

THE UNBOUND CAPTIVES

by

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7/9/2008

TEXAS - 1859 - CLEAR FORK OF BRAZOS RIVER

EXT PRAIRIE - TWILIGHT

Embers from a campfire shooting, crackling up into the night sky. Through the flames, the vague sight of arms, legs twisting, dancing. Sounds of CHANTING, HUMMING rising louder. Silence

TOM'S VOICE

What can you ask of fate?

TOM DEARBORN is lying on a bedroll, staring into the flames. Alone.

EXT COTTONWOOD GROVE - NIGHT

A boy of 10, PHINEAS CONNER, slowly stalks a wild turkey. He stops, looks down at the ground; pulls from the earth--

A HALF BURIED MOCCASIN. Small slivers of tin attached to it JINGLE. He hold it, fascinated.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

It is an enchantment. It opens its door and we happen through.

INT LOG CABIN - NIGHT

May sits at the edge of a bed with her daughter RACHEL, 6, who's HUMMING A SOFT TUNE. A small collection of handcrafted dolls, sitting beside them. Together they delicately work on making another, sewing on a button for an eye. The image ghostly. Beautiful perfection to the moment.

EXT PRAIRIE - NIGHT

BACK TO TOM - Arm resting over his head. Far away. SOUNDS of quiet CHIMES.

EXT PLAINS DAY

A POCKET WATCH - Gold chain attached, rests on an animal skin. It's open. CHIMES exquisitely.

BUFFALO HUMP, WAR CHIEF OF THE PENATEKA COMANCHES regards it. His presence is formidable, impenetrable.

ROBERT NEIGHBORS (37), the U.S. Indian Agent, quiet, articulate and TOM DEARBORN, his Translator, sit across from the Comanche waiting for a reaction. There is none.

BUFFALO HUMP

(smiles; in Comanche)
 Yes. I've seen this before, but
 never one that sings--It tells the
 white man when to do things.

Tom TRANSLATES.

NEIGHBORS

(enjoying this)
 Unfortunately, that's true...Our
 chief wishes to show his respect
 for you.

BUFFALO HUMP

Which one--The Texan or the
 American?

NEIGHBORS

The Great One--In Washington.

BUFFALO HUMP

I do not know this man, yet he asks
 me to go far away and live in a
 place I've never seen...This is my
 home.

NEIGHBORS

Please hear me, sir. Half your
 people have agreed to go. White
 Bear and the others will come to
 speak peace with us. We have
 guaranteed their safety. Join them
 and you will be many. You'll be
 strong again.

BUFFALO HUMP

We are strong now. Only War Chiefs
 speak peace.

(smiles)

You can talk of other things. Those
 who made the Texan's peace are now
 this--

He picks up a handful of dirt, the dust runs through his
 fingers to the ground.

BUFFALO HUMP (CONT'D)

Tell your Great Chief, we are not
 children sitting at the Whiteman's
 feet, waiting for whatever he
 chooses to give us.

NEIGHBORS

Yes. I understand. I will tell him---but there is no more time.

NEIGHBORS (CONT'D)

(hesitates; to Tom)

I'm at a loss.

(to Buffalo Hump)

At night, when you look to the stars--That's how many warriors the white man has. And they are coming.

Tom hesitates.

NEIGHBORS (CONT'D)

Tell him, Tom.

Tom TRANSLATES. Buffalo Hump watches him.

NEIGHBORS (CONT'D)

Your people will suffer all the more. The Texans will see to that.

BUFFALO HUMP

(coolly)

Will they?

NEIGHBORS

Yes, my friend. I'm afraid so.

BUFFALO HUMP

Don't be afraid.

He folds the corners of the animal skin over the watch, unwilling to touch it.

BUFFALO HUMP (CONT'D)

See me now--I wear nothing of the White Man, and I won't carry his magic.

He politely pushes it to Neighbors with his pony whip.

BUFFALO HUMP (CONT'D)

The Whites have wondrous things, but they don't have this--

(he gestures across the vast landscape)

It is ours...We are the People. We are here; we will always be here.

(beat)

Tell all your Chiefs---I will never go in.

He waits a moment for the translation; suddenly addresses Tom-

BUFFALO HUMP (CONT'D)

This is for your ears--I had a dream of you. You held a long knife and you couldn't see through the air.

TOM

(amused)

Did it end well?

BUFFALO HUMP

It did not end at all.

Neighbors watches the men, then persistently--

NEIGHBORS

We must meet again--

Buffalo Hump holds up his hand, interrupting.

BUFFALO HUMP

(to Neighbors)

I have no quarrel with you. Your heart is good. I have no more words

Buffalo Hump stands. They all rise. Neighbors extends his hand. The Chief shakes it.

NEIGHBORS

I wish you well.

The Chief turns his back to them, mounts his horse, gives a last glance back.

TOM and NEIGHBORS watch him ride away.

EXT DAY - LONELY OUTPOST

A GOLD COIN tossed into the air, hit by an arrow. CHEERS, APPLAUSE. A young INDIAN BOY sets another arrow in his bow. A MAN in a worn black suit pitches a second coin into the air, the boy hits it again, hardly seeming to aim. White onlookers APPLAUD. INDIAN SQUAWS, in their most colorful costumes, ululate.

REVEAL an outpost with a courtyard. Several Comanche families and a group of a twenty or so curious whites trying to communicate through halting sign language. The mood is jovial, both parties not in the least hostile. Everyone wants to see the strange and dreaded Indians.

The Man in the suit gives the Indian boy the coin he hit.

INT TRADING POST

Large simple room. Buffalo robes spread on the floor. FOUR COMANCHE CHIEFS--HE DOG, WHITE BEAR, BULL CALF, YELLOW HORSE seated on robes, silently passing a pipe. Tom and Robert Neighbors sit, facing them. A dozen white bystanders observe the proceedings.

Tom has a whispered conversation with He-Dog, then looks up, glances at a MAN standing in the corner, half in shadow.

BULL CALF (COMANCHE)

(slyly)

This is a fine lodge, how do you move it?

NEIGHBORS

(playing along)

Well...you don't. It remains here.

(smiles)

We've brought you vermillion, blankets, and salt---as you've asked

The Chiefs nod, bemused. Talk among themselves as they inspect the goods, Neighbors has brought them. He Dog passes Tom the pip--

TOM - as he smokes, he scans the spectators, alertly.

TOM'S POV - The man he spotted has moved farther back into the room, obscured by onlookers.

THE CHIEFS - Talking, showing Neighbors they approve of their new goods. Iron pots, pans. Neighbors is charming. Enjoys them.

TOM - Looking to another part of the room. Stares.

TOM'S POV - A MAN IN A TOP HAT, silhouetted against the window..

TOM - Watchful. He darkens just a bit. Speaks up:

TOM

(to Top Hat)

Could you let some light in, Friend?

The Man nods, steps aside.

TOM - Holds his eyes for just a beat, then scans the room.

THE CHIEFS - Talking to Neighbors affably. Laughing.

THE CROWD - Taking it all in. Enjoying the strange sight.

A DUSTY, EXHAUSTED RIDER strides in, goes to Neighbors, hands him a letter. Neighbor reddens as he reads. Tom clocks this, the Chiefs watch closely.

NEIGHBORS

(clenched jaw, low-to Tom)
Apparently the Magistrate and his
"committee" have chosen not to
grace us with their presence
(to the Rider)

Come here to me. Closer. Take a
fresh mount, tell them that from
this point on I will deal directly
with Washington. They are no
longer...engaged in these affairs.
Do you understand?

RIDER

Yes, sir.

Neighbors nods, the Rider leaves. The Chiefs are curious, Onlookers murmur.

TOM

(lightly)
"Lifteth me up above those that
rise against me". Surely you're
not surprised.

NEIGHBORS

Just disgusted.

The Chiefs and everyone in the room watch closely. Neighbors, angered, wheels turning. Tom covers.

TOM

He Dog, White Bear, Bull Calf--will
you smoke the American's tobacco
with us?

They agree. Neighbors, momentarily surprised, takes Tom's cue to collect his thoughts, pats his coat, producing a leather case and passes out cigars. He bites off a tip and lights up.

THE CHIEFS - unsure, do the same. They all cough, LAUGH.

THREE DUSTY MEN enter. Tom watches them.

HE DOG
You're wise not to take this smoke.

More laughter. Suddenly, the MAN FROM THE SHADOWS bolts forwards SHOTS Bull Calf in the head IN A SPLIT SECOND.

HE AIMS at Neighbors. He Dog STRIKES the man's pistol with his Buffalo tail whip. The shot goes wild, SMOKES up the room AS--

TOM FIRES at the ASSAILANT'S head. It explodes and SPRAYS NEIGHBORS who's drawing his gun, WITH FLECKS OF BLOOD

The DUSTY RIDERS draw their weapons, BLAST AWAY at Neighbors and the Chiefs. Immediate outrage from the Indians

The Room ERUPTS in gunfire. The Chiefs pull their knives, SCREAMING WAR CRIES.

SHARP, LOUD PISTOL ROUNDS. SMOKE obscures everything from view. The room shrouded in a bizarre fog.

EXT COURTYARD

SHOUTS and SCREAMS. The little Indian boy LOOSES his arrows on the man who tossed coins---HITTING him in the thigh, then again THROUGH THE HEART, KILLING HIM.

Whites RUNNING away from the building. INDIAN WOMEN - alarm on their faces, DRAW their knives.

INT TRADING POST

A DENSE SMOKE. RUNNING IN BLOOD. FLASHES OF COLOR from clothing, from GUNFIRE. FACES INDISTINGUISHABLE. MAYHEM.

TOM - A Navy colt POINTED in his face, it MISFIRES. Tom SHOTS into it's owner's chest, dropping him.

TOM'S POV - One of the ASSASSINS. Dead

HE DOG - Drives his knife into a SHOOTER. PISTOL ENTERS FRAME, FIRES POINT BLANK INTO HIS SHOULDER. The Chief falls. TOM APPEARS through the smoke, pulls him to his feet.

TOM (COMANCHE)
Come with me!

TOM AND HE DOG - Fighting their way toward the door, eyes burning, unable to breathe from the smoke. AS THEY DRAW CLOSER to the exit--

A WHITE ASSAILANT in a BLACK TOP HAT - Barring their way, RIFLE AIMED -

HE DOG - LUNGES at the Assailant with his knife in the same instant as the rifle FIRES. He falls, JERKS his arm back.

HE DOG'S KNIFE - blood flecked, tumbles to the ground.

THE RIFLE COCKS

TOM - HURTLES into the ASSAILANT, pinning the man's rifle against him. They struggle.

TOM'S HAND - Reaching down. Finds the RIFLE'S TRIGGER, JACKS IT.

A ROUND FIRES into the ASSAILANTS chin, cutting through his jaw. His TOP HAT flies off, his head violently slams back on the door.

TOM whips around, reaches out for He Dog.

EXT COURTYARD - Tom pulling He Dog out the door.

HE DOG - RAISES HIS ARM. Just BLOODY FLESH where his hand used to be. He lets out a WAR CRY to his people.

A MELEE. The Whites and Comanche turn on each other. Squaws, children fight, trying to kill anyone in their path.

ON TOM - Witnessing the chaos. He turns, heads back into the building.

INT POST

NEIGHBORS - LOOMING out of the dense smoke, firing his weapon. We CAN'T SEE what he's aiming at.

NEIGHBORS

TOM!?

He looks around for the sight of Tom, can't see him. Neighbors coughs, gasping for air. He spots--

YELLOW HORSE - Badly injured, crawling on the ground.

NEIGHBORS leans in to help him.

EXT COURTYARD - Men pouring out of the post. Whites mounting up, riding away. The Indian women and Children bunch up defensively, KNIVES OUT poised to fight. KEENING WHILE OTHERS LAY DEAD. .

YELLOW HORSE, trailing blood, crawls out assisted by Neighbors. BLACKENED by gunsmoke.

NEIGHBORS
HELP US, HERE! HELP US!

White Bear and Tom emerge. White Bear BACKS AWAY from Tom, mistrustfully brandishing his knife.

TOM (IN COMANCHE)
We've been betrayed.

One of the ASSASSINS BOLTS for daylight, coughing, trying to clear his eyes, Realizing he's passed Tom, he SHOOTs back at him wildly, SPLINTERING the doorjamb above TOM'S HEAD. Tom follows him, FIRING his pistol.

The Assassin TURNS FULL FACE, he and Tom ADVANCE on each other rapidly squeezing off rounds.

A bullet RIPS through a piece of Tom's jacket. Tom's revolver CLICKS empty as he PULLS a derringer with his left hand, SHOOTING his opponent in the neck, dropping him.

Tom kneels over the man, pulls him to a sitting position. The man is incoherent, BLOOD SPURTING from his neck. Tom clamps his hand over the man's surging wound, staunching the blood flow.

TOM (CONT'D)
(furious)
WHO ARE YOU? WHO SENT YOU HERE?

No response.

TOM (CONT'D)
(to the Assassin)
Who are you?

The man just stares in his eyes, defiantly, doesn't answer.

TOM, mercilessly releases his hand from the man's wound, blood gushing, leaving him to die. He rises to his feet.

Tom looks back at Neighbors. White Bear drags Yellow Horse's lifeless body toward the group of Comanche women and children.

NEIGHBORS - Reaching out to White Bear, trying to help, but White Bear holds his knife as a warning for Neighbors to stay where he is.

Neighbors, ripped apart, turns to Tom.

NEIGHBORS
Are you hit?

Tom looks around him, at the DEAD, the KEENING WOMEN--the sadness. Their work undone.

TOM
I don't know

BLACK SCREEN.

EXT FORT - ESTABLISH - DAY

A fort in name only, built by settlers. Some live permanently, others move in during more volatile times. There are eight or nine log structures surrounded by a fence of no more than eight feet high round pickets. There's a trading post/general store. Men work the fields outside the fort. We see a GROWING CROWD in the background. RIDERS coming from all parts.

INT CONNOR GENERAL STORE - DAY

Tom slips in through the back door. His face gaunt, eyes weary, staring hollowly. He's worn and wary--scans the room, guardedly. Dusty from a long journey.

TOM'S POV - A woman, MAY, dusting shelves,

TOM - moves toward the counter, never taking his eyes off the door and window. He looks back at May, and in his exhaustion, depletion, gazes at her for several moments - at her freshness. Far removed from all he's seen.

She looks up, startled at his appearance, then smiles. He averts his gaze, looks down at the candy counter.....Finally--

MAY
May I help you?

TOM
Yes...I'd like two plugs of
Niggerhead, if you please.

She hands him some chew. SOUND of someone running on the duckboards outside the store.

TOM - jerks his head back toward the door, lightly drops his hand to his sidearm. Vigilant. Waiting. May looks at his wrist.

MAY'S POV - Flecks of blood on Tom's shirt cuff and hand.

May almost says something, looks at his face. Waits. He's still watching the door. She holds back.

MAY
Something else?

TOM
No...Well, yes. Maybe some of that
candy.

May picks some peppermint, starts rolling it in brown paper. Tom watches May, her gentleness, her presence washes over him. A dissonance from the nightmare of the day before. Then for little reason at all--

TOM (CONT'D)
(points here and there)
I'd like some of those and a few of
these...And these here look good.

MAY
That will be ten cents. Anything
else, sir?

He looks back 'round. Spies a linen handkerchief laying on the counter. It's clearly monogramed--M.H.

TOM
I'll take one of these as well.

MAY
That's mine. It's not for sale.

TOM
My apologies. Is it Martha? Mary?

MAY
May.

TOM
May.

He gazes at her for an instant, then looks down at the fabric. As if in two places at once. Unable to reach out.

MAY
The "H" is for Halliwell, my maiden
name. But now I'm a Conner. My in-
laws own this store.

A flicker of disappointment on Tom's face. May sees it for a split second. Senses his aloneness and that he's somehow freighted, maybe wrecked. She starts to ask for his well being, then stops herself, sees he's shut off.

MAY (CONT'D)

But here, we have a new one. Will this do?

TOM

Yes, M'am. Thank you.

MAY

We're up to a dollar and ten cents.

Tom fumbles for coins in his vest pocket. Can't seem to reach them.

MAY (CONT'D)

Sir, are you---

Their eyes meet. Something in his look, his guardedness makes her drop the question.

Tom just holds out the money.

She finishes wrapping his purchases. They're both silent; a little awkward. She hands them to Tom.

TOM

Thank you, M'am.

She nods. The back door OPENS. Tom defensively reaches his hand beneath his coat. Robert Neighbors walks in, showing the effects of a hard ride. He looks at Tom, glances at May.

NEIGHBORS

(light)

I was afraid you might have become lost or met with foul play.

TOM

Not yet. Here's your chaw.

CLINTON CONNER, followed by his wife LORENA, both in their sixties, enter from the back of the store carrying two huge jugs. We HEAR A CROWD outside, GROWING LOUDER.

NEIGHBORS

Refreshment! Tom, allow me to buy you a drink

CLINTON

I don't muchly serve till after a meetin'--

The front door opens, a MAN spots Tom and Neighbors, quickly backs out.

Clinton notices this and the crowd, outside.

May glances at Tom, firmly places two shotglasses on the counter.

CLINTON (CONT'D)

--I believe I can make an exception for y'all. On the house, gentleman.

NEIGHBORS

This is a very wise man, Tom.

CLINTON

Thank you.

Tom smiles, looks over at May who continues about her work with Lorena.

The bell on the front door JINGLES again. The FILIBUSTERS file in, rough and ready, side-armed. One stands out--JOHN BAYLOR. Tough. Huge, light eyes. 38ish.

Tom turns, watches them. Neighbor doesn't, coolly finishing his drink. Tension in the room, heavy.

NEIGHBORS

Hello, John.

He finally turns around to face him.

BAYLOR

Major Neighbors...Tom.

May looks at Tom with new curiosity. Neighbors won't even look at him.

NEIGHBORS

I'm guessing that packet you're holding is for my perusal.

BAYLOR

That's right.

He hands him the papers. Neighbors scans it.

NEIGHBORS

My goodness, Tom, look at this---
Bill Shipley--30 head of cattle.
\$250...Thad Anson--4 saddle
horses...12 hogs killed. 50 pounds
of honey---\$35.00. Sam Phillips,
40 beeves...6 horses--

BAYLOR

Submitted to the U.S. Gov't for
remittance on what was stolen or
destroyed by the Indians.

NEIGHBORS

Yes. I've no doubt these
individuals have lost their
livestock...Whether it was due to
Indians or Whites, who can say?

Baylor is livid; understands the implication. Neighbors
tosses him back the papers, turns away toward the bar.

BAYLOR

What are you suggesting, Bob?

NEIGHBORS

Well, John. Perhaps you might
compensate these men with the
cattle you and your boys stole from
the Comanche Reservation.

BAYLOR

GODDAMN YOU!

In a flash, they're at each other, each grabbing the other's
lapels. Tom JOINING Neighbors. It all happens fast. The only
thing keeping them from tearing each other to pieces is the
big, struggling knot of men pulling them apart.

NEIGHBORS

NO, GODDAMN YOU! Are you four men
light, John?! You'll find them at
the post on Big Sister Creek--
(to everyone)
That was a Peace Council!! You
murderous swine--

BAYLOR

(not admitting anything)
You're no better than those godless
savages!

NEIGHBORS

(furious; grabs his
throat, pulls him closer)
That may be, but I'm standing
before you now, John---

A MAN in the crowd, easing his pistol out of its holster. May
catches this--

MAY

NO!!

Tom follows May's glance, wheels around pulls his side-arm, grabs the man's hair, puts the gun to his head. Tom COCKS the hammer, the SOUND freezes the room.

SILENCE. The fighting stops. Tom addresses the Gunman.

TOM

Slow down, darlin'.

The man hands Tom his gun. Lorena passes Clinton a shotgun.

CLINTON

Allright--Allright, Boys. Try to respect the rules of the house.

The men un-ruffle, cool off; disperse just a bit. Neighbors returns to his drink as Baylor moves toward his men.

ON MAY as she watches, showing neither shock nor fear. Lorena is nervous.

Neighbors finishes his drink, sets it down and nods to Tom, ready to leave. He passes close to Baylor, pauses a moment to look him in the face, and in a LOW VOICE...

NEIGHBORS

You've already won.

He and Tom go to the door. There's a hostile BUZZ in the room.

May notices Tom's paper-wrapped packages on the counter. She picks them up, and in front of his adversaries:

MAY

Sir.

Stopping him. She gracefully navigates the hostile room right over to Tom.

MAY (CONT'D)

These are yours.

Tom looks gently at her, and rather than say anything, simply tips his hat with respect and just a tinge of regret. Leaves.

EXT BELKNAP TOWNSHIP - LATE AFTERNOON

A town half a day's ride from where they last were. Tom and Neighbors, even more unshaven and tired ride past TWO DRUNKEN MEN brawling in the mud.

NEIGHBORS

It appears we're back in
civilization.

They dismount in front of the County Courthouse. There's not
a soul around.

TOM

(rueful smile)
Does seem kind of hopeless, doesn't
it?--I'll take your mount, John.

NEIGHBORS

Get yourself a shave, I'll meet you
at half past the hour.
(as he starts to cross the
street)
Pray for me whilst I draft my
letter to the President--
(Angry, almost to himself)
A goddamn exercise in futility, I'm
certain.

Neighbors heads up the Town Hall steps.

INT BARBER SHOP - DAY.

Tom's sitting in a chair, head tilted back, hot towel on his
face. The barber removes it. He looks rested; newly shaved.

BARBER

Bay Rum?

TOM

No, thanks. Never much liked the
smell.

He checks his pocket watch...4:20--

INT COURTHOUSE - DAY

Neighbors is on his way out, a sheath of papers in his hand.
An old acquaintance, MCKAY, a New Yorker, stops him.

MCKAY

Robert Neighbors, good to see your
face again. What brings you here
so late?

NEIGHBORS

Paperwork, McKay--bane of my
existence.

Neighbors keeps going.

EXT COURTHOUSE - LATER

Neighbors checks his watch. Pulls out some tobacco, puts it in his mouth. Hears a VOICE --

Neighbors looks up, sees PATRICK MURPHY, a total stranger. He holds a gun at his side.

MURPHY

(loudly)

I hear you called me a horse thief.
Is that so?

Neighbors places his HAND on his COLT six shooter--

NEIGHBORS

No, sir, I did not. I've never met
you be--

Another MAN comes up from BEHIND NEIGHBORS, CUTS OFF HIS WORDS WITH A BLAST OF TWELVE BUCKSHOT FROM A SHOTGUN. IT'S HELD SO CLOSE IT FLAMES NEIGHBOR'S COAT---

INT BARBERSHOP - DAY

TOM HEARS the SHOTS. BOLTS out of the CHAIR---

INT COURTHOUSE - DAY

Neighbors FALLS to his KNEES...BLOOD EVERYWHERE.

NEIGHBORS (CONT'D)

Oh, Lord--

He COLLAPSES. His two assailants run off. Tom RUSHES up to Neighbors. RAISES HIS HEAD. HOLDS HIM IN HIS ARMS.

NEIGHBORS looks off into the vague distance. Blood pooling all around him. No one stops to help. SHOUTS RING THROUGH TOWN---

MEN

ROBERT NEIGHBORS IS DEAD! THEY GOT
NEIGHBORS---ROBERT NEIGHBORS DEAD!

Neighbors hears this. BLINKS. His eyes flick over to Tom. DISBELIEF...Then an EMPTY STARE.

TOM keeps holding him. There's nothing left to do.

EXT CONNER FARM - DUSK

May is sweeping the porch. RACHEL plays with some soap-stone marbles, talking to her hand-made dolls.

PHINEAS, May's other child, leans dejectedly against a post, hands in his pockets, hoping May will notice.

RACHEL
Wanna play marbles, Phin?

PHINEAS
Nah.

RACHEL
Please?

PHINEAS
Nah.

Every time May's broom comes near Phin's feet, he deliberately STEPS on it. Stopping her work. He's bored.

MAY
(exasperated)
All-right!...My Land's! All-right.
I'll never get anything done with
you moping around, having a pity
party. Go and help your father---
But mind you, don't wander off,
now.

PHINEAS
Yes, M'am!

Phineas flies off the porch. Free at last.

MAY
Phineas!

He stops in his tracks.

MAY (CONT'D)
You understand me? Nowhere else.

PHINEAS
You know me, Ma.

MAY
Indeed I do. Promise me--

PHINEAS
Cross my heart--

He bolts again.

RACHEL
Me too! Wait for me, Phin!

MAY

Rachel, honey, you stay here and help me pluck this turkey.

As Phineas streaks across the farmyard--

RACHEL

Mama, is it a boy or a girl?

MAY

This is a boy, darling.

RACHEL

How can you tell?

MAY

Well, you see all those big bright feathers? That's how you know. He's a boy and boys like to be noticed.

RACHEL

Oh, Mama! Everybody knows girls are prettier!

They're giggling. May enjoying her. She HEARS an OWL HOOT, looks up, something about the sound makes her uneasy, but she doesn't know why.

May drifts back, looks down at her daughter, her life, then back to the horizon.

EXT PASTURE - DAY

MATTHEW CONNER - Strong, decent, sturdy kneels over a dead cow, it's belly sliced open. Phin's fascinated. Excited

PHINEAS

It was them Indians, wasn't it, Pa?
I wanna get me one--

MATTHEW

Don't you say anything to Rachel about this, son.

He hears an OWL HOOT. An unnatural time of day. He picks up his rifle, eyes boring into the middle distance.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Let's get you inside.

INT CONNOR CABIN - LOFT - NIGHT

SOUND OF RAIN. Rachel sleeps on a pallet next to her brother.

Phineas, wide awake, peers through a crack in the floorboard at his parents, below. They speak in hushed WHISPERS.

PHIN'S POV - He can only HEAR snatches of CONVERSATION. He strains to HEAR---

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

--three calves missin' in as many days. It's not right--

MAY'S VOICE

They're nigh, Matt.

MATTHEW'S VOICE

We have to take hold of this raidin'.

She stares at him, knows where this is headed.

MAY

Yes?

MATTHEW

I'm gonna fort you up with my folks for a bit. I want you all together while I head out with the others.

MAY

Head out where and do what? There's not enough of you--

MATTHEW

There will be once the call goes out.

(imitates a redneck)

"Everbody'll jine up"

He grins. May's not laughing, spots Phineas eavesdropping.

MAY

They're watching us. Outside.

Matthew follows her to the porch. We see bits and pieces of them through the screen door. Matthew running his hand down May's cheek, trying to reassure

MAY (CONT'D)

How long?

ON PHINEAS - Straining to hear the conversation, but can't. May and Matthew are arguing quietly, but intensely.

A light JINGLING startles him. PHINEAS JUMPS...

RACHEL HOLDS A STRING OF TIN SLIVERS. We recognize them from the old moccasin he found.

RACHEL
What's this, Phin?

PHINEAS
(he covers her mouth)
Shhh---

RACHEL
(tiny whisper)
It's so pretty--Can I have it? My Dolly surely does need a necklace.

PHINEAS
(whispering)
You can play with it all you want, but you can't let Ma and Daddy see it, okay?

RACHEL
But why?

PHINEAS
'Cause it's a secret...It's got special powers, and if they see this they'd never let me go anywhere again.

RACHEL
Ohh! Oh, I'll keep your secret, Phin. Promise! Promise--

He loops the string around his neck, lies back. She puts her hand on his chest, touches the tin on the necklace and falls asleep happy.

Phin, staring at the ceiling, arm protectively around his little sister.

EXT RANCH - NIGHT

WIDE SHOT of a man on horseback, standing under a tree in the pouring rain. Alone.

CLOSER - It's Tom. Quiet. He's looking at a farmhouse a small ways away.

TOM'S POV - The house warmed by lamplight. We can see fragments of a family as they move about their home, passing by the windows from time to time.

TOM - Watches for a moment, then looks down. A world apart.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

ON THE BACK OF A WOMAN - Swinging open the front door. Tom stands there.

THE WOMAN - PATSY - Stunned. As if she's seen a ghost.

PATSY
Jack--Jack. Look here--

TOM
Hello, Patsy.

JACK, 40 and VIOLET, their daughter, 7, come over.

JACK
(stunned, elated)
Good God in heaven! Brother, it's
been what seems like forever!

Jack makes a move to hug. Then pulls back and slaps Tom on the back. Tom smiles, uncomfortably.

PATSY
(smiling)
Darlin' we don't want to run him
off.

JACK
(thinks about it)
Yeah.

PATSY
Come in, come in. Oh, Tom, you're
soaking wet--

VIOLET
That's Uncle Tom?

PATSY
Yes it is. Violet, take Uncle
Tom's hat.

Tom smiles down at the little girl as he gives her his hat.

JACK
Let's all just calm down, now!
Sonofabitch! I can't hardly
believe it--I'm burstin'!

INT RANCH HOUSE - LATER

Tom sits at the dinner table with Jack, Patsy and Violet. They eat, Tom barely does so, miles away.

The silences are painful. Tom makes little eye contact. Jack and Patsy try to keep things going, so grateful to have him home.

VIOLET

Do I remember you, Uncle Tom?

Tom looks up at the little girl, just smiles.

JACK

Your house, yonder's pretty much the way you left it.

PATSY

I keep the sheets clean and sweep it every other day.

TOM

Thank you, Patsy.

VIOLET

Don't you like your food Uncle Tom?

Long silence. He's trying, but just can't connect.

TOM

It's just right, Violet.

JACK

Terrible thing what happened over there in Belknap with Major Neighbors.

Tom doesn't even look at him.

TOM

Yes it was.

VIOLET

What happened?

Just quiet. Tom tries to continue eating, then draws still. Several moments pass by, then he gets up. Tom reaches into his pocket, pulls out some of the penny candy he bought in the store. Pats Violet on the head.

Tom walks to the door, nods his "thank you" to Patsy, then puts on his hat.

TOM

So long, Jack.

Walks out into the night, headed somewhere else, same as he's done many times before.

EXT FORT - DAY

MINUTE MEN coming together, ready to head out, John Baylor leading them. Women, children from the fort waving...kissing the men goodbye. There's MUSIC from a fiddle player. A BUGLE blows. They men are given a heroes' send-off.

And MAY, holding Rachel, Phin at her side, looking up at her husband, Matt. He's atop a SORREL HORSE with a flaxen man and tail. Ready to leave. He gives his family a last look.

They ride off.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

CLOSE ON A HANDKERCHIEF- the breeze gently unfolds it revealing Neighbors' pocket watch. Glass cracked, buckshot dented. Held in a hand.

TOM'S - He stands with Buffalo Hump. No words spoken.

FLASHCUT - FACES OF COMANCHE WOMEN, crying, cutting their hair, mortifying their flesh.

FLASHCUT - WICHITA BLUFF - BUFFALO HUMP high on a cliff, drawing from a pipe, blowing smoke in the six directions.

EXT FORT - DAY

Settlers work the fields just outside the fort. Phineas is there, playing with a homemade bow and arrow, stalking his imaginary prey.

PHINEAS

(muttering to himself)

You've had it now, you sorry old buffalo.

He draws his toy bow and wheels around to face---

AN INDIAN BRAVE...in WAR PAINT...his SHIELD IN ONE HAND, A LANCE with a WHITE FLAG tied to it in the other.

Phineas is speechless for a moment; lets out a PIERCING--

PHINEAS (CONT'D)

INDIAN! INDIAN!

He runs like hell. The Brave has no reaction. Phin turns around sees---

FIFTY MORE BRAVES about half a mile away, moving slowly toward the fort and Phineas.

MEN working the fields RUN for the FORT, taking up the CRY---

MEN
INDIANS!

A BELL TOLLS. Sounds the ALARM.

INT FORT - DAY

May, Rachel, and Lorena are running laundry through a mangle. They HEAR the ALARM. May's heart races.

MAY
Where's Phin?

EXT FORT - DAY

One MAN, WEBB, stands alone in the field. He heads slowly toward the Indians. He meets Phin along the way...

WEBB
(addresses Phin; never
taking his eyes off the
Indians)
Get on back to the fort. They've
got a white flag. I'll see what
they want.

Phin runs wildly for the gate of the fort. He STUMBLES in a hole, STRIKING his head. He lies prone on the ground, dazed.

And OVER HIM we see the gates of the fort CLOSE.

INT/EXT TRADING POST - DAY

Clinton has a rifle strapped on his back, charges two pistols. May bursts in, Rachel in tow, followed by Lorena. She carries an axe.

MAY
Is Phin here?!

CLINTON
I thought he was with you--

May's stricken. She drags Rachel out of the store, never letting her go.

MAY
(yelling)
PHINEAS! PHINEAS!

Confusion. Men and women carrying weapons. Children SCREAMING. Several families heading toward the rear of the fort.

Clinton grabs May's arm. Keeps her close.

CLINTON

Don't you worry! We'll find him.
(to Lorena; re axe)
Put that down, Lorena.

He hands each woman a pistol.

CLINTON (CONT'D)

Stay together, no matter what happens--

He sees a MAN, HIS WIFE, AND THREE CHILDREN preparing to leave the fort by going through a small trap door in the stockade fence.

CLINTON (CONT'D)

Good God, Man--Stand and fight!

FATHER

There's too many of 'em, Clinton!
I'm gonna hide out Mary and the
little ones--Try to get to Belknap
for help!

May's panicking, CALLING for Phineas.

CLINTON

May! Lorena! Listen to me! Get
in the house with Rachel...stay
away from those windows--

The women run around the store to the cabin. Clinton un-shoulders his rifle. Moves to the front of the fort.

INT/EXT FORT

A group of ARMED MEN look through the gaps in the gate. Watching. Clinton joins them.

THEIR POV - WEBB stands with the COMANCHES, attempting to communicate. All is calm.

BACK TO THE GATE - A BALD MAN nervously looks to his left, then right.

BALD MAN

Where'n hell did everybody get to?

CLINTON
 What's the good of a damn fort if
 everyone's gonna leave?...

BALD MAN
 Look yonder--

THEIR POV - WEBB stands with the Indians, BECKONS to the men
 in the fort.

BALD MAN (CONT'D)
 I ain't goin'

A YOUNG MAN, MARCY, lifts the timber off the gate lock.

CLINTON
 I wouldn't do that, Marcy.

MARCY
 They're showin' a white flag.
 Least ways it could buy us some
 time.

BALD MAN
 Oh, Shit.

MARCY
 Ahh...I'm a bachelor, anyways.

CLINTON
 You're gonna stay one doin' that,
 son.

Marcy looks at them a moment. They all laugh nervously.

MARCY
 Bar this gate after me.

MEN'S POV - As MARCY walks toward the COMANCHES.

The MEN SIGHT IN THEIR RIFLES.

INT CABIN

May's peering out the window. Waiting. Frantic. A TEENAGE
 BOY, JEFFREY, runs by. She runs to the door---

EXT CABIN

MAY
 Where's my boy?!

JEFFREY

I don't know...haven't seen him!
Webb and Marcy are talkin' to a big
bunch of Indians--

He keeps running.

We HEAR Rachel crying in the b.g. Lorena appears in the doorway. Get's May's attention.

LORENA

May, you better come in here.
(whispering)
Rachel's terribly scared.

BACK TO THE MEN - Watching. Silent. Rifles ready.

THEIR POV - Webb and Marcy gesturing with the Indians. Marcy turns back to the fort...PALMS UPWARD. HE SHRUGS---

As he turns back, THE INDIANS DESCEND ON THEM. BEATING. HACKING.. SHOUTING WAR CRIES. KILLING MARCY and WEBB.

MEN AT THE GATE - They react.

BALD MAN

JESUS, GOD--

He FIRES a round at the enemy.

CLINTON

SAVE YOUR POWDER, BOYS---THEY'LL BE
COMING CLOSER.

An ARROW pierces the Bald Man's neck, PINNING him to the GATE.

Off to the right we SEE four COMANCHE standing on the backs of their ponies, firing arrows OVER THE STOCKADE at the MEN.

Clinton and the remaining men FIRE at the Warriors as they loose a barrage of arrows. SMOKE, FIRE, SCREAMS...TWO OF THE INDIANS DEAD---

CLINTON'S HIT. An arrow protrudes from his shoulder---

INDIANS STREAMING OVER THE STOCKADE...MORE CHARGING THE FORT FROM THE FRONT...

CLINTON GETS TO HIS FEET. STUMBLES DEEPER INTO THE FORT. THROUGH THE PANIC---

CLINTON (CONT'D)

THEY'RE INSIDE!!

Several SETTLERS run past him, FIRING THEIR WEAPONS. HAND TO HAND FIGHTING. A WAR CLUB SMASHES INTO A SETTLER'S HEAD...

ANOTHER MAN TRIES TO RELOAD HIS MUSKET--FIRES A RAMROD THROUGH AN INDIAN'S EYE--

A BRAVE unbolts the main gate...INDIANS STREAM IN ON HORSEBACK---

A MOUNTED WARRIOR DRAGS A WOMAN BY THE HAIR---SCALPS HER.

CLINTON reaches his cabin, bleeding, exhausted.

LORENA
Oh, dear God! Clinton!

CLINTON
You all need to get out...Get out and hide in the brush.

LORENA
(crying)
I won't leave you--

CLINTON
You go on...You'll be seeing me again.

RACHEL
Grandpa's hurt--

CLINTON
Get now!

He LEADS them outside, COVERS them while they move to--

INT FORT

The trap door. ON MAY. TERRIFIED. STILL LOOKING FOR PHINEAS. She holds the door open as Lorena gets through--

A WARRIOR CHARGES May and Rachel--

May RAISES HER PISTOL--Clinton FIRES first---

The Warrior FALLS just short of them; a smoking HOLE in this chest.

May pushes Rachel through the door. The little girl SCREAMS.

May scrambles after her. Looks back for Clinton. We SEE--

LORENA ON THE GROUND. A WAR LANCE THROUGH HER SIDE. NO movement from her. As May STARES AT HER, SHE HEARS---

PHINEAS

Mamma?

He stands twenty yards away. Wobbly. Dazed from his fall.

MAY

PHIN!

She sweeps Rachel up; starts after Phin, when--

A COMANCHE RIDES DOWN ON PHINEAS, GRABS HIM BY THE SHIRT AND PULLS HIM ONTO THE HORSE, IN FRONT OF HIM.

May's son fights furiously. The Warrior has to rein in his horse to subdue the thrashing boy.

May grabs Rachel, darts over to the deep brush, LIFTS her daughter onto her back.

MAY (CONT'D)

Hold onto me, Rachel and don't let go.

She forces her way through the brush. The brambles pull and tear at her dress. Frantic. She's now adjacent to Phineas. She STEPS OUT and RAISES HER PISTOL.

THE INDIAN TURNS. LOOKS AT HER. POSITIONS PHINEAS BETWEEN HIMSELF AND MAY.

MAY HESITATES. CAN'T GET A CLEAR SHOT. LOWERS THE GUN SLIGHTLY...SHOOTS THE HORSE THROUGH THE HEAD.

THE HORSE DROPS. THE BRAVE ON ONE SIDE, TRAPPED. PHINEAS FALLS TO THE OTHER SIDE, CLOSE TO MAY.

May pushes Rachel into the brush.

MAY (CONT'D)

Hide! Stay as low as you can and don't make a sound.

Rachel disappears. May GRABS PHINEAS and pulls him into the thicket. All three lie on their stomachs. Dead quiet.

The FALLEN BRAVE extricates himself from the dead horse. Several COMANCHEs laden with plunder and stolen horses ride up. They're LAUGHING at their comrade.

SCARRED COMANCHE

(in comanche)

We saw what the woman did to you.

The Fallen Brave pulls a knife from a scabbard at his waist, enters the thicket, searching--

ANOTHER BRAVE
Are you rabbit hunting?

He's eating candy taken from the store. The Braves find the Indian's hunt amusing---

MAY AND THE CHILDREN - Hiding. Scarcely breathing---

THEIR POV - Indians dismount and begin walking, stabbing their lances through the brush.

RACHEL...a spear, perilously close to her face---

PHINEAS starts crawling away from May and Rachel. May GRABS his leg. He looks back at her. She shakes her head 'no'. He pulls free and vanishes.

MAY is terrified. Doesn't understand.

PHINEAS suddenly RISES UP from the brush.

PHINEAS
YOU! YOU THERE!

STARTLING one of the Comanches. The FALLEN BRAVE GRABS PHINEAS. He's dragged out of the bushes. The Indian points back into the brush...Phin reacts, protectively.

PHINEAS (CONT'D)
NO!!

The Fallen Brave PICKS UP A STICK AND STARTS BEATING HIM. He then ties Phin's hands, throws him on the horse, binds his ankles.

RACHEL AND MAY--TERRIFIED. Tears stream down May's face. She has to make an impossible choice. May covers Rachel's mouth and her own, fighting every instinct to save her son, knowing Rachel will also be taken if she does...Suddenly--

RACHEL IS LIFTED OFF THE GROUND by ANOTHER WARRIOR. SHE'S SCREAMING--CRYING FOR HER MOTHER.

AND MAY'S ON HER FEET, AT HIM INSTANTLY, CLAWING, DESPERATELY PULLING RACHEL FROM HIS ARMS. HE WON'T LET GO.

MAY
Don't take them, please...Don't take them--

THE WARRIOR PUNCHES HER TO THE GROUND. She's down. Rises up as--

PHINEAS' HORSE GALLOPS OFF. THE FALLEN BRAVE AT THE REINS--

And in a split-second, the WARRIOR has little RACHEL mounted on a stolen horse--

MAY FIGHTS FEROCIOUSLY. RACHEL'S SCREAMS CUTTING THROUGH HER. SHE GRABS FOR THE REINS WHILE PULLING AT HER DAUGHTER. THE HORSE SPOOKS.

THE WARRIOR SLASHES at her HANDS.

MAY is HITTING HIM, TRYING to GRAB RACHEL off the HORSE--

HE SLASHES MAY'S CHEST, ARMS--

MAY WON'T STOP. WON'T LET GO--

The other Indians watch. They LAUGH. It's a game. They don't interfere.

THE KNIFE--CUTTING MAY OVER AND OVER. SHE'S BLEEDING HARD. FINALLY--

The WARRIOR decided he's had enough. Delivers a HARD BLOW to her head with the hilt of his knife.

SHE FALLS.

No sound. May's stricken, helpless. Lays on her side staring at her CRYING DAUGHTER and the girl's Indian captor--

He watches her. Another BRAVE dismounts his horse. He walks over to May, gathers her up by the hair, knife ready to SCALP HER.

The WARRIOR makes a noise for the Brave to stop.

WARRIOR
(in comanche)
She has strong fight.

The Brave lets her hair go. Walks to his horse. The COMANCHES RIDE AWAY. RACHEL A CAPTIVE.

ON MAY--Unable to move--watching her daughter disappear.

BLACK SCREEN.

EXT COUNTRY - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom, on his buckskin horse. He's watching a thin stream of SMOKE in the distance. He quickens his pace.

INT FORT - DUSK

Scorched buildings, smoke, ruin. Bodies strewn about. Dogs BARK and cattle BELLOWING for grain.

Several of the ESCAPEES have returned and join a few survivors in removing the dead from the wreckage, piling them into a wagon.

EXT FORT - DUSK

ON TOM - Following a trail of BOLTS OF CLOTH, RIBBONS, PAPER--detritus left in the Comanches' wake. He moves through the brush. His horse startles. Tom reins him in, dismounts.

HIS POV - MAY. Her face pale, porous and frail. Her hair flails out around her, tangled with blood, sticks and mud. Her eyes open, spent, hollow gray pits as if she'd kept them open to survive.

Tom leans over her, listens for a heartbeat. She struggles to speak. Tom, pulse racing, takes in her bloodied face, looks for her injuries.

MAY'S POV - Tom over her. He disappears. Nothing but sky above her, vultures keening.

TOM - Back at May's side, canteen in hand. He begins ripping strips of cloth from her petticoat, wets the cloth and wipes her lips--gives her sips of water.

MAY
(whisper)
Gone

He starts unbuttoning her blouse. Her skin is caked in dried blood.

MAY - Struggling to stay conscious, staring in Tom's eyes.

TOM
I need to find where you're hurt.

She barely nods.

MAY'S POV as WATER FALLS on her face, BLURRING Tom.

TOM pours the water, washing away some of the blood. Her skin is covered in gashes. Tom starts bandaging her wounds.

SHOUTS in the distance. Tom gently places his arms under May and picks her up.

EXT/INT FORT

Tom carries May in his arms as if she'd break apart. Over the scorched earth, through the remains of the fort.

HER POV - A blurred Tom. Eyes trained on her.

TOM AND MAY - She murmurs. He puts his face close to hers, trying to hear.

MAY

Do you see them? Do you see them?

TOM

Who?

MAY

No--They're gone.

Tom's pace quickens. He carries her closer to the others.

Jeffrey, the teen-aged boy is moving another body onto the wagon. He sees Tom carrying May.

JEFFREY

Christ alive! Dr. Kyle!

The doctor, in his 50's, his apron stained in blood hurries over to them. Starts examining her.

TOM

Her heart's beating. Help her--
Please.

Dr. Kyle shouts over at some of the searchers.

DR. KYLE

We've got Matthew's wife!

They run over. Jeffrey's eyes wide, torn open.

JEFFREY

Mr. Conner's folks are in the wagon there. Did you see the little ones?

TOM

No.

The men take May from his arms. She's theirs now. They form a circle, Tom on the outside.

Tom slowly backs away.

EXT CEMETARY - DAY

Seven freshly mounded graves. All is quiet.

INT DR. AND MRS. KYLE'S HOUSE - DAY

ON MAY - Sleeping in bed. A CALM VOICE speaks.

DR. KYLE (O.C.)

May, if you can hear me raise your
finger.

She does.

DR. KYLE (CONT'D O.C.) (CONT'D)

Good. That's real good. You're at
my house. In Belknap. I've given
you morphine. It's very important
that you not move--

Her eyes flutter open.

MAY

(struggles)
Phin and Rachel--

DR. KYLE

The Cavalry is looking. So are the
Rangers. Everyone. We'll find
them.

May stares at him.

MAY

How long have I--

DR. KYLE

Four days

MAY

Four--

MRS. KYLE

You rest, May.

MAY

Matthew?

DR. KYLE

(reassuring)
He'll be returning any day, now.
Sleep...

MAY
 (drifting off)
 Where is the man who foun---

But she can't finish. She's asleep.

INT DR. KYLE'S HOUSE - ANOTHER DAY

MAY, frowning in her sleep.

PHINEAS'S VOICE
 Mamma?

Her eyes snap open. She looks around the room, disoriented. Realizes she was dreaming. She gingerly tries sitting up. Mrs. Kyle is at her side, helping her.

MRS. KYLE
 I've made some broth. Would you like some, dear?

MAY
 Thank you.

May sits in silence for a moment. Mrs. Kyle returns with a bowl and spoon, sits beside her, delicately feeds May. A strong silence between the women.

We HEAR horses and wagons drawing near. May strains to look out the window.

MAY'S POV- The militia returning. Riding up the road. Townspeople run to them, greeting, cheering.

MRS. KYLE
 They've come back. Oh, this is marvelous! I will bring Matthew to you!

But May's not waiting. As Mrs. Kyle rushes out, she struggles to her feet, grabs anything she can for support and moves to the front door.

EXT FRONT PORCH - DAY

May's standing on the porch holding the rail, eyes roving over the crowd for her husband. She can't see him, yet. The crowd obscures her view.

One ride, JOHN BAYLOR, breaks through the crowd leading a horse with no rider. It's Matthew's. Baylor walks toward May, looking at her. Eyes rimmed with sadness.

ON MAY. She tries to speak. The words don't come out, strangled. Her eyes flutter. She faints.

EXT CEMETARY - DAY

May stands with a group of settlers and Dr. and Mrs. Kyle. Before them are three tombstones marked for Lorena, Clinton, and Matthew Conner. Matthew's coffin is lowered to the ground.

May watches as two men pile dirt atop her husband's grave.

SOUND OF HORSEHOOVES. May, turns her head sees--

John Baylor and his men ride by. As an afterthought, Baylor tips his hat at May. His men follow his lead.

MAY

Where are they going?

No one meets her eyes.

MAY (CONT'D)

Where are those men going?

A man with a bandaged head speaks up.

MAN

South, Mrs. Conner. Near Abilene, I expect. There was cattle stolt by the Indians and ---

MAY

Cattle?

MAN

Yes, M'am.

Dr. and Mrs. Kyle, uncomfortable---

MAY

Matthew died fighting with those men. Why are they not--Who'll find my children?

May stunned, looks at the faces around her. There is no answer, only the sound of Matthew's casket being lowered.

EXT CONNOR FARMHOUSE - DAY

May's on a wagon with some family belongings. Accompanying her are the Kyles with Matthew's horse in tow. They help her with her things.

May gets off the wagon. Stands before the house. Tentative. Grateful to the Kyle's but wanting to be alone. Dr. Kyle carries a package into the house. As he comes out--

DR. KYLE

May, we'll say it again. We want you to stay with us.

MRS. KYLE

You're not safe, here, precious.

Something in May is unreachable, yet she behaves politely.

MAY

Thank you Dr. Kyle. But this will be fine. I will be just fine. You've done enough for me.

DR. KYLE

(reluctant)
Well then--Goodbye.

MAY

Goodbye.

He walks back to his wagon. Seats himself, takes the reins.

MRS. KYLE

We'll pray for you and yours, May.

May waves. They reluctantly leave.

May alone, standing with Matthew's horse. She presses her face to its neck.

EXT FARMHOUSE - DUSK

May tends to the animals, trying to pick up where she left off.

INT FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

CLOSE ON A LANTERN. A flame flares up. May blows out the match. We see her house exactly as she last left it. May goes upstairs to her children's loft.

INT LOFT - NIGHT

May checking Phin's and Rachel's beds, making sure everything is right. In place. She runs her hands over their bedding and under Phin's covers--

THE MOCCASIN WITH TIN STRIPS. May sits down on her son's bed, staring at the object. She lays it on her lap, folds her hands. Waiting.

INT FARMHOUSE - NIGHT

May sits at the table, writing feverishly by candlelight. Letters addressed to military posts, asking for her children.

EXT FARMHOUSE - DAY

May hammers a note on the door. Holds a candle to the letter.

MAY'S VOICE

"My darlings, I've gone in search of you. Should you find this note before I return, go to Dr. Kyle's in Belknap. Wait for me there. I love you. Now, always."

EXT PLAINS - DAY

A RIDER coming from the east, in the distance. A lone spot on the grassy plains.

ANOTHER RIDER coming from the opposite direction, coming closer and closer to the rider from the east.

We recognize the rider from the east. It is Robert Neighbors' murderer, Patrick Murphy. He examines the other rider coming closer. Nods his head in greeting.

Tom is the other rider. He nods his head in return. As he starts to pass Murphy he takes out his rope, and in an instant, THROWS it over the man's head, pulling him off his horse.

ON MURPHY - Face-down, prone on the ground. Tom gallops his horse, ruthlessly dragging Murphy behind him.

EXT CREEK - NIGHT

Tom hangs Murphy from a tree by his feet. He's gagged with a piece of wood in his mouth fastened by rawhide, his hands are bound. He struggles to scream and free himself.

Tom mounts his horse, barely looking at Murphy. He rides closer to him.

TOM

I don't think I need to tell why this is happening.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

But I will tell you this---It should take you about six hours to die. Think of Major Neighbors.

Tom shoots the man in the leg. An artery gushes blood. He rides away, never bothering to look back.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

LETTERS BLOWING on the ground, scattering in the wind. A MAN'S HAND picks one up. It's addressed to FORT PHANTOM HILL.

CLOSE ON - A BUFFALO HUNTER. He looks up, from reading sees:

MAY, slumped, weak, barely astride her horse's saddle. Reins dropped. The horse grazes.

The Buffalo Hunter rides up to her. Letters in hand.

HUNTER

I expect your the Mrs. Conner we've been looking for. You're a ways from home, Ma'm ,...Can you ride?

MAY

Yes.

She tries to lift her head up, starts to tumble from her saddle. He catches her.

EXT CANTINA - NIGHT

Tom, in a long duster, ties his horse outside a weathered adobe building, goes inside.

INT CANTINA - NIGHT

Smoke, noise. Lots of DRUNKEN MEN. All MEXICAN but ONE.

Tom spots him at the bar, walks over, squeezes in next to him. The gringo looks up, annoyed at being crowded. It's Murphy's ACCOMPLICE. Tom keeps looking, never takes his eyes off him.

TOM

No...We've never met.

Then a BLAST. Tom's shotgun opens the Accomplice's chest. On the man's face, SHOCK. He falls dead.

No one moves to help him. No one moves to take Tom. He walks out.

EXT TRAIL - NIGHT

Tom on his buckskin horse. Riding. Alone. In purgatory.

EXT FARMHOUSE - DAY

May, barely recovered, straining, exits the barn, moves toward the house carrying milk pails. She startles--

TWO YOUNG CAVALRY SOLDIERS stand in front of her.

YOUNG SOLDIER

Are you Mrs. Matthew Conner?

MAY

I am.

YOUNG SOLDIER

I have a letter for you from Major Henry Tomlin of Fort Phantom Hill.

She drops the buckets. They spill to the ground.

EXT PRAIRIE - DAY

May on a military wagon with two SOLDIERS as escorts.

INT MAJOR TOMLIN'S OFFICE - DAY

MAJOR TOMLIN

We ransomed him. He won't speak, won't tell us his name. Judging from his appearance, I'd have to guess he hasn't been captive for more than a few months.

MAY

And Rachel?

MAJOR TOMLIN

She wasn't with him. Be assured, Mrs. Conner, the U.S. Has every intention of retrieving her if--

He doesn't finish. May takes it in.

MAY

Yes.

INT FORT PHANTOM HILL - DAY

The Major and May walk down a corridor to a holding cell.

MAY'S POV - A BOY huddles by a window. She can't see his face.

A GUARD lets her in.

MAY (CONT'D)

Phin?

No answer. She walks deeper into the cell, next to his figure. The boy sits against the wall, his arms wrapped around his knees, cheek resting on forearm. We can't see his face. He's dirty, wearing borrowed clothes.

May crouches down next to him.

MAY (CONT'D)

Phin---

And delicately she takes his chin, tenderly turning his head to look at her. On her face, utter disappointment. May stifles a sob. Frozen. And rather than walk away, she grabs the boy and clasps him tight. Holding him. Passionately, protectively. After a long moment---

MAY (CONT'D)

What is your name?

He is completely unresponsive.

The Major and the Guard watch. Look down.

May kisses this strange boy on the head, brushes his hair with her hand. Another moment. Than finally, she rises and slowly moves to the cell door. The Boy's VOICE stops her.

BOY

I liked them very much.

ON MAY - Devastated. She hesitates a moment, unsure of which way to go. Looks back at him.

The Boy, completely closed off.

May finally moves forward, out the cell door.

BLACK SCREEN.

EXT ABILENE TOWNSHIP

A COUPLE peer at a sign hanging from a string on a storefront wall. It reads:

(MORE)

BOY (CONT'D)

"Seeking Phineas and Rachel Conner,
aged 10 and 6, taken by Indians
near Belknap July 1, 1859."

"Information wanted regarding a man
Tom, last name unknown, aide to
Major Robert Neighbors, deceased."

The WOMAN notices someone approaching and she tugs at her husband's sleeve uncomfortably. They move off.

It's May, and her appearance has deteriorated. She steps up to the sign, removes it from the wall and hangs it around her neck. She walks down the street to no place in particular. Hoping for answers. She's done this many a time.

And as she passes the residents on the street, they avert their gaze as if she were invisible. We see her ask questions of some only to be met with head shakes or to be ignored altogether.

Then, SHOUTS, CHEERING. May looks around, men run out into the street. WOMEN hug one another. Excitement, mirth.

MAN

WE'RE SHED OF THOSE YANKEE
BASTARDS!

War has broken out and people are pouring out of the buildings. PULL BACK as May stands there, lost in the raucous celebration. Her realities far removed from those around her.

EXT RIVER - DAY

A violently moving current. Tom, astride his horse watches the rapids - removed, a look of desolation on his face.

He guides his horse to the water's edge, urging it to move into the water. His mount refuses, nervous. Tom kicks him and the horse feels it's way into the river. Deeper. Deeper, till there's no bottom under its hooves.

The horse starts swimming. They go just a bit farther out, but the rapids prove too strong and Tom and his struggling horse are pulled downstream. They tumble through the water. He makes no move to save himself.

Tom slips off the saddle, holds onto the horse for a minute as it rights itself, desperately heading to the other bank. Suddenly, he LETS GO.

TOM - Carried away with the current, watching his horse fighting for the shoreline. The noise of the river DEAFENING.

TOM'S POV - As he's buffeted around, the sky above him, moving quickly.

TOM - Reaches up toward the clouds. Carried along. Then a sudden look of fear and he FLIPS over, struggles with the rapids. SMASHES against a rock. A big GULP of air, the wind knocked out of him, water pouring over him again and again as he hangs on for life.

EXT CONNOR FARM - DAY

May saddling her horse. She HEARS horses approach, looks up.

MAY'S POV - SEVERAL MEN accompanying DR. KYLE ride toward her in a spring wagon, faces solemn. Kyle dismounts his horse.

MAY

Dr. Kyle.

DR. KYLE

Hello, May. Can I speak with you a moment?

He takes her reins. She looks at him inquiringly.

DR. KYLE (CONT'D)

I'm afraid you're unsafe here. There'll be no military protection in these parts---all the men are going away to fight. You must leave as soon as you can.

She looks at the waiting men on the wagon. The men watch.

MAY

That's not possible.

DR. KYLE

May, it's been over a year and a half. There's no one left to search for your children. With the war and the men gone, Indians will raid all over these parts. You have no choice but to leave.

MAY

My place is here. I shall stay here for Phin and Rachel---Do not tell me to forget my children.

DR. KYLE

If you stay, you'll never live to see them.

MAY'S POV - The men climb out of the wagon, start for her.

MAY - Leans into Dr. Kyle, in a low rage filled voice--

MAY

Shame on you.

She quickly pulls a pistol from her saddlebag. Aims at Dr. Kyle's face, he brings his cane up just as she FIRES, hits the gun out of her hand.

The bullet deflected, grazes Dr. Kyle's head. A TRICKLE OF BLOOD.

The men descend on her. She attacks, SCREAMING, LASHING OUT. Raging, she STRIKES at the men as they try to subdue her, fighting to keep the life they're wresting away. She manages to slip out of their grasp.

May BOLTS for the house.

Dr. Kyle takes out a handkerchief, wipes the blood from the side of his brow. The men go after her.

DR. KYLE

Have a care, Boys. She's unwell.

EXT CONNOR FARMHOUSE - DAY

May sits on the springboard wagon, manacled to the seat. Her most valued belongings are packed. Pale, she looks back at her home, never taking her eyes off it. It grows smaller...smaller, until it is no more.

SUPERIMPOSE: 1863

EXT - HEAVILY MISTED BATTLEGROUND - DAWN

A FEW U.S. CAVALRY SCOUTS ride slowly, quietly through a thick forest of large trees. They're stealthily probing enemy lines.

TOM, a lieutenant now, looks off to his left. He thinks he sees something, steps his horse over to the tree line and into a meadow, heavy with mist.

EXT MEADOW

Across the meadow he sees a MOUNTED CONFEDERATE OFFICER of similar rank and age. A large, colorful PLUME adorns his hat.

Tom and the officer stand completely still, regarding each other at a distance of some fifty yards. As if on some silent signal they suddenly--

DRAW SABERS AND CHARGE, HURTLING AT EACH OTHER, FULL GALLOP. The Confederate emits a high-pitched REBEL YELL.

TOM'S POV - The soldier coming at him.

They officers come closer and closer to one another when--

TOM DROPS DOWN the side of his horse then reaches up under his mount's thick neck and SLASHES his opponent's throat with his saber.

MOMENTS LATER

Tom stands looking down at the dead Confederate, his eyes roving to the plume in his hat. WE HEAR GUNSHOTS coming from the forest. The other men are engaged in BATTLE, unseen.

TOM'S POV - THE NAKED BACK OF A YOUNG BOY standing where Tom was, looking down at the dead opponent, the soldier now an INDIAN WARRIOR, feathers braided in his hair.

BACK TO TOM - Stillness, emptiness in his expression.

SUPERIMPOSE: SEPTEMBER 1865

EXT NEW ORLEANS STREET - DAY

RECONSTRUCTION. The worn city alive with tattered people and carriages. Tom, astride a horse, comes down the street in Union dress, a Captain, now. He's followed by a number of his MEN. The Southerners don't like them, they keep their distance.

Tom stops in front of a building. He orders his men to dismount and bring out several large bills which they begin posting on the walls of every business on the street.

Tom crosses the street, nails a bill to a building, begins to chat with a street vendor. Something catches his eye.

A WOMAN, smartly dressed, a refinement in the way she moves.

TOM looks away as a carriage drives past, then looks back.

THE WOMAN stops to read one of the newly posted bills.

TOM takes a step off the curb, trying to get a better look at her. For some inexplicable reason he starts to walk slowly toward her.

THE WOMAN reading. Tilts her head slightly. Tom's men tip their hats at her.

TOM coming closer, traffic passing between him and the Woman. He reaches her side of the street.

She turns her head, looks right through him. It's MAY. She is much changed, removed from the world.

TOM starts to smile, to say something. But her expression is blank, with no semblance of recognition. She moves off down the street, accompanied by a large BLACK MAN.

A moment. Tom follows her from a discreet distance.

She turns down one street. Then another. May finally walks up the steps of a townhouse. The black man follows, pulls a key, unlocks the door. They enter. The door shuts.

Tom takes a position across the street. He waits.

EXT NEW ORLEANS STREET - LATER

Tom's still standing in the same place, TIME SUSPENDED.

He writes a note, gives it to a young BLACK BOY who, in turn, runs across the street and up the steps of the townhouse.

TOM'S POV - The boy KNOCKS at the door. The Black Man answers, takes the note...looks at Tom across the way. An older, well-heeled White Woman appears at the door. She takes the note from the man's hands, reads, vexed. Looks at Tom.

Tom doffs his hat.

The older woman turns her back on him. Shuts the door.

INT PARLOR - AFTERNOON

TOM stands in the parlor with FRANCINE, the older woman.

FRANCINE

Someday, sir, you must explain to me how a gentleman from Texas could wind up an officer in the Union Army under that ghastly General Butler.

TOM

I was born in Kentucky, M'am.

FRANCINE

Worst still.

(MORE)

FRANCINE (CONT'D)

I'll ask you to refrain from loitering around this house and staring up at our window for all the world to see! This won't do. No, no, This won't do at all.

(beat)

How long is your stay in New Orleans, may I ask?

TOM

Just a few more weeks, Ma'm. Till fall.

FRANCINE

That long?

(beat)

My niece is precious to me, Sir. She's much altered by the tragedies that befell her in that place.

TOM

Mrs. Bouchard--

FRANCINE

The past is not prologue in this house. We do not discuss those events and I'll thank you to observe this prohibition.

May's standing at the doorway. And as she enters

MAY

Prohibition, Aunt? So early in the evening?

Francine shoots Tom a look, turns abruptly, leaves Tom and May alone. She smiles, goes through the motions as if by rote. Contained, apart. Sits in a chair.

MAY (CONT'D)

Please sit down.

May takes a seat, Tom follows. He's a bit awkward at first. Tom sees how changed she is. Waits. Then--

TOM

I know of your misfortune, Mrs. Connor. I'm sorry.

MAY

Texas is many miles--many years away.

TOM
 For both of us.
 (pause)
 I wasn't certain you'd remember me--

MAY
 Yes--I do.
 (beat; confused)
 You came to my father-in-law's
 store, some time ago.

Tom is momentarily taken aback. Simply nods.

TOM
 I did.

There's an awkward silence. May is very still. Then--

MAY
 I'm afraid I'm not much use for
 conversation---My thoughts seem
 like dust, you see.

TOM
 I doubt that's true.

His eyes rest upon her. She returns his gaze with a long and impenetrable stare of gentle regard.

MAY
 Why have you called?

TOM
 To ask for the pleasure of your
 company. Nothing more.

EXT TOWNHOUSE - DUSK

Tom escorts May into a waiting carriage. A second buggy, bearing the black man stands behind it.

EXT GREEN - EVENING

Tom and May stroll past a pond. It's a beautiful, late summer evening. She seems more relaxed in his company. Tom glances over his shoulder.

TOM'S POV - The black man trailing several yards back, watching them.

TOM (CONT'D)
 We're chaperoned. Your Aunt
 Francine doesn't trust me, I
 imagine.

MAY
Yes. His name is Marcellus.

TOM
That's a fine name.

MAY
He's my minder. You see, they fear
I'll run.

TOM
Will you?

She looks at him, takes his measure.

MAY
It's the tyranny of distance that
keeps me here.
(smiles wanly)
And Aunt Francine, of course.

TOM
(smiles)
I hope you're not feeling the urge
to flee at this particular moment.

MAY
This particular moment? No. I
believe I'll last the evening.

TOM
I'll count that as my good fortune.

MAY
Some would disagree.

EXT TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Tom has walked May to the door. He's quiet. Can't think of what to say. She smiles at him. Present. Marcellus stands below at the front gate, looks away.

TOM
May I call again?

MAY
I should like that.

TOM
And again after that?

MAY
Yes.

Then after a moment--

TOM
Well, good night, then.

MAY
Good-night.

She enters. As Tom stands there, happy, Marcellus passes him on the steps. No words are exchanged. Marcellus walks in the house. Closes the door on Tom.

INT TOWNHOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

MAY, holding a candle, walks toward her bedroom, Marcellus behind her. She opens her door, walks deep into the room.

From the doorframe, we SEE her turn round, look back at Marcellus.

MARCELLUS
Good night, M'am.

He closes the door as her image wipes away. We HEAR the lock being turned. She's a prisoner.

EXT PARK - NIGHT

A dark sky, brilliant with FIREWORKS. They rocket upward, one after the other. The CROWD applauds, OOHS and AAHS, each charge more beautiful than the next.

TOM AND MAY - Watching, their faces colored by the reflection of the fireworks, their spirits lifted by the wonder of it all.

May looks to Tom. An indefinable expression passes her face. Then remembrance. She watches him gaze at the sky for a beat; turns her eyes back to the heavens.

EXT COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Tom and his troopers water their horses at a small stream. Tom looks up at the sky, the trees.

TOM'S POV - Autumn. The leaves starting to change, the light muted.

Tom moves away from his men, stands closer to the road. He turns his face to the wind, far away, as he looks into the distance. One of his men, MOORE, approaches.

TOM
 (in Comanche)
 Summer's dying.

Moore doesn't understand.

MOORE
 Pardon me, sir?

TOM
 (distant; in English)
 Fall is upon us.

INT/EXT TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

May moves quickly to the front door where Marcellus waits. She opens it, a warm expression on her face. Tom stands before her.

INT HALL - NIGHT

A dance. The SOUTHERNERS TURN around in a lively GALLOP. May and Tom stand outside the circle, watching; his Union uniform causing subtle notice. Tom seems un-bothered.

LOW MURMURS. "Her children", "shame". Some women look over at May, clearly gossiping about her. May returns their gaze, then looks away.

The dance ends. MUSIC changes to a WALTZ. Tom takes May's hand, leads her to the dance floor. As they waltz, they're passed by other couples, some of whom dart glances at May. Tom pretends to take no notice.

MAY
 (hushed tone; close)
 You see how I live.

TOM
 (smiles; looks at the crowd)
 Is it you or me?

MAY
 (warmed by his thoughtfulness)
 Perhaps the both of us, then.

TOM
 I'm here, May--for all of it.
 Forget about the others. Look to me. I'm here.

May looks up at his face as he holds her. The world falls away as they whirl and turn with each other and no one else.

INT CARRIAGE - NIGHT

Silence between May and Tom. Both wanting to speak, but unable to. Her gloved hand lays in his. He turns her palm over. Tom starts to say something, then stops. May looks down at his hand in her own. A TATTOO is barely covered by the cuff of his sleeve. She lightly pushes the sleeve back, stares at the strange symbols encircling his wrist. May looks up at Tom, startled.

TOM (CONT'D)

I was taken as a boy. I lived nine years with the Comanche---There's no shame in it, May.

May can't speak. She looks away.

TOM (CONT'D)

I said nothing because I didn't want to turn you away.

The carriage comes to a stop.

EXT TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

Tom helps May out of the carriage. He holds her hand as they stand on the sidewalk. She stands there, stares at him, as if making a decision, then lets go and walks a few yards away down the sidewalk to where Marcellus stands.

TOM'S POV - May speaks to Marcellus. He looks at Tom, then bows his head and shakes "no", conflicted. She puts her hand, gently on his shoulder. After a moment, he reluctantly surrenders to her, hands her a ring of keys.

May moves toward the front steps. Stops in front of Tom, her back to him.

MAY

Would you come with me, please?

BLACKNESS - A MATCH FLARES

INT ATTIC - NIGHT

May puts the match to an oil lamp. Tom stands close to her.

MAY (CONT'D)

Did they harm you?

He considers his answer. Finally--

TOM

No.

A kind of relief floods May's face. She looks to Tom a moment, then accepts his answer as truth. Quiet. She moves to an old trunk, kneels before it. Opens it.

It's filled with her children's belongings. They give May comfort. And without self-pity, without bitterness, she looks at the objects. He kneels next to her as she gently touches her past.

MAY

My acquaintances don't ask me about them anymore--They've always held this quiet expectation that my grief should fade and that I would bury my children...But it's unnatural, isn't it?

She stops, almost embarrassed. Her face is flushed, her hands tremble. Tom just listens.

MAY (CONT'D)

I feel them as if they're right here, in this room. As if they've never left me--How can I put that in a grave?

Tom puts his hand over hers. Gently looks at her.

TOM

You musn't...Ever.

Beat.

MAY

Their faces---I can't see them clearly as I once did. I--
(can't finish; beat)
You should have left me there that day.

He takes this in.

TOM

You do remember--

MAY

Yes. You should have left me.

TOM

It would have been to my everlasting regret if I had.

May's eyes are cast down, her breathing shallow. A soft quiet. Finally

TOM (CONT'D)
Marry me. Be my wife.

May looks up at him, at the desire on his face.

TOM (CONT'D)
May--I want a life with you. No one else. Only you.

A long silence.

May regards him a moment, then rises and slowly walks to the other side of the room. With her back to him she unbuttons the bodice of her dress, dropping it down her back. Her skin a mass of scars.

ON TOM - Watching her. It doesn't matter. He moves to May, takes her face in his hands, presses her head to his chest.

She looks up at him, unfurls onto him, pushing back death. Wrapping her arms about him. He holds her close.

TRAIN STATION - DAY

ROAR OF ENGINES, STEAM, WHISTLES. Tom helps May on board.

INT TRAIN - DAY

Tom, arm around May, seated in a comfortable berth. They watch landscape HURTLE by. May holds his hand, gently pushes back his coat sleeve, looks at the TATTOO encircling his wrist.

MAY
Tell me---Tell me what happened.

He looks down at her, not altogether surprised. Wonders if she's ready. .

TOM
I was eight, my brother Jack but six. Our father was a stern man and he worked us hard, Jack and I.
(beat; he smiles)
He was the guide of our labours--- My mother, well, I suppose she was the shepherd of our souls. They could both read and write, though the only book we possessed was our family bible.
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

The answer to all life's mysteries
were to be found on its
pages..."Writ large as one's
faith," Mother would say.

(pause)

She told us God was our companion--

SUPERIMPOSE IMAGES ON WINDOW

TWO tired BOYS resting their heads on their cows' flanks,
complete silence but for the milk POURING into pails.

TOM (CONT'D)

That day began like any other.
Jack and I arose early to milk the
cows. He'd had a miserable cough
which kept us both up most of the
night.

FLASHCUT - A COW'S HOOF - KICKING the milk bucket, spilling
the contents. We HEAR JACK'S young voice-

JACK

Goddamnit, what in hell is wrong
with you, Susie?

ON YOUNG TOM - Alert. He goes to his brother in the half
light, clamps his hand over his mouth.

INT TRAIN - CONTINUOUS

TOM

I heard someone move, and then
whispers. And by God, I did not
know what to do--I picked up the
stool, grabbed Jack by the back of
his shirt--and we ran.

FLASHCUT - THE BOYS - Dashing from the cow-pen into the
darkness. Jack lifted off his feet into the air.

TOM - Whips around, looks up.

A COMANCHE'S FACE - Painted red with yellow stripes,
terrifying.

INT TRAIN

TOM (CONT'D)

All of the demons of my mother's
great book had come to life--They
were everywhere. I fought them.

FLASHCUT - TOM - Hitting the Comanche hard with the stool.

TOM (CONT'D)

But it was useless. I heard my father's yells, then gunshots. And we were gone.

FLASHCUT - EXT PLAINS - NIGHT

The boys, stripped of their clothes, lashed to the backs of two horses, each ridden by Braves. They THUNDER away.

TOM (CONT'D)

We rode all night and it was late into the next day when we finally stopped...I'd no idea where we'd gone.

FLASHCUT - ON BLISTERED BACKS

TOM AND JACK - Red. Parched, fatigued, Jack's BREATHING difficult. A Brave unloosens Jack's bonds.

JACK - Slumping over his horse.

A Comanche kneels in front of a dead calf, slits it open, SCOOPS his HAND into the animal's stomach. He's extracted milk, tinged with blood. He offers it to Jack.

The boy resists. The Brave forces it down Jack's throat, who wretches. Tom is offered the same, turns away, revolted.

TOM'S VOICE

They fed us curdled milk. They savored it and thought it would help Jack. But his lungs were filling. He was dying.

TOM - Panicking at his brother's deterioration.

TOM'S POV - A Brave examining Jack. He unsheathes his knife, cuts the rawhide binding. The boy falls to the ground in a sick THUD.

TOM - Crying. Screams for his brother. Pleading.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

My words, even if understood would never have mattered. The Comanche could not afford the weak or sick.

He tries biting loose his bindings, desperate. They lead him off. He writhes in his saddle to see Jack.

JACK - White, barely breathing. A tiny figure in the dirt.

Tom is beside himself. Hands bound, he leans over, BITES his horse on the ear. The animal REARS UP, violently. It's Tom's helpless effort to change his fate. He's in a fury.

A Brave swings his war club. A sudden BLOW to Tom's head. BLACKNESS.

EXT INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Tom and his captors ride into a huge PENATEKA COMANCHE encampment. The SQUAWS spot them, drop their work.

SHRILL SCREAMS pierce the air. CRIES of "LELO, LELO, LELA!". It's a great reception for the returning warriors.

The WARRIORS are proud. Some begin SINGING, heralding their triumphs. The Comanches are as thrilled as Tom is mortified. Some HOLD their WAR LANCES high, bearing SCALPS.

The WOMEN crowd around the warriors. They touch Tom's legs.

TOM - Frozen, badly frightened. The women and girls dance around him, singing their songs. They feint at him with knives, fists. Menacing him in a ritual dance.

His horse is led through the village. The young boys follow the warriors. Deeper into the camp stand SEVERAL OLDER MEN, waiting.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I thought my end had come.

Tom's horse is led to the men. His captor, ROPE CUTTER presents him to a Penateka in his 50's, MUKEWARRAH. Tom is motioned to dismount. Mukewarrah (Spirit Talker), a medicine chief, looks at the stolen horses Rope Cutter ponies.

Rope Cutter passes the reigns to Mukewarrah who gives the horses a cursory running over with his hands, then moves his fingers over Tom. He FEELS his arms and legs in exactly the same manner he did the horses.

TOM - Afraid to make eye contact.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Mukewarrah, the Spirit Talker took me. I found out later I was payment for a gambling debt.

Mukewarrah nods his assent to Rope Cutter, pulls Tom down.

EXT VILLAGE - NIGHT

A huge feast for the Warriors. Tom is seated next to

Mukewarrah. The boy is starved. A Penateka woman sets two bowls in front of him. The men begin eating. Tom, desperately hungry, controls himself. He's wary. Watchful.

TOM'S POV - The men engaged in conversation. Some casually watch him with strange interest.

TOM - Shaking. He looks down at the two bowls. One has fragrant, cooked meat. The other raw, washed in blood.

TOM'S POV - The Warriors coolly regard him.

Tom - Takes the plunge. He reaches for the cooked meat, then stops himself. He blinks. Changes course, takes up the raw meat from the other bowl. He EATS without hesitation.

THE MEN - Grinning, gesturing their approval. As he eats, one man in particular, catches Tom's eyes. He's in his early twenties, with a powerful, daunting countenance. His expression bemused, he's studying Tom.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Of all the strangers around the fire there was one who seemed apart from the others. His name was Buffalo Hump and he was the fiercest, the greatest War Chief the Comanches would ever know.

INT LODGE - NIGHT

Tom is held down by several squaws. They push cactus quills through his earlobes, piercing them. He YELLS, helplessly.

EXT VILLAGE - DAY

Tom is held down by several squaws. They push cactus quills through his earlobes, piercing them. He YELLS, helpless.

EXT VILLAGE - DAY

Squaws hold Tom's hand, leading him through a CROWD OF MEN

AND WOMEN. He's numb to what's around him. The boy is dressed in nothing but a breechcloth. He's barefoot.

Tom thrown in a ring. The warriors who watch are dressed up and painted. Tom looks around, nervous, expectant.

TOM'S POV - Squaws coming toward him with an INDIAN BOY his size, all painted. The Comanches let out an excited CRY.

Tom knows a fight has been arranged, but what he doesn't know is if he should fight back. The boys face each other.

The Comanche CHARGES Tom, knocking the wind out of him. He falls. Gets up.

The Indian charges Tom again. Tom offers no resistance whatsoever, fearing his life will be taken if he down. The Comanche jumps on him and beats him repeatedly with his fists.

Mukewarrah intercedes. PULLS the Boy off Tom. Tom, GASPING, doesn't know what to do.

The Chief takes him by the hand and leads him away, talking all the while in a language Tom can't possibly understand.

INT LODGE - DAY

Mukewarrah keeps trying to communicate with Tom, who's totally lost. He gestures, making his point clear.

MUKEWARRAH (COMANCHE)

You must fight. You must fight so
I may win many ponies from the old
women.

His attitude is warm, but definite. He raises his arms to emphasize 'victory'. Looks at Tom expectantly. The boy feels safer, less threatened.

TOM

My family. I want to go home--
please.

Mukewarrah doesn't comprehend. Tom bends to the dirt floor and draws four STICK FIGURES. A mother, father and two children.

TOM (CONT'D)

My family.

Mukewarrah leans over, gently rubs out the images with his hand, then gestures up at the sky to some imaginary vapor.

MUKEWARRAH

Gone.

He points to Tom with one hand and gestures to his chest with the other.

MUKEWARRAH (CONT'D)

You are here now, with me.

Tom, hurt beyond measure keeps a tough countenance. We HEAR a strange, CHOKED BREATH escape his body.

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON TOM IN WAR PAINT

The last strip painted onto his young face. He's cold. Unreachable. Angry.

Beads are hung around his neck.

TOM'S VOICE

The Comanches prized courage and they tested mine.

EXT CAMP - DAY

A repetition of several days before. Tom heads through the cheering throng to the ring. But instead of being led by hand, he follows Mukewarrah with purpose.

Tom faces his opponent. The crowd ROARS. The Squaws CRYING 'Lelo, lelo, lelo--'

Mukewarrah pushes Tom forward, raises his tomahawk, then gives a loud WAR-WHOOP.

Tom and the boy take their cue. They charge each other, hitting right and left, fighting with everything they have. Tom is knocked down. The boy jumps on him, beating him about the face.

Tom throws his arms around his opponent and BURIES his teeth into the boy's FLESH with a death grip. The boy SCREAMS in pain, struggles to get loose.

Tom hangs on, remorseless, feeling only hatred.

The boy lets out a pitiable HOWL, but Tom doesn't let go. BLOOD covers his teeth.

The squaws, excited, move to separate the boys. Mukewarrah let out a RIFLE SHOT, waves his tomahawk in the air, making them stand back.

THE BRAVES - Laughing, yelling. Two enter the ring, try to pry Tom loose. He holds on. They start choking him. He's strangled, his face turning purple, then blue before he finally lets go.

TOM - On his feet, catching his breath. Stands erect.

Mukewarrah takes him by the hand, pats him on the head. He's happy. He's won his horses and regards Tom with pride and esteem.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Mukewarrah and his wife treated me as their son from that day on. But the others felt differently.

INT EDGE OF VILLAGE - DAY

Tom is fetching water. He looks out at the world around him. There's nothing. Nothing but flat land as far as the eye can see.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I planned my escape so many times. But where was I to go?

Daylight ACCELERATES into DARK: Tom TIMELESSLY standing in the same place. SOUNDS of WOLVES CRYING.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I hadn't the courage to venture out amongst the animals and the dangers nightfall brought. So stayed...And I'd do anything for their acceptance.

EXT BEE CAVE - DAY

TOM - Ropes tied under his arms. He's being lowered into a cavern in the ground by a number of SQUAWS. They look down into the hole, after him. A SWARM OF BEES menace the squaws. They run off, laughing.

INT CAVE - Tom's face surrounded by bees. He's diligently scraping the honey off a huge hive. He works steadily, ignoring the vicious stings to his body.

EXT MUKEWARRAH'S LODGE - NIGHT

Tom sits on a blanket. His body and face full of welts, swollen from stings. He's shivering. Mukewarrah's FIRST WIFE tenderly applies a mud salve to his skin.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

I was adopted on that day.

Mukewarrah holds the leather satchel full of honey. He dips his finger in and tastes it. There is a small audience of squaws. Mukewarrah barely contains his disgust for them. He rises. CRIES out in a loud voice--

MUKEWARRAH

My Son, He Bites Him is brave. His magic strong. See him there--He won't be vanquished!

TOM'S VOICE

He gave me a pony---

MUKEWARRAH - Holding Tom's wrists, pressing his palms on the horse's neck, leaving two palm-prints.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

He said I was to always ride a buckskin horse...That a buckskin horse would bring me good medicine, protect me, and keep me safe in battle.

His new father lifts Tom onto the horse's back. Tom tries hang on in his fevered state.

MUKEWARRAH

To be a warrior is to live forever. I say these words to you as I once said them to my nephew, Buffalo Hump.

Tom's only half conscious. Mukewarrah strokes the boy's head in a gesture of tenderness. He turns around--

A LARGE GROUP of Penatekas have been bearing witness. Buffalo Hump stands in the foreground. Mukewarrah looks his nephew in the eye. Buffalo Hump gives a small nod.

Mukewarrah does a CHANT. Moves gracefully around Tom's horse. The CROWD WHOOPS and CRIES their approval.

INT TRAIN COMPARTMENT - DUSK

TOM

Their happiness was my own. I lived in a world worth dying for.

Tom drifts off. Stares out the window.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Buffalo Hump and some of his war party look at SURVEYING EQUIPMENT strewn about a raided wagon. They're cautious, apprehensive around the TRIPOD as if it has some magical hold. None of them dare touch it.

And there's something else...A SURVIVOR of the raid is sitting against a wagon, PLAYING A FIDDLE. The warriors watch him, witness his strange medicine, and leave him be.

Tom, several years older, now, watches the White Man with no feeling whatsoever. Nothing in his demeanor betrays his own racial identity. He goes to Buffalo Hump.

BUFFALO HUMP

You see? This is how it begins.
The Long Knives look across these
sticks and wave to one another.

(he demonstrates)

Then many more come. They hunt our
land, steal our horses. And they
kill us with their fever. They
promise one thing and do another.
They will learn.

Not a flicker from Tom.

INT TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT

Tom is quiet. Finally May asks--

MAY'S VOICE

How did you come back, Tom?

Tom doesn't hear. He's staring out the window, remembering.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

THE SAME SCENE as before, only now we see DEAD BODIES
littering the ground. Tom gazes about him, dispassionate.

OVER TOM'S NAKED BACK - As he walks among the dead white
surveyors. A Man lies prone, reaches up, grasps Tom's leg.

TOM - Looking down at the man. He bends over, scalps him.

MAY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Tom?--

BACK TO TRAIN COMPARTMENT

He's withheld this last remembrance from May. Looks at her.

TOM

I was captured by soldiers. The
Comanches had lied. My parents
were alive and Jack was with them.
He was found two days after we'd
been taken. They never stopped
looking for me.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)
 (changes subject)
 You'll meet Jack soon enough.

May is silent. She takes his hand, gazes at it in her own. Buries her head on his shoulder. He strokes her hair.

EXT DEARBORN RANCH - LATE AFTERNOON

Tom and May come onto the ranch. May is stunned by its beauty. Huge open fields, several thousand head of cattle, every imaginable kind of wildlife and in the distance two rock houses and a solid barn. As they come closer---

VIOLET, Tom's niece, 15 and lovely, stands on the front porch of her home, ties a ribbon round her hair.

VIOLET
 SOMEONE'S COMIN', EVERYONE!

There are FIVE RANCH HANDS ranging in ages from 18-23, and a six, GABRIEL, 30's, who's the only Mexican. They all stop what they're doing and eagerly gather together to await the arrival of the wagon.

PATSY, Tom's sister-in-law, emerges from the house, removes a heavily stained apron, seven-year old in tow. CAROLINE.

The Cowboys star HOOTING, SHOUTING, WAVING their hands at Tom, giving a huge welcome for his return from war.

A LONE RIDER gallops full tilt from an open pasture. He slides to a deep stop next to the wagon. It's JACK

JACK
 Well shitagoddamn! Six years and
 you're ugly as ever!

TOM
 So are you!

They embrace, slapping each other's backs, DUST rising from their clothes. Jack stares over Tom's shoulder at May:

TOM (CONT'D)
 May, this is my brother, Jack--Jack
 this is May.

Jack is dumbstruck.

JACK
 (uncomprehending)
 Uh-huh--

MAY

Tom's told me so much about you.

Long pause. He looks from one to the other. Tom puts his arm around May

TOM

My fiancee.

JACK

Uh-huh!

Jack takes her hand, shakes it vigorously.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well I'll be damned to hell!

Excuse me.

(yells over)

Patsy, it's his fiancee!

As they ride to the others--Patsy's incredulous.

JACK (CONT'D)

(shouting)

He's back, Boys, and all in one piece and with a fiancee!!

Another round of HOOTS AND HOLLERS. The men FIRE off their GUNS in salute.

The wagon rolls to a stop. Tom helps May climb down. Everyone rushes the newcomers. Patsy's in tears. Hugs and affection all around.

INT/EXT TOM'S HOUSE - DUSK

Tom swings open the screen door, a bit nervous, lets May inside.

INT TOM'S HOUSE

May looks around. It's a simple rock home with a large fireplace and upstairs. Simply functional yet warm.

May touches Tom arm. He looks at her, their proximity becoming more natural and more difficult with each moment.

Violet and Caroline startle them, carrying biscuits and fresh-cut wildflowers.

CAROLINE

Mama wants us to bring you these.
Uncle Tom, you're not supposed to
be in here till after the weddin'!

TOM

Yes, well--Thank you for that,
Caroline. I'll just go on over to
the cabin, leave you ladies alone.

He gives May a last smile and leaves.

EXT YARD - EVENING

Everyone gathered for a meal, taking in the last warm night of autumn. It's festive, full of life at this ranch and May is utterly aware of it. She looks from one person to another, enjoying them each as they speak. Only Tom stays silent.

MAY'S POV - Jack whispering in Patsy's ear. She looks at May as she listens to her husband, then suddenly covers her mouth and searches his face.

MAY - Manages a smile, looks away. She finally looks to Tom. He's drinking in the sight of her happiness, watching her and nothing else. They share a look of such intimacy, that it forces them both to look away.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - TWILIGHT

May, naked, hair piled atop her head, runs a sponge over her arms, her neck. She dips it in a tin tub filled with water. We see the knife scars on her upper chest and arms. She's not looking at them for she has no mirror.

A DRESSING GOWN - slipping over her head.

MAY - Standing at the window, looking out.

MAY'S POV - Tom, alone, walking across the field, bedroll slung across his back, unable to live indoors, starting for the hill ahead of him.

MAY - Watching, mesmerized.

EXT FIELD - TWILIGHT

May, compelled, follows Tom's path, a breeze gently moving about the white nightgown. Her expression clear, direct. May approaches Tom as she ascends the hill.

HER POV - TOM - Staring up at the stars, searching. Covered in a Buffalo Robe to ward off the chill. He sees May drawing near.

TOM AND MAY - As she stands in front of him, looking him straight in the eye. He reaches out his hand, pulls her close, wraps her in his buffalo robe. Buries her in him. They kiss, a kiss full of want and release.

They make love under the huge oak tree.

LATER - Tom and May wrapped around each other staring up at---
The brilliant starlit sky. He turns her face to him, looks at her.

TOM (CONT'D)
I'm afflicted and healed by you.

She strokes his face, his eyes and falls into him again. In love in this place without walls. With him and nowhere else

EXT PRAIRIE - DUSK

Tom and May wed, surrounded by about twenty well-wishers. It's a beautiful moment, nothing hidden between the two. They kiss. The MEN throw their hats in the air, the WOMEN smile, laugh.

EXT PRAIRIE - DUSK

The wedding goes dance to a lively folk tune PLAYED by IRISH FIDDLERS. The dance ends and a WALTZ is struck up. Tom takes May's hand, and as the sun drops down on the horizon, waltzes on the prairie with his wife.

EXT RANCH - DAY

Tom, a lone, distant figure, sits on a fence, burning the edges off his lariat.

TOM'S POV - The men are in a large pen, working cattle, branding, castrating. It's Neil's turn with the iron. LI'L BOB and FELTON hold down a large calf.

JACK
(teasing)
You remember how to do this?

FELTON
I hope he don't miss.

JACK
Now Neil, if you hit Li'l Bob in the balls with that, we'll have to sell him off with the rest of the herd.

He shoots a surreptitious look Tom's way.

JACK'S POV - Tom alone, watching with uneasiness. Removed.

EXT WORKING PEN - LATER

Tom and Jack lean on the fence watching the men taking turns breaking horses.

TOM

It's a bigger outfit than when I left.

JACK

Is that a congratulations or a complaint?

Tom smiles. Looks away.

JACK (CONT'D)

You know, you might could stick around and make it whatever you care to.

Tom doesn't respond.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well I can't stand around here listenin' to you blab all day.

(pause)

Let me tell ya. We're doing all-right. Got us about three thousand head for our drive west come spring. It's a trick gettin' there, but if the prices hold, it's a payday.

(beat)

For awhile there, we thought you weren't gonna make it back. I won't ask you what it was like.

TOM

Allright.

JACK

You get any word on May's young ones?

TOM

No. Made inquiries--Fort Sill and points north. Talked to every buffalo hunter that's come in. Nothing.

JACK

Yeah, I talked to that Ol boy, Chambers, in town. He was pretty drunk, says there haven't been any Indians around here for eight months. I imagine they're up north makin' them buffalo robes.

TOM

I imagine they are. Well, winter's comin' early. I'm looking north come spring.

Quiet. They both know what this means.

JACK

I wish you wouldn't do that.
 (beat, shakes his head)
 Who'd have known--you doin' this for a woman. Aww hell, it'll be okay..we got you back, didn't we?

EXT PORCH - DAY

Tom carries May through the door, sets her down. A beautiful SORREL HORSE is saddled next to Tom's buckskin. It's a wedding present. May's dazzled.

-Tom and May running their horses, unfettered, free.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tom and May, in bed, facing each other. Talking, whispers. As close as two people could ever be.

And for the first time, we feel his comfort with the indoor world. A new life. His home with May.

EXT RANCH - FIELD

-Frost covers the ground. May leans against Tom's chest as they ride double, a huge buffalo blanket wrapped around them.

EXT PRAIRIE - DAY

NO SOUND. We're somewhere we haven't seen before. May is walking through the grass, she seems to be searching for something. She turns to see--

Rachel and Phineas, holding hands, walking away from her. They turn and smile enigmatically, almost seeming to ask her to follow them.

She can't move. She panics. Her children continue walking, leaving her alone.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

May cries in her sleep. She stirs, sits up, tries to stifle a sob. The wind MOANS through the house. Tree branches SCRAPE the windows.

INT BEDROOM - LATER

Tom alone in bed. He wakes up, looks for May. He rises, go downstairs.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

May sits at the table lit by a candle. She's writing a letter, struggling to put down words, coming undone; shoulders heaving. She instinctively covers the paper with her hand, ashamed. Tom knows what it is. He sits next to her.

TOM

You don't need to hide that away.

MAY

Winters are hardest. I'm sorry---

The waiting--It kills.

(beat)

I hope they're warm.

He clasps her to him, trying to hold her as she shudders. Fury and helplessness. Tom unable to make it go away.

EXT ROAD - DAY

May and Tom on a springboard wagon. She's quiet, remote. Completely apart from her surroundings. Gabriel, horseback, rides alongside them.

INT POST OFFICE - LATER

May walks up to the counter, addresses the CLERK.

CLERK

Hello, Mrs. Dearborn. Happy New Years to you.

MAY

And to you, Sam. Would there be any mail for me, today?

CLERK

Just a moment.

He checks a file behind him.

CLERK (CONT'D)

No, Ma'm, there ain't. But your flour and molasses is here. And that oil of cloves for Felton's tooth.

MAY

Yes. I almost forgot.

Tom and Gabriel have been standing outside, near the front of the store. As May begins to take care of her bill, a MEXICAN HAND joins them, begins talking excitedly.

May browses through the store. She looks over to the window.

HER POV - Tom and Gabriel briefly glance over at her. Tom moves off down the street. Gabriel tries to end the conversation, turn the men away. It's too late. May walks toward the door as the man takes off.

From inside the post office we SEE May talking to Gabriel OUTSIDE. We can't hear them. A look of shock crosses her face. She walks quickly in Tom's direction.

GABRIEL

(calling out to her)

Espera, Senora!

EXT STREET - DAY

May rounds the corner, breaks into a run--

MAY'S POV - A GROUP of MEN clustered in front of a blacksmith's shop, looking at something she can't see. Tom is walking away from them, spots May.

Tom comes to her as she moves toward the crowd.

TOM

May, stay here--

But she doesn't listen. She pushes her way through the men, desperate. We HEAR a LOUD VOICE--

COX

--About forty miles out. I don't know who killed 'em all, but it wasn't Indians--

MAY

(pushing her way through)

How old?

COX

--They were so dirty, had to look
at them twiced to tell they were
white--

May struggles through, Tom tries to stop her.

TOM

May!--

She nears what they're looking at. A huge, florid Teamster,
COX, has been holding court.

MAY

How old are they?!

COX

Stay back, M'am.

It's too late. She stops, stares at the sight before her

MAY'S POV - TWO BLONDE GIRLS, dressed as Indians, their faces
blue, rest in pine boxes. The coffins are propped upright
against the wall of the building, waiting for someone to
identify their inhabitants.

May takes a step toward them.

MAN IN CROWD

Hold on now--

ANOTHER MAN

Don't let her do that--

Tom puts his arm around May, stopping her as she sees that
the children are not hers.

TOM

Let's go home.

COX

Don't worry about 'em, M'am, their
troubles are over. They're better
off this way.

May is livid. Nearly hysterical. Moves on Cox. Tom pulls
her back.

MAY

Don't you talk that way! Don't you
say that! Someone still loves
these children--They belong
somewhere!

Tom turns May into him. She buries her face in his shoulder. He quietly turns her around and moves her through the crowd. As they pass--

MAN IN CROWD

Mrs. Dearborn, we wouldn't know where to start.

Cox squints at them; recognition. Then vindictively--

COX

Dearborn?...Well, sure enough...You ask that Red Nigger lovin' husband a yours about families--He's the one. He sent those bastards raidin' down the Clear Fork--

May stops, stricken. Tom contains his fury. She looks up at him with questioning eyes. Some of the onlookers gaze down at the ground, embarrassed.

MAY

(whispers)
What is he saying, Tom?

Tom doesn't answer. He looks at her, turns to Gabriel.

JIM

(to Cox)
This ain't no time for that.

COX

The hell it ain't.
(to May)
Ask him about your family.

TOM

Gabriel, take her home.

May, deeply shaken, says nothing. Tom watches her being escorted by Gabriel. The crowd is silent as they walk across the street.

COX

You know what you've done. Every man here knows it.

TOM'S POV - Gabriel and May round the corner. She looks over her shoulder at Tom.

ON TOM - Watching them disappear. A beat. He turns round, walks back through the crowd toward Cox who's readied himself.

JIM
Easy now, Tom.

COX
You don't want no truck with me,
now, you Yankee sonofabitch.

Tom, furious, covers the distance in an instant. Cox swings at him. Tom sidesteps, delivers a blistering blow to the teamster's throat, dropping him to his knees.

Tom KICKS Cox in the face. The man falls on his side, GASPING for breath, blood coming from his ear. Tom crouches beside him, speaks in a low tone.

TOM
Can you hear me?

Cox's eyes roll up at him.

TOM (CONT'D)
You'll be moving on, now...Never
let me see you again.

Tom stands up. The crowd is silent. Some watch, others avert their gaze as he walks a path through them.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tom comes through the door. As it swings shut--

HIS POV - May sits at the table, hands folded, waiting. She looks at him, her eyes veiled.

Tom sits beside her, gently lays a hand on her back, looks at her face, ready.

MAY
Who took my children, Tom?

He doesn't answer. Looks down. Shakes his head, torn.

MAY (CONT'D)
Do you know who took Phin and
Rachel?

TOM
I don't know. If I could tell you
for certain, I would---but I can't.

MAY
Did you know the Comanches aimed to
raid the fort?

Tom looks down. A long moment, then--

TOM

After Robert Neighbors was murdered, I told Buffalo Hump and his men that whites were coming. And they were. You know that. I told them they should run...take their women and children north.

MAY

Tell me your warning did not provoke them.

Tom doesn't respond.

MAY (CONT'D)

Tell me!
(beat)
Which world were you living in?!

TOM

They're the same.

May watches him as if he were someone else.

TOM (CONT'D)

The killing, hatred...Do you think those belong only to the Comanche?--
Do you? I've lived in both worlds and it's the same--

A deep silence between Tom and May. He doesn't look at her. Her eyes are downcast as she grapples with what he's told her. Finally--

MAY

They cast you out---

TOM

Yes.

She shakes her head. Uncomprehending. Then bitterly--

MAY

And still you have feeling for them.

TOM

Yes. I always will.

MAY

You weren't there to see what they did--what they took from me.

Quiet for a long, drawn out moment. May's shaking with shock and fury--

MAY (CONT'D)

Why are you with me, Tom?

TOM

I'd ask you the same, but I know the answer.

She SLAPS him hard. Tom takes the blow.

MAY

Do you pity me? Or are you doing penance for your past sins?

TOM

Strange that you should ask that, May. My love for you seemed a reward. Not a penance.

May waits. Fists balled, staring at the table. Then she rises and leaves the room.

EXT OPEN RANGE - DAWN

Tom riding, pack mule in tow, in the blue, cold morning light.

EXT PLAINS - LATER

A light dusting of snow hits the ground. Tom on his horse, getting farther and farther out.

EXT TOM'S FRONT PORCH - DAY

May, drawn, stands wrapped in a long shawl, watching the snow fall. She's holding a letter.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

The sky is turning bleaker, the ground whiter. Tom heads north. He's rid himself of his 'white-man's' clothing, now dressed in buckskins and a thick buffalo robe.

LATER - It's snowing hard. Tom is huddled under his robe. Around him, a large buffalo herd. He has a bow and arrow, takes aim at a buffalo calf. FIRES.

INT CAVE - NIGHT

A cave large enough to house Tom's horse and mule. They eat bark Tom has stripped for them.

Tom's made a fire. He's roasting the calf meat, smoking strips of meat to save.

INT CAVE - LATER

Tom holds a torch, looks at ANCIENT PICTOGRAPHS on the cave's wall. They're illustrations of primitive men spearing buffalo. Various handprints along the wall. Other lives. Tom presses his own palm against them.

EXT ROAD - DAY

May is on a buckboard wagon with Gabriel at the reins. They pull a covered load.

MAY'S POV - Her old home. It draws nearer and nearer.

CLOSER NOW - May in foreground. The house is a ghost of what it was. The roof falling in, the door open and banging shut.

INT MAY'S CABIN - DAY

She stands inside. Alone. The place untouched. HEARS HER CHILDREN'S VOICES. WHISPERING. The WIND SLAMS the door shut. SCREEN GOES DARK.

EXT PRAIRIE - LATER - Tom stops his horse. He spots movement on the hillside at his left, raises his hand high in the air. The figures on the hillside mimic his action.

EXT KIOWA CAMP - DUSK

Tom is being led into an Indian encampment by three warriors. As they near the center of the village, they're greeted by YELLS, SCREAMS. KIOWA run at Tom with something close to hostility, trying to get a closer look at him.

A CHIEF, who's been watching, motions for Tom to dismount. He does so. A SQUAW removes his buffalo robe, and takes his horse and pack mule. Some of the Indians have raised their clubs, others their knives. They swirl around Tom, menacing him. Coming closer. Waving their weapons perilously near his body.

Tom doesn't flinch. He stands still, staring straight ahead, showing no fear.

A BRAVE runs by and with his knife, CUTS at Tom, taking off a piece of buckskin. It dangles from his shirt. A SQUAW hits his across the face with a pony whip, drawing a streak of blood. It courses down his face.

And through this, Tom shows no fear, no anger, doesn't try to defend himself. The Chief observes him, abruptly tells his people to stop.

CHIEF

(in Kiowa)

You're a white man, but you dress like us, Kiowa.

TOM

(not understanding;
signing)

Can you speak Comanche

CHIEF (IN COMANCHE)

Yes. Why are you so far from your people?

TOM

I am looking for two children. One girl--

(he raises his hand
indicating her height)

And one boy--

(he does the same with the
other hand, a bit higher)

They've been gone for seven years.

CHIEF

Are they yours?

TOM

Not mine. My wife's

The Braves seem amused by this. The Chief regards him.

CHIEF

We have one boy. He is very dear to us and would cost many, many ponies. Do you have them?

TOM

I can get them.

The Chief says something to the two Braves. They get up and leave.

CHIEF

Tell me about the war between the white men? Did you see it?

TOM

Yes. I was there.

CHIEF
What was it like?

Tom thinks about it a moment, then--

TOM
It was very loud.

CHIEF
Have many died?

TOM
Yes. More people than there are
Indians.

CHIEF
(pleased)
That is good. Tell your soldiers
we will still help them fight the
Texans.

TOM
The war's been over for two
summers. Everyone's Texan, again.

The Chief regards him suspiciously, as if Tom's joking. The
Braves return with a YOUNG MAN of about 18 years.

His bearing, his dress, everything about him resembles an
Indian warrior. Everything but his flaming red hair.

Tom stares at him. The young man looks right back, unfazed.
Tom can't conceal his disappointment.

EXT RIVER - DAY

The snow has melted, but the air is still very raw. Tom
follows tracks on the riverbank. They lead into the water.
He takes his horse and pack mule into the river, swimming to
the other side.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Tom, still tracking, is a tiny figure dwarfed by open land.

EXT CANYON - DAY

It's bitterly cold. Tom is afoot, leading his horse into a
narrow canyon. He rounds a rocky bend, comes face to face
with--

A COMANCHE, sitting on a rock, cross-legged, gun upon his
lap.

Tom instantly FALLS to his knee, takes out his knife, moves to strike, then stops---

The Comanche doesn't move. He's dead.

Tom looks at him, at his sightless eyes. A strange yellow pallor upon the Indian's skin.

He ties his horse up, takes his rifle in hand and starts walking. After several yards he sees--

AN INDIAN VILLAGE at the bottom of the hill. He moves toward it.

EXT INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

A STRANGE QUIET. No one comes to threaten him, in fact there's no sign of life at all. No campfires, no dogs, no voices. Just a still nothingness.

Tom moves among a row of teepees. He takes his rifle and slowly opens the flap to one of the lodges--

TOM'S POV - A WOMAN, MAN AND TWO CHILDREN lie dead, their arms around each other.

ON TOM. He registers this. Moves from lodge to lodge and sees the same thing, looking for white children. He finds none, only DEATH everywhere. CHOLERA.

EXT INDIAN VILLAGE - LATER

Tom is stripping off his clothes, staying in only his breechcloth. He starts a fire. When the FLAMES RISE, he puts a torch to it. Tom sets his discarded clothes on fire.

He walks to each lodge, one by one and torches them.

EXT PRAIRIE - DUSK

Tom travels across the plains in his buffalo robe. Behind him, in the distance, the Indian village BURNS.

INT BARN - NIGHT

Jack, kneeling next to a mare about to foal. He HEARS a HORSE draw near. Looks outside:

JACKS POV - MAY, bundled, walking towards him. He stands, nods toward the mare, as if nothing's happened.

JACK

Seems like they always wait for the weather to get worse before they drop a baby.

May looks at Jack. Cuts him off--

MAY

Forgive me.

Jack nods. Doesn't say anything.

MAY (CONT'D)

I want him, Jack. I just want him home. I have to know he's coming home. Have you heard from him?

JACK

No.

(long moment)

Oh, hell. I think we'll be seeing Tom, again. I've seen him come and go so many times.

(beat)

You know, when Tom returned to us after all those years bein' missin' an all, he was wild. Couldn't stay for more than a minute. It drove Mamma mad, just about broke her. I don't know if our folks ever felt they got their boy back. He tried. He did his best. But he left one thing and came back somethin' else.

(pause)

He'll kill himself lookin' for those kids, he loves you that much.

MAY

I fear he won't return this time, Jack. I forced my misery on him until it was his--

JACK

You've given him a life he wouldn't give himself, May. He'd ask for no better.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Snow falls heavily, blanketing the prairie. Tom rides slowly across the plain, his horse struggling step by step. Tom dismounts.

He's coughing hard, face flushed with fever. He looks up at the sky, then falls to his knees and struggles to move aside some snow to expose grass for his horse to eat.

LATER - Tom rides toward the cave he slept in some days earlier. He's weak, barely conscious. He FALLS from his horse.

ON TOM - Laying in the snow. His horse and mule start wandering off. We HOLD there as snow falls on him, clinging to his face, his body.

Tom drifts in and out of consciousness, his figure growing whiter. The wind HOWLS around him.

LATER - Tom's in a half-sitting position. He BLINKS, stares at the sky. He can't move, his body and hair barely visible beneath the snow. He's become a strange, frozen creature. He feels something POKING him. Tom raises his eyes upward.

TOM'S POV - A COMANCHE BRAVE on a horse, looking over Tom, gently poking him on the shoulder with his war lance. He has Tom's mule.

TOM feeble struggles to raise his knife in self-protection.

The Brave watches him for a moment, then rides off, leading the mule, and leaving Tom alone.

Tom struggles, crawling inch by inch toward the cave. He sees his horse standing just inside the mouth eating the left over stripped bark and like him, seeking shelter.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MAY kneels before a fire. Murmuring, praying for Tom's return.

INT CAVE - NIGHT

Tom lies by a fire. He's shivering violently, fighting his fever. He HEARS a noise, looks up:

TOM'S POV - A BUFFALO, head down, SNORTING, challenging him.

ON TOM - He takes out his knife, begins SLASHING desperately in the buffalo's direction.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

The same HOWLING WIND. The windows SHAKE. Trees BRUSH against the roof.

May kneels, pulls a large box from under the bed. It's locked. She forcefully pries at it with a wedge.

INT CAVE - NIGHT

TOM'S POV - The buffalo eyes wild, CHARGING him, again and again.

ON TOM - He stabs helplessly at the animal.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Tom's alone. Hallucinating from fever. He staggers toward an unseen foe, slicing at the air. His knife hits the wall; a SHOWER of SPARKS. His horse jerks its head, but never moves.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM

May kneels at the bed, the box in her hands. She opens it, spills out its contents. She picks them up, fascinated.

HER POV - A beaded war belt, an eagle feather, breast plate--- Tom's Comanche past laid out in front of her.

MAY - Running her hands over the objects. She picks up a leather pouch, opens it, shakes its contents into her palm. Holds them to her lamp. Herbs.

INT CAVE - NIGHT

Tom is on the ground; his breathing short, quick. He lets out a long, ragged EXHALE.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The shutters BLOW OPEN, the windowpane cracks, startling May. The GUST scatters the herbs in her hand, EXTINGUISHES the oil lamp.

INT CAVE - DAY

Tom sleeps, his breathing no longer laboured. He opens his eyes, gets his bearings, sits up weakly--

TOM'S POV - His horse, still there. Sunlight pours through the mouth of the cave.

ON TOM - Thinner, weakened, but the fever gone.

EXT PLAINS - AFTERNOON

Tom rides his horse, heading home.

EXT PLAINS - LATER

Tom spots something on the ground. It's blood. He starts tracking it, looks up suddenly, HEARS--

A RIFLE SHOT. A round WHIZZES past his head. He turns round--

THREE MOUNTED SOLDIERS running toward him. They're firing at Tom, mistaking him for an Indian.

Tom takes off. The chase is on. A RACE across the plains.

His horse is fast.

One of the soldiers' horses pulls up, lame. Another horse is just plain slow. But the third horse, ridden by a young LIEUTENANT keeps up a fast pace, gains a bit on Tom.

Tom looks back--

TOM
I'M WHITE!!

The lieutenant doesn't hear. He draws his pistol, fires--

Tom unlimbers his rifle, drops his horse reigns, aims behind him and FIRES--

The Lieutenant's horse CRASHES to the ground, dumping its rider.

Tom keeps going, riding hard.

INT BAR - NIGHT

Tom's drinking. Drawn, tired, discouraged, dressed in 'white' civilian clothing. In back of him, HEARS--

VOICE
Who owns the buckskin horse tied
outside this establishment?

Tom says nothing, doesn't turn around. No one answers. In the mirror he sees--

The young LIEUTENANT JENKINS

LT JENKINS
All right. I'm going to confiscate
that animal by order of the United
States Government.

TOM
That would be my horse.

The Lieutenant walks up to him, his two underlings follow. They look Tom over. Tom's not in the mood.

LT JENKINS

An Indian. Or someone looking like an Indian, and riding that horse, shot my mount day before yesterday.

TOM

No. That horse is mine, Lieutenant.

LT JENKINS

I want to know what the hell is going on, here?!

He grabs Tom's arm. In an instant Tom THROWS him to the ground, draws his hunting knife. RAISES it close to his head as if to scalp him--

Instead, he cuts off a silver dollar-sized patch of hair close to the Lieutenant's scalp. Tom holds up the hair.

TOM

Now if I was an Indian, there'd be some skin on this.

He lets the hair fall on the Lieutenant's face.

INT FORT BENTON - DAY Tom stands before LT. COLONEL JAMES DAVIES. JENKINS and the two troopers LAUGHLIN and

WAINRIGHT from the saloon are present, as well as SGT. BILL LAWRENCE. Davies scrutinizes Tom. A heavy SILENCE. Then he addresses Jenkins, caustically.

LT. COL. DAVIES

Lieutenant--you look like a goddamn idiot. You know better than to harass civilians off post. I suggest you go find the company barber and have him attend to your new hairstyle.

LT JENKINS

I'd like to lodge a complaint.

LT. COL. DAVIES

The only thing's going to get lodged is my boot deep up your ass. You're dismissed. All of you.

(to Tom)

What's your business in this country?

TOM

I'm seeking my wife's children,
both captives of the Comanches.
They're names are Phineas and
Rachel Connor. They'd be 17 and
14, now. They were taken before
the war.

LT. COL. DAVIES

Did you serve?

TOM

Captain Tom Dearborn. 1st Cav.

Davies scrutinizes Tom. Opens the drawer of his desk, pulls out two shotglass and some whiskey.

LT. COL. DAVIES

Sit down.

EXT RANCH HOUSES - DUSK

The Cowboys finish their tasks for the day. May and Patsy cooking over an outdoor wood fire. WE HEAR HORSEHOOVES in the distance. No one pays any mind.

MAY - looking up from what she's doing. A dawning recognition. She drops her iron pot. Starts moving down the path.

PATSY

May?

She looks to the THREE riders in the distance. No one recognizes them.

May starts running toward the riders. Her heart leaping. It's Tom

The horses draw closer and closer. TOM breaks ahead of the other riders and gallops toward May.

MAY running toward Tom - for life.

TOM dismounts. He moves to May, she flies into his arms. They hold each other in a long embrace, May joyfully kissing him over and over. Utter disbelief that he's returned. She closes her eyes.

Jack, Patsy and the Cowboys have caught up and stand back a few yards, respectfully letting Tom and May have their moment.

MAY

I never thought I'd see you again.

She opens her eyes, sees the two other riders on horseback. One, Lt. Jenkins, the other a young man of 17. Tom pulls back steps next to May, his arms around her.

Someone SHOUTS from the crowd.

JACK

GOOD TO SEE YOU BACK, BROTHER!

FELTON

HEY, TOM!

The Cowboys start hooting and yelling.

JACK

COME ON NOW, Y'ALL GOTTA GIVE THEM
THEIR PRIVACY!

May's transfixed by the young man behind Tom. He's tall, wan, has long hair. His ears are pierced. The young man wears an air of impenetrability and perhaps arrogance. He gives May nothing but a passing glance. Tom introduces the officer first.

TOM

May, this is Lieutenant Jenkins

He quickly doffs his hat, puts it back on. May looks back to the young man. Staring. Stunned.

TOM (CONT'D)

Are you ready?

She nods. He takes her to meet him.

TOM (CONT'D)

(in Comanche)

Come here.

Tsomo dismounts. Stands in front of them.

TOM (CONT'D)

May, this is Tsomo. It means
"Bead".

She stares at Tsomo, into his face. Tries to find Phineas in him. He gives her nothing. Very within himself.

TOM (CONT'D)

(in Comanche)

Do you know this woman?

He glances at Tom, then at May. Doesn't respond.

MAY searching his face, trying to find something to recognize him by. It's too much to take in one draught.

TSOMO - Implacable.

TOM (CONT'D)

Do you know him, May?

MAY

(halting)

I don't know. I just don't know.
I always thought I would be certain-
But--I couldn't say--I--

She falls SILENT. Destroyed. It's not the moment she was hoping for. Feels the onlookers scrutinizing her.

MAY (CONT'D)

(to Tom; hushed)

Can we go inside? Please, Tom?

Tom says something in Comanche to the boy. He follows them.

May's wobbly, holding onto her husband. Tom holds her close about the waist.

They walk up onto the porch, go to the front door.

The boy stops, drawn to something leaning against the window.

Tom and May look at what's caught the boy's attention.

THEIR POV - Tsomo has the broom in his hand. He hands it to May.

She's confused, doesn't know what he wants from her. She takes it from him--

He instantly STEPS ON IT. Just as Phin did years ago.

ON MAY - Shock. Recognition.

MAY (CONT'D)

Phineas--

Tears course down her face. She reaches out, puts a hand on his shoulder for a moment, trying to be careful with him. She can't. May throws her arms around her son, holds him fiercely, crying heavy sobs.

Phineas allows her this, indifferent, removed. The Cowboys lets loose, HOLLERING, CHEERING. They're staying, having their own party. Phineas looks out on this sea of strangers.

INT TOM AND MAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

All the Ranch Hands are in the house, celebrating along with Tom's family. They surround May, wishing her well.

ON MAY - Through it all, looking at Phineas.

HER POV - PHINEAS -Sits on the floor in a corner of the room, alone. Impassive.

OH MAY - Trying her best to allow him room, knowing what he must be going through. She gives him a smile tinged with sadness.

ON PHINEAS - Glancing at her a moment, but just for a moment, then looking away.

INT TOM AND MAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is empty but for the presence of Tom, May, and Phineas. May has carefully put together another plate of food for Phin. She brings it to him, takes the empty dish from him.

MAY (CONT'D)

(to Tom)

May I ask him some questions?

Tom translates. Phineas nods, curtly. May sits on the floor.

MAY (CONT'D)

Do you remember Rachel?

TOM

(in Comanche)

Your sister?

Phin nods again.

MAY

What became of her?

PHINEAS

(in Comanche)

She was taken away.

Tom repeats this to May in English. Translates through remainder of scene.

MAY
Who? Who took her?

Phin shakes his head as if he has no answer.

TOM
(in comanche)
How long ago?

Phin makes a sign with his fist and hand.

TOM (CONT'D)
Right away. May--His tribe was hit
by Cholera. Most of them died.
His Comanche family, too.

May, saddened, wants to ask so much more, but doesn't press him. She waits a beat, regards Phin. He's remote. May is emotional but clear. Can't hold in what she wants to tell him.

MAY
I--I never stopped thinking of you.
I tried to believe that if you were
alive, you were happy. I tried to
let you go, but couldn't. You were
everywhere.

She gives a pleading look to Tom. He's silent. Won't translate. Perhaps it's a reminder of his own past.

Phineas is gazing at her with detachment.

TOM
Let's wait on that, May.

MAY
It's too soon, isn't it?--

Tom's expression, says it is.

INT HOUSE - NIGHT

Phin has refused a bed, instead lies sleeping on the floor of a little alcove off the main room. Tom sits in a chair, watching over Phin, knowing he might flee.

May brings a chair, sets it next to Tom's. She's wrung out. Rests her head on his shoulder. WHISPERS to him.

MAY (CONT'D)
Thank you.

She buries her face in his neck, murmurs--

MAY (CONT'D)

I love you. I love you, so. Thank
you---

Tom puts his arm around her, holds her close.

EXT PASTURE - DAY

The men are building a horse pen with heavy round rails.
Phin stands atop one of the rails, balancing precariously.

The Cowboys watch him, barely hiding their irritation. He's
not working. Phin lithely jumps down, starts urinating just
a few feet from where the men work.

LI'L BOB

Tom, you think he could piss a
little closer to us?

Tom barely looks up. Exchanges Comanche with Phineas.

TOM

(in comanche; points)
You work here, piss over there.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)

It's stupid to build a fence when
you can hobble your horses. I can
find my horses wherever they
wander. This is bad medicine.

Jack doesn't understand a word they're saying.

JACK

Well that's all very interestin'
but it don't get this fence built.

The Cowboys mutter their agreement.

NEIL

That get's my vote.

Phin starts wandering off, throws a look back to the others.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)

Go shit in your mouth.

Tom shakes his head, starts laughing. Doesn't let the men in
on the joke. Jack narrows his eyes.

JACK

(to Phin)
You better hope I never learn
Comanche, Boy.

INT JACK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

ON CAROLINE'S SLEEPING FACE. She awakes. HEARS a noise. Half asleep, she gets up.

INT KITCHEN

Caroline enters. SCREAMS.

Phineas, dressed only in a breechcloth, is eating from a bowl of sugar with his fingers. He has no reaction to her fright.

Jack, Patsy and Violet rush to Caroline. Jack carries a shotgun.

PATSY

Sweet Jesus!

JACK

What in the hell are you trying to do, Boy? Scare us to death? I coulda filled you full a holes.

VIOLET

He didn't know, Papa. He was just looking for something sweet. Come along, Phineas. I'll walk you to the door.

He allows her to take his arm, bring him outside.

EXT JACK'S HOUSE

VIOLET (CONT'D)

You go home, now.

He takes a few steps, turn back and gives a smile full of attraction, to Violet. He heads toward his house.

ON JACK AND PATSY - Standing at the door, looking at Violet, not liking this at all.

EXT BARN - DAY

The Cowboys saddle up. May and Violet give them provisions for the day.

Phineas leads a horse near Violet, ties it to the post. He looks at her a moment, then spots--

PHIN'S POV - NEIL - Smiling at Violet as he's walking out of the barn with a saddle. Phin's irritated.

Neil steps up to Phin's horse, throws his saddle on it.

NEIL
 (sarcastic)
 Thanks

Phineas yanks the saddle off, knocks it to the ground. Neil looks at him, picks up his saddle and puts it back on the horse. Phin shoves him and knocks the saddle off again.

Neil rolls up his sleeves, speaks in a LOW TONE. The cowboys wait and watch.

NEIL (CONT'D)
 All-right. Let's have at it,
 peckerhead.

Phine's expression is blank. Lightening fast, he reaches out and grabs Neil by the balls. Neil SCREAMS--

The Cowboys WINCE. Run to pull them apart.

JACK
 Is that painful, Neil?

No answer. Tom says something in Comanche. Phin ignores it.

MAY
 Phineas! Let go of him right now!
 She GRABS him, angrily yanks him off Neil.
 He wheels around, glaring at her, insulted. Then lets it go.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)
 (to Neil)
 You scream like a woman.

He mounts the horse bare-back. Smiles at Violet as he rides by.

INT BARN - DAY

May milking a cow. She hears a LOW HUMMING from somewhere outside. She stands, goes toward the sound. Peers through a slat in the barn siding.

MAY'S POV - Phineas, speaking to himself and singing in COMANCHE. He clips his fingernails and puts them in his magic pouch, ritualistically. He looks to the sky in the far distance, motions with his hands, talking to his gods. His world utterly private.

ON MAY - Seeing just how far away her son is from her.

MAY'S POV - Phineas rising to his feet.

She moves away, so as not to be seen. Resumes her work.

Phineas enters the barn a short beat later. Sees her there. Grabs the pail of milk, begins drinking, ignoring her.

MAY

I miss you even when I'm with you.

She waits him to finish his drink. He hands her the pail, treating her like a squaw, then struts out of the barn.

EXT JACK'S HOUSE - DAY

Jack opens the door, Violet stands behind him. A look of utter disapproval on Jack's face.

Phineas has a pony in tow, and several skins and a buffalo robe. He indicates they're an offering to Jack for Violet.

PHINEAS (HALTING ENGLISH)

For you. I want Violet for my wife.

JACK

(beat; then)

I understand how you feel and all, son. But that's not how we do things around here. Violet gets to choose.

Phineas looks to Violet, vulnerable. Not quite comprehending. He maintains his pride.

EXT RANCH - Rolling fields, setting sun. Stillness.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - DUSK

May is making dinner. The same quiet. Then--A SHOUT

JACK'S VOICE

TOM!

EXT PORCH - DUSK

Jack rides up with Gabriel and the Cowboys, agitated.

JACK

Goddamnit, Tom! Gabriel just found a calf. Not one of ours, full of arrows, all cut open---And Phin was standin' next to him, eating his Goddamn liver---Raw!

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)
Like the wildest Indian you've
fuckin' ever seen!

FELTON
(low, to No Neck; re Tom)
I bet its not the wildest Indian
he's ever seen.

Phineas saunters in on his horse.

GABRIEL
(shakes his head;
confounded)
He eat his liver, Senor Tom.

TOM (COMANCHE)
Phineas--You can't do that. You
can't kill other people's beeves.
We feed you here.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)
I was hungry. I ate.

TOM (COMANCHE)
That animal doesn't belong to us.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)
It belongs to whoever can take it.
I took it.

TOM (COMANCHE)
Give me your bow and arrows.

Phin takes a moment, then pulls them out, BREAKS them over
his knee. He's livid.

NO NECK
Here we go.

PHINEAS (COMANCHE)
There. Now I have nothing. This
is what you want. Before I had
everything. Horses, my own
clothes. I was a warrior. Now I
am nothing.

Tom's studying him.

NEIL
Man, he's on a tear, ain't he?

MAY
What is it, Tom?

TOM
 (to the others)
 I imagine everyone's got something
 to do.

They disperse. Jack tries to stay. Tom motions him away.

JACK
 Y'all get those horses unsaddled.

He makes a show of leaving, but doesn't.

TOM
 (to Phin; Comanche)
 Come with me.

Phin sullenly, refuses.

TOM (CONT'D)
 You and I are fixin' to sort some
 things out.

Phin starts to walk away. Tom yanks him back. Phineas
 pushes Tom aggressively. Tom CLOCKS him.

Phin falls in a heap. Tom strides into the barn.

MAY
 Tom! What are you doing to him?!

She goes to Phin, holds him. He's dazed.

Tom returns, leading a horse and carrying a rifle. He pulls
 Phin to his feet, hands him the rifle and the reins.

TOM (COMANCHE)
 These are yours. Stay or leave.
 But these are yours.

May's confused, doesn't understand what was said or who's
 side to take. Tom takes her by the arm. She yanks it away.

TOM (CONT'D)
 I'm going to finish my supper. You
 should as well.

May, torn.

TOM - HIS OUTSTRETCHED HAND - Waiting.

ON MAY - Tom's certainty, her trust in him transcends
 everything. She takes hand, rises and leaves with him.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - EVENING.

Tom eats dinner. May's silent, glances at the empty chair and plate of food for where Phineas should sit. She covers his plate with a piece of linen.

TOM (CONT'D)

He can miss a meal. I'll wager in his short time he's missed more than one.

We HEAR a horse galloping back and forth around the cabin. Phineas SHOUTING a diatribe in COMANCHE. Tom and May ignore it. She's doing a slow burn.

MAY

More brisket?

TOM

Please.

They eat in silence. May steals a brief glance toward the window.

MAY'S POV THROUGH WINDOW - Phineas, heated, rides by, yelling words May doesn't understand.

MAY- Looking at Tom for his reaction. Nothing.

MAY

(frustrated)

What is he saying?

TOM

Not a whole lot.

She sits there, tries to resume eating. Phineas shouting, baiting them. May can't take it anymore. She picks up Phin's plate, opens the front door.

MAY'S POV - Phineas, on his horse, galloping back and forth, spewing what must be profanities. The Cowboys sit on the fence, watching the show. Jack and Patsy watch from their window.

MAY

(strongly; determined)

If I have to wait this out, if you feel I must be tested so that you can let go and be my son, again, I'll do whatever it takes.

(beat)

(MORE)

MAY (CONT'D)

I'm not going to give you less than
what I hoped to give you every day.
Know this.

Phineas sidles up to her, SPITS on the plate of food.

MAY, angered, throws Phin's plate at the dirt in front of
him. Phin looks down, surprised, then recovers. The Cowboys
grin.

PHINEAS'S VOICE (SUBTITLE)

(for Tom's benefit)
YOU SEND YOUR WOMAN OUT!

May turns back into the house, SLAMS the door

MAY - Looking at Tom. Then covers her face with her hands in
exasperation.

PHINEAS'S VOICE (CONT'D)

(derisive)
YOU, WHITE INDIAN! YOU WANT ME TO
BE LIKE YOU!

Finally, SILENCE.

TOM

Now you've gone and embarrassed him.

May looks at him incredulously. Stalks off into the bedroom.
Tom smiles, shakes his head.

INT BEDROOM - NIGHT

May putting on her dressing gown. Tom sits on the bed.

MAY

Did you know what you were marrying
when you asked me?--?

TOM

(looks at her)
I told you I was here for all of
it. Come here, May.
(he sits her on his lap)
You can't ever forget that he
doesn't think as you do. As white
people do. That boy was raised to
be a warrior. He wasn't taught to
read the good book and do what some
preacher tells him is God's will.
His questions are answered by his
magic.

(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

When that magic is strong, he's at peace---He isn't peaceful, mind you, just at peace. And when he's not, he's lost.

MAY

You know this?

TOM

Yes.

EXT OPEN RANGE - DAY

Jack and the Cowboys gather strays. Phin's nearby, chasing a calf back toward the herd. He reins abruptly, sits stock still, looks in the distance. He cups his ears, listening.

EXT OPEN RANGE - NIGHT

The Cowboys sleep. Moccasined covered feet stealthily move amongst them.

IT'S PHINEAS.

EXT RANGE - NIGHT

Phineas sitting cross-legged under a big, star filled sky.

EXT OPEN RANGE - DAY

THE Cowboys and Phin moving cattle. Felton is mounted, rolling a cigarette.

NO NECK

I believe we got them all, ladies.

Phineas suddenly bolts his horse past the group, spooking Felton's mount. Phineas slides to a stop.

Felton's lost his tobacco.

FELTON

Goddamn look at what you made me do-

Phineas silences him in Comanche, then STANDS on his saddle, muttering to himself, intensely.

LI'L BOB

What's he sayin', Gabriel?

GABRIEL

I don't talk that Indian talk.
Shit, no Bobby.

FELTON

This don't feel right, I'll say that.

He unsheathes a rife from his saddle.

NEIL

Don't shoot your own dick off, Felton--

NO NECK

It ain't much of a target.

They laugh, nervous.

And in an instant, Phineas drops into his saddle, starts stripping off his shirt, points to the horizon.

Their POV - a lone INDIAN SCOUT, lance in hand, crests a hill and disappears down the other side.

The cowboys reach for their weapons.

FELTON

How many?

Phineas eyes never leave the horizon.

FELTON (CONT'D)

There's sure to be a damn sight more than one.

Phineas turns to them, smiles, kicks his horse. Neil quickly grabs his horse's headstall.

NEIL

Where the hell you think you're goin'?

Phineas strikes him in the throat with his quirt. Neil falls out of the saddle.

Phineas grabs Felton's horse by the nose. It rears up, falls back. Phineas whips his horse and is GONE.

NO NECK

You little bastard.

NEIL

Go get in.

No one does.

LI'L BOB

Don't look at me. Them devils is likely to come back here, wipe us out.

NO NECK

He wants to partner up with them heathen red niggers, good riddance, I say.

GABRIEL

Claro. Verdad. I stay too.

Neil croaks unintelligibly. Felton dusts himself off.

FELTON

He said, "the boss ain't gonna like this"

LI'L BOB

Well, then, he can send his brother after 'im. He was one of 'em anyways.

The Cowboys agreeing.

EXT RANCH - DAY

Tom, Jack and the Cowboys standing a bit in a tight knot, speaking in hushed tones. Looking over at --

THEIR POV - Patsy and May washing Violet's hair in a trough outside the house, oblivious to the men.

TOM - hurriedly saddling his horse, glancing in May's direction.

TOM

Y'all keep this quiet, for now.

JACK

That boy's got five hours on you, Tom.

The Cowboys agree.

LI'L BOB

By God, we sure enough tried to stop him.

JACK
 (lashing out)
 Everyone of you's just brimmin'
 over with bullshit--Grown men can't
 handle a boy.

They look sheepish.

TOM
 Never mind that--I don't blame you
 all.

A TERRIBLE SCREAM - Caroline runs from around the house,
 shrieking. Terrified. Patsy and May run to her.

JACK
 Patsy, what is it?

Caroline buries her face in Patsy's apron. Phineas gallops
 in with two horses and two scalps in hand. He's bloodied,
 stripped down. An arrow protrudes from his leg.

His horse lathered, wild-eyed.

Phineas slides onto one of the Indian ponies, prances back
 and forth. DECLARING himself.

PHIN (COMANCHE)
 These beautiful things are from my
 enemy! I am a man, now. I am
 Tsomo! I belong to the People.

May covers the distance between them. She's scared, furious.

MAY
 You are my son! Do you understand
 me?

The Cowboys and Jack start toward Phin and May.

TOM
 (quietly)
 Leave them be.

May grabs at Phin's reins. He deftly maneuvers out of her
 reach.

MAY
 You're not a savage. You're my
 son! We are your family! Respect
 that. I will not stop until you
 learn this. By God--I will not let
 you do these things. You're my
 son, Phineas!

She stumbles on her knees, gets back up. In HALTING COMANCHE

MAY (COMANCHE) (CONT'D)

You are my son--Phineas!

Phineas looks at her directly, for the first time.

PHINEAS (IN ENGLISH)

I am Tsomo---

He weaves in his saddle, weakening, kicks his horse to leave. It walks a few yards. Phineas collapses to the ground. May screams.

EXT TOM'S PORCH - NIGHT

The cowhands are clustered on the porch peering through the screen door into the house. They pass a jug.

THEIR POV - Phineas in bed, leg in a splint, chest bandaged. May is tending to him, gently cleaning his wounds. Tom and Jack sit in another corner of the room at a table, speaking quietly.

NEIL

(in hushed tones)

I was kinda disappointed there
wasn't any hollerin' when they set
that busted leg.

FELTON

Well---He is an Indian.

They all look at him.

LI'L BOB

After a fashion.

They find themselves funny. Jack, irritated, walks to the door, closes the door behind him.

JACK

Y'all go have your snort somewhere
else. This ain't no body house
parlor.

He takes a swig.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

PHINEAS AND MAY - She washes blood off his body. Phineas watches her closely, looks in her face. May notices, but says nothing, keeps ministering to his wounds.

Phineas starts whispering something in Comanche. May leans in, puts her ear close to his mouth.

PHINEAS
Ataputo. Ataputo.

May doesn't understand.

PHINEAS (CONT'D)
Tom--

Tom comes over.

PHINEAS (CONT'D)
Ataputo.

TOM
It's a name---It means "Different".

PHINEAS/TOM
"My sister--Ataputo."

All of the breath goes out of May.

MAY
Rachel.

Tom translates as Phineas speaks in Comanche

TOM
"She is Kwahadi, now."

MAY
Is she alive?

Phineas continues speaking. Tom Translates.

TOM
"I saw her two summers past. There"

Phineas raises his arm weakly, points.

TOM (CONT'D)
"Near the Buffalo Rock."

May smiles through her tears, grateful.

MAY
You knew all this time--

Phineas says nothing.

TOM
I believe he did.

PHINEAS
(drifting off)
She is Kwahadi.

May stays at his side, holding his hand, rests her head on his shoulder. Phin softly pats her back.

EXT RANCH - DAWN

Greener than we've ever seen it. Spring wildflowers. The sun isn't yet out. Tom stands there, waits for the rising sun.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Patsy, assisted by Violet who's holding a basin of water ministers to Phineas. She turns him on his side, scrubs his back. He's miserable.

PATSY
I've been wantin' to do this since you first got here. You might as well come to like it--it's not like you're goin' anywhere.

Violet smiles at Phineas, then turns her head away, discreetly tries not to laugh. Phineas grins, flirtatiously.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Jack, Tom, and May ride. Pull up their horses. May looks back at the ranch, torn at leaving her son.

JACK
Don't worry. We'll take care of him. Maybe I'll even teach him to speak a little American.

MAY
Thank you, Jack.

JACK
It's no place for a woman out there...Aww, hell--If it was one of my girls, I know Patsy'd be the same way.

(beat)
I guess there's no point in my sayin' "be careful".

TOM
I guess there isn't.

JACK
I'll see you when I see you.

They shake hands. Jack pulls off Tom's work-glove, turns his horse, throws it back to him as he gallops off.

EXT PRAIRIE - DAY

Tom and May crest a hill covered in spring wildflowers. Below them---

A GIGANTIC BUFFALO HERD

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Tracks split in two directions. Tom follows the northbound.

EXT PLAINS - DUSK

Tom and May ride, two tiny figures against an ominous sky. Lightening FLASHES as they move on.

EXT PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Tom and May huddled under canvas. Rain pelting down. The night sky illuminated by hard flashes of LIGHTENING.

EXT CREEK - DAY

The trek arduous, Tom and May water their horses. She sees a FLASH in the distance.

MAY

Tom--

ANOTHER flash.

EXT PLAINS - DAY

Tom and May lie down on a low rise. Tom looks through a spyglass--

TWO LIPAN APACHES engaged in a skirmish with a COMANCHE BRAVE. They're young. The Comanche knocks down one of the Lipans with his war club, killing him.

The other Lipan shoots an arrow through the Comanche's shoulder, dislodging him from his horse. He dismounts from his pony, starts menacing the Comanche.

Tom hand May the spyglass, starts sighting his rifle.

May watches the Lipan kicking the arrow lodged in the Comanche repeatedly, torturing his victim.

MAY (CONT'D)

Hurry, Tom.

Tom takes careful aim, pulls the trigger. A SHOT RINGS OUT.

The Lipan looks up, HEARS THE SHOT. Nothing happens. Then, after a moment, the bullet hits. He falls down dead.

EXT PLAINS - LATER

Tom and May stand over the Indians. The back of the Lipan's head is blown off.

The Comanche raises his tomahawk with the last bit of strength he has left. Tom steps on his arm, pinning him.

TOM (COMANCHE)

You are Comanche. I am your friend, He Bites Him.

COMANCHE

How do you speak my tongue?

TOM

We must take you away from here.

EXT PLAINS - NIGHT

The Brave is bandaged, Tom having pulled out his arrow. He's sweating. May give him water and food. She's trying to communicate her daughter's Indian name. The Brave doesn't understand.

TOM (COMANCHE) (CONT'D)

Do you know a white girl, Ataputu? She's Kwahadi.

COMANCHE

No.

TOM (COMANCHE)

Do you know Buffalo Hump--Is he alive?

COMANCHE

Everyone knows Buffalo Hump.

EXT ROCKS - DAY

Tom presses TWO BLACK PALMPRINTS on his horse's neck. He helps the wounded Brave mount up.

TOM (COMANCHE)

Show this horse to Buffalo Hump. You know my name. I'll wait two suns.

EXT ROCKS - NIGHT

Tom and May sit under a full moon, both fighting sleep. Tom's head starts falling forward. A small campfire burns.

May shuts her eyes, drifts off. Her head JOLTS back, suddenly. She HEARS A NOISE behind her. STARTLES--

BUFFALO HUMP stands over her. FIVE BRAVES with him.

And though she's petrified, May knows who it is.

MAY

Hello

Tom is awake, stands, his hands on his wife's shoulders.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)

You look different.

TOM (COMANCHE)

You look the same.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)

Is that your woman?

TOM

Yes. May, I want you to meet my brother, Buffalo Hump.

She nods, curtly.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)

I'll give you thirty ponies for her.

Tom grins. May looks at him inquiringly.

MAY

What did he say?

TOM

He says you're very pretty.
(to Buffalo Hump)
We're looking for her daughter.
She was taken seven winters ago,
with her brother.

Buffalo Hump just looks at him.

TOM (CONT'D)

Her name is Ataputu. We believe she's Kwahadi.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)
And the boy?

TOM
Found. I brought him home.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)
(points at Tom)
Your home?

TOM
Yes.

Buffalo Hump nods, studies May.

BUFFALO HUMP
I know of this--where the woman
fought for her children. She was
called "Dark Like Us".

There's a hint of respect in his manner. He turns to his
Braves, repeats Tom's question and Rachel's Indian name.

RED FEATHER
Ishameaqui.

EXT PLAIN - DAY

Tom, May, Buffalo Hump and the Five Braves travel across the
landscape.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)
The Texans never stopped chasing
us. It's very cold in the north,
and our people were hungry. Many
died...We came to your reservation
at Fort Cobb--we went hungry there,
too...And then it burned.
(smiles mischievously)
And now I'm here with you.

EXT KWAHADI VILLAGE - DAY

The GROUP rides into the INDIAN VILLAGE. These are NORTHERN
COMANCHES who've had little contact with whites. Dogs start
BARKING, warning of their arrival.

The KWAHADI WARRIORS descend upon them, the SQUAWS SCREAMING,
YELLING. May is terrified.

TOM
(reassuring her)
Look at me.
(she does)
(MORE)

TOM (CONT'D)

Stare straight ahead. Show them no fear.

Buffalo Hump and his men lead them through the CACAPHONY of SHOUTS. He stops, protectively holds his lance across Tom and May.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)

I am Pohanasquasit. I wish to speak to Ishameaqui.

EXT KWAHADI VILLAGE DAY

Tom and Buffalo Hump smoke a pipe with Chief Ishameaqui. They appear to be negotiating.

May sits on the ground a bit of a distance away. She can't hear what they're saying, can only see them. She's surrounded by Indian women and children. They're looking at her clothing. Saying things to her, hugely curious.

She's more anxious than frightened. She smiles at her audience. A LITTLE BOY reaches for her hair, STEALS the comb from it. May mocks scaring him.

The boy startles, jumps back. Peals of laughter.

Tom comes to May. Takes her by the hand.

MAY

Is she here?

TOM

I don't know. Come along, May.

INT CHIEF'S LODGE - DAY

The Chief, ISHAMEAQUI, enters followed by Buffalo Hump, Tom and May. He motions for them to sit on the ground. May can barely breathe. She takes Tom's hand, clenches it tight.

The Chief speaks. Tom TRANSLATES. We see his hand. May has held it so tight, her nails have drawn BLOOD.

ISHAMEAQUI

Ataputu's parents are dead, but she is very dear to us. We raised her. She cannot be bought.

(beat)

If she is from you, and chooses you, she will be free to go.

(motions to Brave)

Tell the girl to come, now.

The brave leaves the teepee. May glances at the Chief, then at the ground. Tom still has hold of her hand. She looks up when she HEARS THE FLAP OF THE LODGE OPEN---

The LIGHT from outside the flap blinds May for a moment. She sees a YOUNG GIRL'S FIGURE IN SILHOUETTE, ONLY. As the flap closes--

May's eyes readjust. Before her stands a girl of 14. She's dirty, skin dark from years of being in the sun, but an unmistakable version of May at a younger age. She holds a young BABY in her arms. May rises. Tom watches her.

She can't take her eyes off RACHEL. May's expression wears the pain and wonder and awareness of all the years she's missed.

Rachel doesn't make eye contact with May. She's skittish. Frightened. Doesn't know what's going to happen to her. She looks at the Chief.

MAY

Is that your child?

Tom TRANSLATES. Rachel nods.

MAY (CONT'D)

What is your baby's name?

RACHEL (COMANCHE)

Owl.

May becomes emotional, hearing her daughter's voice for the first time. Her eyes well up, she smiles. Looks from Rachel to her baby.

MAY

May I hold her?

Rachel hesitates, cautious. Glances at the chief. Then turns back toward May and hands her the baby with a mother's pride.

May takes the child, touches its fingers. A look of such tenderness and longing crosses her face. She finally breaks down.

Rachel watches this stranger crying. She softens.

MAY (CONT'D)

Where is your husband?

Rachel holds up her hand. Her smallest finger has been severed.

TOM
He's dead.

May looks at her daughter a moment. Sad for her. Then--

MAY
Do you remember me, Rachel? I'm
your mother--

RACHEL
My mother was Comanche.

She motions to take Owl back. May lets the infant go.

MAY
I've been waiting...looking for so
long. We want you to come home
with us.

Rachel looks fearful. Shakes her head, adamantly.

RACHEL
My people are here.

MAY
Please---Please.

Tom stops. Doesn't say anything. May looks at him.

TOM
There's no translation.

MAY
I feel about you, the way you feel
toward her. (She indicates Owl)

A drawn out, uncomfortable moment. Rachel feels pity for
May, but asks Ishameaqui--

RACHEL
Can I leave this, now?

ISHAMEAQUI
Yes.

She turns to leave. May grabs hold of her arm, tries to keep
her there.

MAY
Don't leave, please! Don't go!

Rachel is confused, upset. She breaks loose from May's
grasp. Everyone begins talking at once.

ISHAMEAQUI

Your path and her path are not the same.

Rachel flees as Tom translates--

MAY

God damn you! Don't tell me that--

TOM

May, let her be--

But she pushes past both of them, goes after Rachel--

EXT CHIEF'S LODGE - DAY

She rushes out. Stops.

MAY'S POV - More than TWENTY COMANCHE WOMEN standing close to one another looking over at May, protective, hostile.

May searches their faces, trying to see Rachel. Then it hits her.

HER POV - Her daughter could be any one of them.

ON MAY - IN SLOW MOTION - She reflexively keeps looking around her, slowly realizing--

She has lost.

INT LODGE - NIGHT

Tom lies next to May, holding her. She's exhausted, almost asleep. She runs her fingers over her eyes, down the bridge of her nose. Her hand drops down. She murmurs something.

TOM (CONT'D)

What, May?

She's asleep. Tom has a protective arm around her, watching over her.

LATER - EXTREME CLOSE-UP

A HORSE'S EYE. FRANTIC, HELPLESS. The horse SNORTS. A LOUD CRACK...SOUND OF METAL SCRAPING.

INT LODGE - DAWN

May JOLTS awake. Gasps for breath. Tom awakens.

MAY

Tom! Did you hear that?

TOM

No.

She listens. Nothing. Gets up.

EXT LODGE - DAWN

May steps outside. It's barely dawn. The village QUIET.
Tom joins her.

She scans the village, alert. Tom looks around. The whole world asleep.

May relaxes, rests her forehead on Tom's chest. Weary. He strokes her hair. Looks off in the horizon, TENSES...

TOM'S POV - Cresting the top of the hill are CAVALRY SOLDIERS, RANGERS and MILITIA ready for a fight.

May feels Tom tense. Off his look, sees MORE SOLDIERS ON THE RIDGELINE. She stares in horror.

TOM (CONT'D)

Wait here!

He YELLS IN COMANCHE, SOUNDING THE ALARM. A warning SHOUT FOR WAR. He runs through the village.

BRAVES come out of their lodges, bearing weapons. SQUAWS, CHILDREN move into action. Some of the INDIANS point at the HILL---

There must be 200 MEN ASSEMBLING ATOP THE RIDGE.

DOGS BARKING. THE VILLAGE springs to life. Frightened WOMEN. The BRAVES have their weapons, GRAB THEIR PONIES. WAR SHOUTS--

May RUNS through the village, frantically searching for Rachel. She looks from lodge to lodge, not knowing which is her daughter's.

MAY

Rachel!!

The SQUAWS are evacuating with their children, taking whatever they can carry. CHAOS. SCREAMS.

And through it all, MAY, SEARCHING EVERYWHERE.

About 150 BRAVES have lined up on their horses. They're SINGING a WAR SONG. BUFFALO HUMP and his WARRIORS stand among them, ready to take up the fight.

ON THE HILL - The SOLDIERS and RANGERS wait, gathering their forces.

TOM can't find May. He looks all about him as INDIANS rush by, women making their escape. Complete PANDEMONIUM.

The COMANCHE WARRIORS let out WAR CRIES. DRUMBEATS. The NOISE GETTING LOUDER AND LOUDER. Their INTENSITY BUILDS as they buy time for their loved ones to ESCAPE the VILLAGE.

MAY is beside herself, knows TIME IS RUNNING OUT.

ON THE HILL - The LT. COLONEL watches his opponents. He RIDES BACK and FORTH in front of his MEN.

LT COLONEL
SLING CARBINES--

The Soldiers holster their guns.

LT COLONEL (CONT'D)
DRAW SABERS--

SOUND OF METAL BLADES.

LT COLONEL (CONT'D)
ADVANCE!

THE BUGLE SOUNDS. The army ADVANCES in a slow TROT toward the INDIANS. The soldiers faces, tense. Some are frightened. A few horses act up.

Some of the BRAVES ride closer toward the advancing ARMY. They TAUNT and JEER the soldiers in a display of courage and intimidation.

ON TOM - In the confusion, looking for MAY.

THE SOLDIERS--

LT COLONEL (CONT'D)
HONOR TO THE COLORS, BOYS--

He points his SABER. A DRAWN OUT BEAT.

LT COLONEL (CONT'D)
CHARGE!!

The BUGLE SOUNDS. SABERS OUTSTRETCHED, the 200 THUNDER toward the KWAHADI VILLAGE...

TOM JERKS his HEAD, HEARS the BUGLE above the DIN. He knows what's coming. The SOUND ELECTRIFIES EVERYONE.

A great WHOOP comes up from the WARRIORS. THEY CHARGE--

TOM sees MAY, LOST, searching for RACHEL. He RUNS through the FRANTIC CROWD toward MAY.

ON TOM and MAY - He GRABS her by the arm. THROUGH SCREAMS AND YELLS--

MAY
WHERE IS SHE?!

TOM
WE CAN'T BE CAUGHT AFOOT!

He PULLS her through the camp. The SOLDIERS advancing faster, closer to the village, now OVERRUNNING IT.

The Comanches and Soldiers fight ferociously, hand to hand. Horses, riders falling everywhere. The center of the cavalry charge is weakened, yet 50 soldiers manage to SWEEP through the Indian encampment.

The SOLDIERS running over everything, in a frenzy, KILLING women, children, anything moving.

An OLD WOMAN takes up the fight, she tries stabbing a SOLDIER. He quickly runs a saber through her stomach.

A CAVALRY OFFICER, thrown from his horse is being CLUBBED to death by several SQUAWS.

TOM and MAY, in the midst of battle, darting, trying to find a way out. Tom spots--

THEIR HORSES, hobbled, frightened, mid-way through the village.

TOM and MAY run for their horses.

The Kwahadi lodges are torched by the soldiers. They BURN uncontrollably.

A DOG, panicked, attacks a soldier about the leg. The soldier raises his revolver, shoots the animal in the head. An ARROW lodges in the man's neck.

A YOUNG COMANCHE BOY holds the bow which fired the weapon. Another soldier rides over to him, puts a bullet in the back of the boy's head.

Blood and destruction, everywhere. The Comanches are suffering a huge death toll. The warriors keep fighting.

TOM and MAY have made it to the horses, their desperation carrying them quickly. A MOUNTED SOLDIER, out of control in the fury of the battle, saber outstretched, charges at them. He pulls up his horse, stopping Tom and May. A look of absolute shock on his face. He yells back to anyone who can hear him.

MOUNTED SOLDIER
 CAPTIVES! BY GOD, I'VE FOUND
 CAPTIVES!

A SHOT rings out. A small hole rips through his chest. Blood. He looks down at it, surprised.

MOUNTED SOLDIER (CONT'D)
 Oh, mercy--

BUFFALO HUMP stands several feet away, holding the discharged rifle. He moves closer to the dead soldier, leans down, picks phis saber, points toward the river.

BUFFALO HUMP
 The little water!

Tom nods. Buffalo Hump rides back toward the coming onslaught. Tom lifts May onto her horse, mounts his own. Never takes his eyes off the fight. It's quickly overtaking them.

MAY
 We must find her!

He leads her behind a teepee. The NOISE of the clash overpowering. Tom and May watch the hideous annihilation. Bullets WHIZ past. Comanche WOMEN, CHILDREN, ELDERLY stream past them, out of the rear of the camp.

TOM starts stripping off his shirt. He talks quickly over the DIN. Watches for an opening.

TOM
 Wait! Wait--When I tell you, ride
 to the rear of the camp. No matter
 what, make the creek and head
 upstream--Upstream! No matter what--

MAY is immobile, staring at the battle in front of her.

TOM (CONT'D)
 May, do you understand?!

She looks at him, blankly, petrified.

TOM (CONT'D)
Do you understand?!

MAY
Yes, Tom.

The attack EXPLODES just a few feet away from them. The NOISE, horrible. A TRIO OF SOLDIERS rides past the teepee. They miss Tom and MAY.

ON MAY as the battle rages about her. She only looks to Tom's face for his signal. REINS wrapped tightly around her fists, turning them white.

A BLOND SOLDIER rides up within a hair's breadth of them. He whips his horse around to face Tom and May. A BULLET strikes his head.

BLOOD showers on Tom and May.

TOM
RIDE! RIDE, MAY!

She can't move. Frozen. He WHIPS he horse with his reins. She KICKS her horse into a run for the creek.

May and Tom GALLOP through the camp. A TONKAWA SCOUT, for the U.S. Army, rushes toward them, rifle in hand--

Tom cuts him down with his pistol. His gunfire draws the attention of a Cavalry SOLDIER who bears down onhim, saber outstretched. Tom SHOUTS to May--

TOM (CONT'D)
Don't stop!

He's now engaged in battle. He drops his horse back to cut off the Soldier. The American swings at Tom, narrowly missing him.

TOM (CONT'D)
Let us alone--

The Soldier pays no heed. He's raging, strikes at Tom. Tom raises his pistol to fire.

The Soldier deflects the pistol with his sword causing the shot to go wild. Tom loses his pistol. Draws his knife.

The Soldier strikes at him again, narrowly missing Tom, embedding the saber in his saddle.

Tom THRUSTS his knife under the soldier's ribs. DUST and CONFUSION reign. He looks about for May--can't find her.

A TONKAWA SCOUT, in Cavalry uniform, jumps on Tom's horse, cuts a slight gash in Tom's neck. They struggle.

Buffalo Hump rides in, quickly SLAMS his war club against the Tonkawa's back. TOPPLING him from Tom's saddle.

BUFFALO HUMP (COMANCHE)

This way.

Tom hunkers over his horse's neck, rides after Buffalo Hump.

EXT CREEK

May is nearing the water. She's not alone. There must be more than thirty Kwahadi SQUAWS, some carrying children, fording the water. They're panicked, many cry, howl.

May pulls her horse up, looks about her, SCREAMING for Rachel

A YOUNG WOMAN turns to face her. It's Rachel. She's waist deep in the water, holding her infant, struggling to get to the other side. Fearful of her mother.

May instinctively jumps off her horse and wades in after Rachel, leaving her mount at the Riverbank. A GREY-HAIRED SQUAW turns on May. She's cutting herself with a knife over and over in mourning. She points the knife toward May.

SQUAW (COMANCHE)

You brought them here.

May is uncomprehending. Keeps moving after her daughter. A volley of GUNFIRE. Squaws and their children fall into the water, bleeding, dying.

A HANDFUL OF SOLDIERS stand on the opposite bank, firing at their targets relentlessly. They're sole purpose is extermination.

Rachel is in shock. Doesn't know where to turn. In the melee, May manages to pull Rachel and Owl in a cutaway beneath the riverbank.

SMOKE and GUNFIRE. SCREAMING, CRYING. May and Rachel hidden from view, heads barely above water, witness the massacre.

THE SOLDIERS - They systematically reload, fire, kill their prey. They're skilled. Unemotional.

MAY, RACHEL, OWL - May's hand is clamped over her daughter's mouth, holding her fast, keeping her from joining the others. Their heads are barely above the water. Rachel struggles to hold her baby up high.

THEIR POV - A SQUAW, horribly wounded. Bleeding profusely, her last moments alive. She's holding her very young CHILD, looking at him closely. Then she lowers him beneath the water, drowning her son. She looks at Rachel.

SQUAW (COMANCHE) (CONT'D)

This is the better way.

The Baby disappears. The Squaw's head falls into the water, her body floats after her child's.

May looks at Rachel, sickened, terrified that her daughter will do the same. The SHOOTING continues. May shakes her head 'no', pleading. Rachel struggles to hold Owl's head above the water. May helps her.

Rachel stares at the horrible. Starts weeping. Can't harm her child. She chooses to stay alive.

GUNSHOTS STOP. SILENCE but for the battle raging in the village, its fury beginning to fade. DEAD women and children litter the water.

A BOY of 8 has survived. He struggles to pull his wounded body up the bank of the river. A SOLDIER stands, watching the boy's efforts. He pulls a canteen to his own mouth. Mops his sweaty head.

SOLDIER

It's hotter than a biscuit out here-

Then, without warning and with no reaction, he puts a bullet through the boy's head.

ON MAY AND RACHEL - They STARTLE at the gunshot. They can't see anything from their hiding place.

TOM AND BUFFALO HUMP ride up on the opposite side of the river. In a moment of complete surprise the Soldiers and Tom and Buffalo Hump FIRE at each other.

MAY AND RACHEL, unseen by Tom, watch. May is unable to call out to him.

Tom desperately looks about for May, then he and Buffalo Hump turn and ride downstream. The Soldiers and enemy Indians LEAP over May and Rachel's a hiding place, CHASE the men.

MAY AND RACHEL hold still until the enemy are out of sight. They're the sole survivors of the massacre. May pulls her daughter and grandchild through the dead bodies and blood toward the bank of the river.

Rachel scrambles up the bank, gasping, tries to move off in no particular direction. May grabs her arms.

MAY

No---no...upstream.

Rachel backs away from her.

M

Rachel--darling, please. This way.

She points upstream and pulls her there. Rachel submits.

EXT GRASSY RIVERBANK

The soldiers search for Tom and Buffalo Hump, THUNDERING through the tall grass. QUIET. They vanish downstream.

Buffalo Hump and Tom rise up from where they've been laying with their horses. They pull their steeds up to their feet, quickly mount and ride upstream.

EXT CREEK

May, Rachel, and Owl running alongside the creek, headed away from where the battle has moved. May stops short.

MAY'S POV - TOM'S BUCKSKIN HORSE, bleeding. A SOLDIER holds the horse's reins in a death grip. He's sitting up, scalped, appears to be looking at the women.

Sandy's ears are pinned back, frightened. May moves forward, tries to reach for the reins, tries to calm the terrified horse.

MAY

Whoa, boy...who--

The horse starts to pull, frantically. The reins slip from the dead soldier's hands.

MAY (CONT'D)

Easy...Easy--God, please, Sandy--

The horse eases up, steadies. May grasps the reins. Sandy gives a final head jolt, then stands still.

EXT BRUSHY AREA

Tom and Buffalo Hump searching, HEAR horses crashing through the brush.

BUFFALO HUMP'S MEN, TALL TREE and RED FEATHER come up on them. They carry scalps.

Tall Tree is bloodied about the chest, but he rides strong. He carries one of his wounded brothers.

BUFFALO HUMP
(inquiring about a Warrior in
comanche)

TALL TREE
Dead.

The old warrior is pained. Goes to the barely conscious brave, looks over his wounds.

TOM (COMANCHE)
My wife?

They look to Buffalo Hump.

BUFFALO HUMP
Tell him.

TALL TREE
We have not seen her.

As the men help the wounded, WE SEE behind them, in the distance, TWO FIGURES and a HORSE ascending a hill. Tom reflexively turns around, sees them. He's off in a flash.

EXT HILL - DAY

The men have joined Tom, the SOUNDS OF BATTLE receding in the distance. They ride hard to catch up to the figures.

TOP OF THE HILL - May, Rachel, and Owl. They've been following the path of KAWAHADI WOMEN, CHILDREN, AND OLD MEN about a mile ahead of them.

May hears the noise of horses behind her. She turns, dismounts, gun outstretched. Her hand shakes uncontrollably. She's exhausted.

Tom ascends the hill, overwhelmed.

TOM
May--

Disbelief on her face. She falls into his arms, notices his wounds. She starts tearing strips of cloth off her skirt to wrap the bloodied cuts.

Tom looks to Rachel, smiles faintly. She nods, turns, looks in the opposite direction.

Buffalo Hump moves to her, follows her gaze.

THEIR POV - The escaping Comanches, undetected, making their way west, far from their burning village.

RED FEATHER (O.C.)
They're coming, now.

They all turn to see FIFTEEN SOLDIERS slowly advancing toward the hill. They're not stopping.

Tom, Buffalo Hump, and the Braves huddle, SPEAK in COMANCHE. Tom and Buffalo Hump look toward the emigrating squaws. May stands near Rachel, trying to comprehend, tense.

MAY'S POV - Buffalo Hump speaking to his Braves. They shake their heads in dissent. The Braves remove their moccasins, symbolically lay them on the ground. No retreat.

Tom says something to Buffalo Hump. He looks to May and Rachel, then nods, walks over to them.

TOM
Buffalo Hump will lead you and the Kwahadi away from here. I want the three of you to follow him. We'll hold back the charge.

May looks to her daughter and then to Buffalo Hump. Unnerved, she walks close to Tom, looks at him.

MAY
You're staying.

Tom looks to the Braves, then back at May.

TOM
We're staying.

May's gaze falls to the ground a moment. With difficulty, she tries to accept what he's doing for her, for the others. Her eyes rest on him. Tom gazes back at her. Then she tugs at his hand, leading him to Rachel.

MAY
(to Rachel, urgently)
I love you. Tell her, Tom.

Tom translates as:

MAY (CONT'D)
I always have.
(she presses her palm to her chest)
(MORE)

MAY (CONT'D)

Here...Here...You've always lived here. You've never left and you never will.

She places her hands on Rachel. The girl remains neutral. May holds her arms out for the baby. Rachel puts the child in her mother's arms.

MAY (CONT'D)

She is you. I've never forgotten.

She kisses Owl's forehead, hands her back to Rachel, and in so doing, lets go of her daughter forever. She looks at Rachel on last time. Hands her the horse's reins.

ON TOM - He knows May has chosen to remain on the hill with him.

TOM

May, you can't stay, there's nothing in that--

MAY

(interrupting)
Tell her goodbye, Tom.

Tom scrutinizes her face. She's determined. Her time left is with him, now.

He does as he's asked.

Buffalo Hump speaks to his Braves. They embrace. A last farewell. They help the wounded Comanche onto his horse.

The SOLDIERS advance up the hill. Time running out.

Buffalo Hump approaches Tom and May. He hands her a knife. Tom translates.

BUFFALO HUMP

For your enemies.
(to Tom)
Remember everything. When we meet in the 'other place', we will talk.

Buffalo Hump and Rachel ride off. Tom and the braves take their positions, ready to fight. The Comanches begin SINGING THEIR DEATH SONGS. Tom reloads his rifle, sights it in. A BUGLE BLOWS.

May watches her daughter gallop off behind Buffalo Hump. Disappearing one more time. Suddenly Rachel turns in the saddle, stops her horse. CALLS out to MAY, HALTINGLY--

RACHEL (ENGLISH)
 Goodbye, my first mother--

Her words bring May a happiness she could not expect. She stands rooted to the spot, getting a last glimpse of Rachel as the girl moves away in the distance, JOINING the long trail of KWAHADI.

Tom and the Braves ready for the onslaught. May takes her place next to Tom. Waiting. The men sing LOUDER. Make no effort to hide themselves, not to flee.

May sits back to back with Tom. He FIRES his gun, drops a soldier, then another.

The soldiers RUN up at them.

May turns her head to Tom's back, doesn't take her eyes off him. A radiance fills her face.

MAY
 Never leave me.

GUNSHOTS, YELLS, DUST. A JUMBLE OF SOUNDS. HORSES. LOUDER. BLOOD AND SCREAMS EVERYWHERE. THEN MOS:

ON MAY - Looking up at the sky, closing her eyes to the sun, feeling her husband with her. SCREEN GOES WHITE.

A SHAFT OF LIGHT streaming thru a dark room.

INT TOM'S HOUSE - DAY - 1898

The light illuminates the back of an LITTLE GIRL, her head turned up to the sun filtering through a window, she holds two small lead Indian figures to the light. She SPEAKS in WHISPERS, as if holding a private conversation. The girl reaches her hand up to shield her eyes, we CAN'T SEE HER FACE. The hand is replaced by the IMAGE of May's face, looking directly down at her.

EXT HILL - 1867

TOM'S POV - May, reading his face; her own streaked in blood.

ON TOM - His expression drained. Fighting for consciousness.

Tom, May, and Tall Tree sit on the hilltop, still alive, exhausted. The other braves lie dead. The BODIES of DEAD SOLDIERS litter the ground. Riderless GREY HORSES meander nearby.

They've taken the dead soldiers' guns. May has them lined up, reloads them, hands the men one each. Tom is bleeding, struggles to hold up the gun. Tall Tree is stronger.

THEIR POV - EIGHT CAVALRY TROOPERS at the bottom of the hill, readying for another charge.

TOM and TALL TREE - raising their rifles.

THE SOLDIERS - Start GALLOPING up the hill.

TOM AND TALL TREE - Taking aim.

THE SOLDIERS - A SHOUT. They stop. After a long moment, inexplicably TURN AROUND and RIDE AWAY.

TOM'S VOICE

No one is strong enough or cunning
enough to trick fate. We were
spared and for this I cannot
answer.

EXT PRAIRIE - DUSK

Tom slumped on his knees; May desperately trying to hold him up.

They become two lone figures in a huge, barren landscape. Night is falling.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

What becomes of warriors?--They
grow old or they die well.

EXT CANYON - DAY

CLOSE ON BUFFALO HUMP - Tom's imagining. The same powerful face.

He's horseback. Alone. Riding farther and farther away from us toward the mouth of the canyon.

The War Chief disappears from sight. Vanished.

EXT TOM'S HOUSE

Again, a small child's WHISPERS. SOUND of a BALL BOUNCING and then we see it ROLL across the porch and down the steps. It's followed by a TODDLER, a little girl. May's figure walks after her.

MAY'S VOICE

Did you see that, Tom? Did you see
what she did?

TOM'S VOICE

Yes.

EXT FIELD - DAY

THE LITTLE GIRL lithely WALKING THROUGH a field, dragging a stick, grazing the top of the tall, tall grass. HUMMING an INDIAN song.

ON MAY'S BACK - following in her footsteps.

MAY - We see her vividly, now. A look of pleasure as she watches the little girl. She HEARS Tom walking behind her. He MOVES into FRAME. She reaches behind her waist-

ON MAY'S BACK - her open palms waiting expectantly as she walks along. Tom's hands fill her own, lightly rest there.

CLOSE ON A PALM OF HAND, SLATHERED IN RED PAINT - Fingers dip into the paint.

A HORSE'S FACE - The fingers paint red, lateral stripes on the animal's face. Carefully, deliberately.

EXT TOM'S PORCH - DAY

CLOSE ON MAY'S SHOES - as they ascend the porch steps.

MAY - Stops suddenly. Turns. Stands.

MAY'S POV - PHINEAS, in Indian finery, on his painted horse, just standing there, looking at her.

May smiles.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Phineas remained a constant in May's affections. And for all his wanderings, he always came home.

EXT RANCH - DUSK 1868

Everyone sits down at the same table where May and Tom had their first dinner so many years ago. There's merriment, laughter. Phineas, Jack, Patsy, the Ranch Hands, all there with their families, sharing stories, having a big time.

EXT OPEN RANGE - DAY - 1868

PHINEAS - Astride his horse, gazing up at a tall telegraph pole.

HIS POV - The miles of line, reaching into the distance.

PHINEAS - Ear pressed to the telegraph pole, listening to the BUZZING of the telegraph wires. Trying to understand.

ANOTHER ANGLE - Phin chops away at the pole, muttering in Comanche.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
And love him as we did, he was
always different.

PHINEAS - Horseback. Ropes the pole, dallies off on his saddlehorn. He kicks his horse, let's out a YELL.

The TELEGRAPH POLE comes tearing down.

ANGLE ON THE SKY - Red birds taking flight.

EXT FIELD - SUNDOWN

TOM - Watching the birds. He looks down at his clenched palm.

TOM'S POV - He opens his hands. The small lead Indian figure rests there.

TOM - Looking at it.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
It's said that life is a means to
an end--

EXT PLAINS - DAY

WAGONS BURNING, FLAMES RISING HIGH.

A CHILD of two years sits on the ground next to her dead mother. Bodies spill over the ground.

CLOSE ON HER FACE - In shock, numb.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
And that nothing lasts--Neither
happiness nor despair--

TOM - Walking gently up to her. He reaches down, lifts the bereft child up into his arms.

TOM - RIDING WITH HER IN FRONT OF HIM.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
But it's untrue---

INT TOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

MAY bathing the child in a tin tub. Washing the grime from her face. From her tiny shoulders. Gently, tenderly.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
Time softens the blows and deepens
love.

THE LITTLE GIRL - Shining face and hands

MAY - Tilts her head, gazing into the child's eyes. Kisses her cheek.

A WHITE NIGHTGOWN FALLING OVER THE LITTLE GIRL'S UPRAISED ARMS

TOM, MAY and the CHILD IN BED. The girl runs the Indian figure over Tom's face

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)
We named her Theodora.

EXT HILL - DAY

TOM AND MAY - Facing each other, arms wrapped about the other. Moving slowly...Tom guiding May backwards as he covers her eyes with his hands, kissing her.

TOM AND MAY - Laying in the grass, faces pressed close together. Lost. Fulfilled. Tom brushes a strand of hair from her face. She holds onto him--

ON MAY'S SCARRED BACK - As Tom touches her.

TOM'S HAND - Slowly sweeping down May's back. As it glides down her skin, the scars DISAPPEAR. The MURMUR of MAY'S VOICE from somewhere.

MAY'S VOICE
I want to remember.

TOM AND MAY - As before. In the grass. Everything in the world to each other..

EXT FIELD - DAY

THEODORA, running. Running through the grass.

MAY and TOM playfully giving chase.

The WIND kicks up, swirling the fall leaves in the air.

Theodora is lifted into the air by Tom. As he brings her back down, she points in the distance.

A CLOUD OF DUST kicked up by the wind, MOVING toward Tom and May

MAY - Watching the sight. TIME STOPS

MAY'S POV - Out of the swirling dust, A YOUNG INDIAN WOMAN with her daughter make their way toward them. They approach closer, closer.

MAY - Transfixed.

MAY'S POV - It's RACHEL with her daughter, OWL.

The DUST BLOWS STRONGER, OBSCURING RACHEL AND OWL FROM VIEW.

TOM'S VOICE

May never saw Rachel again. We expect she remained Comanche-- always Comanche -- as May remained vigilant, searching, and in all ways, hopeful.

And for a final moment--WE SEE RACHEL AND OWL walking toward us plain as day.

MAY - Standing still, eyes on the sight before her. Far away. A shadow of a smile on her face.

MAY'S POV - RACHEL AND OWL. Her daughter looking directly at her, warm. Dust whirls round them as they move forward until they're gradually obscured once more, leaving only--

A DUST DEVIL - In their place. Whirling, growing larger. Spinning 'round, and 'round as the wind moans.

ON MAY - Looking down at Theodora, touching her hair. They stand mesmerized by the spinning wonder.

MAY looks up at Tom, a smile spreads across her face.

TOM - Watching his wife, understanding her deeply. A VOICE humming a song, maybe Indian, barely audible OVER --

THE DUST DEVIL - Gathering force, whipping around in no particular direction. Golden, impenetrable.

TOM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

There are no endings.

BLACK SCREEN

