

CARNIVORE CANYON

Written by

Landon McDonald

**BLACK SCREEN:**

"In Indian civilization I am a Baptist, because I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization & when we get them under, holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked."

- Richard Henry Pratt, Founder of the Carlisle Indian School

"The worse the country, the more tortured it is by water & wind, the more broken & carved, the more it attracts fossil hunters, who depend on the planet to open itself to us..."

- Jack Horner, *How to Build a Dinosaur*

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - NIGHT**

SUPER: NEWLYNTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 1892

A train arrives at midnight. Townsfolk swarm the platform, each hoping to catch a glimpse of its extraordinary cargo. A marching band plays "The Crusader" by John Philip Sousa.

GENERAL ROBERT NEWLYN (mid-50s, an ambitious politico posing as an avuncular mentor), parts the masses, trailed by FATHER LAWRENCE (30s, teetotaler totalitarian, conspicuously Irish).

A silent procession of 300 Native children (many tribes, age 13-19) disembarks, escorted by U.S. Cavalrymen. The kids are all long-haired, dressed in buckskin, blankets and moccasins.

They huddle together as Newlyn inspects them, weary from the long journey and frightened by the crowd, except for one boy. He's angry. He's been that way for a long time.

This is ELI (14, mixed-race, lean and scrappy with a sharp, fierce intellect burning behind his brilliant emerald eyes).

NEWLYN (V.O.)

"Kill the Indian, save the man."

REPORTER #1 (V.O.)

Tad violent for a school motto, don't you think? Particularly one with such progressive policies.

NEWLYN (V.O.)

Perhaps. And yet it must be done. Because the only other option is too terrible to even contemplate.

Newlyn RUFFLES Eli's hair as he passes. Eli's scowl deepens.

**EXT. MAIN STREET - NIGHT**

The children are herded through town. The marching band and townies follow closely, urging on the General's new charges. What's meant as a parade looks decidedly like a death march.

REPORTER #2 (V.O.)

General Newlyn, you've been quoted as saying that forced assimilation is the Indian's last, best hope for survival. Do you truly believe --

NEWLYN (V.O.)

I believe that all men are created equal, Mr. Tanner. Is that really so radical a notion? The Indian is born *tabula rasa*, just like all the rest of us. It stands to reason, then, that a savage child reared in civilization will grow to possess a civilized language and habit, yes?

Eli spies a recently converted military barracks at the edge of town, directly adjoined by a Colonial Revival manor house lit by gas lamps. A sign reads: NEWLYNTOWN INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - THE GENERAL'S OFFICE - NIGHT**

A framed print of John Gast's "American Progress" hangs above the mantle. Newlyn stands beneath it, nursing a brandy. Three reporters sit nearby, fresh off a guided tour of the grounds.

REPORTER #3

But you're taking these children away from their families, tribes, the only homes they've ever known --

NEWLYN

That's precisely the point. Total immersion. We're preparing them for a life beyond the reservation, on a level playing field with their white brothers and sisters. But to truly better themselves, they must agree to leave the old ways behind.

REPORTER #2

You're saying they can't go home?

NEWLYN

What I'm *saying*, Mr. Tanner, is that if we've done our job well enough, they won't want to.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - BARBERSHOP - NIGHT**

The male recruits report for mandatory haircuts.

A MILITARY BARBER (beady-eyed and balding) forces Eli into a high metal chair. The boy is shorn and shaven until his long black hair covers the floor. What's left is "high and tight."

The barber pulls off the sheet and motions for the next boy.

Eli hops down, rubbing his scalp. He checks his hand. Blood.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - GYMNASIUM - NIGHT**

General Newlyn and his staff present their male charges with strange new uniforms. Father Lawrence lurks nearby, watchful.

The recruits, unashamed of themselves, strip naked, swapping out their buckskin and moccasins for itchy flannel underwear, stiff high-collar shirts, suspenders and white leather boots.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
Says here you're Apache.

ELI (V.O.)  
More or less.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
Have you chosen a Christian name?

ELI (V.O.)  
The one my mother gave me.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
Okay, son. What's your name?

ELI (V.O.)  
Eli. Eli Mercer. My father was Jack Mercer.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
Gentleman Jack. The outlaw?

Eli grimaces, SQUEEZING his calloused feet into the narrow, unforgiving boots.

ELI (V.O.)  
The war hero.

Once the recruits are dressed, Lawrence lines them up against the gym's far wall. A photographer takes aim with his camera.

In the instant before the FLASH, Eli bares his teeth.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - DORMITORY - NIGHT**

A cramped, dingy room dominated by two single beds and two writing desks. Eli enters. He's greeted by his new roommate VICTOR (13, a homesick Comanche boy, sweet-natured and shy).

They introduce themselves in English, then switch to Numinu.

ELI

Eli Mercer. Apache.

VICTOR

Victor Lawton. Comanche.

ELI

As in Lawton, Oklahoma?

VICTOR

That's right.

ELI

What's your real name?

VICTOR

Mow-way.

ELI

Then that's what I'll call you.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - DORMITORY - LATER THAT NIGHT**

Eli stares at the ceiling through the dead-of-night darkness, trying not to listen as Victor quietly WEEPS into his pillow.

Eli rolls over, regarding the younger boy with the kind of pity we reserve for poor devils who remind us of ourselves.

VICTOR (V.O.)

There is bad blood between our people. Always has been. When they put us together, surely they knew --

ELI (V.O.)

They don't know shit. All of us look the same to a white-eye.

Eli crosses the room, crawling into bed with Victor. He puts his arm around the kid, comforting him until he falls asleep.

ELI

(Whispering)

Don't cry, Mow-way. What is now is not forever.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - DORMITORY - DAY**

A Prefect finds Eli and Victor in bed together. He hurries forth to fetch...

Father Lawrence, eager to correct any "aberrant" behavior.

He rousts both boys out of bed and leads them from the room by their earlobes.

**EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY**

Father Lawrence, now clad in flowing white vestments, stands against the slow-moving current, preparing to baptize Victor.

Eli and the Prefect watch from the shore.

FATHER LAWRENCE

Do you renounce Satan and all his empty promises?

Before Victor can respond, Lawrence DUNKS him underwater. Holds him there far longer than necessary.

ELI

Hey, quit it! Let him up!

Lawrence relents. Victor surfaces, SPUTTERING.

The Prefect forces Eli into the river. Eli wades toward Lawrence, passing Victor, who's still COUGHING up water. Eli locks eyes with his newfound friend, reassuring him.

Lawrence lays hands on the suspiciously compliant youth.

FATHER LAWRENCE

Do you reject Satan, and all his empty promises?

Eli shrugs. Holds his BREATH as Lawrence submerges him.

The kid FLAILS underwater, CLAWING at the riverbed until his fingers close around a small, smooth stone.

The moment Lawrence relaxes his grip, Eli SPRINGS from the water, WALLOPING Lawrence with the rock, BREAKING his nose! The clergyman REELS as hot blood pours out of his nostrils.

ELI

Run, Mow-way!

The boys flee across the river, the Father and the Prefect close behind, and gaining fast...

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - ENTRANCE HALL - DAY**

Lawrence and the Prefect blow past the main doors, dragging the recaptured Eli and Victor behind them. Lawrence holds a bloody rag over his nose. Eli sports a newly blackened eye.

ELI

Fuck your mother, *góshé!*

**MONTAGE** - Music: "The Roving Blade" (Instrumental)

A) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - THE GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY** - Eli bends over a wicker chair, BITING DOWN on a bar of lye soap while Lawrence TANS his aft-end with a long, flexible Rattan cane.

FATHER LAWRENCE

Our English cousins call this six  
of the best...

B) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - MAIL ROOM - DAY** - Eli bellies up to the counter. A MAIL CLERK (50s, rotund and ruddy) glowers at him.

ELI

Anything from San Vicente, Arizona?

The Clerk shakes his head. Eli walks off, crestfallen.

C) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - CLASSROOM - DAY** - As autumn leaves swirl outside, an English lesson is interrupted by Eli and Victor, wearing loin cloths and warpaint made from berries and bark.

The boys BOUND from desktop to desktop, FLINGING papers and WHOOPING while the TEACHER (obvious toupee) PLEAS for order. Some of their classmates look bemused. Others cheer them on.

D) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - THE GENERAL'S OFFICE** - Eli takes another savage CANING from Father Lawrence as Victor waits his turn.

E) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - MAIL ROOM - DAY** - Eli returns to the Clerk, ever-hopeful. The Clerk shakes his head again. Eli withdraws, his long-held rage fermenting into desperation.

F) **EXT. NEWLYNTOWN - DORMITORY - NIGHT** - A gentle snow falls as Eli shimmies down from the second-story window, employing tied-together blankets as a rope. Victor follows reluctantly.

G) **INT. DUTCH FARMER'S BARN - NIGHT** - Eli and Victor huddle for warmth while snowflakes drift in via a hole in the roof.

As Eli watches a mama owl tend to her nest in the rafters...

Newlyn and a rough-hewn crew of ex-Cavalrymen BURST in with lanterns and rifles. The runaways hide behind a bale of hay until Victor's DRY, HACKING COUGH gives away their location.

H) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - NURSE'S STATION - DAY** - Newlyn looks on as a Nurse checks Eli and Victor for frostbite. The latter's COUGH is now noticeably worse: a wheezing, persistent RATTLE.

I) **INT. NEWLYNTOWN - TUBERCULOSIS WARD - NIGHT** - Eli stares, shell-shocked, as a Doctor covers Victor's blood and sputum-spattered body with a white linen sheet. His friend is gone.

ELI (V.O.)  
It's my fault. I made him go with me. We were gonna hop a train...

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
At least he did not die unbaptized.

ELI (V.O.)  
Where will you send him? Back to his family?

J) **EXT. NEWLYNTOWN - CEMETERY - DAY** - Father Lawrence prays over Victor's open grave (NO SOUND). Eli, Newlyn and dozens of Newlyntown students and staff mourn in plaintive silence.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
I'm afraid not. Tuberculosis is insidious. Even the dead can carry it. He will have to remain here...

ELI (V.O.)  
I don't wanna leave him.

NEWLYN (V.O.)  
Then don't. You are a remarkable young man, Eli. A child of two worlds. Why not stay here and realize your great potential?

ELI  
I won't forget him.

NEWLYN  
I know you won't.

As the coffin descends, Newlyn puts his arm around Eli.

**EXT. NEWLYNTOWN - CEMETERY - DAY**

SUPER: FIVE YEARS LATER

Eli (19, the fires of youthful rebellion banked by practiced deference and lingering guilt) puts lilies on Victor's grave.

The headstone reads: VICTOR LAWTON 1879-1893. No mention of his true name.

NEWLYN (V.O.)

I must say, you've become a model student. The pride of Newlyntown.

**INT. NEWLYNTOWN - THE GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY**

Eli sits across from Newlyn (the latter's beard now flecked with gray). The old wicker chair gathers dust in the corner.

NEWLYN

And you took to our outing program like a fish to water. I hear you even showed those Dutch farmers a thing or two about irrigation.

ELI

The Meulenbelts were very kind.

NEWLYN

So here you are, top of the class, the world at your feet. Princeton is still the goal, yes?

ELI

That's right, sir.

NEWLYN

I have a friend, James Pellegrin. Teaches paleontology at Princeton.

ELI

Pellegrin. The fossil hunter?

NEWLYN

He'd very much like to meet you.

ELI

Really?

NEWLYN

He'll be at the Koenig Museum tomorrow afternoon. Father Lawrence has organized a field trip there for a few of our younger students. Perhaps you should accompany them.

Eli stands, hardly able to believe his luck. Salutes Newlyn.

ELI

Yes, sir. Thank you, sir.

**EXT./INT. KOENIG MUSEUM - DAY**

A banner out front proudly proclaims: "HERE BE DRAGONS!"

Eli and Lawrence (his nose healed crooked) escort Newlyntown students through a dinosaur exhibit. Eli's BREATH catches in his throat as he beholds the exhibit's fearsome centerpiece: an Allosaurus skeleton posed as if feeding on an Apatosaurus.

Even Lawrence is taken aback by the 16-foot theropod.

FATHER LAWRENCE

Did He who made the Lamb make thee?

As Lawrence ushers the students onward, Eli lingers to read the plaque: *Allosaurus fragilis*, OTHNIEL CHARLES MARSH 1877.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

That's not her real head, ya know.

Eli turns to survey SOPHIE PELLEGRIN (21, freckled sweetness masking tempered steel) leaning against a glass display case.

ELI

Sorry?

SOPHIE

Her real one weighs 500 pounds. Her neck can't support it anymore, so they have to display it separately.

ELI

Where's the real one?

SOPHIE

Mr. Marsh has it. Do you know about him and Mr. Cope? They were friends at first. They even named their discoveries after each other. But it turned out Marsh wasn't enough of a gentleman for Cope and Cope wasn't enough of a professional for Marsh. Now they're bitter rivals...

ELI

You make 'em sound like lovers.

SOPHIE

Is your name Elliot Mercer?

ELI

Call me Eli.

He extends his hand. Sophie shakes it.

SOPHIE

Sophie Pellegrin. My father sends his apologies, but the expedition has reached a critical juncture, so it's fallen on me to collect you.

ELI

Collect me? I thought I was here for an interview.

SOPHIE

Newlyn didn't tell you? I'm sure Father explained our arrangement.

ELI

What arrangement?

QUINCY (O.S.)

This mutt botherin' you, Soph?

QUINCY DEVEREUX (28, a lumbering Louisiana Golem, his eyes concealed behind tinted railway spectacles) looms over Eli.

SOPHIE

Quincy, this is Eli Mercer, the Apache kid. Go wait by the Goya.

Quincy stalks off, GRUMBLING.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

You'll have to excuse Mr. Devereux. He's one of Father's associates. Thinks I still need a chaperone -- You are a real Apache, aren't you?

ELI

More or less.

SOPHIE

But you grew up in Arizona, right? San Vicente Reservation?

ELI

For a couple years, yeah. It's a long story.

SOPHIE

Well, that's where Father is right now. There's a massive dig underway inside Coronado Canyon. We have the tribe's permission to be there, but there was a... kerfuffle and our translator up and quit. Now your Chief refuses to cooperate with us.

ELI  
Sorry to hear it.

SOPHIE  
You won't be when you hear what I have to say next. Father wants to hire you on as our new translator. Figures they'll be more receptive to one of their own.

ELI  
I ain't been on the Rez in years.

SOPHIE  
But they know you, they trust you. And you're one of Newlyn's boys, so hopefully you'll play fair with us palefaces. And if Father likes you, and he will, he'll recommend you to the board at Princeton. Sound fair?

ELI  
I -- I'll have to think it over.

SOPHIE  
Alright, but don't think too long. Our train leaves at half past ten.

**EXT. TRAIN STATION - PLATFORM - DAY**

Eli, wearing a sack suit, hurries along the platform lugging a single hastily packed suitcase. He spots Sophie and Quincy talking with an acne-scarred PORTER. Sophie waves him over.

SOPHIE  
(Distributing tickets)  
Ah, there you are! First class for us, and third for dear old Quincy.

QUINCY  
I gave the Professor my word --

SOPHIE  
I'm sorry, it's all they had left. Chrissake, where's my handkerchief?

PORTER  
They don't let his kind ride first class, ma'am. It's company policy.

SOPHIE  
Nonsense, he'll go where he likes. He's a Pellegrin!

The Porter looks at Eli with new eyes as Quincy fumes.

PORTER  
You're Percy Pellegrin? The  
Princeton running back?

Sophie grins at Eli, egging him on.

ELI  
In the flesh.

PORTER  
I'm sorry, Miss Pellegrin. I didn't  
realize your brother was, uh...

SOPHIE  
Adopted?

PORTER  
Yes.

SOPHIE  
No harm done. Now run along and see  
to our luggage.

As Sophie watches the Porter scamper off, Quincy puts his arm  
around Eli, pulling him in close.

QUINCY  
You try anything with her, I'll  
have you strung up and castrated  
before we reach Holbrook. Nod if  
you understand.

Eli swallows hard. Nods. After a beat, Quincy lets him go.  
The boy hastens after Sophie, trying not to show his fear.

**EXT./INT. TRAIN - FIRST CLASS DINING CAR - DAY**

Eli WOLFS down a steak as Sophie signals for more wine.

ELI  
Sitting Bull won the battle, but he  
lost the war. Now it's all about  
survival, you know, adapt or die.  
That's why General Newlyn's work is  
so important. I owe a lot to him.

SOPHIE  
I still say you're selling your  
people short enlightenment-wise.  
Women have all kinds of leadership  
roles in Apache culture, right?

Eli considers this.

ELI

The most powerful person in our tribe was a medicine woman named Sonsee-Array. Even the Chief would come to her for advice and counsel.

SOPHIE

If Indians were in charge, maybe I'd be the one going to Princeton instead of my chucklehead brother.

ELI

You mean me or Percy?

SOPHIE

(Laughing)

You're no chucklehead. Quite the contrary in fact. You're special.

ELI

Now I know you're messing with me.

Sophie refills Eli's wine glass. They're both a bit tipsy.

SOPHIE

I'm going to tell you something, and you have to promise not to laugh.

ELI

I'll do my best.

SOPHIE

Have you ever read *Tom Sawyer*?

ELI

Yeah. He was a little shit, wasn't he? Never understood why ol' Huck Finn put up with him like he did.

SOPHIE

Really? My favorite was always Injun Joe, chasing Tom and Becky Thatcher around that deep, dark cave. He frightened me, but at the same time I always felt kinda sorry for him, especially the way he died, trapped down there all by himself, trying to catch water in a cup. Ever since I read that book, I've had the queerest fascination with, well, people like you.

ELI

You mean half-breeds. It's the eyes, right? They give me away.

SOPHIE

What an extraordinary perspective you must have.

ELI

That's one way to put it.

SOPHIE

You sound bitter.

ELI

On the Rez, they'd never let me forget what I was. My own half-brother used to call me *Masáána*, you know, "apple." Red-looking on the outside, white on the inside.

SOPHIE

I'm sorry.

ELI

Why? It ain't your fault... So, big Chief Kuruk's making trouble for your father, huh?

SOPHIE

Kuruk? That doesn't sound right.

ELI

Older fella, fat, only one leg.

SOPHIE

No, this Chief is young. Too young to be a leader of men, Father says.

ELI

Probably Kuruk's nephew Delshay.

SOPHIE

Is this Delshay a reasonable sort?

ELI

Usually, long as he's sober... Say, what's so special about Coronado Canyon anyway? What's your father looking for out there?

SOPHIE

(Looking around, nervous)  
What do you say we skip dessert?

**EXT./INT. TRAIN - THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE - DAY**

Quincy sits in a stifling, overcrowded carriage packed with migrant workers, freedmen, farmers and their families. He's caressing a handkerchief - Sophie's missing handkerchief - embroidered with poppies and the tell-tale initials "S.P."

Across the aisle, CAL (40, farmer) signs with his deaf-mute daughter CLEMENTINE (6, suffers from motion sickness) while Cal's wife OPAL (35, tired) soothes OLLIE, a colicky infant.

Pocketing the handkerchief, Quincy removes his spectacles to apply drops from an amber tincture glass. We don't see what lies behind those lenses, not yet, but poor Baby Ollie does. He WAILS bloody murder. Not an infant's squalling. A SCREAM.

Quincy slides on his specs, glaring at the SHRIEKING baby as fresh saline flows from his hidden eyes like crocodile tears.

**EXT./INT. TRAIN - FIRST CLASS CARRIAGE - NIGHT**

Eli and Sophie, both very drunk, stumble to their compartment, holding onto each other and LAUGHING.

SOPHIE

I wanted to get to know you better.  
Now I've got you all to myself...

Eli grins. He's glad he skipped dessert.

**INT. TRAIN - ELI AND SOPHIE'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT**

A compartment with conjoining rooms.

Eli unpacks. Sophie scoots next to him, admiring a silver pearl inlay straight razor. She slowly unhinges the blade.

SOPHIE

Is this real silver?

ELI

It belonged to my father.

SOPHIE

What do you use it for?

ELI

I... shave with it.

SOPHIE

Can you even grow a beard?

ELI  
 (Indignant)  
 Of course I can.

SOPHIE  
 It's just, I've always understood  
 Indians don't have much in the way  
 of body hair. That a lot of them  
 are smooth, you know, all over...

Eli SCOFFS. Hikes up a pant leg, revealing coarse, dark hair.

ELI  
 There. What do you say to that?

Sophie closes the curtains on the compartment door.

SOPHIE  
 But what about your, uh, chest?  
 Your stomach?

Eli, understanding the game, takes off his coat and pants.

Sophie crawls into his lap, SLICING off his dress shirt's buttons one by one. They kiss. He tenses as her hand moves along his bare chest, stroking his belly, traveling lower...

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
 Stop flexing, just relax...

The two lovers move as one, spurred on by the steady rhythms of the train itself.

At the height of Eli's ecstasy, Sophie hands him the razor.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
 Hold it to my throat.

ELI  
 What? Why?

SOPHIE  
 Just do it.

Eli, accustomed to following orders, obliges her.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)  
 Now say I'm coming for you, Becky.

ELI  
 I'm coming for you, Becky!

As Eli pushes the razor deep enough to break the skin, Sophie starts to ORGASM.

**EXT. TRAIN - THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE BACK DECK - NIGHT**

There's a full moon on the rise.

Clementine, still struggling to overcome her motion sickness, VOMITS off the back deck of the train car. An ATTENDANT (old, stubbly beard) rests atop a nearby stool, asleep at his post.

**INT. TRAIN - THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS**

Quincy tosses and turns, unable to get to sleep. Across the aisle, Baby Ollie BURBLES and COOS in a small wicker basket.

Everyone else in the carriage is in dreamland, yet something about Ollie's BABBLING is setting Quincy's teeth on edge. He glowers at the baby, a vile thought percolating in his brain.

Before he can act on it, a succor of silence descends at last. Ollie appears to have finally tuckered himself out.

Quincy SIGHS, relieved. He turns over, using his hat as a pillow, but just before he has the chance to drift off...

The BABBLING resumes, louder this time! Quincy looks around, studying the sleeping passengers. There can be no witnesses.

He kneels by the basket, takes out Sophie's handkerchief and holds it over Ollie's face, using his thumb and index finger to pinch off the nostrils and his palm to smother the mouth.

The infant KICKS and THRASHES, unable to cry out.

As Quincy observes Ollie's final moments, he detects a sudden intake of BREATH from behind him. He turns to find Clementine watching him, an upset stomach now the least of her problems.

Quincy, moving with terrifying speed, LUNGES at the mute witness! She runs for the back deck, trying to force her paralyzed larynx to form a scream, but nothing comes out.

**EXT. TRAIN - THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE BACK DECK - CONTINUOUS**

Clementine clears the door and is half-way to the sleeping attendant when a leather-gloved hand closes around her arm!

She looks behind her, eyes wide with fear, and sees...

Quincy, leering down at her like a nightmare made flesh, pools of moonlight collecting in his railway spectacles.

As Clementine opens her mouth to deliver one last stillborn scream, the train's WHISTLE pierces the night.

**EXT. DREAM TEEPEE - DAY**

Eli (14 again) hugs his mother Ela (41, fierce yet fragile) in the shadow of a teepee that seems to stretch to the sky.

ELI  
Don't let 'em send me away! I'll do better, I promise! Tell Taza --

ELA  
Listen to me, *shiye*. What is now is not forever.

Two dead-eyed Cavalrymen move in, TEARING Eli from her arms.

ELI  
Máá!

**INT. TRAIN - ELI AND SOPHIE'S COMPARTMENT - NIGHT**

Eli wakes with a start in the sleeper bunk, soaked in sweat. Sophie lies beside him, still fast asleep.

**INT. TRAIN - ELI AND SOPHIE'S COMPARTMENT - DAY**

Sophie enters, smuggling in a breakfast tray. She finds Eli sitting by the window, sewing the buttons back on his shirt.

SOPHIE  
Ah, the Brave Little Tailor.

ELI  
It's my only dress shirt.

Sophie kisses Eli on the cheek and flops down across from him, helping herself to a blueberry muffin. We note she's wearing a high lace collar to hide the mark on her throat.

SOPHIE  
I meant to ask you something last night, before we got distracted.

ELI  
Okay, shoot.

SOPHIE  
Well, speaking of sewing circles, apparently that priest you came to the museum with told Quincy your father was some infamous character named Gentleman Jack. Is that true?

Eli stiffens. He wasn't expecting this line of questioning.

ELI

His name was Captain John Mercer. Served in the 1st Texas Infantry, fought at Gettysburg. After the war ended, he got into trouble with a card cheat and his U.S. Marshal brother-in-law. They ambushed my father, shot him in the side. He wandered the Petrified Forest for three days and nights, waiting for death, but the Apaches found him first. One of them was my mother.

SOPHIE

Let me guess. Love at first sight.

ELI

I suppose it was. She already had a husband and a kid, but it didn't matter. When she got pregnant with me, he convinced her to leave it all behind and run away with him.

SOPHIE

So you weren't born on the Rez?

ELI

No. For the first ten years of my life, I lived with my parents on a ranch called Pale Horse. Then, just before my brother Little Jack was born, my half-brother Taza escaped from the Rez and tracked us down.

SOPHIE

Must've been quite a shock for you.

ELI

We got on well enough, but after a while, bounty hunters came sniffing around. They said they were looking to bring Taza in, but I think they were really after my father. There was a fight. My father was killed. After that, my mother, Little Jack and me had to go live on the Rez.

SOPHIE

So how does the half-white son of a Confederate captain end up at an Indian boarding school? You had a Christian name, you spoke English --

ELI

Well, they knew I'd have value as a translator. Still do, looks like. But it certainly wasn't my idea.

SOPHIE

Whose was it?

Eli's expression darkens.

ELI

Taza's. This Indian Agent, Roland Taggart, wanted Big Chief Kuruk to enroll his own daughter as a sign of goodwill, but Taza was sweet on her. So he volunteered me instead.

SOPHIE

Without asking you.

ELI

I missed the Rez at first, even tried jumping a train like this more than once. But it never felt like home. Not really. You know they never even wrote me? Five years, not a single letter from anyone, not even my mother.

SOPHIE

That's terrible. Any idea why?

ELI

Believe me, I aim to find out.

**EXT./INT. TRAIN - THIRD CLASS CARRIAGE - DAY**

The train SLOWS. The town of Holbrook lies on the horizon.

Quincy stirs from a pleasant slumber. A crowd, including ONLOOKER #1 (forties, a long-suffering Quaker woman) has gathered around Ollie's basket. Cal holds a WEEPING Opal.

ONLOOKER #1

Crib death, ghastly thing...

As Quincy begins to gather his belongings, Opal breaks loose from Cal, grief giving way to a sudden, panicked realization.

OPAL

Oh God, where's Clementine?

Quincy smiles to himself. God only knows.