

PALE HORSE

Written by

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BLACK SCREEN:

HOOFBEATS, heavy, rhythmic and approaching fast. As the sound intensifies, the following appears in stark white lettering:

"Life is a storm, my young friend. You will bask in the sunlight one moment, be shattered on the rocks the next. What makes you a man is what you do when that storm comes."

- Alexandre Dumas, *The Count of Monte Cristo*

FADE IN:

EXT. GILA RIVER BANK - DAY

SUPER: ARIZONA 1878

Four horsemen ride along the river's edge at a FULL GALLOP, their murky mirror selves cast in the standing brown water.

The lead horseman, Captain John "GENTLEMAN JACK" Mercer (42, a hulking mountain man with a mustache to match) urges his men onward, mindful of the thunderclouds brewing behind them.

EXT. APACHE CAMPSITE - DAY

A wicked wind WHIPS through a cluster of teepees perched on a hill high above the Gila River. Every doorway faces east. An unattended campfire smolders nearby. The light is dying down.

INT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

ELA (27, fierce yet fragile) cradles her son TAZA (6, scrawny and sickly) on a cot under a buffalo hide blanket. The boy is drenched in sweat and SHIVERING, caught in the grip of fever. BAISHAN (29, a warrior out of his depth) looks on helplessly.

ELA

The fever still hasn't broken.

As Taza TWISTS and MOANS deliriously, we catch a glimpse of an upside-down heart-shaped birthmark on his right shoulder. Ela feels Taza's forehead. She rises, quietly determined. We note a small but distinctive turquoise ring on her left hand.

BAISHAN

Where are you going?

ELA

To fetch Sonsee-array. She will drive out this sickness.

EXT. APACHE CAMPSITE - DAY

Ela exits her family's teepee, heading further into camp.

She passes CHIEF KURUK (45, pockmarked) and his son LUPAN (8) as they oversee the construction of a wickiup. Kuruk watches Ela, his face etched with concern... and a hint of suspicion.

Lupan tries hard to imitate his father's stern countenance.

EXT. GILA RIVER BANK - DAY

Gentleman Jack spies the campsite. He draws his Colt Dragoon from its holster. Motions to his men, who ready their rifles.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Baishan lays a damp rag on Taza's forehead, HUMMING softly. The boy smiles in gratitude, his eyes struggling to focus.

EXT. SONSEE-ARRAY'S TEEPEE - DAY

As Ela approaches the teepee, SONSEE-ARRAY (44, mystic and severe, old before her time) opens the flap to meet her. The medicine woman takes Ela's hand, imploring her to lead on.

INT. SONSEE-ARRAY'S TEEPEE - DAY

As Ela and Sonsee-array depart, we see portentous paintings on the teepee's walls, including a woman being carried off by a gigantic owl and a warrior wrestling with a demonic coyote.

EXT. GILA RIVER BANK - DAY

The four horsemen swoop fast and low, circling the camp. At Jack's signal, they CHARGE, closing in from every direction.

EXT. APACHE CAMPSITE - DAY

Hearing the THUNDER OF HORSES, Kuruk shoves Lupan into a nearby supply tent and barricades the door. He grabs his rifle, but as he turns to face down the oncoming threat...

A female horseman, BLACK-EYED SUSAN (29, West Texas' answer to Annie Oakley), already has him dead to rights. She FIRES.

Kuruk's right kneecap EXPLODES in a fine ruby mist. He falls, WAILING, SHOOTING blindly at the gunslinger as she passes by.

More GUNSHOTS ring out, sending the camp into chaos.

Ela and Sonsee-array fight their way back toward Baishan's teepee. One of the horsemen STORMS past, nearly trampling Ela. Sonsee-array pulls her out of the way just in time.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Gentleman Jack dismounts his horse, approaching the teepee with equal parts caution and elation, savoring every step.

He SINGS the following: "In the Pines (Traditional)."

INT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Baishan recognizes the voice. Closes his eyes, thinking. Looks down at Taza. Puts a finger to his lips. Taza nods.

Baishan rises. Turns to see...

Gentleman Jack's shadow, thrown against the far wall of the teepee. As Jack draws closer, its shape grows more defined.

Baishan slinks across the room, grabbing a Brown Bess musket. He levels it at the encroaching shadow. Taza covers his ears.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

The musket's single shot ball RIPS through the teepee's wall, WHIZZING by Gentleman Jack's face, claiming his left earlobe and knocking him off his feet. He lands on his back, dazed.

Baishan appears in the teepee doorway. He takes aim, but the musket JAMS. Jack rolls over, Dragoon at the ready. He FIRES.

Baishan collapses, clutching his stomach. Blood OOZES from between his fingers. With a great GASPING effort, he drags himself back inside the teepee as Jack struggles to his feet.

INT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Taza watches in frozen horror as Baishan crawls towards him on his belly, leaving a sanguine trail on the earthen floor. Baishan reaches out. Taza WHIMPERS. Baishan shakes his head, stressing silence. Father and son embrace for the last time.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Gentleman Jack steadies himself. Heads inside the teepee.

INT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Gentleman Jack enters to see Baishan leaning against the cot, a tomahawk clenched in his fist. Taza is nowhere to be found.

GENTLEMAN JACK

You're gut-shot, boy. It's over.
Why not make it easy on yourself?

Baishan rushes his foe, emitting a WHOOPING WAR CRY.

Gentleman Jack SHOOTs Baishan again. As the brave crumples to the ground, WHEEZING, Jack kicks the tomahawk away. Throws the buffalo blanket off the bed, revealing... an empty cot.

As he prepares to look under the cot, Baishan HOWLS in pain.

TAZA'S P.O.V. - UNDER THE COT, SENSES CLOUDED BY FEVER

Satisfied, Jack produces a second Dragoon from his greatcoat. He kneels atop Baishan, burying the barrels deep in his eyes.

GENTLEMAN JACK (CONT'D)

(Deep, distorted)
You never loved her anyhow.

He FIRES both guns at once, BLOWING Baishan's brains out.

As Jack turns to leave...

CUT TO REVEAL:

A shell-shocked Taza, peering out from the shadows beneath the cot, his fear and anger already curdling into hatred.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Gentleman Jack finds a jug of rotgut whiskey. SMASHES it, dousing the teepee's walls with flammable liquid. Seizes a burning log from the dying campfire. SETS THE TEEPEE ABLAZE.

He mounts his horse as the fire spreads.

EXT. APACHE CAMPSITE - DAY

Ela and Sonsee-array look on as the teepee erupts in flames. Ela CRIES OUT, frantic. Sprints ahead of the medicine woman.

As Ela rounds a corner, Gentleman Jack appears on horseback, flanked by his three fellow riders. Jack grabs hold of Ela, swinging her to his saddlebow. The five alight from the camp.

Sonsee-array runs after them, SHRIEKING and shaking her fist. Finally, she turns back, hurrying towards the burning teepee.

She passes Lupan standing over the newly crippled Kuruk. The boy watches his father WEEP, his own eyes dry and disdainful.

INT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

Sonsee-array leaps through the flames to find...

Taza, clinging to the cold clay of Baishan's corpse.

She gathers the child in her arms and heads for the exit.

EXT. BAISHAN'S TEEPEE - DAY

As Sonsee-array and Taza emerge from the conflagration, the storm clouds above them finally make good on their threat.

She rests Taza on the ground, looking for signs of life.

SONSEE-ARRAY

Taza, can you hear me? You must be strong now. You must be strong...

Taza eyes open. He SCREAMS. Sonsee-array holds him tight as the rain falls and the burning teepee collapses in on itself.

EXT./INT. U.S. ARMY TROOP TRAIN - DAY

SUPER: 10 YEARS LATER

A military transport nearing the end of a long journey west.

PASSENGER CARS

White officers and enlisted men enjoy the luxury of personal space, their mobile barracks standing in sharp contrast to...

BOX CAR

The Buffalo Soldiers of the 9th Cavalry, packed in tight with no regard for space or comfort.

The box car's sliding doors have been propped open in an bid to combat the stifling heat.

One soldier plays "The Hills of Mexico" on a battered guitar, his equally ragged voice WARBLING beneath a wide-brimmed hat.

SERGEANT ABE CAVANAGH (42, black, stoic, the spitting image of John Ford regular Woody Strode) sits apart from the group, engrossed in a dog-eared copy of *The Count of Monte Cristo*.

PRIVATE RIGBY (19, black, jocular) scoots over to join him.

RIGBY

Feels like we slowin' down some.

ABE

Uh-huh.

RIGBY

No sir. Won't be long now.

ABE

Uh-huh.

RIGBY

I hear you can smell Lieutenant Sharpe's pomade 'bout a half-mile from Holbrook if the wind's just right. Any truth in that, sir?

Abe sets his book aside. Sizes up Rigby at a glance.

ABE

You talkin' a lot, boy, but you ain't sayin' much. You from New York?

RIGBY

Kansas City, sir. First time west of Fort Leavenworth.

ABE

You don't say. Got a name?

RIGBY

Silas Rigby -- I mean, Private Rigby, sir. Private Silas Rigby.

Rigby extends his hand. Abe shakes it, albeit reluctantly.

ABE

Sergeant Abe Cavanagh.

RIGBY

Abe Cavanagh? Not *the* Abe Cavanagh? Battle of Tularosa Abe Cavanagh?

ABE

If you like.

RIGBY
 Hell yeah I like! You rode with
 Sergeant Jordan. You beat back
 Victorio and half the Apache in --

Before the words are out, an arrow SAILS past Abe and Rigby,
 PIERCING the guitarist's hat and PINNING it to a nearby wall.

Everyone in the box car freezes, taking in the ominous sight.

RIGBY (CONT'D)
 Speak of the devil.

Abe rises. Approaches the arrow. The others watch in silence.

He PULLS the weapon from the wall. SNAPS it over his knee.
 Places the tattered ten-gallon back atop its owner's head.

ABE
 As you were, Corporal.

The guitarist nods, resuming his SONG. The others go back to
 their business. Abe returns to his seat next to Rigby, whose
 respect for the Sergeant has graduated to something like awe.

RIGBY
 (Shaking his head)
 Godless fuckin' savages.

ABE
 Hush, boy. Those ain't your words.
 (Beat)
 You ever seen an Apache before?

RIGBY
 Well, no, not up close. But I --

ABE
 They were worthy opponents once,
 'til we made 'em somethin' else...

RIGBY
 What's that mean, somethin' else?

ABE
 They were nomads for thousands of
 years. It's in their blood. Then we
 marched 'em all into a forty-acre
 prison cell and told 'em to stay
 put. I think it's made 'em crazy.

RIGBY
 Hey man, least they got their forty
 acres. We never even got the mule.

EXT. HOLBROOK STATION - DAY

COLONEL ARTHUR DRUMMOND (59, a beard covers his scars) and LIEUTENANT PRESTON SHARPE (31, a well-groomed dandy) watch from their horses as the troop train pulls into the depot.

Abe, Rigby and the rest of the Buffalo Soldiers disembark immediately. They stand at attention alongside their fellow cavalrymen as a carpet of steam HISSES around their ankles.

SHARPE

Gentlemen, welcome to San Vicente, Satan's Forty Acres. My name is Lieutenant Preston Sharpe and this here's Colonel Arthur Drummond.

Drummond nods, BLOWING his nose into a silk handkerchief.

SHARPE (CONT'D)

The Rez is a few miles south of here. We should arrive just before sundown. And once we get there, we happy few will be the only thing standing between the good people of Arizona and all manner of murderous redskins. 'Cause they do tend to wander, 'specially the young bucks. And when they do, you're honor-bound to hunt 'em down and bring 'em to heel. Is that understood?

The soldiers MURMUR, some more enthusiastically than others.

SHARPE (CONT'D)

Outstanding! Now saddle up! This desert gets mighty cold at night.

As the company prepares to ride out, Abe and Rigby are joined by CORPORAL BILL WAGSTAFF (35, black, pot-bellied and proud).

BILL

Ol' Sharpe actin' like he in charge now, huh?

RIGBY

Can you blame him? The Colonel lookin' like death warmed over.

BILL

No shit. I'm guessin' you heard 'bout his wife?

ABE

No. What happened?

BILL

The whole family got terrorized by
some Apache boy in a coyote pelt.
Broke in during Christmas dinner
and held 'em hostage for two days.
They still ain't caught him yet...

ABE

But you didn't say family. You said
wife. What happened to Miss Alice?

BILL

I don't know, but I heard she was
disfigured.

A subtle wave of grief breaks over Abe's stony face.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - DAY

Taza (now a young man of 16, still short and on the scrawny
side, with long hair and sharp features) sleeps in the shade
of a giant petrified tree, both arms folded behind his head.

We recognize him by the tell-tale birthmark on his shoulder
and by Ela's ring, which he wears on a chain around his neck.

BINA (8, cute but never cloying) stalks her big cousin from
above, sneaking down the sparkling rock and seizing several
of his newly-sprouted armpit hairs. She YANKS them... hard!

Taza AWAKENS with a start.

TAZA

Damn it Bina, that really hurt!

Bina pinches the strands between her thumb and forefinger.

BINA

Hairy and hungry and always grumpy.
I told Granny you might be turning
into a bear. Make a wish, Taza!

She BLOWS the strands away. Taza's glare melts into a grin.

TAZA

Go away, crazy woman. Go away and
let me sleep --

BINA

Granny sent me. She says it's time.

Taza SPRINGS to his feet, every muscle tensing. Bina smirks
knowingly and grabs his hand, leading him away from the tree.

EXT./INT. SONSEE-ARRAY'S WICKIUP - DAY

Taza stands before a ROARING fire, naked to the waist. Sonsee-Array circles him, inspecting him carefully and CLICKING her tongue. The brave stares straight ahead, holding his breath.

SONSEE-ARRAY

The wasichu. What is his name?

TAZA

Captain John Mercer, but his friends call him Gentleman Jack.

SONSEE-ARRAY

What are his crimes?

TAZA

He murdered Mother and Father.

SONSEE-ARRAY

What have I taught you?

TAZA

To think like him, to speak like him, to move among his people as the eagle moves among the vultures. To find him no matter the cost.

SONSEE-ARRAY

And when you find him, what must you do?

TAZA

I must kill him.

SONSEE-ARRAY

You are Baishan's son. You have my brother's strength, his cunning... but not his patience.

She PUNCHES Taza in the gut. He doubles over, WHEEZING.

SONSEE-ARRAY (CONT'D)

You are not ready.

TAZA

Auntie, please --

SONSEE-ARRAY

You are young, tender, ruled by emotion. He would destroy you.

(Beat)

Revenge is man's work, Taza. The boy would fail. The man will not.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - DAY

Taza trudges through the Rez, ruminating. He passes threadbare tents, barren fields and desperate people.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - DAY

Taza aims a Colt Navy revolver, FIRING round after round into a straw target hanging from the archway of a rock formation.

Unsatisfied, he swaps his revolver for a tomahawk and CHARGES forward, WHOOPING, burying the axe deep in the dummy's neck.

Chief Kuruk (his right leg has been amputated below the knee) watches Taza's exhibition while languishing in a wheelbarrow.

NASCHA (14, Kuruk's dark-eyed doe of a daughter) draws water from a nearby well. She keeps an equally close eye on Taza.

KURUK

Excellent form. Your last strike,
however. Was that the killing blow?

Taza nods, PANTING.

KURUK (CONT'D)

Then why is your enemy still on his
feet?

Taza renews his attack on the dummy with UNHINGED FEROCITY, CUTTING it down and DECAPITATING it. Kuruk grins, satisfied. He motions to Nascha, who brings Taza a cracked tin canteen.

Taza accepts it gratefully, GUZZLING the gritty well water.

NASCHA

That's just Father's way of saying
he's pleased with your progress.

TAZA

Thanks. Where's Lupan? I thought
this was his day to help.

NASCHA

They got into another fight
yesterday, so Father's making him
clean out the traps.

TAZA

That's not much of a punishment.

NASCHA

It is when you're the Chief's son.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - OUTLANDS - DAY

Lupan (now a vainglorious 18, athletic and cruelly handsome) prowls the outskirts of the Rez, armed with a bow and arrow and pulling a wagon filled with fly-blown animal carcasses.

He comes upon a coyote with its leg caught in a steel trap. The creature is in the process of GNAWING off its own limb.

Lupan looks on, transfixed. Eventually, he raises his bow.

EXT. TRAINING GROUND - DAY

Kuruk DOZES under a blanket in the wheelbarrow as Nascha helps Taza gather up his supplies and training equipment.

NASCHA

You know, tomorrow's the first day
of the Sunrise Ceremony.

TAZA

I know. My aunt's sponsoring you.

Nascha nods nervously.

NASCHA

Are you coming?

TAZA

You really want me there?

NASCHA

Of course.

Nascha gives him a peck on the cheek. He blushes.

As Taza bends down to retrieve the dummy, Lupan enters with a bloody, three-legged coyote carcass slung over his shoulders. Taza runs over to greet him, eyes bright like an eager puppy.

TAZA

There you are, Brother Wolf! Who's
your friend?

LUPAN

Brother Coyote. Probably from the
same pack that's been after our
cattle. Black eyes, ravenous jaws,
the damn thing nearly mauled me.

NASCHA

It looks like a cripple.

Chief Kuruk awakens. Eyes his son's trophy with distaste.

KURUK

Lupan, why have you brought this
beast to our door?

LUPAN

Don't be afraid, Father. I honored
Brother Coyote's life by taking it.
Now his pelt will bring me luck.

TAZA

It's huge! How did you kill it?

LUPAN

I'll show you.

He drops the carcass and tackles Taza, knocking him off his feet. Nascha rolls her eyes at the impromptu wrestling match.

LUPAN (CONT'D)

Can you best me, little brother?

Taza fights valiantly until Lupan traps him in a choke-hold. He tries to tap out, but his older opponent takes no notice.

KURUK

That's enough, Lupan. Let him go.

Lupan complies. Taza sits up, rubbing his throat.

NASCHA

I should get Father home before
dark. See you tomorrow, Taza.

Taza waves as Nascha exits, carting off the Chief with no small amount of difficulty. Lupan watches his family leave. Once he's sure they're gone, he claps Taza on the shoulder.

LUPAN

Bina told me Sonsee-Array really
chewed you out this morning. I'm
sorry, little brother.

TAZA

We are not brothers.

LUPAN

No, we are friends. And as your
friend, it is my duty to tell you
the truth. You are ready. You've
been ready for the better part of a
year now. You lack only one thing.

TAZA

What?

LUPAN

The opportunity to prove it. That's what you've been waiting for, yes?

TAZA

Yes, but --

LUPAN

Dahkeya heard the Colonel talking. There's a shipment of rifles coming in tomorrow from the east. When night falls, my war party will raid the depot, take the guns and use them to liberate our people. They rallied behind Geronimo once... Now they'll do the same for me.

TAZA

I thought your father had forbidden more raids.

LUPAN

He's a fool, Taza. A fat, useless cripple afraid of his own shadow. He and the elders have failed us. It's their fault we are living in this hell. We must rise up, or the wasichus will exterminate us all.

TAZA

If they catch us, they'll hang us.

LUPAN

Those nigger soldiers? I'd like to see them try. Only an Apache can catch an Apache.

(Beat)

Tell me, little brother, how many times have you left the Rez since they first brought us here?

TAZA

Once, to see Doc Rutherford.

LUPAN

Ha! This will be my fourth raid. When it is done, I will be a man. Will you follow me, little brother?

Taza considers this. After a beat, he gives up a small nod. Lupan LAUGHS, WHOOPING, as he pulls Taza in for a bear hug.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - DAY

Abe and Rigby approach a rickety watchtower at the edge of the Rez, passing by multiple wanted posters for the Apache fugitive known as "El Coyote." The bounty stands at \$1,000. The picture is a rough sketch of a youth in a coyote pelt.

RIGBY

How you say it? Doo-moss?

ABE

Dumas. The "S" is silent.

RIGBY

And he wrote *Three Musketeers* and the really long one you're readin'?

ABE

He wrote a bunch of stuff. High-adventure, swashbucklers, romance. And he got it all from his daddy.

RIGBY

Which ones did Daddy write?

ABE

It ain't what he wrote. It's what he did. Thomas-Alexandre Dumas joined the army when he was twenty-four, same age as me when I was startin' out. But by the time he turned forty, my man Thomas was a goddamn general. The first black brigadier general, then divisional general, then the General-in-Chief of the entire goddamn French Army.

Before Rigby can form a response, ALICE DRUMMOND (40, dressed in a red evening gown, her face covered by a long black veil) passes by the mouth of the alley, escorted by an armed guard.

RIGBY

That the Colonel's wife?

ABE

That's Miss Alice.

EXT. WATCHTOWER - DAY

Abe and Rigby look out over the reservation.

ABE

And during the Revolution, Dumas led a group of bushwackin' negro swordsmen called the Black Legion.

RIGBY

The Black Legion? The Black Legion? Where's our motherfuckin' Black Legion? This cavalry shit ain't cuttin' it. I wanna be an officer. Why the hell ain't we in France?

ABE

Well, times change. You ever hear the name Henry Flipper?

RIGBY

No. Who's he?

ABE

First black man to graduate West Point. He was a second Lieutenant in the 10th Cavalry. Helped us fight off Victorio. Always seemed like a bit of a prick, if you ask me, but I guess maybe you gotta be.

Rigby leans forward, squinting.

RIGBY

Hey, Sarge?

ABE

So see? It can happen here. We just gotta keep our heads down and --

RIGBY

Sarge?

ABE

What?

RIGBY

I think we got a few. See 'em down by the gate?

Abe looks into a pair of binoculars.

ABE

Well, I'll be damned. Good eye, boy.

RIGBY

Thanks, Sarge.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - OUTLANDS - DAY

An Apache Boy (10, moon-faced) and Girl (12, snaggletoothed) help their Grandmother (78, infirm) sneak past the main gate.

The runaways stumble towards an eccentric-looking carriage with DOC RUTHERFORD'S RADICAL REMEDIES printed on its side. For a moment, it seems they're going to make it, until...

Abe and Rigby appear behind them on horseback. Abe raises his rifle, FIRING a warning shot. The runaways freeze, terrified. Doc Rutherford's carriage TAKES OFF, its two calico steeds SNORTING indignantly as they flee across the desert wastes.

ABE

Safe travels, Doc! Next time we
takin' you in!

RIGBY

Who was that?

ABE

Doc Rutherford. He's the only white
doctor they trust. I ain't ever
seen his face, but I'd know that
damn chuck wagon anywhere.

(To the runaways)

Right you three, time to go home.

The Girl points to the old woman, gesticulating wildly.

APACHE GIRL

No, she sick! Need medicine!

APACHE BOY

Please, sir! She will die!

Unsure, Rigby looks to Abe. The Sergeant shakes his head.

EXT. FORT BRAXTON - DAY

A fortified military compound bordering the Rez. Errant Apache sulk in steel cages, their eyes hooded and vacant.

As Abe and Rigby unload the three runaways at a detention center, a BUGLE BLAST sounds from above. The gates open...

Lieutenant Sharpe GALLOPS into the fort, dragging a captive of his own: DAHKEYA (21, tall and lithesome, a born runner).

SHARPE

Afternoon, gentlemen! Nice to see
we're all keepin' busy.

Sharpe dismounts his horse, seizing Dahkeya by the hair and hauling him towards a nearby scaffold. The brave is already bruised and bloodied. All the fight's been beaten out of him.

SHARPE (CONT'D)

I caught this one skulkin' around the stables. Sometimes they send out spies to hamstring our horses. Sergeant Cavanaugh, come over here and help me string him up.

ABE

Sorry, Lieutenant. Bad back, you know.

SHARPE

Fair enough. Private Rigby, you do the honors.

A reluctant Rigby lashes Dahkeya to the scaffolding. Sharpe pulls down on the rope, suspending the brave in mid-air. Abe and the other Apache turn away. They've seen this all before.

RIGBY

So what happens now? We hang him?

SHARPE

Nah, we're just gonna give him a little taste of his own medicine. Your name's Dahkeya, right? How'd you fly the coop this time?

DAHKEYA

I come and go as I please, wasichu.

SHARPE

I told you what would happen if I ever caught you wanderin' again, and lo and behold, here we are.

RIGBY

Maybe we oughta ask the Colonel --

SHARPE

Shut up and grab his leg.

RIGBY

Which one?

Sharpe draws a bowie knife from his belt. Wipes his nose.

SHARPE

It don't matter.

Dahkeya kicks and HOLLERS, eyes wide with fear.

Rigby grabs hold of the brave's left ankle. Sharpe moves in.

SHARPE (CONT'D)
They're like children, really. And
they require a firm hand.

Dahkeya THRASHES and WAILS pitifully as the blade SINKS into the back of his knee, SAWING THROUGH the three major tendons.

RIGBY
Jesus...

SHARPE
Careful now, don't squirm. Delicate
thing like this... You want it done
clean. That's it...

The Lieutenant pulls out the knife and uses it to cut Dahkeya loose. The hamstring brave sinks to the ground, WHIMPERING.

SHARPE (CONT'D)
You can go now.

Dahkeya rises, doing his best to ignore the pain and the hot blood SPURTING down his leg. After a few steps, he collapses.

EXT. FORT BRAXTON - ALLEY - DAY

Abe holds Rigby's equipment as the latter VOMITS.

RIGBY
... Like somethin' you'd see on a
plantation.

ABE
Like your Kansas ass would know.

RIGBY
Hobblin' slaves, hamstringin'
Indians. What's the difference?

ABE
They lost the war. This is the
kinda shit that happens when you
lose a war.

RIGBY
I'm just sayin'... There's a lot of
good ways for a man to be wicked.

EXT. SAN VICENTE INDIAN RESERVATION - VILLAGE - DAY

Nascha stands at the center of the village, clad in a white buckskin dress and surrounded by her entire tribe, including Taza, Lupan, Kuruk and Bina. The Sunrise Ceremony has begun.

Sonsee-Array, pulling double-duty as both medicine woman and sponsor, smears a mix of clay and corn meal on Nascha's face.

SONSEE-ARRAY

Over the next four days, this girl
shall become the living incarnation
of Changing Woman, healing spirit
and mother to our people.

Taza and Kuruk watch Nascha with pride. Lupan seems restless.

SONSEE-ARRAY (CONT'D)

When her children taste victory,
this is the sound of her joy...

Sonsee-Array lets loose with a triumphant WHOOP.

At her signal, CHANTING and DRUM-BEATS commence. A Crown Dancer leaps forward, brandishing a sword and a WHIRRING leather strap. Other dancers join in as the music BUILDS.

Nascha pulls Taza out of the crowd. The two dance in tandem, careful to face due east. Sonsee-Array looks on approvingly.

EXT./INT. FORT BRAXTON - DRUMMOND'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

A grand office with a roaring fire. The DRUM-BEATS continue.

Drummond works behind his desk, clutching a glass of port. His son LIONEL (6) fights with tin soldiers on the carpet.

Alice sits facing the fire, gingerly removing her veil. The scars suggest an amateur scalping. Her left ear is missing.

ALICE

I've decided.

DRUMMOND

What's that, my dear?

ALICE

Tell Sharpe I want to raise the
bounty. Five thousand this time.

DRUMMOND

Consider it done.