

The 10th Cavalry

Written by Alan Nafzger

www.screenplay.biz

FADE IN:

1 EXT. SOUTH CAROLINA PLANTATION - DAY - 1866

We hear an AUCTIONEER shouting at a cluster of two hundred people standing in front of a yard below a big white antebellum mansion. It is a post Civil War foreclosure auction.

GABRIEL (35) a former slave is watching his former owner's property being sold.

The auctioneers are selling off things which had belonged to the lady of the estate - her fine china. Next up are a makeup box and her modest jewelry.

In a barn, we see JULY (18) who is slightly built stable boy. He is grooming a fine horse. He seems happily working.

Gabriel glances at the old GENERAL (72) whose possessions are being sold. Gabriel is looking for some emotion. But the General is stoic and doesn't flinch.

Gabriel watches two sweating black men who work as the auctioneer's helpers, bringing out to the porch a tall grandfather clock.

FLASHBACK: Gabriel (5) remembers the last auction he attended, when he was the property being sold. He is little is clearly frightened. We see him tightly gripping his mother's trembling hand.

END FLASHBACK:

Gabriel is grown now, but we can see that he remembers and is uneasy.

Now Gabriel stands six feet tall or more and is clearly one of the tallest and strongest men in the crowd.

There is a doll in the property. It is a homemade doll of considerable quality. However it is old. On a whim, the auctioneer begins.

AUCTIONEER

This is an exceptional doll. How many fathers out there will give me 1 cent?

The crowd chuckles at the greed of the bankers - that literally everything is being liquidated.

There is a bid.

AUCTIONEER

2 cents.

The crowd chuckles more.

Gabriel quivers. He looks at the doll. He looks at his former owner. The old General looks back at Gabriel. They have some connection and attachment to the doll.

Gabriel gestures for the General to buy the doll. Gabriel holds his hand out. The General digs into his pocket and brings out a nickel. It might be the last nickel of the man, but that isn't clear.

FLASHBACK: Gabriel (15) has made a doll from scraps he's found around the plantation. Feed sacks and remnants found in the trash. Gabriel is shy to approach the General and his DAUGHTER (5). He says nothing just holds the doll out to them. The daughter is delighted and looks up to the General for permission.

GENERAL

You made that?

Gabriel nervously nods.

GENERAL

For us?

Gabriel nods.

The General is shocked; a slave has never done something so elaborate. The General nods his approval. The DAUGHTER runs and grabs the doll.

DAUGHTER

Oh, Gabriel. Thank you. Thank you.
Thank you!

The General nods his appreciation. It makes the general feel a bit odd. The General and his daughter climb into the carriage.

END FLASHBACK:

At the last minute Gabriel bids on the doll and wins it for a nickel. Gabriel runs to the front. The auctioneer has already started on the next item - a fancy red buggy.

AUCTIONEER

And now, you elegant Gentlemen, we have here a good spring carriage - Durham Buggy Co. - somewhat experienced but still capable of carrying a family of four to church or other destinations. Who'll bid me twenty, make it twenty, I said twenty, got the twenty, somebody make it twenty-one..."

Gabriel arrives up to the front and tries to pay the auctioneer.

AUCTIONEER

You dumb nigger. You don't pay me.
You pay him!

Gabriel grabs for the doll. And the auctioneer pulls it back. The crowd laughs. The General does not laugh; he is teary eyed. Each stroke of the auctioneer's hammer half kills him, but this doll is the very end. The General turns and walks out into an orchard.

The auctioneer points to a man and the man gestures for Gabriel to come to him. Gabriel runs over there and gives the man the nickel and runs back to the auctioneer for the doll.

The crowd watches and laughs again, for whatever reason (foolery). The auctioneer stops his song.

Gabriel finally gets the doll.

Now let that be a lesson. There is literally something here for everyone.

The auctioneer begins where he left off.

We see a freshly washed black carriage is waiting. There are premium and well groomed horse harnessed to it.

2 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

Gabriel returns to the slave quarters with the doll. He looks especially proud of it.

Two former slaves are there - large NAOMI (cook) and small JULY (stable boy) are standing there. They are all that remains of the plantation's perhaps 70 slaves.

July is something of a Don Quite (Gus McCrae) and Gabriel is Sancho Panza (Woodrow Call).

NAOMI

It's the damn Yankees. They runnin' the government now. They sees an estate they wants, they just sets the taxes so high to where there can't nobody pay them. Black boy steals a chicken, they string him up for it. Carpetbagger steals a farm, they just smile and say "help your self to some more of the General's blue berry pie".

JULY

Damn sad story. The fields and the big white house are gone. Gone are the Negro houses and the barns, my thoroughbred horses, the orchard. Look out there at that fine stand of cotton now setting its blooms. And they gonna take that from him. Hell, they are even gonna get his farm machinery. Sooner or later they will even get his chamber pot.

They contemplate.

JULY

Hell, the General is gonna leave here with the black carriage, one horse to pull it, and whatever clothing and personal stuff he can put into it.

NAOMI

Boy you better worry about yourself.

JULY

I'm gonna be right here working for the new owners.

NAOMI

They ain't gonna want you around here. They be afraid you will remain loyal to the General instead of to them.

Gabriel is only half listening. He looks at the doll, apparently remembering the old times. He looks and follows the General's progress through the orchard. Gabriel looks worried and walks fast to catch the old man.

3 EXT. ORCHARD - DAY

Gabriel waits the noise of the crowd and the auctioneer are gone before he calls out.

GABRIEL

General? General, sir?

The General stops, but he does not turn. He waits for Gabriel to come past him and face around.

GABRIEL

I was wonderin', sir, if you got any special work you want me to be doin'? You didn't tell nobody what you wanted us to do.

GENERAL

Work? Damn you, boy, haven't you got it through your woolly head that I've no longer got any work for you to do?

(pause)

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to speak so sharply to you, Gabriel. You meant me nothin' but good; I know that.

(pause)

I don't know what you are going to do. Best that you blacks be heavily dependent; manageable that way.

GABRIEL

July hitched your good sorrel pacer to the buggy and it is waiting for you.

GENERAL

When everyone is left out with my things, please bring all the people, all my good old hands. I'll have a few words to say.

GABRIEL

There aren't but three of us. But we are waiting for you. You want me to bring them out here? This is a nice place for a speech.

GENERAL

No. Come to think if it. I've already said everything there is to day.

GABRIEL

Yea, I heard you let them have it the other day at the barbershop.

Gabriel chuckles but the General is not amused.

4 EXT. SLAVE QUARTERS - DAY

Gabriel returns. He continues to look back into the Orchard. The General is still standing with his back to the house and auction.

GABRIEL

I'm worried.

NAOMI

You better be worried. Old General
can't take care of you now.

JULY

We'll take care of ourselves, is
what.

Naomi has her few possessions and boards a wagon with a
dozen other freed slaves and leaves without looking back.

GABRIEL

I'm scared, July. I don't know about
you but I need to eat.

JULY

There's other places, Gabriel, better
than this one. There's other farms we
can work on.

GABRIEL

They ain't home.

JULY

They will be, when we get there.

The auction continues but the General
doesn't wait. He returns from the
Orchard climbs in to the carriage. He
is about to leave.

He hesitates and looks at the house
and the auction. He looks at Gabriel
and July, who come running once the
see he is looking at them.

GABRIEL

He wants to give his speech, come on.

JULY

Speech?

Their hats are removed and held in
their hands. The General says
nothing, but he pulls out a two
coins. He gives the gold coin to
Gabriel and the silver coin to July.

The General whips the horse and leaves the plantation.

GABRIEL

Why you smilin'?

JULY

I got twenty dollars.

GABRIEL

Don't you know we are about to be two
pups hauled off and dumped way off?

JULY

That is tomorrow and don't never
worry about that and tonight I'm
sleepin' the big house?

GABRIEL

You ain't never slept in this house?
Me neither.

4 EXT. LARGE PLANTATION HOUSE - MORNING

July and Gabriel are sleeping on the hard wood floor.
They each have a ratty blanket. Gabriel has a carpetbag.

The house is cavernous and old. There is no furniture
and even the fixings are gone. The wallpaper has light
spots where pictures had hung. The overall effect was
more sad than scary.

They wake up and set out on the balcony. They can see
what the old General saw most mornings - big front yard,
the oak-lined lane which leads in from the road, cotton
fields, the barns, the stable and slave cabin row.

They see a carriage pulling up the lane with TWO WHITE
MEN sitting in it. Gabriel and July race down the stairs
to the porch. They know they are in trouble.

As visitors pull up they are surprised to see the two
black men coming out of the house. The taller of the men
points at Gabriel.

WHITE MAN

Boy, you stop right there!

Fear is in Gabriel's face.

WHITE MAN

What're you boys doing, coming out of that house? What're you trying to carry away?

GABRIEL

Nothin', sir, only what's ours. Just a few clothes is about all.

WHITE MAN

Open everything on the ground. Let's see what you have.

Gabriel and July were slow to comply. The man jerked the whip from its stock and lashed it across both men's shoulders.

When I tell you to move, I mean move—and be damned quick about it!

The other man pulls out a pistol.

Gabriel opens his carpetbag on the ground. He unties his rolled blanket. July does the same dumping his clothes out. The white men were not satisfied.

WHITE MAN

Your pockets. Turn your pockets inside out.

Gabriel did, taking care not to lose the gold coin. July isn't as good concealing his silver coin.

WHITE MAN

(to July)

Is that money you've got in your hand?

JULY

It's mine.

WHITE MAN #2

Probably found it in the house.
Niggers don't come by that kind of
money honestly.

JULY

The General hisself give me this
money, sir.

The white man with the pistol cocks the hammer.

WHITE MAN

I'll give you something too, boy, if
you don't hand that money here to me.

July, agonizes his loss, and hands over the coin. July
was too slow and the white man lashes him across face
afterwards.

WHITE MAN

I own this place now, and I own
everything on it. If you boys are
ever seen here again I'll have you
shot on sight. Do you understand
that?

Neither Gabriel nor July has voice to answer.

WHITE MAN

Now get!

The white man with the pistol grins and fires a shot into
the air. This frightens the horses and almost spills the
white men out of the carriage.

The shot set a dozen hound dogs to barking down on cabin
row. They came running out, some of them, to see what was
happening and to challenge the intrusion.

WHITE MAN

This place is overrun with nigger
dogs. I want you to shoot every
mongrel you see.

(pause)

And then shot them niggers when you
are done.

The white man shots the nearest dog and the other dogs scatter. Gabriel and July run for the road.

5 EXT. THE ROAD - MORNING

At the road, off the plantation. July sits on the ground. Gabriel is looking at the mixture of blood and tears on his a face. Gabriel looks at the white men inspecting the horses outside the stable. Gabriel clenches both fists. Gabriel looks form the stable to the barn and then to the house.

Gabriel may be lying.

GABRIEL

July, the General told us if he had a young man's nerve he'd of burnt the place down so them people couldn't have it. You remember him sayin' that?

July shakes his head dully, not yet comprehending.

JULY

No.

GABRIEL

We're young men.

JULY

Are we fixin' to burn the big house down?

GABRIEL

To the ground!

July and Gabriel conceal themselves in the trees.

Time passes.

They watch the white men leave. It is near dusk.

6 EXT. PLANTATION - DUSK

Gabriel and July stealth back onto the plantation. They drop their bundles where they can pick them up later.

They find a barrel in the empty barn and they roll toward the house. At the porch steps they together pick it up. It is very heavy. Inside, they unplug the cork and fuel oil spills out. They roll it through the house and cover the entire first floor.

In the back of the house, they look out a window across a pasture.

In the kitchen, Gabriel finds the matches.

GABRIEL

You get out the door, July.

Gabriel give July time to clear the steps, then strikes the match. He pitches it and the house erupts in flames.

GABRIEL

Get a-runnin'. They catch us, they'll shoot us like they shot that dog!

They race across the field as the sun sets. At the end of the pasture, they looked back at the smoke pouring out of the house.

JULY

We done it. The General will be proud if he knowed what we done for him.

July is loving it. Gabriel is sedate.

GABRIEL

I didn't just do it for him, July. I done it for me.

7 EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE OF AUGUSTA GEORGIA - DAY

They stay in the woods and go around towns. They eat wild berries and different nuts. They have lost weight and look worn out. Outside Augusta a SHERIFF and three OTHER MEN spot them crossing a road.

SHERIFF

There! Two niggers.

The law men spur their horse but Gabriel and July dart into the woods. The sheriff and men don't follow. They

fire a few shots, narrowly missing Gabriel and July, but then ride off, probably to the other side of the woods.

Gabriel and July run through the woods at full speed. They run into a military encampment. U.S. Army Cavalry. There are two WHITE OFFICERS and twelve BLACK ENLISTED MEN. Everyone is surprised. It is quiet for a good deal of time.

The white officers listens and we can hear the sheriff and the horses. The officers look at the condition of the new men. The officer seems to know the situation immediately.

OFFICER

Dinnertime. Ain't got much in the way of food, but you boys are welcome.

Gabriel and July pause and sit down quickly. They have bread and beans; they scarf it down. All the soldiers are looking at them. Not long ago the soldiers were probably in Gabriel's shoes.

JULY

Hey, soldier, how's a former slave turned gentleman get one of them pretty blue suits?

There isn't any response.

OFFICER

You men thought of joining up?

GABRIEL

We thank you kindly, sir, but we expect we'll just keep on travelin' for a while.

(pause)

If I was a younger man.

OFFICER

What about you? You are young.

JULY

I am a horseman. I could join ya'll. You have some fairly nice horses there, but I'm with Gabriel.

GABRIEL
Thanks for the food.

Gabriel and July stand up. Everyone hears the sheriff ride by again. It sounds like they are not going to give up. Gabriel and July sit back down.

This seems to confirm the officer's suspicions.

One of the horses is acting out. The excited sheriff and then the two men running into the camp has the horse riled up.

July chuckles as the black soldier can't saddle him.

OFFICER
You laughed at my boys. Do you think you could do any better?"

JULY
Sir, them boys don't know how to talk to that horse.

OFFICER
And you do?

JULY
I believe so, sir.

OFFICER
Talk is cheap. Get over there and show me.

July walks over and calmly saddles the horse.

OFFICER
Now get on him.

JULY
In these woods?

OFFICER
You don't have to ride him around, but you do have to get on him.

JULY

Okay.

Gabriel looks nervous. July gently speaks to the horse.

JULY

You know if you hurt me you will
probably get hurt too. These trees.

July has his hand on the neck and is rubbing from cheek to throat and down to foreshoulder, talking all the while. The horse has scars that July notices. The horse has been shot. The bullet entered and exited the skin across his chest.

JULY

You and I don't want to hurt each
other. After all we been through?

July raises his left foot slowly and deliberately into the stirrup. He lets the horse feel his weight tentatively while he leans against him, still patting, rubbing, talking.

JULY

I been whipped plenty of times, just
once last week at the plantation.
Some white man of course. I know who
that works huh?

He swings into the saddle, the horse is startled only momentarily. The horse stands trembling. July leaned forward a little.

JULY

There he is, sir. They ain't no mean
in this horse.

OFFICER

You are hired.

JULY

I didn't say noting about lookin' for
a job.

OFFICER

What's your name, boy?

JULY

July.

OFFICER

Just July? Nothing else?

JULY

July's all they ever told me, sir.

OFFICER

July, can you do that with all horses?

JULY

Yes, sir, horses and me have always got along pretty good.

OFFICER

Seriously. Did you ever think the U.S. Army need someone like you.

JULY

You mean you want me to be a Yankee soldier?

OFFICER

Not Yankee—that's all over and done with. Just American. We're all Americans again. The life is interesting, the food is regular, and a private soldier is paid thirteen dollars a month.

JULY

Thirteen dollars and I get to ride a horse everyday?

(pause)

And I get a blue suit?

The officer reaches into a pack and brings out two uniforms.

OFFICER

Just like everybody.

Gabriel and July look at each other.

OFFICER

We are going to Atlanta for basic training.

GABRIEL

West?

OFFICER

I'm sure in the end you will be at a fort in Texas.

(pause)

You'll like the West. Lots of fresh air.

Gabriel and July look at each other.

OFFICER

The land of opportunity for everybody - black or white.

Gabriel looked at the ground.

GABRIEL

Indians.

OFFICER

Total exaggeration. They have to sell newspapers and magazines.

(pause)

Novels. They are all made up!

JUMBO

(to Gabriel)

Fresh air, sunshine, three solid meals every day. And think of the money! Thirteen dollars a month.

The officer saw that July is convinced and pitches him a uniform. July is elated.

OFFICER

July, as long as you're joining the army, I'm gonna put you in charge of these horses.

The officer holds out a uniform to Gabriel.

GABRIEL
What about Indians?

OFFICER
You put this uniform on and you will probably never see one.

Gabriel looks at July. July gives him a reassuring look.

Gabriel reluctantly takes the uniform.

8 EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE OF AUGUSTA GEORGIA - DAY

The Officers and the black soldiers exit the woods and ride nonchalant along the road. They pass the sheriff and his men.

SHERIFF
You see two niggers in the woods.

OFFICER
No. What did they do?

SHERIFF
Nothing, but we go niggers running wild left and right in the county. Some body let 'em loose.

OFFICER
Well they might be in there. We just ate, rested the horses and now we are moving on.

The sheriff looks over the black soldiers.

Gabriel and July are obviously nervous, but are perfectly still. The sheriff spits his chewing tobacco.

SHERIFF
I'm gonna hang me some niggers tonight. I guarantee it.

The sheriff and men ride east.

9 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - DUSK

A Comanche boy, APIATAN (14) is watching a huge herd of horse. It is summer. The river is only a ribbon. It appears salty.

A second Comanche boy arrives to relieve his watch. It is not entirely clear but this is his older brother, WAKIZA (16).

Apiatan takes a bath in the river to be clean for whatever spirits might be waiting for him.

At the camp, a SHAMAN greets him. Apiatan smokes a bone pipe and the shaman sings over him and paints his face and chest with symbols and colors.

SHAMAN

Since your father died, I've along awaited this day.

(pause)

You will go into the mountains and not return until you have found your medicine. It is a long tradition. When you return you will be a warrior.

10 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - DUSK TO DAWN

At dawn he walks alone toward the nearest of the two mountains. He carries a buffalo robe, a bone pipe and a undecorated bullhide shield.

A dog follows him.

APIATAN

This medicine is too important. I will kill you if I have to. It will hurt my brother, but I will.

(pause)

There will be no food for four days or more.

(pause)

What if the medicine goes into you rather than me?

Apiatan throws a rock at the dog hitting it. The dog returns to camp.

He looked back a minute upon the quiet camp, upon the row of buffalo-hide tepees.

11 EXT. BALD EAGLE MOUNTAIN TEXAS - DAY

Apiatan studies the mountains intently as he walked toward them.

After an hour's walk he stopped and spread the robe on the ground. He packs some dried leaves into the bone pipe, fires a twist of dry grass with his flint and lights up. He takes six long puffs and blew smoke in each of the six directions, up, down, east, south, west and north.

He sees a flash of movement ahead of him - a gray wolf hunting for rabbits or kangaroo rats. He watches for a sign or spirituality. After a time the wolf disappears but Apiatan listens for a bit.

It is a hot day's. Sweat is running down his body, streaking the medicine man's paint. The climb is difficult. He stops for a breath. He grabs his growling stomach.

A very dark cloud passes. It has the potential for rain. Apiatan watches it while climbing. He hears its warning but he is bitten by a rattler. He immediately takes out his knife out and cuts the wound and blood pours out.

He cuts a prickly pear open and ties it to the wound.

He contemplates going down the mountain. Apiatan is almost to the top and the loose gravel slips beneath his moccasins. He slids on his stomach, moving faster as he went down. The sharp rocks gouge and rip at him. He loses the shield. The robe is tied across his back.

He recovers and reaches the top. He gets under his buffalo robe and waits for the poison to take effect. Soon he is near death. He is sweating profusely. His leg is incredibly swollen.

His heart, racing at first, begins to slow. He manages to sit up.

Down off the mountain he sees U.S. Army cavalry. Seven men on horse back.

He lays back and is no longer conscious.

DREAM: A storm arrives over the desert. There has been a huge battle and there are dead cavalry soldiers all over the field. Lances and arrows striking out of their dead bodies. Apparently the Comanches have won this battle. It begins to rain, a Bull buffalo walks across the battle field and is killed by lightning.

12 EXT. UNDER A TEXAS ESCARPMENT - DAY

The summer sun is blazing. Seven blue UNIFORMED MEN are huddled in desperation behind a two foot deep dry wash. They are backed up against and under a thirty-foot high cliff. Six SOLDIERS are black and one OFFICER is white.

The one white officer has a nice new repeating rifle. The black soldiers have only an old style of carbines.

The troopers are pressed low to the ground. Most of the blue uniforms are sweat stained and dirt smeared. We can see their ammunition is limited to the cartridge belts. A swarm of small gnats and stinging flies pestered them into constant slapping and waving.

Hot lead is zinging a foot over them and causing fragments of stone to fall on them.

PRIVATE

Lieutenant, how in Christ's name we gonna get out of here?

The Lieutenant has no answer for the private. He looks at the six men with him.

LIEUTENANT

I'm as surprised as you are. We tried to ride away but the warriors had us surrounded. We dismounted and found the best cover available.

PRIVATE

We got no horses. They drove off our horses!

LIEUTENANT

We have enough ammunition to hold out until it was dark. Then we can slip away. Maybe.

One-hundred yards ahead is a slight rise. Behind that protection are forty Comanche warriors. Nearly half of them are armed with rifles.

Beyond this in the distance is a huge herd of horses.

PRIVATE

Come on, Lieutenant, we got to do something. Maybe if we all jumped up and charged the bastards...

CORPORAL

Shut up, Jackson. The lieutenant is figuring it out right now.

LIEUTENANT

It didn't matter now. The Comanche have eliminated any possible avenue of escape.

A new volley of six shots slammed into the top of the rock wall showering them with rocks and dust.

LIEUTENANT

They have a smart leader. He knows they have a sure victory here and he doesn't want to rush things or risk his warriors. Thirst alone will kill us tomorrow.

A Comanche war arrow buried itself six inches deep in the dirt in front of them.

Rifles up. Keep your head down. On my signal fire two rounds each.

As he speaks three more arrows drop like mortar shells, sliced into the ground just in front of the group.

When the weapons were in place he said: "Now!"

The six troopers scatter twelve rounds into and over the Indians' protection.

Ten seconds later twenty arrows dropped silently out of the sky. The Corporal screams in pain. One of the arrows is imbedded in his thigh.

The complete arrowhead and its backward prongs is buried in his flesh. He reaches down and breaks off the shaft. He shakes his head to keep from passing out.

A horse charges over the protective hill from the left side. It must have a rider on it, but all we can see is a rawhide band around the pony and one foot locked under it. The Comanche rides on the far side of the horse in safety.

The RIDER gets within a fifty yards, gave a furious Comanche war cry, then wheels and rides back.

They wait. Another flight of arrows comes but missed them.

Again a SECOND RIDER bolts from the protection of the hill and rides toward them. The Lieutenant lifts up and pushes his rifle over the top of the dirt. Then he fires three times, as fast as he could lever the rifle. The pony goes down and rolls. Two rifle rounds from the Comanche answer, hitting dirt.

The Lieutenant fires twice at the now horseless Comanche warrior. The second shot brings him down. But just then the Lieutenant shouts in pain and is jolted back from the wall. A rifle round from the enemy has smashed into his chest.

Two troopers pull him back into the protection of the wall. Arrows began to drop in on them again. At least fifty of them fall in the first wave.

LIEUTENANT

One goddamned Comanche for a West Point U.S. Cavalry Officer. A damn poor exchange.

The Lieutenant dies.

Another fifty arrows fall.

CORPORAL

A hundred yards. Over there.

PRIVATE

What you want us to run?

CORPORAL

Either that or stay here eventually
one of them arrows is gonna get each
one of us.

The privates agree. No one objects.

CORPORAL

We'll move and fire, spaced five
yards apart, run, drop and fire at
the hill, get up and run again.
Fifteen twenty yards at a bite. Zig-
zagging wouldn't hurt.

(pause)

All right men, what do you say?"

All six of them nod.

CORPORAL

All right, up on your feet, but squat
down. We all go at once and string
out. Fire while running might be
better. If you stop they'll have an
easier target. We might surprise
them. Ready?

Ten yards out, they fire at the hill and continue to run.

For ten seconds there was no firing from the hill. Then
it came, a two dozen rounds. Three soldiers drop. Then
another round. Two soldiers drop.

The Corporal is wounded but keeps running.

He covers the 100 yards. He is almost there.

He hears a scream from behind him. Six Comanche's ride out on their ponies waving fourteen-foot long lances. A bullet shatters his leg and he now begins to crawl. And then he stops.

He grabs at his six-gun, but it has fallen out of its holster.

The Corporal grits his teeth, fights back the pain pain and again crawls, dragged his useless leg behind him.

The riders have drawn up three on each side of him. They walk their horses as he crawls.

The warriors watched him, curious how far he could go.

He lifts knife at them but a lance swung down and smashes into his chest.

The Comanche's shrill and laugh.

The bodies were stripped of their clothes. The pistols and rifles were gathered up, as well as the spare ammunition. The Comanche return with the captured the horses. They discarded the heavy saddles, but keep the bridles.

The warriors then ceremonially slashed the bodies so the black Pony Soldiers would not be able to fight them again in the hereafter.

They load the one dead Comanche on to a war pony.

They ride. They see a large herd of buffalo.

13 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - DAY

The Comanche warriors arrive in the camp. But don't stay long; everyone packs up to travel. The children are excited to move. The women are doing most of the work. They packed everything into large rawhide boxes and skins, loaded it on a travois, take down the tipis, folded and rolled the large heavy leather cover into one large bundle and loaded it on a travois.

As the women do this, the men circle the camp on their favorite war ponies, being always ready to defend the camp.

They travel. Some of the children rode travois, some ran along beside them. The older boys, and some of the girls, have their own ponies.

13.1 EXT. THE LLANO ESTACADO - BUFFALO HERD - DAY/NIGHT

The east edge of the Staked Plains have sharp drops and cliffs. The warriors circle the buffalo and drive the beasts over the ledges.

When the first huge bison senses the danger, it is too late. Directly ahead lay a fifty-foot cliff with a straight down drop off to rocks below. This first buffalo tries to stop, but two hundred tons of charging bison behind him soon push him over the brink. The herd all plunge over the cliff.

The men at the top of the cliff observe the women below with the dead buffalo.

They are dragging dead buffs off one another to an open space where they can be butchered. The horses and mules strain to pull the huge animals out of the heap.

The warriors arrive at the base of the cliff.

The women and warriors both work. The buffalo meat is butchered and cut into strips. Knives fly, drying racks are set up right there. They gorge on the treasured raw delicacies as they butchered - raw liver, kidney, eyes, testicles, marrow from leg bones, gristle from snouts, hoofs of unborn calves.

The racks aren't enough. More racks are improvised. Buffalo strips hang everywhere as the hot summer sun begins the drying process.

The men and women were blood stained from chin to ankle. Warriors and women alike fall into a small stream and splashed away the blood and hair and smell of butchering meat. They appear exhausted.

Women cook some of the meat over fires. As the night falls, there are songs and games and eating and more eating.

14 EXT. UNDER A TEXAS ESCARPMENT - DAY

One WHITE OFFICER and TWELVE BLACK SOLDIERS (including Gabriel and July) ride up on the site of the massacre.

The officer dismounts and walks from body to body. He seems to be studying it, but he might also be in shock. He doesn't order the troops to do anything. So they remain on their horses.

There is a quietness, except for July.

JULY

Damn. They said we wouldn't see no Indians.

GABRIEL

We ain't.

Both are looking around

JULY

They sure as hell did.

(pause)

I want out of this. I'm not made to be butchered like this.

The SERGEANT signals for them to quiet down.

The officer remounts and rides over to the hill the Comanche had hidden behind. He rides farther as he follows their pony tracks. He returns and speaks to the sergeant.

OFFICER

Dismount.

The Sergeant echoes his command.

OFFICER

Burial detail.

Again the Sergeant echoes his command.

The soldiers dismount and take their small shovels from the pack animals and move off to the various bodies.

Gabriel and July have the nearest body and can overhear the conversation.

The officer explains to the sergeant.

OFFICER

Far as I can tell, the Comanche must have figured that the patrol would see a raiding party and the stolen horses, so they attacked first. Damn smart of them, and it worked. What a mess.

The Sergeant watches nervously in all directions. A chilled look comes to Gabriel's face as the Sergeant slips his carbine from its scabbard and lays it across his lap.

OFFICER

They took the horses up on the high plain.

SERGEANT

We going after them?

OFFICER

With these recruits. You got to be kidding.

(pause)

Maybe later.

The officer takes out a pad of paper and sketches the bodies and writes some names down - a roster of dead men.

SERGEANT

You men keep you eyes open.

The Officer and the Sergeant move away to map the other bodies. After a time, we see them at the farthest body.

Gabriel and July are digging and then drinking water.

A loud shout jars them both. Gabriel glances west first, toward the other soldiers and the horses. Most of the men

were looking in his direction and beyond him and they then are running to the horses.

Gabriel and Jimo jerk their heads around, they see horses running straight toward him. Indians!

The horses are right next to them. The idea it to take them to the soldiers who are scattered about. July gets on his horse and takes all but one horse in the opposite direction of the hostiles. Gabriel remains stationary.

The Indians are a bit dismayed but continue their attack, screaming and waving their feathered shields and lances.

An arrow races past Gabriel. July brings them their horses (and rifles). The soldiers begin firing about the same time Gabriel begins firing.

There are four Indians racing toward him. Gabriel brings up his carbine and fires. He fires twice. All four are still coming.

The firing throws his horse into a panic. It runs away from the soldier's gunfire, toward the Indians. Gabriel is between the soldiers and the Indians and we get the impression they aren't the best marksmen. No Indians fall.

Gabriel pulls frantically on the reins, trying to stop the horse, then tries to turn him. The horse keeps running, carrying him into the Indians.

Gabriel raises the carbine and fires again. The Indians suddenly veer left and right. They spread out, confused by the lone soldier charging directly into them.

One Comanche holds his path. Gabriel's carbine misfires. The Comanche horse and Gabriel's horse collide. Both horses are fatally wounded, legs broken. The horses fall and Gabriel loses his carbine.

The Indian and Gabriel are both on foot. The Indian comes are Gabriel with raised stone tomahawk. Gabriel pulls his pistol and at point blank kills the Comanche.

Through the dust and the shouting and the shooting and confusion, Gabriel sees July racing toward him.

JULY

Better get that carbine and swing up
behind me!

Gabriel grabbed his friend's arm and swings up on the horse.

July doesn't spur the horse. But, he quickly looks over the dying horses. July takes out his pistol and shots the two horses. Then he spurs the horse.

The other Comanches have ridden off and are no longer threatening.

15 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - DAY/NIGHT/DAY

More than twenty young boys (including Apiatan), aged fourteen and fifteen, are pleading with the CHIEF to go along on a raid. He sternly shakes his head and turns them down.

Preparations for the raid begin. One Comanche seems skilled at making arrows. The warriors crowd around him. He gives out all that he has made. When they want more, he chuckles. He continues working slowly and makes a few more before the raiders leave.

In the day, the council sits around seeming to be hashing out the details. Women shake out their best dresses. Hair is braided anew, lances polished, war shields tested and bows readied.

At dusk, TOMOYAQUE, one of the alpha males, stands on his pony's back and the animal remains absolutely still.

TOMOYAQUE

We will raid him. We will steal his horses. We will make him quake and tremble with fear of the mighty Comanche nation. We will return next summer and burn down his fort and drive him and his puny white men back to Fort Worth.

(pause)

We are Comanche! We are Comanche! We are Comanche! We cannot be beaten. We

will be victorious on our raid, and we will return with many of the strong army horses to breed with our own fleet, sure-footed ponies, and we will live in the land of buffalo and honey and pecans for years on end, forever and ever."

Tomoyaque drops onto his horse, and a great roar of approval goes up from the band.

The drumming starts. It is almost dark.

A line of dancers forms around a fire. The women and young girls are on the inside, the men and older boys on the outside. They dance around the circle, first one way, then when the drums changed beat, they reversed and go the other way.

At one point they move so close to each other they almost touch. Suddenly the beat changes and they backed away and began to circle again. Each time they came toward each other it was with a different man and woman.

The ceremonial drums begin to beat until the last dancer falls from exhaustion. Midnight.

16 INT. ARMY FORT - DAY

A MAJOR is standing in front of the WIDOW of the Lieutenant and her five-year-old daughter. She screams. And runs into a bedroom and slams the door.

After a time, another ARMY WIFE emerges and speaks with the Major.

ARMY WIFE

She wants to leave. She and son will go to Fort Worth and then to Ohio.

MAJOR

Yes, ma'ma.

ARMY WIFE

Just as quickly as she could.

MAJOR

Yes, Ma'am. I understand her loss. I'll arrange an escort to leave at ten in the morning if that's satisfactory. She'll have a ten-man escort to Fort Worth. We'll arrange a cover on one of the freight wagons. It's a hard five day trip by wagon, can you tell her that?"

ARMY WIFE

Certainly.

WIDOW

(from behind the door)

Oh damnit! Why did he have to die?"

ARMY WIFE

They'll be ready to go by tomorrow.

16.1 EXT. ARMY FORT - DAY

Gabriel and July and the other black soldiers of the 10th Cavalry are laying bricks. When not soldiering the buffalo soldiers labour was used for general construction.

17 INT. WEST TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY

About twenty fully qualified warriors are moving toward the fort. They are traveling light.

Near the fort they take one full day to rest their horses and let them graze and drink to recuperate.

17.1 INT. WEST TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY

There is an awards assembly. The soldiers are lined up nicely. Gabriel and the Major stand apart.

Gabriel is promoted to Corporal and receives a commendation. He gets an extra stripe on his uniform sleeve.

WHITE MAJOR

I have never in my life seen or heard
of a trooper charging four Indians
single handedly.

GABRIEL

I tried to tell the Sergeant it was
the horse.

WHITE MAJOR

Damn proud of you. Fine example to
the rest of the men.

GABRIEL

But the horse carried me in that
direction.

WHITE MAJOR

(whispering)

Shut up. I need to be an example to
the other men. Most of them are
scared and maybe if they see a little
success, they will jump on board.

GABRIEL

But you need to know it was the
horse's idea.

WHITE MAJOR

I understand, son. But that is
secondary.

18 INT. PASTURE OUTSIDE THE ARMY FORT - NIGHT

They attack at night under cover of darkness. They put
their best bowmen up front.

They lay in the tall grass to the south of the fort. They
are two hundred yards from the paddock where more than
three hundred army horses wait.

Tomoyaque and two of his most trusted warriors dismount
and slide up to within touching distance of the wire on
the posts. They spot the paddock guards and kill them
with arrows.

Tomoyaque pulls on the wire. He pulls out a white men's hatchet and another piece of iron.

He signals for an Indian to go through the wire, among the horses. This Indian jabs one horse with his knife to bring a scream of pain and the accompanying wickering (horse talk) among the nearby animals.

At the height of this noise, Tomoyaque cuts the first wire next to one of the posts with two hard blows with the hatchet. On the third wire, a guard comes from outside the fort and he is killed with arrows.

Six other Comanche's slide into the paddock, leap bareback aboard the mounts near the far corner and began driving the horses toward the gaping hole in the fence.

A second guard comes from the fort fires three times in the air. Arrows fly but he runs back inside the gate.

They had more than half of the horses out of the paddock.

The men on horses inside the paddock slide off them and run to the opening in the fence. Several riflemen have arrived but they are out of sight behind the army mounts.

The Comanche herders are forming the emerging animals into a group and begin driving them north.

Twenty Comanche work the hundred and fifty horses to the north. Shots slammed through the night air behind them.

Tomoyaque can hear the angry commands as troopers are instructed to close the hole in the fence, then to catch a mount and saddle it and give pursuit.

Gabriel and July are the first to saddle their horse. The major and two officers are with them.

The officers wait at the gate on horseback for more to join them. In the end, five more black soldiers join them. Total there are 10 who peruse the raiders.

Tomoyaque gives a shrill Comanche war cry and picks up the pace.

But it alerts the Major and his soldiers and they change directions.

Ten more soldiers find horses and emerge from the fort.

The Major leads them hard for a half mile, then drops to a canter.

Twice we see Army mounts eating grass. They cross a small creek, and pass half a dozen more.

The Major stops on top of a rise and listens. He sends the other back down the rise so he can hear. He hears the moving the horses.

MAJOR

We are gaining on them!

And they galloped forward again.

19 INT. WEST TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY

As the sun rises, the Indians of rear guards fire some arrows.

The soldiers gallop ahead.

The Comanche's see them coming and send back a delaying force of four men. The Major signal for his troopers to space themselves out at twenty yard intervals and they simply rode through the Indians, killing three of them with accurate fire. The remaining Comanches continue to run.

Again the Major (with Gabriel and July) closed in on the herd. The Army mounts were tiring, and more and more stragglers fell by the wayside, some foundering, some escaping and munching on grass or finding a stream for a drink. Soon the Comanches will not have a herd and all this will be for not.

When they reach the Colorado River (Texas), it is too high to ford easily. When the Comanche approach their usual fording spot, the first Indian is swept downstream. The Army horses refuse to enter the water.

As the Major and his men arrive, firing and knocking down Comanche warriors, many of the Indians dive their horses into the water.

There are a group of Indians that haven't entered the river. They are shooting the horses with arrows rather let them go back to the Army. The Major races the men to attack. The soldiers fire a volley and kill the five Comanche horse executioners.

They group of soldiers are positioned on the rise over the river.

The Comanches escape across the river... or down the river, but the Army horses now can be recovered. They leave their prize and their dead.

July notices, twenty Army horses who have entered the water and are attempting to cross. The river level is high and the current is swift. For the most part, they are drifting downstream. They may be lost if the horses cross or if they float too far down the river.

July rides downstream and is calling the horses in the river.

MAJOR

Who is that man? What is he doing?
This is an action with hostiles and
he is going off on his own?

(to the officers)

Who ordered this?

(pause)

Get him back here.

GABRIEL

No. no. He's gonna get those horses
back.

Gabriel nods to the Army horses in the river.

The Sergeant is about ride after him.

The Major glares at Gabriel.

GABRIEL

I'm sorry, sir.

The major looks at the two lieutenants. He looks at the horses in the middle of the river. He looks at July.

An Indian on horseback emerges from the brush and comes up behind July, as he calls for the horses.

It is a long shot but Gabriel fires and downs the Indian.

July looks back and sees the Indian falling off his horse.

July manages to turn the horses from the river. They follow him right out of the water and back to the group of soldiers.

When July returns with the horses, the Sergeant is about to put down the wounded horses. There are nine or so horses gathered into a group. They have arrows sticking out of them, some have sports injuries. The wounds might look serious but July seems to know better.

JULY

You ain't gotta do that.

The Sergeant looks at the major for a decision. The Major gestures "ok" and the Sergeant lowers his pistol.

More soldiers arrive from the fort. And they begin to round up and drive the healthy animals slowly back to the fort.

20 INT. SOUTH OF THE COLORADO RIVER - DAY

The soldiers have established a temporary veterinary camp at the river. It is still very dangerous and many soldiers are three only a sentries.

There is a makeshift corral and July seems to be in charge. He has other privates and even a sergeant taking his orders. July is teaching everyone what he knows.

JULY

You can't talk to a horse that way.
You have to be soft. They in the army
like you, but they ain't dumb.

July uses soft voice and body language to settle the horse but he wants nothing to do with the corporal.

An arrow is so deep in the horse's hip that July can't pull it out.

JULY

Shut your goddamn bellowing. You're yelling loud enough to call every Indian between here and the Canadian River.

Gabriel and another soldier try to hold the horse. Several other soldiers abandon their watch and come to help hold the horse. July can't get the arrow out with another attempt.

A large man, Gabriel tries and can't pull it out. It is a long, heavy shaft apparently with a metal point.

July is about to give up and signals for the Sergeant to come put the horse down. The horse is lead away from the others. The Sergeant is about to put a bullet in the horse's brain.

July spots a tree and thinks about the angle of the arrow.

JULY

Wait!

(pause)

I have an idea. Bring that horse over here.

July climbs the lower branch of a tree.

JULY

Bring the horse over here.

The Gabriel and privates don't move.

JULY

Bring the horse here.

July reaches down from the tree and from approximately the same angle the arrow went in, he grabs the shaft.

The horse was shot in the hip from above and is in at a 45 degree angle. They have been trying to remove it from a 90 degree angle.

JULY

Okay, just walk him right on out of here.

As the horse walks away the arrow smoothly exits the horse. There is only a small amount of blood. When the horse is moved away, July holding the arrow jumps down from the tree and back to his horse hospital.

July is working on the next injured horse.

An OFFICER comes by and counts the horses. He makes a note in his pad.

OFFICER

Nine?

JULY

Yes. Now that one over there..

OFFICER

Damned shame we lost six, as best as I can tell.

(pause)

Two are lost.

JULY

Don't you worry. Those two missing will get hungry for some oats and be back before I get these horses back.

July is entirely too friendly, too optimistic and too talkative for the officer to like him. The officer is not amused and just rides back to the fort.

21 INT. ARMY FORT - DAY

There are 10 black soldiers mounted and ready to accompany a wagon out of the fort.

The widow emerges from her quarters. The fort is completely still and quiet. Everyone watches the widow.

They leave the fort.

22 INT. ARMY FORT - NIGHT

A SURVIVOR from the wagon detail to Fort Worth arrives. He is nearly shot by the sentry, but falls off his horse. He has five arrows in him and there are two arrows in his horse.

An officer comes out to meet him as he is brought into the fort.

SURVIVOR

Everybody is dead. They killed the lieutenant widow's and took the girl. The soldiers we fought but there were so many.

The DUTY OFFICER sounds the alarm and when they are assembled chooses the elite soldiers to mount and ride out to the site of the attack.

The duty officer reports to the Major. The Major goes back inside and writes orders.

The duty officer returns to the soldiers and orders them to mount up and supply for two weeks.

Gabriel and July, with the other soldiers, go to saddle their horses and pack supplies.

The white officers are left to discuss the situation and issue orders. There is the duty officer and two lieutenants.

DUTY OFFICER

(to experienced lieutenant)

Hawk Troop. Relieve the escort and track the party if possible as far north as the staked plain.

The Major arrives and sends a second group north. There is a rookie officer, BLECHER (22). He looks very young and is far too nervous. He gives both lieutenants written orders.

MAJOR

(to inexperienced lieutenant)
Lightening troop. You go north. Cut
them off before they reach the staked
plain.

(pause)

Don't follow them up there.
Understand. I know you want to get
the little girl back and be a hero.

The young Blecher does NOT look like a hero. He
is actually shaking and he hasn't left the fort
yet.

MAJOR

You know you're going with twelve
against two or three hundred, if you
go up there.

(pause)

Don't go near a camp. Their women can
be as tough as their warriors.

(pause)

If they are a small party out in the
open and you can grab the little
girl, great. Then run like hell,
preferably on a couple of good
horses.

(pause)

I wish you well, son.

(pointing to a map)

They are going to the high plains.
Block them. That is all your orders
say.

The Major hands him the orders and a map.

Lieutenant Blecher wipes his palms off on his uniform.

MAJOR

For God's sake, relax. You are
sweating like mad. Sit down over
there until they brings you a horse
and take it easy.

LIEUTENANT

Yes, thank you, sir.

MAJOR

I understand that you've had very little practical field experience?

LIEUTENANT

None. None whatsoever.

MAJOR

Well that will change tomorrow.

(pause)

Listen it is probably a small group and they might just leave the girl if you catch them out in the open.

(pause)

You each have an Indian scout. Tonkawa. Good men but they are cannibals. Watch them.

Blecher barfs on his way to the chair.

Two troops mount up and ride out. Gabriel and July are in the second group and ride north with the inexperienced lieutenant. A Tonkawa Indian is their guide.

23 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - DAY

The Lieutenant's five-year-old daughter is named SADIE. She has blond hair and is actually very healthy and strong. She is sitting in a circle of COMANCHE WOMEN busy making pemmican. She tries to walk off but the Comanche women pick her up and return her to the center. She pitches a fit and cries. They ignore her and continue to work.

A Comanche woman tries to explain in the Comanche language. Of course the young girl doesn't understand anything.

COMANCHE WOMAN

If we make enough, we will have plenty to eat all winter through. If we don't make enough, there would be hunger and starvation.

The jerky from the buffalo hunt has been saved and when they have time, they began making pemmican from it. First it was pounded into a powder and then mixed with buffalo

fat. That was the staple food in the winter, but the Comanche's usually mixed in other foods to flavor it.

We see persimmons, pecans, grapes, plums, acorns, apples, cattail tubers, blackberries. These are beaten into a pulp with sticks and mixed into the pemmican.

The pemmican is stored in rawhide boxes and cases called parfleches.

Young Sadie gives up trying to walk away and in the end we see her beating the mixture with the Comanche women.

24 EXT. TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY

Lieutenant Blecher is performing well; they are simply moving north and there isn't any fighting. The land looks empty. Lieutenant does look frightened, but after a time he seems to gain in confidence.

This is true until a rattlesnake suddenly strikes at the horse just in front of Blecher. Blecher jerks his horse around the snake and gallops at least a hundred yards before he stops.

Corporal Gabriel isn't the Sergeant; it isn't his problem. But the Sergeant nods for Gabriel to fetch him back. Gabriel follows. Gabriel leads the junior officer back slowly talking.

BLECHER

Corporal, I'm deathly afraid of snakes. Always have been and that... that was a rattler, right? Deadly.

GABRIEL

They are out here that is for certain. In Carolina we have them too.

BLECHER

I'm from Michigan.

GABRIEL

You ain't got rattlers there?

The Lieutenant doesn't want to return to the group. He seems to be looking to see if the snake has been killed.

GABRIEL

Well, I will tell you something my old master told me. Made me feel better out in the field. He says, usually they're more afraid of us than we are of them. Only time a rattler will strike at a man or a horse, is when it's surprised and cornered.

(pause)

That's the first one I've seen in two months here.

BLECHER

They killed it?

They ride back and the troop progresses North.

GABRIEL

The horse spooked and ran off.

The Tonkawa doesn't make a sound, but he clearly understands something is wrong. He and Gabriel and the Sergeant have eye contact trying to judge each other.

Time passes.

They dismount in a small group of trees along a tiny stream to eat a cold noon meal. Blecher goes off to eat on his own. The black soldiers look worried. He is white and their leader. He has the map and the written orders.

But they put it out of their mind and eat their lunch.

But suddenly close and suddenly three rifle shots interrupt the quiet meal.

BLECHER

Indians!

Must be a dozen of them sneaking up on us.

He ran into the small clearing by the side of the stream and huddled behind a tree. Half the patrol grabbed their rifles and ran to the edge of the woods.

The Sergeant was the first one there. He looked out across the prairie and all he could see was a buffalo down and kicking about fifty yards out.

SERGEANT

Chrissakes, don't shoot no more!

(pause)

Hold your fire!

JULY

Just a buffalo on this way, Sarge?

SERGEANT

I don't know why the Lieutenant fired. There ain't no Indians out here.

Gabriel puts his head in his hands in disbelief. But he get up, mounts his horse and rides out to the buffalo. The animal dies about the time he arrives.

They have to physically put Blecher on his horse. He is catatonic and they are basically leaderless.

25 BALD EAGLE MOUNTAIN TEXAS - DAY

When Apiatan wakes, the sun is broiling his body. Where he had been fevered, he awakened to a chill. He throws the robe off him. He stands up in alarm.

He rolls up his buffalo robe and begins down the mountain. He is walking with a limp. The leg is less swollen.

He comes down the mountain and finds a dead bull buffalo. He splits open the bull's belly and pulls out the intestines.

Apiatan drags out the stomach, opens it and pours out the contents and finds a ball of hair not quite as large as his fist.

He cuts off the bull's scrotum, empties the testicles and puts the hair ball into it.

Then he gathers up his belongings and walks.

Tomoyaque and his band arrive just as Apiatan is leaving the carcass. Apiatan has not been looking out across the plain and is surprised.

APIATAN

I've been in the mountains searching for medicine.

TOMOYAQUE

Did you find it?

APIATAN

I was bitten by a snake.

He shows Tomoyaque his still badly swollen leg.

APIATAN

I had a vision of dead soldiers and this buffalo who was killed by lightning.

Tomoyaque looks at the cloudless sky. He looks at the dead buffalo.

TOMOYAQUE

We are from the reservation near Fort Sill. We are going to steal some horses and live out here for a while. Come with us.

Apiatan agrees and is given a horse.

APIATAN

We should get my brother and maybe some other warriors.

TOMOYAQUE

Where?

APIATAN

Over there.

TOMOYAQUE

Your father and your uncles they
might join us too.

APIATAN

Dead. Father and two uncles. I have
an older brother. There are several
young friends in my village who will
come.

Apiatan points to a spot on the horizon.

26 EXT. TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY/NIGHT

There is a discussion. The Tonkawa, the Sergeant and
Gabriel. July is tending the horses. The other 9 black
soldiers are looking at the three, hoping one of them
knows what to do.

SERGEANT

Well don't look at me, I can't read.

GABRIEL

Me neither.

TONKAWA

I'm an Indian.

GABRIEL

Can anybody read?

It is silent.

SERGEANT

Well, how about this? We keep moving
north if something happens, then it
happens.

GABRIEL

Well it seems like the party that
took the little girl would be moving
north.

TONKAWA

Winter. Comanche. High plain.

SERGEANT

We will get the girl and go home.
Simple.

They all seem agreed.

They ride north. Slowly Tawakoni join their group.

TONKAWA

Tonkawa, friends.

SERGEANT

Yes Friends.

The sergeant doesn't understand. It is hot and the troop is just plodding along. Suddenly, July looks to his left and sees three Indians. He looks at the Sergeant and then at Gabriel. Neither look worried. He looks at the Tonkawa leader. He smiles.

TONKAWA

Tonkawa, friends.

July seems to understand. Maybe something happened when he was asleep. The others look at the new Tonkawa and then at July. He doesn't look worried.

JULY

Tonkawa, friends.

They come to a known camping area the Comanche's once used, but there was no sign any Indians had been there recently. The Tonkawa become more active, the move out in front of the group and do what they do best. Track.

They stop at several known camping areas along small streams, but no Indians are found.

The Tonkawa, when asked, keep singling they find no tracks.

Nearing darkness they approached a site with tipis, about twenty strung along a creek. Two Tonkawa take the lieutenant's field glasses and scout the camp.

They return after dark to a camp.

TONKAWA

No white girl.

Two days later... they find another camp. There were nearly fifty tipis. It could be pay dirt. But this story is the same. They watch until darkness comes but see no evidence of any captive children.

They moved far enough away to start a fire. Two of the Tonkawas bring back a deer.

They almost blunder into a Comanche camp. It is small and didn't have captives.

When they come to the White River the Tawakoni find tracks. They are excited and point. Tonkawa hate the Comanche.

The soldiers dutifully follow the tracks. The soldiers all want to find the girl.

The Tonkawa signal that there are 10. Which the soldiers seem to think is manageable. They don't hesitate at all.

They work their way up a trail onto the Staked Plains. The Tonkawa are leading the way.

When they get to the top, the Tonkawa look out with suspicion, not knowing what they might find. Clearly, they have never been there.

On top of the huge plateau the soil is easy to track. And the hoofprints are clear to everyone.

JULY

Damn, somebody did come this way.

GABRIEL

Wait a second, we need to catch them before they get where they are going.

SERGEANT

Let's go.

They move faster.

More hoof prints that lead to the north.

It is flat, perfectly flat. It is painted with brown waving grass. Far off to the north they see a band of green.

GABRIEL

A stream up there, with trees. Green is not like the rest of Texas. That is where she is.

They ride forward and find the trees. Coming up to the trees, they could see no indication of anyone living on the Staked Plains.

They camp. But have just begun to sleep. The wind changes and now blows from the north.

TONKAWA

Smoke.

The Tonkawa get up and grab their weapons and begin talking among themselves.

July wakes up and looks for an explanation.

GABRIEL

North. A wood fire somewhere close by.

27 CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - DUSK/NIGHT

The Tonkawa, the Sergeant and Gabriel quietly walk through a clump of trees. Through these they see another group of trees and is probably a river.

Concealed in trees, the other troopers remain on their horses far back. But they are incredibly nervous. July is trying to keep the horses quiet.

Now The Tonkawa, the Sergeant and Gabriel can see the smoke, hear voices.

Gabriel looks down on the Comanche camp holding some kind of a dance. He counts twenty-five tipis.

28 EXT. CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - NIGHT

They leave and return to where the other troopers are hiding. It is now night. They try to sleep. Gabriel is tired. But somehow he can't sleep. He is too near the Indians. He dozes off now and then, but wake with a start each time.

The dream is always the same. Some wild eyed, long haired, painted Indian warrior was about to hurt Sadie. Gabriel running at him but just about the time he got there, the warrior turns into the old General.

Gabriel wipes the sweat off his forehead and stares into the darkness. It is almost pitch black. But Gabriel sits up and cleans the bore of his Spencer rifle by feel. He then takes the Spencer apart and cleans and oils it and puts it back together again in the dark.

Something moves near him. The shadow moves again and Gabriel's knife with a sharp six-inch blade slid from the leather home and points at the shadow.

TONKAWA

Tonkawa friend.

GABRIEL

Ok, friend.

TONKAWA

You no sleep.

GABRIEL

Cleaning gun.

TONKAWA

Yeah. Right. I hear you.

GABRIEL

That little girl is out there. I know it. I can feel it!

The Tonkawa chuckles.

TONKAWA

Many Comanche's out there, too.

28.1 EXT. CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - DAWN/DAY

Despite the morning light, Gabriel has dropped off to sleep. Tonkawa touches his shoulder and springs back. Gabriel came awake with his revolver in his hand. He blinks a few times, sees Tonkawa and relaxes.

Together they walk back to lookout from the edge of the trees at the camp. The Sergeant watches them leave but wants little to do with it all.

Now in the light, they can see more tipis. In fact, they are surrounded. There are Indian camps to the North, South, East and West.

Looks like we found where all the
damned Comanche's went.

We are in the mouth.

They see three Comanche warriors trots toward them. Each carries a bow and one arrow in his left hand, and a quiver of hunting arrows on his back.

Gabriel and the Tonkawa hold still. The three Comanche's came straight toward their position. One of the hunters shakes his head and points in a different direction. The other two have word, then turn and angled into the woods.

The trio is out after some early morning game and they disappear.

They wait all day in the trees. July struggles to keep the horses quiet. The lieutenant is still catatonic.

Morning activity was beginning below in the Comanche camp. Gabriel has the lieutenant's binoculars, and lifts them, studying the camp. The largest tipi has a cloud, lightning bolt and a dog painted on it. It is directly ahead of them.

Gabriel lifts the glasses. Gabriel rests his eyes a minute, then looks again through the glasses.

What the...

You tiny figure comes out of the largest tipi and Gabriel catches a flash of golden hair. It might be the young

captive girl but she is running around behind and in and out of tipis.

A moment later several girls are rushing about the camp. A woman has evidently called to them. They stop and one of the little girls is definitely blonde.

GABRIEL

That is her.

Gabriel grows louder.

GABRIEL

I see her down there. The little girl
is right down there.

Tonkawa puts his hand on Gabriel's arm to remind him to be quiet. They were one-hundred yards away, but sounds carry well in the morning air.

GABRIEL

I can slip into their camp and get
her out tonight.

Tonkawa slowly shakes his head.

TONKAWA

Too tall. Too black. Comanche not
dumb, somebody see you, put two
arrows through you. All done. Dead.
Better let Tonkawa friends.

They lay in their concealed position for the rest of the morning, watching the activity around the big tipi. Many people came in and out the front of it.

Tonkawa silently points to certain items below. There is a well worn path through the grass around the tipis. The dogs are under trees and next to several tipis. The herd of ponies are at the far end. He points this all out to Gabriel who nods.

GABRIEL

You steal the horses and race east.

(pause)

I will grab the girl.

TONKAWA

You steal the horses and we grab the girl.

GABRIEL

No. It won't be that way at all. No, sir.

TONKAWA

Okay, but we keep the horses. No?

The resume observing the camp.

TONKAWA

Women start packing.

We see the rawhide boxes being filled with items.

GABRIEL

Moving their camp?

TONKAWA

Two days. No more, then move.

For a time Gabriel watches the blond girl play with two small Indian girls outside the tipi. It is a kind of game and she seems totally at ease, not a captive. Tomoyaque even comes out and plays the game with them for a short time. This scene subtly shows that the Comanche's have adopted Sadie that they intended to make her into a Comanche and keep her forever.

But the scene also shows that Gabriel might be thinking of letting it drop - avoid risk and returning to the fort without the girl.

Gabriel shakes his head "no". We aren't sure what he has been thinking about and we don't know what he has chosen.

The Tonkawa thinks Gabriel is ready to bail.

The Tonkawa gestures to and the pinches the one stripe on Gabriel's uniform.

TONKAWA

You can leave her, no shame. Take the horses, or not, and be safe.

Gabriel makes no response, but walks away.

They return to the troopers.

28.2 EXT. CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - DAWN/DAY

Several soldier are listening to Gabriel and the Tonkawa.

GABRIEL

The most important part is getting away. I figure we have to race straight to the White River Canyon and get down it. Same way we came up. If we didn't they will send men there first to cut off our escape. We will trapped up here.

TONKAWA

Quick. Clean. Four hours before chase.

Gabriel and half the troopers sleep.

Gabriel awakes.

GABRIEL

Okay, I've got it.

He motions for July the Sergeant and the Tonkowa to come listen.

GABRIEL

They will run us down.

TONKAWA

Not.

GABRIEL

Yes.

TONKAWA

You Tonkawa steal the horses and drive them down the white river. Go east. Fast.

GABRIEL

We will take the girl and go south.
They will chase you.

TONKAWA

They can't catch us. Tonkawa fast.

GABRIEL

Yes. Misdirection. We will go to Big
Spring.

Everyone thinks. First the Sergeant nods his approval and
then everyone joins in agreement.

JULY

You don't want me to go with those
Indians do you.

GABRIEL

No. You have the horses ready there.
The Sergeant and I will get the girl
and bring her there and we will light
out.

JULY

Oh, good. Lately I hear horses and I
figure I'm involved.

GABRIEL

You are. You are in charge of our
Army horses. You are the most
important part of this. The escape.

28.3 EXT. CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - DUSK

The Tonkawa braves bring six rabbits. The soldiers look
read to eat them. But they bring the rabbits to Gabriel.
He thanks them with a nod.

The soldiers look at Gabriel for an explanation why they
can't eat them.

JULY

Don't tell me you are fixing to eat
all them rabbit.

GABRIEL

The dogs.

Several Tonkawa Indians return and speak with the Tonkawa. Tonkawa then reports to Gabriel.

TONKAWA

Night, one, maybe two boys. We kill and steal the horses, they never know.

GABRIEL

Good. It must be that way. We need a three or four hour head start you said.

Gabriel gestures to the camp.

28.4 EXT. CONCEALMENT NEAR COMANCHE CAMP - NIGHT

JULY

What do we do about the lieutenant?

There is a long pause.

GABRIEL

Put him on his horse.

The Sergeant mounts his horse, takes the reigns of the lieutenant's horse and rides off with the Indians. They leave to position themselves to steal the horses. Nothing is said but the soldiers, especially Gabriel are shocked. July doesn't react.

29 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - MIDNIGHT

There is less than an optimal moon. It shines far too bright for this sneaking around in the night. Gabriel continues to glance up at the moon and wish it would go away. Of course, it doesn't.

Gabriel is not been able to find any guards or security around the camp whatsoever. He throws a rabbit to several of the dogs. They tug and tussle for them but this is the only sound, until they run off.

Gabriel enters the camp and conceals himself behind a pile of buffalo skins. He listens. As near as Gabriel can tell, Tomoyaque's tipi is home to Sadie. It wouldn't be easy. He seems to be working up his nerve.

30 EXT. EAST OF COMANCHE CAMP - MIDNIGHT

The lieutenant is abandoned as the Sergeant and the Tonkawa near the herd of horses.

The Tonkawa kill two COMANCHE BOYS guarding the horses. But the third, who is concealed cries out. The cry is distant and Gabriel thinks it might not have been heard but Tomoyaque emerges from the tipi. He listens.

The Tonkawa move the Comanche horses slowly and then faster until they begin to run.

The Comanche boy runs to the river and along the river through the trees. He cries out again.

This time Tomoyaque screams. He grabs his rifle and fires it three times in the air. He runs toward the disturbance.

The Tonkawa that are chasing the boy through the trees stop once they hear the three shots.

They mount up, return to the herd and join the stampede east.

31 EXT. COMANCHE CAMP - MIDNIGHT

As the camp is about to swarming with activity. Gabriel hides under the buffalo pelts. The COMANCHE MEN rush out of the camp and the COMANCHE WOMEN congregate and try to watch.

The men grab stray horses and mount them to give chase to the Tonkawa.

Gabriel sees the blond girl. She is very similar to the General's daughter at that age.

He runs up behind the girl and grabs her.

She lets out a little squeal. The women turn and see what is happening.

GABRIEL

I'm not going to hurt you. I'm a soldier, see.

Gabriel shows her his stripe.

GABRIEL

The Army sent me to bring you back.

(pause)

Okay?

SADIE

Okay.

Quickly the women surround them. They all have knives. Scrapers and other tools for weapons. One or two have a lance.

They begin moving toward Gabriel and the girl.

Gabriel pulls his pistol and points it at the women. They stop, but then move forward.

Gabriel points the pistol at the girls head.

GABRIEL

I'm not going to do it. It is just for show. You understand.

Sadie nods her head.

The women stop abruptly.

They aren't willing to risk the girl.

July rides into the group with two horses. He half runs over a woman who goes flying. Sadie and Gabriel climb on the spare horse. A Comanche woman screams runs at Gabriel with a knife and is about to stab Gabriel or the horse (or the little girl). July, pulls his pistol and kills the woman.

They spur the horses and bolt out of danger.

32 TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY

By ten o'clock have covered twenty or more miles. The soldiers with Sadie stop. Gabriel pulls an old doll out of his saddlebag and hands it to the young girl. She takes it without hesitation.

Gabriel looks in all directions. The land is perfectly flat.

GABRIEL

We should be turning south for Big Spring.

Sadie has her own horse now and looks tired.

GABRIEL

Keep moving, everyone!

The troops ride on. Gabriel does not speak. It is very silent. The Gabriel's restless eyes study the heat-shimmering flat terrain on both sides of the line of march. He frequently looks back. Of course he is alert, this is the heart of the Comancheria.

The sun is bearing down to the point that one of the soldiers sways and falls from his saddle.

GABRIEL

Git up from there and be a soldier!
He have to get this little girl home safe.

But the man is not moving.

JULY

Sunstroke.

July gets down from his horse. Places his horse to provide shade for the sick man. The trooper is revived after a time by wet cloths placed on his forehead and water sparingly given him. They get him back up on his horse and continue.

32.1 EXT. TEXAS PRAIRIE - DUSK/NIGHT

Some of the soldiers are sitting around a meal.

SOLDIER #1

God, I know the Comanches might be behind us. But how many hours a day can a man or horse take?

SOLDIER #2

I mean that sun!

SOLDIER #3

I figure we are gonna die out here anyway. Indian or thirst.

SOLDIER #1

Maybe starvation.

SOLDIER #2

We should have done gone with the Tonkawa.

SOLDIER #3

Better yet we should have never taken the girl. What was they gonna do to her. She looks to me fed.

July waits until Gabriel leaves to speak. Gabriel is becoming more isolated because his de facto leadership. He walks off and looks out at the plains.

JULY

Now, you-all listen to me, and you listen real good. I don't want to hear no man grumble. You got enough to worry about without all this bitchin'. When did they let women in the army?

(pause)

You got somethin' to say, you come say it to me. Then I will decide whether to fix the trouble or to kick your butt.

SOLDIER #3

Water.

JULY

We will find water. Don't you worry about that. All we got to do is keep moving south.

(pause)

We'll make the big spring, that way. It's never been dry yet.

The troop all look at July hoping he is right.

32.2 EXT. TEXAS PRAIRIE - DAY S

They travel three more days.

Suddenly Gabriel reins up and stares across the prairie.

Squinting against the glare, Gabriel sees a single horseman coming. He pulls out his carbine.

JULY

It could be an Indian.

GABRIEL

There is no reason a lone Indian would move directly toward a company of cavalry.

JULY

Crazy.

GABRIEL

I never saw a crazy Comanche.

JULY

I seen one angry.

GABRIEL

That ain't crazy.

A hundred yards out, he raised his hand in peace. The rider is a white civilian.

JULY

He is white.

GABRIEL

He has a bearded.

The MAN rides up nearer. We can see his is in a very old and tattered Confederate uniform.

CONFEDERATE

We're sure glad to see you soldier boys.

Gabriel takes off his hat and wipes his sleeve across his forehead. The heat has robbed him of any humor.

GABRIEL

I don't believe, sir, that you will find a boy in this company.

CONFEDERATE

No offence meant... Corporal.

(pause)

I'm an old soldier myself.

(pause)

Maybe I don't look it now, but I was.

JULY

Which army?

CONFEDERATE

Union, of course. Do I look like a Johnny Reb?

JULY

Without the uniform, I find it increasingly difficult to tell.

CONFEDERATE

You'll find some Rebs in our outfit up yonder.

He half turned in the saddle and pointed his chin in the general direction of a low, flat-topped mountain that lay to the northwest.

A SECOND RIDER is coming this way.

CONFEDERATE

Yankees, too. Old enemies pull together when a new one appears.

GABRIEL

I suppose.

CONFEDERATE

We was hunting buffalo and got jumped by some breakaway Indians. We are about to start hunted Indians now.

GABRIEL

You show us the Indians, and we'll decide to fight them or not.

CONFEDERATE

Corporal, I believe there are more than enough to go around for all of us. Those Indians killed a couple of men and then ran off the whole horse herd. We've chased them awhile, and they they've chased us. I don't know what is happening right now. I come to fetch you.

(pause)

We're down now to twelve men and a Mexican guide.

GABRIEL

Where?

CONFEDERATE

The boys is at a small creek, where a group of men were camped in the welcome shade of scrub timber.

GABRIEL

Water?

CONFEDERATE

Yep.

Gabriel is clearly contemplating the water.

The second rider arrives.

CONFEDERATE #2

Darkies! I had hoped they'd be white men.

JULY

I doubt that the Indians will know
the difference, or care.

Gabriel rides away.

CONFEDERATE #2

Hey were you going, boy?

Gabriel nods for July to come speak with him in private.

GABRIEL

I figure we need the water and will
go with these men?

JULY

If you think.

They ride in the direction of the buffalo hunter's camp.

33 EXT. BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY

These buffalo hunters are no blundering adventurers and there are more than twelve of them; they are closer to twenty-four. Clearly veterans of the Civil War. They are a military-style corporation.

The black soldiers welcomed the water and the rest.

A buffalo hunter rides into camp and slid his horse to a stop, spraying sand.

HUNTER

Indians coming yonder.

The camp is instantly alive. The former Confederates scramble for their weapons.

July hides the girl in some thick brush.

Gabriel forms the black soldiers into a line and are prepared to fire. It is almost automatic.

Five horseback riders appear through the swimming waves of heat. They have a white handkerchief, in the form of a flag.

CONFEDERATE

Truce. Do you suppose the Indians
have decided to give up to us?

Gabriel is studying them through his binoculars.

GABRIEL

More likely they are going to invite
us to give up to them.

Gabriel studies further.

GABRIEL

It is not a war party. Two are women.
Two old men.

They Indians stop one-hundred yards out. They are
reluctant to enter the trees.

Gabriel mounts his horse and the Confederates races to
follow him out to speak with the Indians.

There were about thirty rifles or carbines in camp, every
one of them pointed at the Indians.

COMANCHE CHIEF

Peace!

The Confederate speaks Comanche.

CONFEDERATE

Peace.

The two women, trailing the three men, looked very
frightened. The men are grave but show no anxiety.

The leader taps himself on the chest.

Quanah. Quanah.

The Confederate point to Gabriel and then to himself.

Gabriel. Bates.

The Indian slowly reaches into a deerskin bag tied behind
him. He brings out a large envelope that bore some kind

of seal. Cautiously the Confederate takes a few more steps up to accept the envelope.

The Confederate reads for a moment. He hands the document to Gabriel. Gabriel pretends to read it.

This is the most important scene. The Confederate is only interested in having his stock returned. He isn't accurate with the translation and makes a deal with the Chief to point the soldiers into the desert.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
That look real to you.

GABRIEL
Looks ok to me.

Gabriel hands the documents back.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
I am sure this is legitimate, but I'm not in the army. The renegades stole our horses. And now they make like a rabbit taking our stock back to the reservation. Once they make the reservation, we never get back a hoof.

CHIEF
You kill the buffalo. On Comancheria.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
He says the paper says you can't kill Comanches on their own land.

GABRIEL
No one is going to kill anyone. That is over and done. No more killing.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
This is army business. You need to return the stolen horse. Or he says he will kill.

CHIEF
Agreement soldiers needed. No kill
Comanche.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
He wants to know if you will honor
the paper.

GABRIEL
We will honor it?

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
He said, the document protects you
and the women and the old me. But not
your violent and thieving brothers.

CHIEF
We need honorable me to live up to
their promises.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
He wants to know why you are here?

GABRIEL
The girl who was a captive we have
her and we are returning to Fort
Concho.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
This black man doesn't speak Comanche
and he wants to hunt your brothers. I
speak your language and you steal
from me? This not an honourable
event.

CHIEF
There are many things wrong in this
land.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)

He says it is wrong for you to be here and warns of a war and blood on your hands if you remain.

GABRIEL

You need to tell him we are leaving.

CONFEDERATE

(to Gabriel)

He thinks you came here to team up with us, a joint civilian-military force.

GABRIEL

You told him we are leaving?

CONFEDERATE

(to Gabriel)

He is an Indian, of course he doesn't believe you. It's the uniform you are wearing.

GABRIEL

Tell him I can't take the uniform off.

CONFEDERATE

(to the Chief in Comanche)

He says he is here to hunt them and kill the renegades.

The Indian is aghast.

CONFEDERATE

(to the Chief in Comanche)

His orders are clear, he says.

CHIEF

I return your horses; they will not kill more Comanche?

CONFEDERATE

(to Gabriel)

He wants you to know that he regrets any war that might begin here.

GABRIEL

Thank you. It is done and we just want to leave in peace.

CONFEDERATE

(to the Chief in Comanche)

He said, this letter will only save you. Perhaps. These blacks are blood thirsty. No peace.

CHIEF

I'm sorry. They left the reservation.

CONFEDERATE

(to Gabriel)

He said he isn't returning to the reservation.

GABRIEL

Suits me fine. The officers won't like that but that ain't my business. You pointed out I'm just a Corporal.

CONFEDERATE

(to Gabriel)

I'm not going to tell him about you being a prices.

CONFEDERATE

(to the Chief in Comanche)

Yes, these black soldiers have been sent to hunt them down. There are many out in the trees.

The Indian chief looks at the trees trying to judge their number.

CONFEDERATE

(to the Chief in Comanche)

Have the horses returned to me and I will lead them out in the desert?

CHIEF

How many soldiers and do they have food? We have been traveling and need some food.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
Forty. With fine health horses.
Modern guns. Later after the soldiers
leave return for food.

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
He wants to know if you will give him
40 horses in exchange for your lives.
No and that there are 40 guns on him.

There is a long pause.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
They have a white girl captive they
have stolen from Tomoyaque.

CHIEF
Tomoyaque is chasing Tonkawa horse
thieves.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
So, do we have a deal?

CHIEF
Maybe. Where do you want the horses
delivered?

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
He wants to know if the water is good
here.

GABRIEL
It is okay.

CONFEDERATE
(to the Chief in Comanche)
Bring them here and I will send the
soldiers in the direction of nowhere.

Both the Chief and the Confederate point southwest, which
is desert and the worst possible path.

CHIEF
Great thirst?

CONFEDERATE
(to Gabriel)
You have to leave. It is negotiated.
He says there is going to be a war if
the renegades see you. He will bring
them back to the reservation, but if
they attack you it will be bad.

The Confederate points to the southwest.

CONFEDERATE
Big Spring.

CHIEF
Send the soldiers away. Agreed.

CONFEDERATE
I told him you are only interested in
the path to Big Spring. He agreed.

The chief and the other Indians leave and head north.

Back in the trees. The Confederate takes a map and
misleads Gabriel.

CONFEDERATE
You are here.

The Confederate points to a location southwest of
Abilene.

GIDEONS
I thought we were here.

Gabriel points to Lubbock.

CONFEDERATE
No I'm certain. This river is here.

The Confederate might have a few seconds of moral
conscience about tricking the soldiers (and the young
girl) into the desert death trap.

CONFEDERATE

That little girl. She someone special?

GABRIEL

An officer's daughter. He died out here a few weeks ago.

CONFEDERATE

This officer a Unionist?

GABRIEL

Yes. Why do you care?

CONFEDERATE

I don't, just asking.

Everyone rests under the trees until night.

Around the fire, the southerners look over at the soldier's camp. The chuckle and laugh. A few look sadly at the little girl. This is a subtle scene and foreshadows the death they expect to take place.

The Confederate buffalo hunters are a bit too boisterous.

The soldiers look suspiciously at the buffalo hunters, but can't smell the plot.

BUFFALO HUNTER

You boys look nervous. Why? Once you see that white sand you just cut right through it. On the other side is the biggest sweetest spring.

34 EXT. LEAVING BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - MORNING

One of the buffalo hunters brings Sadie a hat. It is a large hat for a little girl, but still it is useful in the hot sun.

BUFFALO HUNTER

Don't waste your water, honey. It's awful dry out there. He slyly puts an extra canteen over her saddle horn.

Bates leads Gabriel and the troop in the wrong direction. The sun is at their back. Gabriel turns around and watches the buffalo hunters. In time they are out of sight.

The sun will soon be bearing down like a devil. Gabriel finds that he is not the only one looking back regretfully at the tree-lined creek, its water and shade.

35 EXT. BUFFALO HUNTER'S CAMP - DAY

The Indians bring the horse herd back, as per "the deal". They are promptly killed by the buffalo hunters.

36 EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

Their mouths are very dry. And the horses are moving very slowly. The buffalo, the antelope and birds all have left the area. Bates looks like a confident swindler.

Sadie isn't too phased by the hot sun.

They come upon a what was a lake that is now empty. The bottom is dry and cracked. They stop in the middle.

They untie the shovels from one of the horses

GABRIEL

Dig here.

JULY

Keep digging.

GABRIEL

The water down there may not be pretty, but it will be wet. Fish sometimes survive in that mud.

What gradually seeps into the first hole seems more mud than anything else, but while he is digging additional holes, Gabriel notices some clearing in the first one.

July waits a little, then dips water into a cup. He smells it, touched it tentatively to his lips, frowned deeply and takes a good swallow.

Grimacing, he wiped his sleeve across his mouth.

JULY

It isn't good but we can drink it. I
can.

Gabriel is exhausted from digging. One of the other
soldiers takes over. July brings Gabriel a cup of water.

More digging and tons of patience produces enough water
to satisfy the horses and mules, to fill the canteens.

They mount up and ride on.

Time passes...

They come upon another lake. They don't have to dig here
to find the water. Gabriel and July move forward to try
the small pool of shallow water. It is smack in the
middle of a dry lake bed.

Gabriel never tastes the water; he doesn't have to.

The thirsty July however skims a palmful of water. He
brings it to his lips and spits involuntarily. And then
he has some dry heaves.

JULY

Great Goddlemighty!

The troopers look disappointed.

GABRIEL

Spare your water, men. We'll get none
here.

The order is late. July has no more water.

37 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - DAY

The troop is out of water again and without prospects.

The plodding feet of the horses powdered the dirt. There
is no grass - not short or long and none dead or alive.
There is a cloud of light-colored dust.

After a while Gabriel lifted his canteen and take the last couple of swallows of the water. It causes a chain reaction and everyone drains their canteens.

GABRIEL

Liabile to be awhile before we fill them canteens again.

JULY

Didn't you hear them say we was headed for another lake?

Far to the west lay a line of sand hills that are glaring white. Gabriel leads them to the sand dunes. He squints to see the other side.

The troop makes camp at the edge of the white sand.

As the sun goes down, sulking in their disappointment, Gabriel sees that Sadie's lips were gray with dust. We see Sadie licking her lips often without apparent effect. Sadie's eyes are glazed.

Gabriel shook his canteen to see how much water might be left, than hands it quietly to Sadie. Gabriel does not dare look at the men; he does not have water enough for them all.

July speaks regretfully.

JULY

That is goin' to run you short.

The question was one of courtesy and form; July could tell Gabriel's water was nearly gone.

GABRIEL

There'll be some more along the way.

JULY

Which way?

They mount their tired horses.

Gabriel notices July is sitting stiffly in the saddle, rather than his usual casual, but perfect manner.

You all right, July?

July nods and mumbles. His lower lip are cracked, showing a rusty-colored patch of dried blood he is not able to lick away.

The morning sun blazes down angrily upon their backs, then on their shoulders, sometimes the right, sometimes the left. They are lost and without any direction.

Gabriel rides until her realizes they were shifting direction every so often.

He stops.

A soldier falls off his horse. Gabriel looks back, waiting to see if someone else will make the effort. Another soldier does, his eyes wide with alarm.

No one is talking. Their tongues are dry and feel swollen.

The sun is directly overhead, bearing down without mercy.

Earlier they have sweated, but now even the sweat is gone. Their uniforms were soaked at on point but now are now bone dry. On the horses, the same, the salty dried sweat leaves a crust of clotted white slat/dust where saddle or reins have not rubbed it away.

38 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - NIGHT

They halt at dark. The troop literally makes a dry camp. For the most part, the men are grimly silent, eating little because they have no water to wash it down.

They look at each other with hate - the many with those few who still saved a little water.

One soldier comes to Gabriel, begging for his canteen. Gabriel hands it to him, rather than try to convince him it is dry. This one soldier turns it up and holds it a long time. When he lowers it, his eyes are angry.

SOLDIER

One drop?

(pause)

One little old tyntsy drop.
(pause)
I bet you got water.

The soldiers is going insane. He looks at the Gabriel's horse. And at the saddle bags.

Gabriel doubted it. The hunters seemed to be suffering too. "You go tryin' to steal any, they'll kill you like a Comanche."

GABRIEL
Don't you look at that horse.

SOLDIER
I'm going to look that horse. I know
you got water.

The soldiers walks over to the horse and goes though Gabriel's saddle bags. He finds nothing and sits back down.

Later, in the silence of the night. Gabriel gets a final canteen out of the saddlebags on Sadie's horse. He wakes Sadie and sees that she drinks.

Bates quietly mounts his horse and leaves the group for the southeast.

39 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - MORNING

Dawn finds the troop awake and more miserable than the day before.

The men are seen urinating into their canteens.

No one seems to notice but Bates has left the group in the night. They are seriously dehydrated and are in a daze.

They find the soldier dead. He is half inside a hole he has dug searching for water.

Breakfast is a hollow ritual, most of the men eat again only a little, choking it down with considerable effort.

JULY
What no coffee?

GABRIEL
If I had a cup it would set off a
minor mutiny.

GABRIEL
Where is Bates?

They look left and right.

JULY
He ain't here!

GABRIEL
I wonder if we haven't been
hoodwinked.

JULY
Bates?

GABRIEL
There isn't any water out here. Not
over there. And not anywhere.
(pause)
Well lets figure it out and get back
on the right path.

JULY
Reckon we can?

GABRIEL
Bring me the lieutenant's map.

Gabriel takes the map and it is just a bunch of lines to him. He looks out at the terrain. The map in comparison looks like gibberish. He hands the map back to July.

They mount up. Gabriel always lifts Sadie onto her horse.

There is a monument of confusion. Gabriel doesn't know which way to turn. He even twitches in indecision. Part of his body turns southwest and another part turns southeast.

The troopers' horses are hanging their heads, many bracing their legs and are trembling.

One horse collapses, almost knocking down the horse next to it. The trooper falls out of the saddle and scrambles away, avoiding being pinned.

The fall breaks Gabriel out of his tormented trance.

GABRIEL

That bastard lied. I should have know him claiming to fight for the Union

JULY

And I think that was a Confederate uniform.

GABRIEL

Why didn't you say anything?

JULY

I thought I did.

GABRIEL

Give me that map again.

July takes out the map again. Everything is moving a 1/8 speed. There is anticipation.

Gabriel looks at the map again. There are no physical gestures and the land is entirely flat. But on the map there is a huge blank space, also without features.

Gabriel puts his finger on that spot.

They change direction. It is like Gabriel has his second wind. They travel on a very steady course to the southeast.

GABRIEL

Water is this way.

40 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - AFTERNOON

Gabriel studies the men and horses. Three troopers have dismounted and lay on the ground in the shadows of their horses.

One soldier is groaning, anticipating death. Several of the soldiers remain hunched over in the saddles, their eyes closed. Everyone's lips are dried and cracking from the sun and the hot wind.

Gabriel dismounts. He too lays under his horse in the shade. He appears to sleep.

SOLDIER

Where's the water? He promised us water.

July does some shrugging, some pointing.

SOLDIER

He says we should've found it. Says this has been a bad year, and lots of the old waterholes have failed.

JULY

I think the buffalo hunters have tricked us...

SOLDIER

You mean him. They tricked him.

July looks over at Gabriel, who still seems sleeping.

JULY

They've led us out here across these sands - these dry flats - keeping us away from water.

Gabriel is awake and lifts his head up.

GABRIEL

They ain't murdered us yet.

The same men who urinated in their canteens are now drinking from them.

They ride more.

Gabriel goes the motions of setting up a mounted guard, but it was a futile effort. He could really do anything

if one of the men or horses dropped. But he rides at the back just incase.

Gabriel's vision is so blurred that he can hardly see straight.

41 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - DUSK

Gabriel is obviously tired and nods off a bit. He wakes with a start.

You worried about Indians?

GABRIEL

I wish we would come across an Indian.

What would you do?

GABRIEL

I'd follow him.

Follow him?

GABRIEL

To water.

Long pause.

JULY

You glad we joined the army?

GABRIEL

Without the army, what could I be?
Where could I go?

JULY

Lots of things. Lots of places.

GABRIEL

You know better than that. In the army I got something. I'm somebody, and I can do somethin' like save that little girl. Anywhere else, I'm just another nigger.

JULY

So, why don't you take your rest?"

GABRIEL

You tryin' to tell me what to do? You ain't never told me what to do.

JULY

No. Just come to me that you had a hard day.

GABRIEL

We all had a hard day. Mine ain't been worse than nobody else's.

JULY

You've rode back and forth, walked back and forth, seein' after the men. You gone twice as far as most of us. You rest, why don't you?

On the other side of the camp..

SOLDIER #1

What if the buffalo hunters were right?

SOLDIER #2

What man, even a confederate would hold such a grudge as to send us out here in this god-forsaken place?

SOLDIER #1

What if Bates left off for the water?

SOLDIER #2

What if we strike out in the original direction for the nearest water? How far would it be?

Solder #1 gestures to Gabriel.

SOLDIER #1

He's lost. He got so absorbed in that little girl that he forgot to keep track of landmarks.

SOLDIER #2
What landmarks?

Later everyone sleeps. We see grotesque sleeping positions. Something about dehydration that effects even the most natural processes.

42 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - MORNING

Soldiers #1 and #2 both are missing in the morning. They appear to have departed to the Southwest.

GABRIEL
Six or seven miles. He says there's
water in six or seven miles.

The troop begins to move again.

Gabriel keeps watching July. When his friend seems in danger of falling from the saddle, Gabriel reaches out and grips his arm.

GABRIEL
July, you take ahold of yourself.

July had not been far short of unconsciousness.

JULY
I'm all right. Just got sleepy.

They continue. Behind him Gabriel hears a dull thump as another trooper falls and this one begins trembling convulsively on the ground.

Gabriel dismounted and walks back. One of the other soldiers is about to shot the convulsive soldier in the head. Gabriel grabs is wrist.

GABRIEL
That won't help him.

The convulsive soldier stops shaking and dies.

43 EXT. TEXAS DESERT - DAY

Bates dismounts slowly, heavily, canteen in his hand. It sloshes a little.

BATES

God, I love this desert!

He unscrews the cap and lets the water trickle slowly across the his cracked lips.

44 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - MORNING

July feels his brown horse breaking down, his steps labored. He dismounts.

JULY

Boy, I don't know how you carried me
this far.

July begins to walk, leading the horse. Around him, other men do the same.

One of the horses and men drops back almost to the rear of the column. After a time the horse falls to its knees, then lays over on its side, kicking convulsively, making a harsh and agonized sound in its fight to breathe.

The soldiers pleads with the animal to get up. Weeping he tugs in vain at the horse's head.

FLASHBACK:

The soldiers are in training. A Sergeant is lecturing them.

SERGEANT

Indian's don't matter. You have one
fear in the West. I mean to repeat
this until you understand. I will
tell you over and over again. Losing
your horse is tantamount to suicide.
A man afoot is soon a dead man.

END FLASHBACK:

July runs back and manages to work the saddle free and slip the bridle off. Perhaps the horse will get up, but his condition just deteriorates.

The weeping soldiers stops crying. And he takes a knife and a cup. He cuts the throat of the horse. He fills the cup with blood and drinks. Other soldiers gather around and drink.

July! Get up here!

That is a trail.

Yes, by gosh; it is.

Get the canteens and the best horse.

July gathers seven or eight. Canteens and leaves to follow the trail.

You watch that trail and don't lose it. Out here the only place a trail leads to is water.

July is suddenly enthusiastic. He leaves without another word. The plan is for him to find the water and bring back canteens to what remains of the troop; it isn't spoken but understood. In the desert with no water there is an economy of language.

The others follow the trail also. Everyone is walking.

July is riding faster than the group and progresses out of site.

45 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - NOON

They walk and Gabriel looks out down the trail. Still there are no trees and on terrain except a round hill dead ahead of them, rising a little higher than the plain around it.

By now he is having to walk along beside Sadie and holds her up in the saddle.

GABRIEL

Any minute now, God willing, July is going to bringing back the canteens and salvation.

46 EXT. PECOS RIVER - AFTERNOON

July reaches the river and falls into the water. His horse is drinking too much and too fast. July recovers and leads the horse out of the river and ties it to a tree. He returns to the river and drinks. He fills the canteens.

He rests for a moment.

Up the river bank, under a tree, rests Bates.

He hears the splashing of the water and July's horse pleading for more water.

The Bates pulls out his buffalo rifle and takes careful aim at July. He pulls the trigger and misses. Bates is dismayed that he has missed.

July grabs the canteens and runs for his horse. He pulls his horse into the thick brush and trees beside the river. He disappears for a time, but then after a time reappears almost out of sight on top of a rise.

Bates takes one more shot at him.

47 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - AFTERNOON

One horse stops walking. The horse begins to urinate; the soldier rushes with a cup. The thought is no longer repulsive. Another horse urinates and then another. Soon, there is a mad rush to capture the urine. The men drink it madly. The push and shove for it.

There is one cup remaining from the last horse to pee.

He stares at the men about to drink the last of the urine. They hand it over to Gabriel.

This he gives to the girl. It seems she doesn't know what it is.

Gabriel grabs some brown sugar from his backpack for to stir into the urine.

Some of the sugar is given back Sadie's horses, which at first refuses but then accepts it.

GABRIEL

It couldn't be more than a few more
miles – fifteen or twenty at most.

The soldiers do not look at him or even appear to have
heard him. Only Sadie seems to listen.

GABRIEL

We'll live. We've got to live.

The heat is in full fury. The move on.

A staggering horse brings the procession to a halt.

The smallest soldier's horse goes down on its rump and
this his side. Without waiting for Gabriel, one of the
soldiers moves to cut the animal's throat. The smallest
soldier resists and grabs the wrist holding the knife.
There is a short fight ending with the smaller soldier on
the ground.

Gabriel thinks about breaking up the fight, then go to
his knees. He has no energy to waste on that task.

Gabriel has trouble distinguishing reality from
hallucination. He grabs his head and we can hear a steady
heart beat that turns into a drumbeat.

DREAM/FLASHBACK:

Gabriel imagines (or remembers) that he can hear a
marching band playing Dixie at the beginning of the Civil
War. He is a young slave in a city with his owner, the
old General. They are delivering cotton to the market.
The band and the song and the excitement in the crowd
come to Gabriel's mind.

END DREAM:

The larger soldier manages to cut the throat of the horse
and several jostle over the gushing blood.

This smallest soldier stares dumbly, making no effort to
join the struggle to capture its blood. He lays down on
the short, brittle grass and weeps silently. His body
shuddering. Clearly he doesn't want to die and feels now
without a horse he certainly will.

The horse dies and the blood stops flowing. Some of the soldiers become violently ill. The blood is thick and bitter from the horse's dehydration.

Time passes and we see the men are strung out for half a mile. They are no longer a military unit. It is not a loose group of stragglers half-delirious men struggling for individual survival.

Far from Gabriel, one soldier falls. Gabriel wants to return to them but continues with the girl.

When a second soldier falls, nearer to him, Gabriel leaves Sadie's side. He musters the strength to stagger twenty steps and throw blanket a over the man's head.

Gabriel then is too exhausted to return to Sadie on her horse. He sees her looking at him. But his vision become blurry.

DREAM/FLASHBACK:

Gabriel lapsed into a dreamlike state - back to the plantation. He hears the happy voice of big Naomi and the other slaves there. He is a boy and is splashing barefoot in a flowing river.

END DREAM:

He awakes and July is holding his head. He tastes the water. Gabriel recovers.

He sees a soldier doing the same for the soldier with the blanket over his head. But it appears futile to help the other fallen soldier. The soldiers trying to help him give up.

The troop forms up after a time. The water has done it's magic.

48 EXT. PECOS RIVER - AFTERNOON

Tomoyaque and ten Comanche warriors appear; with them are four Comanche boys. They chase Bates into a canyon. It is almost a hole in a canyon wall. Bates has abandoned all of this scalps.

Bates runs with only his buffalo rifle. His pistol and a smaller rifle are yards away when the Comanche appear. He runs into the protection of the rocks with this huge gun, which is practically useless in these close quarters.

Tomoyaque doesn't want to risk the lives of his men, so he has the young boys capture rattlesnakes and throw them down into the crevice. They manage to find about eight snakes. They burn their tails so we can hardly hear rattle; apparently this significantly angers the snakes and is highly amusing to the boys.

Eventually in the night, Bates emerges.

They knock him out with a blow to the head.

There are very few trees, but they do find one. They take Bates to the tree and hang him upside down.

They build a fire under him.

While the fire is building, one Comanche jabs a stick in his ear and Bates wakes up. He is screaming and wiggling around and he pretty much has it down how to swing around and outside of the flames in a circular motion.

The Comanche cheer, taunt him and shot him in the legs with arrows. All the time he is pleading in a language the Comanche do not speak.

Eventually, he will tire and in a matter of hours his head, arms and upper torso will be cooked.

49 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - DUSK

The heat stops with sundown. The men have had some water and are not lying in the previous grotesque positions.

Ended is the groaning from the previous nights.

50 EXT. TEXAS EXTREME DESERT - MORNING

The morning comes and the men are happy to urinate. They don't collect it and just let it seep into the ground. Just this act seems to give them a great deal of

satisfaction. In fact, there is something of a celebration to be peeing at all.

Several horses have wandered away.

Gabriel can't bring himself to any emotion except over his horse.

JULY

Judas is gone.

(pause)

I'm sure he walked up to the river.

They can smell that water and I

brought back some; he knows it is out there.

(pause)

We will find him.

Half the men are afoot now, their horses strayed or dead. None are riding still. Several are walking beside their horse; others have no horse to walk.

The men and seem in much better condition. But again, we see Gabriel bringing up the rear so no one can drop out without his knowledge.

51 EXT. PECOS RIVER - DAY

When the group arrive at the river. One soldier flings himself onto his stomach and falls face first into the water. The shock is unexpected and he faints.

Gabriel gets Sadie down from her horse and is about to hand her a cup. But Gabriel sees the fainted man floating in the river. He drops the cup and runs to save him.

Gabriel pulls him up half drowned onto the river bank.

GABRIEL

Easy now. Easy.

The eager soldier tries to scramble to the water again, even as he chokes and gags.

GABRIEL

Slow, damn it. Slow.

Sadie takes the cup to the river and drinks without help.

The other men drink. Clearly the men have never known water so sweet.

Gabriel rations himself, drinking a few sips, waiting, then drinking again.

We see other men fall into the water, swimming and splashing around in it. They look like children.

July supervises the horses and only allows them a short drink and then he leads them to a tree. Of course they don't like that and resist.

Gabriel is drinking from the river and looks up and in the distance is Bate's dead body hanging from the tree.

Gabriel approaches. The fire now is just smoldering ash.

His head is almost entirely charred. His neck and arms are seriously burned. He has at least 5 arrows in him all in non-lethal locations. We saw this in a previous scene.

Gabriel looks all around and sees nothing.

July joins him standing over the body.

GABRIEL

Who you recon did this?

JULY

When I left him he didn't have no arrows in him and he had his head. In fact he was shooting at me.

GABRIEL

I didn't think you did this.

JULY

I can't say this is the way I want to go.

GABRIEL

Serves him right.

JULY

Yep. Some Comanche has used him for
target practice.

(realizing)

Comanche!

The both ponder the situation. And they scan
the horizon and then the brush on the banks of
the river.

GABRIEL

Who would burn a man like this and
leave the arrows?

JULY

Beats me.

Both look around the area again.

JULY

Maybe it was still too hot when they
left.

GABRIEL

Like just a while ago?

JULY

They can't afford to just loss arrows
this way.

GABRIEL

That is right.

Both men ride a short distance looking for tracks in the
sand. There are many.

A single shot rings out in the distance. The two men turn
their attention in that direction and return to the camp.

52 EXT. PECOS RIVER - DAY

Two soldiers bring a killed deer. Into the camp beside
the river. Wakiza and Apiatan are hiding in the brush.
They make a face when they see the deer carcass.

They are upset by a number of things but taking game from
their land is clearly provocation.

53 **EXT. PECOS RIVER - MORNING**

The sun has just risen. It is very early and most of the soldiers are not yet awake.

WAKIZA

It is a good day for a fight,
brother. It would even be a good day
to die.

APIATAN

You will not die. It was not in the
dream for you to die.

WAKIZA

And you, Apiatan? What did the dream
say about you?

Apiatan sits in silence a minute, then points to the
camp.

WAKIZA

Are you ready? It is time.

Gabriel is awake. July stands beside him. They mount
their horse.

They ride into the center of the river turning their
heads slowly, searching.

JULY

You got the same notion I have?

GABRIEL

They're out there someplace.

Gabriel looks back at the men sleeping in the camp.

GABRIEL

I intended to warn them to stay
alert.

JULY

Jackson is awake.

Sure enough there is one soldier awake over the fire. After all they have been through, he is making coffee.

They ride/swim to the far side of the river.

They both scan the ground for tracks, but they are nervous and can only glance down at short intervals, then up again. Both men expect an ambush any minute.

They move out a little farther from the river bank. They are both trying to watch for tracks without looking down for more than a few seconds at a time.

As they move along, a covey of quail flushed and both whipped the carbines up. They chuckle when they realize the fright were just birds.

Gabriel glances back at July and lets a rare smile come across his face. July always smiles but Gabriel has been all business this entire film.

They begin to cross back over the river.

The two young Indians come over a rise, whooping, yipping, firing a rifle and arrows. They catch July and Gabriel in midstream.

Gabriel raised his carbine and makes one quick shot.

Gabriel pulls his horse around and heads toward the camp.

The rest of the men are quickly up. Gabriel spurs his horse toward them. July fires.

Ten or twenty Indians run at the camp. A soldier is killed with an arrow.

The soldiers hold together and they don't scatter. They grab their carbines and fire.

One adult Comanche is hit with a bullet in the chest. He manages to stay on the horse but in the end tumbles into the river.

The Indians' charge on the camp wavers. They stop moving forward and they fire a few bullets and arrows. Then they

veer off and out of range. We see ten Indians on a rise with a views of the camp.

But in the river the two young warriors continue to come.

Apiatan is in the lead, shouting, loosing arrows at the Gabriel and July as rapidly as he could draw them and fit them to the string. Wakiza has a rifle but Apiatan is out in front of him and Wakiza is afraid to fire for hitting his brother.

Ahead of him, at the camp, Apiatan sees a solid cloud of smoke. It is the smoke from the carbines.

A bullet hits Apiatan's shield. It seriously slows a bullet and falls into the river.

Apiatan glances up on the rise and he sees that the other Indians have ceased the attack. He looks back and sees Wakiza, still behind him.

The rest of the warriors milled about the rise in confusion. For them the battle is over.

Apiatan shouts and waved his arm for them to reenter the battle.

No is with him except Wakiza.

Wakiza might realize the futility of making the charge by himself.

WAKIZA

Stop.

They veer off to one side. The firing from the soldiers in the camp ceases.

The one Indian in the River lays still in shallow water. Wakiza and Apiatan turn away from the camp and riding on either side, their horses' hoofs stirring a spray of water. They leaned down, each grabbing an arm, and pulled the Indian up between them. Going to the bank together, they put the man gently to the sand on the far side of the creek.

The man's eyes are open, but apparently he is dead.

Apiatan is enraged.

WAKIZA

We should leave this for today and
fight tomorrow.

He looks over at the buffalo soldiers who, jaws dropped,
are watching the young boys.

Gabriel has arrived back in the camp and appears to be
giving orders.

Apiatan grabs the shield from his brother. Apiatan then
reins his war pony around toward the other warriors.

APIATAN

Are you warriors, or did I bring
rabbits?

The soldiers are dismayed for two reasons. First, the
leaders is clearly a boy. Second, there is no way the
Indians can win. The rifles are the dominate weapon.

On the rise, the group of Indians rally and charge at the
camp again. Gabriel turns the soldiers away from the
youth on the other side of the river. They are ready to
fire on the charging Indian.

Gabriel looks back to the two boys, who are looking into
the dead man's eyes.

Apiatan is charging across the river, again with Wakiza
behind him. The soldiers have their back turned to him.
He hears hoofs striking the water behind him and knows
the two boys are coming. Gabriel looks back.

Apiatan has this second shield over his left arm. He
screeches the fiercest war cry.

Apiatan can see Gabriel's face. Gabriel has his rifle
aimed at Apiatan's chest, but lowers it a foot at the
horse's head.

Apiatan's pony breaks stride. The water cautions his fall
but still knocks the breath from him.

Wakiza rides to him through the water, leaning, reaching toward him. Apiatan catches his brother's arm and swings up behind him.

Wakiza reins around and retreats.

They see the other warriors again pulling away from the fight.

54 EXT. RISE OF THE HILL OVERLOOKING THE CAMP - MIDMORNING

Apiatan is chasing the horse of the dead Indian. He keeps motioning for his brother to come help him. The horse of course will not stand still and keeps running ways at Apiatan nears.

Wakiza, on horseback, is watching and apparently is refusing to help catch the horse. He fears his brother will use the horse to return to the battle. The entire group of warriors are watching.

It is a sad scene for the warriors.

Tomoyaque and the other warriors contemplate leaving the battle. Apiatan stops and walks to the group and points toward the soldiers.

APIATAN

If you run away now you will never fight again.

(pause)

We can get them this time, and it will all be finished.

TOMOYAQUE

Look at us, Apiatan. We are finished. Your nephew is dead, and Terrapin is dead, and my brother has a hole in his side. Half our horses are dead or wounded. You have no horse yourself.

APIATAN

More reason to kill the soldiers.

TOMOYAQUE

The soldiers! Your dream said the soldiers would fall to us. But you

dreamed what you wanted to dream. The
medicine is bad.

APIATAN

The medicine is good.

Apiatan cut his eyes from one man to another, fighting
the despair he saw.

APIATAN

Don't you want the Comanche land
back? Don't you want to reclaim what
is ours?

Tomoyaque no longer taunts him.

TOMOYAQUE

This is not a good fight. We will go
away now and fight again at a better
time.

The Comanche faces are downcast. There will be no more
attacks today.

APIATAN

I will go by myself if I have to. I
will kill them alone!

WAKIZA

Brother, the dream has been spoiled.

APIATAN

Go with me. We can catch a horse.

(pause)

Catch him for me.

(pause)

The dream said we would kill them.

WAKIZA

Then there will be two of us against
them.

TOMOYAQUE

We will not tie you with leather
strips, but we will not catch you a
horse. You can walk back to with us,
or you can go fight on foot. Which?

Gabriel watches the Indians pull away toward the north.

55 EXT. TEXAS DESERT - AFTERNOON

A thunders storm is gathering. Dark clouds. We see lightening in the distance. It will be raining very soon.

After they ride a few miles, Apiatan, pulls his older brother off his horse and turns back to the river. He grabs a lance from a Comanche warrior as he passes by.

The chief is amazed. He doesn't give chase to Apiatan, so his brother runs on foot chasing him.

56 EXT. PECOS RIVER - AFTERNOON

Apiatan arrives back at the river.

Gabriel and July are standing over the body of the Comanche on the other side of the river.

July shouts a warning to the troop, who again scramble for their rifles. Quickly they are organized into a firing line; any charge would be suicide.

GABRIEL

One Indian?

They look left and right; it might be a diversion.

GABRIEL

It is that kid again.

Gabriel dismounts. July holds his horse. Gabriel bringing up the Springfield. Incredulously he watches Apiatan race toward him. It seems odd only one Comanche would attack and this is a mere boy.

Just as Gabriel is about to fire his weapon, Tomoyaque appears on horse back with his followers. Gabriel lowers his weapon.

Apiatan wants to kill Gabriel and is not charging the soldiers on the far bank. Tomoyaque is between the charging Apiatan and Gabriel. The other Comanche are at the side.

Tomoyaque looks at Gabriel trying to judge his intentions. Gabriel nods to him to stop the boy, implying that he will not fire. Tomoyaque turns his back on Gabriel. He intends to stop Apiatan.

Gabriel holds his hand up signaling the troop not to fire.

Tomoyaque stops the boy. The boy is enraged but halts his horse.

This is not wise. I need you to fight tomorrow and the next day. This man will kill you and for what?

Tomoyaque spurs his horse and tries to go around Tomoyaque. Tomoyaque is forced to use violence. He knows the boy off his horse into the water and they fight.

In the end, Apiatan is tied with leather ropes to his horse and they Comanche leave.

Wakiza walks beside the horse to keep his brother from falling off.

FADE OUT:

ALTERNATE ENDING

57 PECOS RIVER - AFTERNOON

Apiatan arrives back at the river.

Gabriel is standing over the body of the Comanche on the other side of the river.

July shouts a warning.

Gabriel turned quickly in the saddle, bringing up the Springfield. Incredulously he watches Apiatan race toward him.

The troopers begin firing, trying to help Gabriel.

He comes on, the lance extended.

Gabriel swings out of the saddle and drops to his knee, bringing up the riffle again.

Time seems to stand still. Slow motion.

The Indian is almost upon him.

Wakiza arrives on foot. He is exhausted but he sees this last charge by his brother.

Gabriel squeezes the trigger an instant before the lance grazes (tears) his uniform.

The warrior flips off pony's rump and falls loosely to the sandy river bank. The Comanche horse begins a wide circle, frightened violence.

Wakiza runs to his dead brother.

The other Indians arrive and walk their horses up to the brother.

Gabriel is swayed, he almost falls backward. He struggled to his feet, staggers a couple of aimless steps and goes to his knees. He braced himself with his rifle to keep from falling.

July slowly begins to cross the river.

The Indians no longer want to fight. They could kill Gabriel. They are there in close quarters, but simply to retrieve the body of Apiatan.

They pick up Apiatan and place him over a horse.

July arrives to stand beside Gabriel.

The Indians ride away.

Wakiza walks beside the horse to keep his brother's body from falling off.

APIATAN - Wooden Lance
WAKIZA - Desperate Warrior
TOMOYAQUE - Thunder Dog

