHERON  
(excited)  
Isn't this something?

Victor and Applebee look at one another, covering their noses and mouths in disgust.

Victor is turning green, trying to control his gag reflex.

The Doctor continues to write.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)

Be with you in just a tick.

*Character Note -- (Captain-Dr. Cheron is the outpost's surgeon -- a good-natured portly sort, who constantly writes in a journal).*

Alluding to Victor and Applebee, he sets his book and pencil down and, returning to his ghastly work, keeps talking.

He clinically examines the sculpted heart with a probe.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)

(with aplomb)

The Apache's think this mockery of the human form allows it to walk free into the hunting grounds, unchallenged. This is a great honor.

(shakes his head)

He must have fought bravely. I imagine he was alive when they visited most of this...

(frowning and gesturing)

... art work, upon him.

He walks to a box-camera on a tripod and asks everyone to step back.

He holds up the flash-pot and burns the unfortunate corpse's degradation onto the camera's silver-tint plates -- for posterity.

Victor's wound is starting to seep vigorously.

APPLEBEE

(more than disgusted)

Doctor, as fascinating as this may be -- the Lieutenant here needs some attending.

The Indian girl turns towards Victor and we see -- it is the beautiful Indian Princess of his visions.

She smiles at him.

As the feelings of recognition overtake him, Victor sees her for a moment dressed in her resplendent Indian finery, looking like the earth-mother virgin.

A trooper calls out in pain and the spell is broken.

She lowers her eyes, smiling, turns and hurries to tend the trooper.

Cheron throws a burlap tarp over the corpse, as flies disperse from every corner.

Applebee and Victor cover their noses.

DR. CHERON  
Better get this one into the ground --  
soon.

He sets Victor down in a well-worn barber's chair, leans him back and pumps the lift with his foot till the chair reaches a proper height.

Peeling back his head-bandage, Cheron removes the dirty blood-soaked dressing.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
(examining the wound)  
Hmm, nasty cut.

He calls to the Indian girl.

Victor turns in her direction, still enchanted and with a dim sense of recognition.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
(in a fatherly tone)  
Little Wing, bring me my kit.

LITTLE WING  
(in Indian-pidgin  
English)  
And -- where that now be, Father?

Victor is puzzled by this reference.

VICTOR  
Your daughter, Doctor?

DR. CHERON  
(kindly, ignoring  
Victor's comment)  
Try the empty bed in the rear, child.

She retrieves it and brings it to him. All the while, she stares at Victor, turning away when he returns her watchful eye.

VICTOR  
Where'd you find her? Honestly,  
Doctor.

She hands him his medical bag and he begins rummaging around for the surgical thread and needles.

DR. CHERON  
Oh -- I adopted her. Actually?  
Tribe just abandoned her -- found  
her in a cave, starving -- half dead.  
(MORE)

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
 She's a big help and not hard on the  
 eyes.

He smiles at Victor.

Victor smirks.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
 (knowingly)  
 Don't worry yourself, lad. She's my  
 adopted daughter -- for God's sake.  
 (smirks back at Victor)  
 Don't even think that thought I know  
 your thinking.

The Doctor pours some vodka on his hands -- rubs and shakes  
 them dry.

Victor winces in pain as Dr. Cheron wipes the wound clean  
 with iodine astringent and a cotton swab.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
 (examining the wound)  
 Excellent, no infection has set in.  
 We'll remove these crude stitches,  
 sew it back up and you'll be right  
 as rain, Lieutenant. Just take it  
 easy for a few days -- How did this  
 happen, anyway?

VICTOR  
 Long story, Doctor... some other  
 time, perhaps.

Little Wing looks closely at the wound. She knows something  
 is not right about his wound.

DR. CHERON  
 This may sting at first.

Dr. Cheron grabs a small bottle of powdered cocaine, turns  
 Victors head and pours some on the wound, wiping away the  
 excess.

Victor's face pinches in pain.

With scissors, the Doctor carefully cuts away Gaffe''s crude  
 stitch-up job.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
 (to Little Wing)  
 Hold his head down for me, would  
 you, child?

She gently puts her hands upon his head, as he gazes back  
 into her astonishingly beautiful face.

The wound is still dreadfully deep and seeping fluids.

LITTLE WING  
 (concerned, to Cheron)  
 This ghost wound, Father. This bad  
 magic. He need Shaman Indian man --  
 cure this.

Cheron takes a deep breath, raising himself.

DR. CHERON  
 (patiently sighing)  
 Child, Child. How many times have I  
 told you that's all superstitious  
 nonsense. Ghost wound?

Dr. Cheron rubs more cocaine into the wound.

He threads a needle and begins to stitch Victor's cheek back  
 together.

CLOSE UPS --

The needle pierces the skin.

Victor's neck muscles tense.

He looks at Little Wing out of the corner of his eye and  
 sees her smiling at him, a halo of back-light framing her  
 head.

DR. CHERON (CONT'D)  
 Too bad, Lieutenant, if I could have  
 gotten to you earlier? You may not've  
 had to deal with the unattractive  
 scar this is going to leave on your  
 pretty face.

VICTOR  
 (through clenched  
 teeth)  
 It will be an honorable mark, Sir.  
 I assure you.

He winces, as the needle closes another flap of the wound.

INT. MAJOR FAUST'S OFFICE -- SAME

Faust is in an uproar.

MAJOR FAUST  
 (empirically)  
 ... How dare you question my ethics --  
 These Apaches are demons. They fight  
 like devils. They live like devils.  
 (MORE)

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)

You fight them on their own terms or you die -- sometimes horribly. You must understand, this is not a Christian war!

CHARLES

(facetiously)

I apologize, Sir, that I find slaughtering women, children and the elderly -- dishonorable.

MAJOR FAUST

(searing)

Dishonorable? Dishonorable!? You have no idea, do you? You spoiled little cock.

Gaffe' tries to calm the scene down.

GAFFE'

Now, now, Sirs. If I may, please... settle it down.

Faust walks to a large map of the Arizona Territory. He points to the tiny mining town of Silverton, just a few miles over the ridge from the outpost.

The two recognize it.

MAJOR FAUST

Silverton was wiped out last week. Only a handful escaped, telling tales of such pitiless depravity -- I can barely fathom the horror. An entire town, gentlemen, razed to the ground.

(shaking his head,  
eyes bulging)

This is no Christian war.

(walking to the window,  
in deep thought)

I do what I must.

(hardened, soulless)

I do what I must.

He looks out the window to a distant thunderhead on the horizon. It throws down fingers of lightning upon the desert valley floor far below.

Faust turns to them, a weird glow flooding his features.

FULL SHOT -- FAUST'S FACE

MAJOR FAUST

Out here? Life is cheap.

(MORE)

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
(piercingly, pointing  
out the window)  
Out there, things are wild.

CUT TO:

EXT. COLONEL MAGDALINE'S WAGON COLUMN -- AFTERNOON

Three wagons, separated from main column, run for their lives over a rise, as a dozen Apache riders follow in hot pursuit.

Below -- the other half of the column is struggling in a pitched battle, pinned down in a low, wide ravine.

Six (or so) Apache Braves lie prone on a high ridge, looking down onto the chaos. Brandishing high-powered telescopic buffalo guns, they take potshots at the troopers below.

One takes careful aim.

POV -- APACHE WARRIOR'S GUN-SIGHT --

We see him pin a trooper's head within the cross-hairs and then, with a jolt, we see half the trooper's head fly off.

CLOSE ON --

The Apache brave laughs, as the others slap him on his back.

WIDE SHOT --

Down in the ravine, the troopers are caught in a hail of gun and arrow fire, as they huddle behind what cover they can find.

CLOSE ON --

The wagon's canvas canopies have caught fire.

A burning body lies across a wagon hitch.

A trooper is thrown back, as two arrows slam into the face.

Major Magdaline is busy taking out Apache riders on their painted ponies. He is better than deadly with his pearl-handled Colts, as each warrior who charges him is quickly dispatched.

Suddenly his head jerks and he spins around, a gleaming throwing-hatchet jutting from the back of his skull. Blood pumps like a spray-gun from the horrible split.

REVERSE --

We see -- it is his squaw-concubine who has thrown the deadly projectile. She scampers off and down a hill.



CLOSE ON --

The Gatling gun is spraying fire everywhere -- but the gun overheats and jams. The gun-crew is quickly overwhelmed as are all the defenses --

Detail --

A savage massacre ensues.

BACK TO --

Meanwhile -- three wagons race away from the conflagration, as we see the smoke from the battle rising lazily over the ridge.

Apache riders chase down one of the wagons.

Two Braves with short rifles shoot the two lead horses, causing them, the wagon and its occupants to tumble down a steep ravine.

CLOSE ON --

The driver is crushed under the team of horses.

The other two occupants fly through the air like rag-dolls.

ON --

Other Apaches catch up to the second fleeing wagon, shooting the driver and its occupants.

Two warriors grab the reins of the horse-team and expertly bring the wagon to a halt.

The remainder of the Apache riders dash off after the last remaining wagon.

CLOSE ON --

The driver is in a panic, as he pushes the horse-team to their limit.

FROM BEHIND --

The Apache riders close the gap.

CLOSE SHOT -- THE WAGON'S BACK WHEELS

The wagon-wheels skirt the rim of a steep culvert.

CLOSE ON --

A warrior pulls alongside the racing wagon, takes careful aim and, with his bow, lets fly a shaft.

The arrow skewers the neck of the trooper -- yet, he keeps riding on.

FULL ON -- THE WAGON'S BACK WHEELS

The wheels dip dangerously into the culvert.

CLOSE ON --

For his life, the trooper swings the galloping team from the precipice.

He breaks the arrow off and and pulls the shaft out the other side of his neck, as he urges the team onward.

Another trooper, from the wagon's rear tail-gate, picks off several Apache riders with a carbine.

REVERSE ANGLE --

A bullet rips through his shoulder and neck, spraying blood and tissue everywhere.

He falls on another man who is holding his gut.

The Apache riders are on the verge of overtaking the last wagon.

CRANE SHOT -- FROM ABOVE AND FROM BEHIND

Six Indian riders pull up to an escarpment, as the wagon and its pursuers race on far below.

FROM BEHIND --

Six Shadow Warriors are stained from head to toe in jet-black ink. Their faces are (as always) obscured by their masks.

They are mounted on ponies -- strangely armored in buffalo-bone. They scream and yelp to their brothers pursuing the lone wagon below.

CLOSE ON --

An Apache rider sees the apparitions on the ridge and yells out to his comrades.

The chase is almost immediately broken off.

CLOSE ON --

The gravely wounded soldier, in the rear of the wagon, lifts his head and sees the pursuit fading.

He briefly spots the Shadow Warriors charging down the embankment to greet their brothers -- and passes out.

WIDE SHOT --

The wagon races over a ridge and away to safety.

EXT. MAGDALINE'S MASSACRED COLUMN -- MOMENTS LATER

Apache Braves are picking over what remains of Magdaline's wagon column.

A brave wrests the gleaming, fine-steel throwing hatchet from Magdaline's skull. He wipes the blood and brains from the blade onto his buckskins. He tests the weight and balance of his newly acquired weapon -- He is pleased.

CLOSE UP -- HIS FACE

He screams with joy and triumph.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTPOST 22 -- LATE EVENING

A small herd of deer munches on foliage in the dappled moonlight, as Outpost 22 sleeps in the background.

Guards patrol the creaking wooden battlements.

Chickens cackle and a cock crows in a darkened pen -- as weasels make off with prized eggs.

Charles is asleep in the officers' quarters.

Gaffe' is asleep in a small private room adjacent to a troops' bunk-house.

FULL SHOT -- THE EMBOSSED COVER OF DICKEN'S "GREAT EXPECTATIONS" --

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

Victor has nodded off in a corner of the hospital tent.

He is sitting in a chair -- face bandaged, next to his bed, beside a flickering lantern light. The book is open, lying in his lap.

CLOSE ON --

Fingers gently touch the bandages on the side of his face.

He awakens.

It is the beautiful Indian girl, smiling at him.

He begins to say something, but she touches her fingers to his mouth.

LITTLE WING

(whispering)

Where you get that? Omph et oat^eah  
Eh-tahey.

She points to his wound and slowly removes her hand from his mouth.

VICTOR

An Apache gave it to me.

LITTLE WING

No -- no alive Apache give you that.

That is Shadow Scar.

(shaking her head)

It is not this world.

VICTOR

(smiling)

I know you, your face -- That's  
impossible -- isn't it?

LITTLE WING

(frightened for him)

It is bad spirit give you that cut --

Bad spirit. I now afraid for you.

(stroking his hand,  
looking deep within  
his eyes)

You will take me now. Yes? Cure  
you now.

She kisses his wound.

Victor is hesitant -- puzzled, but acquiesces to her tender overtures.

LITTLE WING (CONT'D)

(gently)

Nkêêz, nkêêz.

Victor caresses her slender shoulder.

He sees the vision of her as his Dream Indian Princess repeating those words to him again.

VICTOR

What does that mean? Nkêêz?

LITTLE WING

(smiling, sexual)

Time -- Time to be. Time to live.

She removes her clothes and then his.

They slip naked onto the hospital cot, embracing each other like reunited lovers exploring the vaguely familiar recesses of their own bodies -- disappearing into one another.

Above the bed, an incorporeal mist takes shape, bursting into soft, dancing flames of blue, orange, red and yellow.

The delicate fires are ghost-flames and do not burn or smoke.

The spectral lights wash over them, as they continue their sexual exploration.

The trooper with a broken leg snores away in his bed next to them -- oblivious to the action taking place.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL TENT -- SAME

There is a small but evident glow within the hospital tent.

All is quiet save the crickets, singing within the silence.

The scene lingers.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE ASSEMBLY GROUNDS, OUTPOST 22 -- DAWN

TRACKING -- ALONG THE BATTLEMENTS

We come across two guards, drinking tins of steaming coffee, scanning the horizon.

GUARD 1

I'm sick of this stinking pile o' shit, ain't you?

(spits out some grounds, disgusted)

Stuck here in Hell, and all. I feel like killing something.

GUARD 2

Well, this is where they send no-accounts like you and me. At least my in-laws ain't here.

They both chuckle.

There is the distant sound of iron wheels on chipped rock then -- immediately, they spring into a defensive mode.

With their long rifles at the ready, they fix eyes on the source of the noise, but it is hard to make out anything in the dim light and brewing ground fog.

PAN -- THE HORIZON

An eerie calm.

GUARD 1  
 (whispering)  
 What's that, you think?

GUARD 2  
 (whispering back)  
 Hell if I know -- Sounds like wheels.

GUARD 1  
 Savages ain't got wagons.

He whistles over to the guard at the far tower.

GUARD 2  
 (calling over)  
 You hear that!?

GUARD 3  
 (calling back)  
 I have it in the spy-glass. It's a  
 covered wagon -- It's one of ours.  
 (yells)  
 Open the gates! We got a straggler!

GUARD 1  
 Are you sure it's clear?! Should I  
 sound alarm?!

GUARD 3  
 It's clear. They're waving a white  
 flag!

Guard 3 looks through his spy-glass.

TELESCOPIC -- THE LONE WAGON

The lone wagon creeps towards the outpost.

The driver waves a blood-stained white shirt overhead.

GUARD 3 (CONT'D)  
 (yelling below)  
 Open the gates!!

The gates slowly open, as the sun streams over the eastern  
 hills.

CLOSE ON --

The tattered wagon pulls into the assembly grounds.

Guard 3 calls out alarm on his bugle.

The driver, still holding the angry wound on his neck, jumps  
 from the buckboard and collapses -- as does one of the horses.

Troopers, some half-dressed in their long johns, stream onto the grounds and surround the wagon.

Faust, buttoning up his coat, his undershirt hanging down, walks to the wagon as the troopers step aside.

The driver lies unconscious.

Faust looms over him.

MAJOR FAUST  
(sternly)  
So -- what's all this?

Faust points to three stunned privates.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
(ordering)  
Get him to the infirmary. The rest  
of you men, stand back.

Troopers gently pick up the stricken soldier as Dr. Cheron meets them.

Charles is straightening his rumpled uniform.

He salutes Faust and looks at the man being carried into the infirmary.

CHARLES  
Sir, I know that man. He's from  
Magdaline's wagon column.

MAJOR FAUST  
(angry)  
I need some answers right quick.

The Big Buck saunters over.

BIG BUCK  
(sarcastically)  
Answers? Answer is? You kill them  
or they kill you -- Better start  
killing more, Faust. Less of them,  
better for you.

MAJOR FAUST  
(tersely)  
Shut up, Savage. I'll ask your  
opinion when I need it.

Faust motions to Charles and they draw their guns, peering into the back of the wagon.

The sharpshooter lies dead on top of another man.

The body beneath jerks and shakes.

Faust and Charles, guns drawn, slide the dead trooper's body aside and there, barely alive -- is Limmings, a thick broken arrow shaft through his gut.

He grabs at Charles' coat.

LIMMINGS  
(in a pained whisper)  
We were ambushed. Never had a chance.  
Everyone's dead or worse.

CHARLES  
You'll be OK, Limmings, lie still.

Faust is straddling the backboard, shaking his head.

MAJOR FAUST  
Where, Corporal? -- Where were you  
attacked?

LIMMINGS  
(suffering, spitting  
out blood)  
Goddamn, this hurts, Sir.

MAJOR FAUST  
(impatient)  
Where, Corporal!?

Limmings tries to catch a breath.

LIMMINGS  
About fifty, about fifty ...

Limmings dies.

Charles looks to Faust.

Faust's face becomes a picture of pent-up rage.

He turns to address his officers at hand.

MAJOR FAUST  
(with a burning calm)  
Officers, assemble the men. This  
morning we kill Indians.

EXT. THE ASSEMBLY GROUNDS -- LATE MORNING

The cavalry is assembled and ready to move out with two small howitzers in tow.

The Big Buck and his companion scouts join the column.

Victor exits the hospital tent, bandaged and buttoning his topcoat. He seems on a mission.



The Big Buck motions to him to join up.

BIG BUCK  
 (yelling over to Victor)  
 Little Rich White Soldier need to  
 come along.  
 (smiling and nudging  
 his companion)  
 Little Rich White Soldier like Indian  
 mount last night?  
 (pumping his fist  
 like a stiff cock)  
 Mount pony, now?!

They laugh, trotting off to join the column, laughing out loud.

VICTOR  
 (bemused, to himself)  
 How do they know these things?

POV -- Victor

He sees Little Wing gathering eggs in the coop.

She smiles at him at first, but her demeanor changes and she frowns and shakes her head, as if to dissuade him from what he is about to endure.

ON VICTOR --

He grabs a trooper and orders him off his horse.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
 Trooper, off your mount.

HORSEBACK PRIVATE  
Sir? Is that a good idea, Sir?

VICTOR  
 (insistent, irritated)  
 That's an order, Private.

The Private looks lost, but obeys his order.

As he pulls his cap on, Victor mounts up and joins the company.

Charles abruptly rides up to him.

CHARLES  
 No, Vic -- not this time. You need  
 to let those stitches heal. You'll  
 be useless if we run across trouble --  
 Which we will.

VICTOR

Don't even think you're going out there without me. We started this mess together -- might as well finish it.

CHARLES

You wont take no for an answer, I suppose.

VICTOR

'Fraid not.

CHARLES

I never thought sanity was one of your strong points.

(graciously)

Come along for the party... by-all-means...

As Victor rides to join the formation he looks to Little Wing, who sadly gazes at him.

He looks back, but knows he has no choice in the matter.

The Company moves out.

ANGLE FROM ABOVE --

Applebee is mounted on horseback at the gate -- Bible in one hand, his reins in the other. He quotes a passage from Isaiah, as the troop passes beneath the outpost's sign.

APPLEBEE

(preachy, gravely)

Look! See the armies thundering towards God's land. But -- though the enemy roars like breakers on a beach, God will silence them. And this is the message sent to you -- Let your mighty armies now advance... and leave the field filled with thine enemy for the birds and animals to eat and scatter.

(bows his head)

Amen...

Applebee brings up the rear, joining the column as the gates close.

Gaffe' is staying behind to hold the fort down.

He calls to the remaining troopers.

GAFFE'

All right!

(MORE)

GAFFE' (CONT'D)

Get to your posts and keep alert! --  
 Be nice to have a fort for them to  
 come back to, now -- wouldn't it?!  
 (points to three  
 troopers.)  
 Move that cannon into position.

Little Wing silently observes the departing troopers.

She climbs up the battlements and watches until they disappear  
 over the far ridge.

Dr. Cheron calls to her.

DR. CHERON

Little Wing, dear, will you help me,  
 please? We need to keep this fellow  
 alive for his folks back home.

She takes one last look.

LITTLE WING

(to herself and the  
 powers that be)  
 Good magic to help you, my Victor.  
 Help you come back.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN --

EXT. THE COMPANY COLUMN -- AFTERNOON

Faust seems to know where he's going, as the company descends  
 into a fertile foothill valley.

MAJOR FAUST

(to his officers)  
 I know where these savages live. I  
 know how they think -- There will be  
 blood by the end of this day -- I  
 can feel it.

Charles scoffs and looks to Victor.

CHARLES

Ours or theirs?

Applebee is handy with a Bible quote.

APPLEBEE

(to Charles and Victor)  
 The blood of thieves is better than  
 the blood of those who eschew the  
 God of Israel. Proverbs, gentlemen.

He rides by.

EXT. A NARROW VALLEY -- LATE AFTERNOON -- CONT.

Downhill -- There is a small encampment of Indians nestled beside a lazy stream.

Faust's column cautiously pulls up to the canyon's cliffs. They are hidden by a thick grove of pines.

MAJOR FAUST  
 (looking through his  
 spyglass and then,  
 to his officers)  
 These aren't the ones we're looking  
 for. But they'll do.

Through his spyglass we see a squaw and a few braves going about their business.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
 (looks to Charles)  
 Lieutenant, take twenty men down  
 there and kill everything that moves.

CHARLES  
 (shocked)  
 I'll do no such thing, Major. I'm  
 no murderer.

Applebee chimes in.

APPLEBEE  
 (sternly)  
 What you do you do for the glory of  
 God, Lieutenant.

Faust quickly pulls his revolver and points it at Charles' head.

MAJOR FAUST  
 Lieutenant, I do believe -- I make  
 the orders and you follow them.  
 There is nothing to be done but kill  
 or be killed. Now, MOVE OUT!

Charles assembles a small company.

Victor rides up to join the troop.

Faust will have none of it.

MAJOR FAUST (CONT'D)  
 Lieutenant Harvey, you stand down.

Victor is frustrated, but obeys Faust's orders.

With great stealth, Charles and his small company move out.

Faust and his officers creep to the edge and peer down at the tiny encampment below.

Charles and his troopers assemble behind a few large boulders, downwind and only 200 yards from the encampment.

Apparently, they haven't been spotted -- yet.

CLOSE ON --

Charles is a mixture of fear and resignation.

CHARLES  
(whispering to his  
troops)  
Ready men?

They all steady their horses.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
Go!!

They gallop towards the village, guns drawn, firing.

They gallop into the encampment, blazing away.

Then --

They find it empty. The few Apache who were supposedly there have disappeared into thin air. They find dummy decoys. The huts are bare. They have been tricked.

Panic fills Charles' face as he looks up towards Faust and the rest of the company.

Faust sees Charles waving his arms through the spy glass.

Faust is immediate in his decision.

FAUST  
(yelling)  
To higher ground, men! We've been  
had!

The company charges out of the woods and up a steep rocky grade towards a large outcropping of granite.

A Corporal and two troopers next to him scream out, as a shower of arrows turn them and their mounts into pincushions.

Gunfire rings out and suddenly -- all is chaos.

FROM THE FAKE ENCAMPMENT BELOW --

Charles hears the gunfire, the screams of the men, and the battle yelps of the attacking Apaches.

He wheels his mount around and motions to his troopers.

CHARLES  
(taking command)  
To those rocks, men, ambush!!

But -- before they can make a move, a small unnoticed tepee's drape-flap opens and there, staring at them, is a Gatling gun the Apaches stole from Magdaline's column.

It opens up on them at 10 rounds a second.

The troopers not immediately cut down race downstream, only to have arrow shafts rain down on them from all sides.

FROM THE BATTLE ABOVE --

Faust and the remaining company hastily dismount and head for the cover of the formidable granite outcropping.

There is blistering fusillade from all sides, as troopers and a few Apache braves fall in battle.

Victor is in the midst of the chaos as arrows and bullets whiz by.

A charging Apache rider springs out of the woods, screaming, galloping towards Victor, swinging a huge mace-like tomahawk spiked with nails.

Victor's horse bucks him off while the Warrior bears down on him. He tries to roll out of the way as the Warrior raises his mace to strike.

The Big Buck leaps on the rider, who topples off his mount.

Big Buck snaps the warrior's neck like a twig and motions to Victor to continue uphill.

Victor runs towards the rocks.

The Big Buck wastes two more Braves before his throat is blown out by a shotgun blast.

He crumples to the ground, dead.

The troopers scamper for cover in the rocks and begin to return a heavy blanket of fire.

Apache warriors with torches ignite the dry foliage surrounding the rocky outcropping.

The fire quickly explodes into an inferno -- helped along by the oily brush and dry mesquite.

The fire races uphill towards Faust and his troopers.

Faust and his company are trapped.

Dense smoke overtakes Faust and his men, as they shoot blindly into a veiled foe.

Several Apache Braves have commandeered the howitzer and the accompanying ammo. Loading the muzzle with a round, they pull the trigger-bolt, blasting the side of the outcropping while sending granite, shrapnel and several troopers' body parts flying through the air.

Victor narrowly escapes the rushing flames and hot metal. Bounding blindly away from the conflagration, downhill and through a narrow gap, he tumbles over a steep incline, bouncing off rocks and tree branches.

He is hurt and bleeding, but there are no bones broken. He checks his face and finds the bandages are soiled but still there. He rises to his feet and begins to pick his way down through the woods towards Charles.

PULL UP --

The battle at the outcropping can be seen still raging on above the burning trees.

TRACKING -- VICTOR

Victor rushes through the thicket of trees, brush and brambles. A fierce melange of sound swirls all around him -- Gunshots, screams, Indian whoops, a cannon shot, flames, crackling -- come in from all sides.

He finally reaches the fake Apache encampment.

FULL SHOT -- VICTOR'S FACE

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

Bodies and blood are everywhere.

He searches vainly for Charles.

He ventures further downstream and spies the body of a trooper lying face-down on an over-hung embankment.

The stream is streaked with blood.

He approaches the body and sees that it's Charles.

He gently turns him over.

Charles winces in pain, barely alive, as blood trickles out the sides of his mouth and nostrils.

He struggles to speak.

CHARLES (CONT'D)  
 (choking, chuckling)  
 This is a sad showing, isn't it,  
 Victor. My fair Victor.  
 (more chokes and bloody  
 spittle)  
 I'm dying, aren't I? What in Hell's  
 circles is dying about, anyway?

VICTOR  
 (tears filling his  
 eyes)  
 You're not dying.

Charles begins to lose consciousness.

VICTOR (CONT'D)  
 (more tears, gently  
 nudging Charles)  
 No you don't. No you don't!

Charles eyes flicker and he smiles.

CHARLES  
 Am I still here?

Victor hears a sound, and lifting his head he sees two Shadow Warriors rushing towards them.

REVERSE ANGLE --

As they race towards him, he pulls his revolver and gets off a few stray rounds, missing their mark. The supernaturally agile warriors hurtle towards him.

POV -- Victor

They overtake and overpower him.

CUT TO BLACK:

FADE IN --

EXT. DESERT VALLEY -- DUSK

A fantastic sunset stains the horizon -- like a Dali painting.

A tall, lone mesa stands like a huge Roman column in the desert valley.

CRANE DOWN --

Victor is stripped, staked and strapped down to the dusty ground.



PULL BACK --

*Scene Note -- (He is on top of the desert mesa he envisioned in his opium-absinthe dream -- from the brothel scene).*

He is surrounded by cloaked Shadow Warriors singing their frightening mantra.

Victor regains consciousness, as fear and confusion freeze his features.

A Shadow Warrior approaches. His face is covered in the immaculately rendered mask of a hawk spirit. He speaks in broken English and deep dialect, punctuating every word with hand signs.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR

(in an calm, surreal,  
low voice)

We gather to honor you, white human  
being.

(pointing)

We show you to the sun. We show you  
to the moon. We show you to the  
Spirit that makes all and kills all  
and makes rebirth.

Victor has visions of Dr. Cheron telling him the unholy mutilated body's condition was a ritual of honor and indeed, the Shadow Warriors hold aloft gleaming daggers.

FAR SHOT -- TO THE MESA

The daggers catch the sun's rays, throwing their reflection in prismatic streams over the desert valley below.

Victor awaits his gruesome fate.

VICTOR

(despairing)

Oh, God, no. Jesus, no, not this...  
Jesus, not this.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR

You have face of good spirits that  
live in you. Show us your spirit  
face.

Victor pinches his eyes closed, as the daggers slice swirls into his face's soft derma.

The mantra intensifies.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)

You have right eye that see the truth.

Victor screams as one of them plunges the blade into his right eye.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)  
 You have right ear that hear the  
 drums that cry for all human beings.

One slices off his right ear. He continues to scream.

The sun is swollen in the background, like a bright bloody tick.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)  
 You have breasts that breathe in the  
 air of the land -- and they do not  
 despair.

They carve stars and moons deeply into his chest.

It is a nightmarish image, as Victor passes beyond the pain threshold and begins to moan in a compulsive drone.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)  
 You have gut that eats bad spirits,  
 dug deep in the earth.

They cut swirls into his abdomen.

He starts to lose consciousness. The Shadow Warrior's voice softens and everything becomes enchanted, prismatic, LSD-esque.

DETAIL --

Victor's flowing blood becomes gold and streaked with liquid silver.

POV -- VICTOR

In a daze, he looks down his body length and sees beautiful desert flowers blooming from his wounds. He laughs at this apparent hallucination.

VICTOR  
 This is all so beautiful. Am I dying?

The Shadow Warrior continues his prayer, as the frightening mantra softens and becomes a low soothing hum.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR  
 And -- His heart is of a hawk that  
 flies in heaven and never lies.

They pull out his pulsing, dripping heart, as it sprouts wings and transforms into a fierce falcon-hawk, soaring into a purple-crimson sunset.

Victor watches it wing away.

The Mesa Shadow Warrior holds up the infant man-child Victor saved at the massacre.

Victor looks at it through his sleepy, good eye.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR (CONT'D)

This is son of you. You give to us as a gift and he make you whole with the earth and spirit. You are a father of a chief, who shall write great words to heal our people's sorrow.

Victor smiles in a stuporous shock.

FULL SHOT -- CLOSE UP -- THE MESA SHADOW WARRIOR'S FACE

He hands the child to another and looks into Victor's soul with his unearthly black eyes -- at once terrifying and beautiful, alien.

MESA SHADOW WARRIOR

Tell the white devil when you see him, he has killed us. We are a beaten people. We are a dead people. We are only ghosts now. It is white devil makes us. We will fade into the earth, now. The last battle is won, but the war is lost forever... Tell the white devil this, tell him he cannot kill our hearts. He never kill our hearts... never... Not when time ends.

(smile)

So we win, anyway... Tell him this.

Victor passes out.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN --

EXT. THE MESA -- MORNING

CLOSE UP -- VICTOR'S FACE

He blinks his eyes and then shields them with his hand from the bright daylight.

WIDE --

He sits up and takes a deep breath, feeling around on his body. He is wearing Apache buckskins, his uniform has disappeared.

He checks his body for the ghastly wounds inflicted on him -- there are none. He checks his face and there is only a scar where the original Shadow Warrior's cut was -- no stitches, no nothing.

He stands up and looks to the valley stretching below.

He sees a well-worn path behind him and carefully picks his way down a hand-path etched into the mesa's face.

At the bottom there is a pony tethered to scrub bush.

There is a water canteen and a full food-satchel resting next to it.

There is an Indian drag-stretcher hooked to the pony's haunches.

Victor sees that it is occupied.

POV -- VICTOR

To his astonished relief he sees it is Charles, all carefully bandaged and cleaned up.

Charles is only semiconscious, but he is still alive.

Victor drops to his knees beside Charles and begins to weep.

He notices there is a small map drawn on buffalo hide.

It seems to point the way back to Outpost 22.

He mounts up and begins his long journey with Charles in tow.

MONTAGE --

EXT. SHOTS -- 1. DAY 2. AFTERNOON 3. EARLY EVENING 4. NIGHT  
5. LATE MORNING

In a series of shots we see:

1. Victor is almost lost in the immensity of the desert valley landscape.

2. He reaches a trail that takes him up into the foothills. Always following the map, he trudges on.

3. The desert valley spreads out below him, as he proceeds steadily up the rocky trail.

4. He sits by a campfire, feeding a bundled Charles, who gulps down a soup of corn and dried fish -- still too weak to feed himself.

5. He reaches the familiar fork in the trail that leads up to Outpost 22.

6. Glancing back to where he came from, he sees the sky billowing with latherous black clouds heading his way.

7. It begins to snow as he reaches the last stretch of trail before the outpost.

Victor dismounts to check on Charles.

Charles is still too weak to do much of anything, but manages a smile.

VICTOR  
 (brushing the snow-  
 flakes from Charles'  
 face)  
 I think we're going to make it,  
 Charley.

Charles, ever the bad boy, winks at Victor.

CHARLES  
 (his voice a thin  
 rasp)  
 I sure could use a brandy, about  
 now.

VICTOR  
 I'll look into it.

Victor makes sure Charles is secure and continues on the last leg of the journey.

Victor, with Charles in tow, traverses a ridge and we see the smoking ruins of Outpost 22 looming in the distance.

The two pikes where the Apache heads were impaled are empty.

Victor pulls up to the ruined gates and sees Gaffe' and Dr. Cheron buried up to their necks, their faces half-ripped off by marauding coyotes. They are very dead.

The outpost is deserted.

The snow continues.

FULL SHOT --

His horse steps over what is left of the wooden sign announcing **OUTPOST 22.**

Charles is able to crane his neck and look around.

CHARLES

(reedy)

What, in God's earth, happened here?

Victor dismounts and surveys the disturbing scene.

Looking for Little Wing, he calls out her name.

VICTOR

Little Wing!... Little Wing!...

PAN -- THE RUINED, SMOLDERING, OUTPOST

VICTOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Little Wing!? Little Wing?!

Charles coughs, speaking in a pained whisper.

CHARLES

She's gone, Victor. No one's here.  
Let's find shelter. It's rather  
chilly, don't you think?

Victor looks as if his spirit has been permanently broken.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

What's it doing snowing in mid-summer,  
anyway?

Part of the hospital tent is still standing.

Victor rushes in, expecting to see Little Wing's dead body  
but -- there is nothing there. His heart sinks.

He spots some tinned food scattered on the ground and gathers  
it up.

He stuffs what he can in with Charles and the leather food  
satchel.

VICTOR

(looking to Charles)

I guess you're right. Nothing here...

(looking lost)

Nothing anywhere. I think you're  
right, Charley -- Let's find some  
shelter.

They leave the ruins of Outpost 22 behind, continuing to who-  
knows-where.

It is snowing harder.

As they forge up a hill, Victor sees a mounted figure through  
the thick snowfall. He is suspicious and removes his sidearm --  
slowly approaching.

A.O. -- (*Snow dropping on tree branches*).

The two figures close the gap.

We see it is Little Wing.

Victor's face lights up like a candle, as he recognizes his Dream Princess trotting towards him.

He rides towards her, with Charles complaining --

CHARLES

Damn it, Victor. Take it easy.  
This hurts.

The two lovers, from their horses, lean into one another in a soulful embrace -- They kiss.

LITTLE WING

(excited)

You come back, my Victor. Good  
spirits with us. Come with me. I  
know place, stay warm.

VICTOR

(sadly)

Dr. Cheron? Couldn't you save him?

LITTLE WING

No. Ghost Warrior say only you and  
friend live.

(ashamed, shaking her  
head)

I save him not.

Charles looks up from his bone-and-hide stretcher.

CHARLES

You wouldn't have a bottle of brandy  
on you, would you?... My sweetness.

She, miraculously, hands him down a bottle of Napoleon from inside her buffalo coat.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(painfully reaching)

Maybe this isn't going to be as bad  
as all that.

He hesitates for a moment, looking deeply into her ethereal features.

Balls of corn-snow sprinkle her straight raven hair.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

You wouldn't have any friends...?

She smiles back, angelic.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

No? Thought not.

In pain (but now with a mission) Charles retrieves the blessed liquid sacrament, uncorks the bottle and takes a deep swig.

He hands the bottle to Little Wing, who hands it to Victor.

He kisses her as if she may disappear at any moment, but kissing while mounted on ponies proves difficult.

CHARLES (CONT'D)

(pained but not without humor)

Take it easy. I'm an injured passenger here.

Victor takes a warm healthy belt of the "Little Emperor's" favorite spirits.

VICTOR

(smiling)

You may be right. Things may work out, Charley.

He looks to Little Wing, who appears for the final time like the Indian Madonna-Princess of his visions, brilliant in the snowfall.

LITTLE WING

We go quick now. Snow not let up for a time.

(looking to Victor)

Bad spirit angry at you, my Victor. We go now.

The trio starts down a trail as the corn-snow thickens to a soup.

CRANE UP --

They ride up and out of frame.

The ruins of Outpost 22 can barely be seen -- still smoldering and smoking in the far distance, through the floating ice-rain.

The shot lingers --

DISSOLVE TO:

THE PAINTED BUFFALO HIDE --

The hide, from the opening scene, is beautifully mounted and hanging on a wall.



A.O. -- (A murmur of indistinguishable sounds swirls in the background. It slowly becomes apparent it is a crowd, talking amongst themselves -- in some sort of hall).

INSERT -- OVER

*In 1883 a treaty was signed officially ending hostilities between the U.S. Government and the greater Apache Tribes. The once proud nations were relegated to six small reservations where half their number died of starvation or disease in the first five years after the wars. The Apache chief, Chenza, was said to have placed a curse on the White Man that: "He may eat himself when there is nothing left to eat and vanish from the face of the earth; forever."*

PULL BACK TO REVEAL --

INT. AN ARIZONA MUSEUM -- DAY

The hide is being displayed in a modern museum as people stop, look and pass by.

TO BLACK:

*Roll credits --*

Insert -- **For Joseph Heller, John Ford and Sergio Leone**

[First edit 7/12/04, Final edit 7/19/04]