

125 pgs-

RAVENOUS

by

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Adam Fields Productions
December 13, 1996

FADE IN:

MOVING OVER SNOW.

Fresh powder lying unmolested. Until...

A SKI thrusts into frame, paralleled shortly by its twin.

THE SIERRA NEVADAS - PRESENT DAY

FIVE CROSS-COUNTRY SKIERS traverse through a remote canyon, all wrapped in bulky ski wear -- weekend Eskimos.

And they've picked the wrong weekend. Snow flurries lash their faces, WINDS HOWL and ECHO off the canyon walls, and visibility dims to a mere ten yards in any direction. These fun-seekers have stumbled into the season's worst blizzard.

They approach...

AN ALCOVE IN A CLIFF'S WALL

A refuge from the unrelenting storm outside. The skiers stumble out of the snow, shaking powder and cold from their bodies.

SKIER #1

Picked a helluva day to get lost.

SKIER #2

Christ, didn't anyone listen to a forecast this morning?

SKIER #3

Storm wasn't due 'til tomorrow.

SKIER #4

(feigning optimism)

Don't worry. This - this'll pass.

SKIER #2

And if it doesn't?

One skier, the group's LEADER, withdraws a map. He studies it, then studies the surrounding area, then grimaces: the two don't correspond.

LEADER

Jerry. Better get on the radio. See if we can get word to the ranger station.

This falls heavy on the others' ears: they are in serious trouble.

DISSOLVE TO:

A CAMPFIRE - LATER

No sing-alongs here. Each skier wears a heavy countenance, grimly staring into the fire. A WALKIE-TALKIE offers only static in reply to...

SKIER #3

S.O.S. Come in, please. We are lost somewhere in the northwest quadrant of Sutter's Valley. Please come in...

(no response)

Fuck.

SKIER #4

(a whisper)

How much food do we have, Todd?

SKIER #2

(a whisper)

A few granola bars. Some oranges.

These whispers ECHO throughout the alcove -- now everyone knows the ration supply.

SKIER #1

Sounds like plenty. But what are the rest of you guys going to eat?

No one's laughing. The Leader returns from outside.

LEADER

Only getting worse out there. Looks like we'll have to spend the night here. When we don't show up at the lodge tonight, they'll send the Rangers out in search for us.

Silence. No one even GROANS. It's past time for that -- everyone's scared shitless.

LEADER

In any case, we have some time to kill here. If anyone knows any stories, I'd sure like to get my mind off things.

A beat. Everyone's lost in their own panic.

SKIER #1

You guys ever hear the story about Fort Spencer?

No one has. Skier #1 thinks better of telling it...

SKIER #1
Actually, it may be a little long.

SKIER #2
We're not going anywhere.

LEADER
(gazing out on the storm)
Tell it. Tell anything.

SKIER #1
(sighs, resigning to his task)
Fort Spencer used to be somewhere up in
these mountains. Burned down about a
hundred and fifty years ago. This is the
story...

And suddenly a wind whips through the alcove, pushing the
campfire's billowing ash right into our face...

DISSOLVE TO:

MOVING THROUGH ANOTHER SMOKESCREEN.

A thick fog of gunsmoke and dust. There's a commotion ahead,
and we're approaching it, though we can only see its flashing
core through this soup.

But we can hear it.

A HEAVY, CONSTANT, DEAFENING BARRAGE OF GUNFIRE -- atavistic
thunder: muskets, revolvers, cannons -- illuminates what's
invisible before us: a lot of people are killing a lot of
other people up ahead.

TITLE: THE MEXICAN WAR, 1847

Moving closer, the form of a man, an American CAPTAIN, takes
shape. He is fighting to maintain order in the midst of
chaos, and he is losing the fight.

He spins on us...

CAPTAIN
Sergeant!! Bolster the right flank!!
What's left of it!

SERGEANT BOYD

Patrician young soldier, virgin to combat. He nods to the
order, removing his revolver, and turns to his squad to relay
the command when...

A ROWDY, MULTITUDINOUS CRY ERUPTS BEHIND HIM.

A shrill, menacing BATTLE CRY -- the enemy is ambushing them from the rear.

CAPTAIN

Jesus Christ, they outflanked us!

A CANNONBALL CUTS THE CAPTAIN IN TWO.

The Captain's blood sprays Boyd's face, and the sergeant stands dumb a moment, frozen in his tracks, as out of the gunpowder haze surrounding him...

DROVES OF ENEMY SOLDIERS

Pour in from all sides, bayonets glaring: it's going to be a rout. Regardless, all of Boyd's squad engage them.

Except Boyd. He can't move. Revolver trembling in his hand. Literally petrified.

SOLDIER

Sergeant! Sergeant Boyd, c'mon!

Boyd's feet don't budge. He is shivering with fear. The revolver drops from his hand.

SOLDIER

Boyd!

As his fellow soldiers combat the invasion, each to be dropped by musket fire or run through by bayonet...

BOYD

Slowly sinks to his knees. Cowering. He lays his face gently on the dirt and squeezes his eyes shut, tuning out...

THE WAR DIN

As it crescendos, full of the ANGUISHED CRIES and SHRIEKS of his comrades, then fades...

DISSOLVE TO:

FLESH.

Red meat. On a slow broil to brown. So close this might be steak.

THE SUN.

Orange and swelling and oppressive and the cooking agent of

the sirloin below, only it's not sirloin, it's something far less savory.

DEAD SOLDIERS.

Dozens. Mexican. American. Strewn along a country road not far from the Rio Grande. It's their flesh that's spoiling. Flies dance between the corpses: an afternoon picnic.

From just over a nearby ridge comes the continuing CANNONFIRE and BATTLE THUNDER of the conflict which an hour before felled these men.

WHEELS.

Wooden and in disrepair and SQUEAKING like mad. They belong to an empty CART which in turn belongs to...

TWO MEXICAN LACKEYS.

The Mutt and Jeff of their corps. These fellows have been pulling shit duty since the day they enlisted, and today's assignment -- body removal -- is par for their unenviable course. As they survey the myriad corpses, one word passes through both their minds:

LACKEY 1

Mierda.

ONE DEAD AMERICAN

Wins the lottery of first to be flung onto the "Dead Cart," and he's pretty bloody, so that the lackeys must wipe their hands clean on his pants before they turn back to their task.

LACKEY 2

Este?

LACKEY 1

No, eso. Con los calzados.

THE TWO LACKEYS

Shuffle across the dirt road, kicking up dust as they pass one particular body, an American sergeant spread eagle on the ground.

BOYD.

The lackeys' dust makes his eyes flutter. He is alive: in fact, he's not even wounded. He cracks an eye open, just enough to scan his locale.

Verdict: he's in a lot of trouble. He inches his hand slowly

down to his holster but -- shit, no -- it's empty. Panic time for Boyd -- what to do? -- when suddenly...

THE LACKEYS

Gather him up by his arms and legs and carry him across the road and fling him, too, upon the Dead Cart, unaware that they've loaded a live one.

BOYD.

Face-up, squeezed between two Yankee cadavers, the bloody one and another, on the bottom of the cart, and there's nothing he can do but lie there and fake it as -- THUMP -- another body is loaded on top of him and then -- THUMP, THUMP, THUMP -- another and another and another.

CUT TO:

SWEAT-SOAKED, BLOODIED MEXICAN SOLDIERS

Lounge about, resting from the day's battle. War may be hell but there's joy in this bivouac presently -- the Mexicans won today (which, alas, won't be a trend in this war). The approaching SQUEAK of wheels draws no attention as...

THE DEAD CART

Limps into camp with one wheel weaving like a drunk and a six-foot high pile of BODIES on top and somewhere below them all our hero.

CUT TO:

ONE LACKEY

Scrapes a piece of charcoal over a wood slab, scratching out letters, perspiring with concentration (spelling does not come easily to him) until he finishes: "GRINGOS." He hangs the sign on the Dead Cart and wanders away.

THE SUN ABOVE.

Mellows. Setting. Night forthcoming.

CUT TO:

THE DEAD CART.

Surrounded by twilight and sleeping Mexicans and a few carousing DRUNKS.

ONE BORRACHO

Clumsily mounts the body pile and starts urinating atop it, his amigos chuckling...

BORRACHO

Yankees! Urino sobre los Yankees!

...until the Borracho's equilibrium cuts out on him and he stumbles back and falls on his ass and wets his pants and then his friends HOWL. They do not hear...

THE FAINT, DIFFICULT SOUND OF BREATHING

Emanating from within the body pile.

CUT TO:

BIRDS -- THE NEXT MORNING

Mangy scavengers. Sit atop the body pile and peck at flesh.

BELOW THE DEAD CART.

Blood seeps through the cart's floorboards, forming a thin, red puddle in the grass -- drip -- as, nearby, Mexican soldiers start their day -- drip -- washing up or smoking or playing cards -- drip -- until...

...a CANNONBALL lands on one poker table, killing the game and its players, and takes out one of the Dead Cart's wheels as well. The Cart collapses on one side, all the bodies shifting with it, but only a few corpses fall off.

Everyone scurries. THE DAY'S BATTLE HAS BEGUN.

CUT TO:

THE BIVOUAC -- SEVERAL MINUTES LATER

The place is almost deserted now, everyone off fighting at the front, leaving...

THE DEAD CART

Isolated and unobserved. A bird or two remain on top, but they're quick to scam when the bodies beneath them begin to stir and shuffle and a RED HAND wrests to the top, followed by ANOTHER RED HAND, followed by A WHOLE RED MAN.

BOYD.

Blood-soaked. Eyes wild: possessed. Inhaling freely for the first time in a day. He checks the top bodies for weapons.

No luck: all looted. Boyd slides over the edge of the cart, drops to the ground, and surveys the area in a crouch.

Something appears deeply, primally mad about Boyd now: he has endured the most terrifying hell he could imagine, without hope of escape, and emerged stripped of his senses, bare to his most primitive instinct -- survive.

MOVING ACROSS THE BIVOUAC.

Boyd stalks. Moving low and hungrily. His first concern is weaponry, which he satisfies with a revolver from a slain Mexican officer. Crouching behind the dead soldier, Boyd draws a bead on...

THE MEXICAN COMMAND POST

TWO SENTRIES stand guard. Shortly one of them makes a routine trip to the tent's rear and there meets Boyd, demon-like, crazed...

SENTRY 1

Dios mio.

...and Boyd seizes the hesitation and promptly snaps the sentry's neck.

INSIDE THE MEXICAN COMMAND POST

THREE MEXICAN COMMANDERS confer in Spanish -- it's desperation time: the battle is not going well -- when their remaining SENTRY enters, hands held high, followed by...

BOYD

Training a rifle on the sentry and a revolver on...

THE COMMANDERS.

They gape at Boyd, blood-drenched, and the sight unnerves them. Slowly, tremblingly, they raise their arms in surrender.

BOYD

Victorious, he begins to breathe more easily now. He wipes some sweat from his brow, leaving a white streak across his red skin. Posture straightening. Nightmare ending.

SERGEANT (V.O.)

...for heroism above and beyond the call of duty...

CUT TO:

DAYS LATER -- DOZENS OF AMERICAN SOLDIERS.

Live ones, all standing at table in an ASSEMBLY HALL,
audience to a medal ceremony.

SERGEANT (O.S.)
...for successfully infiltrating the
enemy's ranks...

CUT TO:

BOYD -- A DAY BEFORE THIS

Sits in an office. Two OFFICERS interrogate him.

OFFICER 1
How did you get behind the Mexican line?

BOYD
I played dead.

OFFICER 1
Why?

BOYD
Scared.

OFFICER 2
What do you mean: what kind of "scared"?

BOYD
I froze, sir.

CUT TO:

THE SERGEANT IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL

Continues to read his commendation.

SERGEANT
...and securing victory independently...

OFFICER 2 (V.O.)
You froze. Scared.

CUT TO:

BOYD -- THE DAY BEFORE

OFFICER 2 (CONT'D)
While the rest of your unit fought. And
most of them were killed.

Officer 1 waves off Officer 2.

OFFICER 1
You all right, Boyd? You look a little sick. You eaten lately?

No response.

OFFICER 2
What should we do?

OFFICER 1
Promote him.

OFFICER 2
He's a coward.

OFFICER 1
We could shoot him, but seeing how he captured the enemy command for us single-handedly, it might set a bad precedent.

OFFICER 2
Alright, but Shaw's not going to like it.

CUT TO:

GENERAL SHAW IN THE ASSEMBLY HALL

And he isn't liking this: medaling a self-professed coward. He salutes Boyd. Boyd, now in full uniform, returns it.

SERGEANT
...with cunning and honor. Captain John Boyd.

CUT TO:

STEAK DINNERS.

Blood-red, lined up and down every table in the assembly hall. The company CHAPLAIN finishes Grace and a CACOPHONY of silverware explodes as the regiment begins to eat. Meat is sliced and prodded and bitten and gnawed.

BOYD.

Hesitates. His steak lies before him untouched, and others at his table begin to notice, including General Shaw. Sensing their gaze, Boyd cuts a piece and puts it in his mouth and chews it...painfully.

CUT TO:

THE LATRINE - ONE MINUTE LATER

Boyd vomits.

GENERAL SHAW (V.O.)

Cowardice. I can smell it on you, Mr.
Boyd.

CUT TO:

GENERAL SHAW AT HIS OFFICE DESK

Scribbling furiously with his quill pen. It's a letter of
transfer for Boyd...

GENERAL SHAW (CONT'D)

It reeks like disease. And it's as
contagious. I want you as far from my
company as possible.

...and he finishes it and signs it and thrusts it upon Boyd.

GENERAL SHAW (CONT'D)

I'm sending you to California. Fort
Spencer.

CUT TO:

SNOW. MILES AND MILES AND MILES OF SNOW.

An eyeful of white. The world in deep freeze.

THE WESTERN SIERRA NEVADAS.

California. Might as well be Iceland. Barren, icy mountain
precedes barren, icy mountain, a perpetual petrified vista.
There are only two signs of life in sight, animal or human,
and the first is:

A LONE COVERED WAGON

Rolling slowly but steadily along what must be a trail (it's
undetectable under all the snow), heading east toward the
mountains.

MOVING WITH THE COVERED WAGON

Boyd rides shotgun to an Indian driver, JEFFERSON, and maybe
Boyd tries to make eye contact but the Indian won't move his
eyes from the road as they continue toward the second sign of
life:

A FLAT, DRAB, BROWN STRUCTURE

Nestled in a valley. Abutting forested mountains to the north and east. Inert but for a constant belch of smoke from its chimney. One thing's for sure: this place has no winter resort potential; it is cold, bleak, desolate, and unattractively remote.

Welcome to FORT SPENCER.

CUT TO:

WITHIN THE FORT'S PERIMETER

The covered wagon arrives, and Boyd disembarks, assessing the cheerless scene. It fits his mood.

HART (V.O.)

Captain Boyd.

CUT TO:

COLONEL HART IN HIS OFFICE.

The spectacled commanding officer of Fort Spencer. At the moment, he's wrapped in a struggle to crack a particularly thick-shelled peanut.

HART

War hero, huh. The brass decided to reward you with a little appointment in the California sun?

He smiles, glancing at the snowfall outside.

HART (CONT'D)

Oops. Have a peanut, Boyd. Jefferson just brought them in from San Miguel.

Boyd declines as Hart snatches from his bookshelf a thick text and prepares to employ it on his peanut.

HART (CONT'D)

Let me tell you about Fort Spencer. We're located at the western foot of the Sierra Nevadas. We enjoy beautiful weather seven months out of the year. Welcome to January.

SLAM! Hart eats the peanut as Boyd glances at the thick text's covers, snatching one word: "Aristotle." Boyd's gaze continues over Hart's bookshelves: Sophocles, Homer, Euclid, etc.

HART (CONT'D)

The fort was built fifteen years ago, its principal purpose to serve as a waystation for western settlers.

(noting Boyd's gaze)

Hobby of mine. Reading in the original languages. Well, languages in general. Sounds tedious, I know, but this place thrives on tedium. You got a hobby, Boyd?

BOYD

(glancing at the snowstorm outside)
Swimming.

HART

(smiles, then)

During the winter months there's no traffic through these parts so we maintain only a skeleton company. Eight men in all.

INSERT:

PRIVATE TOFFLER.

Repairs the wood fence which surrounds the fort's front yard. He hums "Onward Christian Soldiers" as he works.

HART (V.O.)

...Private Toffler...

MAJOR KNOX.

Nods off in a chair, half-drunk glass of whiskey at his side.

HART (V.O.)

...Major Knox...

PRIVATE REICH.

Performs one-handed push-ups.

HART (V.O.)

...Private Reich...

JEFFERSON.

Removes the harness from the covered wagon's horses.

HART (V.O.)

...Jefferson, whom you've met...

MADISON.

Smoking peyote in the enlisted men's quarters.

HART (V.O.)

...Madison. He's Jefferson's brother,
both of 'em locals, hibernating here for
the season.

Madison passes his pipe to...

PRIVATE CLEAVES.

Who drags hard on it.

HART (V.O.)

And Private Cleaves. The overmedicated
Private Cleaves.

BACK TO:

COLONEL HART AND BOYD.

HART

You and I make eight. Cleaves cooks the
food, Knox plays doctor, and my advice to
you is don't get sick. I'd say don't
eat, but most of us have to. With your
promotion, Captain Boyd, you are third in
command. Anything you want to tell me?

Boyd shakes his head.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE FORT

as the day's snowfall continues into evening, and Toffler
quits his toil.

CUT TO:

BOYD'S NEW QUARTERS.

A shoebox at best -- a bunk and a chest the only furniture --
but it is his own private shoebox. As Boyd closes his door,
he meets his own exhausted glance in a small mirror.

CLEAVES (O.S.)

Dinner.

CUT TO:

THE MESS

Fort Spencer's entire company is assembled, all at table, not speaking a word.

CLEAVES

Dishes out beef stew with a ladle, passing platefuls down to each man. Momentarily he's absorbed in some very private, peyote-inspired joke.

The SILENCE is broken at last by...

HART

So...did anyone...do anything today?

No response.

HART

(to Boyd)

We have a great sense of camaraderie here at Fort Spencer.

TOFFLER

Mutters Grace under his breath. When he's done, Hart nods and...

EVERYONE EATS. EXCEPT BOYD.

Madison: voraciously. Jefferson: skeptically. Reich: methodically. The bibulous Knox: sparingly.

Suddenly, Cleaves bursts out LAUGHING -- he's very, very stoned.

HART

Jesus, Cleaves.

CUT TO:

FORT SPENCER'S MARES

Eating as well in their stalls, mouthfuls of hay, as Hart and Boyd enter the stables, their breath foggy from the cold.

HART

Agamemnon and Meneleus. Technically though they're both female. We barely use them during the winter. Except back and forth from San Miguel.

BOYD
(re: bear traps hanging on the walls)
You get a lot of bears up here?

HART
Not in the winter. They're all sleeping.

Boyd's curiosity leads him to a large, canvas-covered object: underneath, a cannon and the necessary supplies: gunpowder, matches, cannonballs, etc.

HART (CONT'D)
You found it. Ancient thing that.
Suppose it's mandatory for a military
outpost. Never use the thing.
(then)
That ends the guided tour. Jesus, it's
cold. Let's get the hell back.

CUT TO:

A DIMLY-LIT HALLWAY

Boyd and Hart adjourn to their rooms.

HART
Goodnight, Boyd.

BOYD
Pax vobiscum.

HART
The swimmer speaks Latin. Evidence of a
classical education.

BOYD
Evidence of an ill-spent youth.
Goodnight, Colonel.

And simultaneous with Boyd's closing his door...

CUT TO:

A SHOVEL - THE NEXT DAY

Strikes the ground. Toffler is clearing snow from the fort's
front porch. From that white stuff to...

KNOX'S CHEEK COVERED WITH SHAVING SOAP

As a razor draws across it. The Major soaks in a tub in the
fort bathing room. Boyd enters, seeking a drink of water...

Morning. KNOX

Afternoon. BOYD

KNOX
(cutting himself)
Ow! Good god.

BLOOD

Trickles down Knox's cheek, mixes with the shaving soap.

BOYD

Spots the gush of red, and he nearly convulses right there. Instead, he splashes some water on his face and quickly exits.

CUT TO:

BOYD.

On a troubled stroll around the fort. Trying to exorcise the demons from his head. A KNOCK startles him, but it's only Hart in his window, offering a wave. Boyd returns it.

CUT TO:

REICH.

Completes a snowman's head behind the fort stables, sculpting not for aesthetics' sake but for shooting practice, and he marches twenty paces back and does not give Boyd the time of day when he appears, until:

REICH
Heard you're a war hero.
(loading his rifle)
One thing about war: you get to know your limits.

He aims.

REICH (CONT'D)
What I don't understand is: if you were such a hero, why did they send you here?

He FIRES. The snowman's head EXPLODES.

CUT TO:

HART AND CLEAVES

Tour the Fort's supply room, a subterranean room of its own, stairs leading down from the kitchen. Today is inventory day.

HART

Looking a bit low. I told you: no more late-night eating. What do we need? Flour, meat...Cleaves, what happened to all the kerosene?

Cleaves releases a little titter: guilty.

HART (CONT'D)

A little fire display in the snow, huh? Well, you and Jefferson can go back to San Miguel.

CLEAVES

I can make it alone.

HART

(shoots him a look)

No you can't.

CUT TO:

THE COVERED WAGON IN THE FORT'S YARD.

Jefferson and Cleaves aboard, ready to depart, as the rest of the company stands by.

HART

I want you back in two days. No peyote. No women, either.

MADISON

Hands Jefferson an extra blanket for the ride, the mindful younger brother, and he stays dutifully as the wagon pulls away from the fort. Meanwhile...

TOFFLER

Packs a snowball and heaves it at Cleaves: a near-miss.

CLEAVES

Yeah -- well, have fun cooking, Toff!

TOFFLER

At least everyone won't get the runs tonight.

BOYD

Lingers a moment to watch the wagon leave, even as the other members of the company pass him on their way inside, including Reich...

REICH

Wish you were along for the ride?

...and it's obvious from Boyd's stare that, yes, he does wish that.

CUT TO:

BOYD'S MEDAL.

Dangling from Boyd's index finger and thumb, held as mothers hold diapers. He sits on his bunk after dinner.

HART (O.S.)

What'd you get the medal for?

Hart loiters in Boyd's doorway.

BOYD

Cowardice.

HART

(nods, lets it go)

Listen: Knox has some first-rate whiskey on him, really prime stuff, and he just passed out a minute ago. You look like you could drown some sorrows.

BOYD

(pocketing the medal)

Knox won't mind?

HART

Not until late tomorrow afternoon.

CUT TO:

THE PARLOR.

Reich sits and stares distantly into a roaring fire. Above the fireplace: two crossed swords.

Behind him, Madison watches the ceiling. Outside, in the hallway, Toffler can be heard HUMMING to himself.

CUT TO:

HART AND BOYD IN HART'S OFFICE.

They toast each other.

HART

To escape. In one form or another. I guess that's what we're all doing here. Escaping from the world. No one just ends up at Fort Spencer: they come here for a reason.

BOYD

Yours being?

HART

Eudora Fitzsimmons. You can imagine what happened; all romance ultimately develops into a variation of the same, overtold story. Paradise lost.

He drinks.

HART (CONT'D)

Yes, I come here lovelorn, Reich for his reason, you for yours...whatever that is.

(a beat)

You going to tell me? C'mon, the sulking walks around the fort, the loss of appetite...

BOYD

(sighs)

Something happened in Mexico. I lost control. Killed a Mexican sentry. Broke his neck.

HART

S'what you're paid to do.

BOYD

(nods, then)

It's not that. I, uh, I lost myself. Lost my nerve.

FLASH: Boyd buries his face in Mexican soil.

BOYD (CONT'D)

And I don't...

FLASH: Boyd's P.O.V. at the bottom of the Dead Cart. THUMP. Another body is loaded on top.

FLASH: Boyd's eyes. Bursting with fear. Sinking into madness.

BOYD (CONT'D)

...I don't know if I've regained it.

A quiet, still moment. Boyd's eyes filled with terror/shame. Hart pays him the courtesy of averting his gaze.

HART

(drinks)

I'm going to need to drink a lot more of this.

Toffler passes by the door: mistake.

HART (CONT'D)

Toffler! What are you singing out there?

TOFFLER

Religious hymn.

HART

Religious hymn. A hymn that's religious.

TOFFLER

Trying to write one.

HART

Well, find some inspiration outside.
(offering him a bucket)
More ice, please.

Reluctantly, Toffler takes it, exits. Hart turns his attention back to Boyd.

HART (CONT'D)

Funny thing is: we escape the world, come here, then turn right around and try to escape this place. Knox with this really quite fine whiskey, me with my books, Cleaves...jesus, the boy's going to burn away his brain.

(another sip)

You know the one frightening aspect of escape, though: the chance you might end up somewhere worse.

As they both drink...

A GHOSTLY WHITE FACE FLASHES IN THE WINDOW

Startling and eery, Hart does not see it, but Boyd does and he jumps.

CUT TO:

HART, BOYD, REICH, MADISON AND TOFFLER

Hurry out the Fort's front door, pulling on jackets and hats, Reich bearing a rifle and Madison a lantern and Toffler the pointless ice bucket as they hustle around the fort's perimeter to Hart's window, and there they find...

FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOW.

HART

Where's Knox?

TOFFLER

Passed out.

Hart tries to shake himself sober as he takes the lantern from Madison and follows the footprints into DARKNESS, his four soldiers right beside him.

They come upon...

A MAN

Collapsed in the snow. Semi-conscious. Bearded with wild hair and dressed in tatters. Near-frozen. Hart tends to him.

REICH

Jesus fucking Christ.

TOFFLER

(flinching at the blasphemy)
Please, Reich...

HART

Let's get him inside.

CUT TO:

CHAOS.

Everything is hurly-burly as Boyd and Madison and Hart haul the Man inside the front door and Hart barks directions:

HART

Toffler, hot water! Gallons of it!
Reich, see if you can rouse Knox!
(to Boyd and Madison)
Let's get him by the fire.

THE MAN

Is laid next to the parlor's fireplace.

HART (CONT'D)
We need to, uh, facilitate his
circulation. Madison, rub down his legs.
Boyd, you and I his upper body.

Madison doesn't quite understand this -- his English isn't
that great -- and Hart translates his instruction into Sioux.

HART (CONT'D)
And let's get these rags off him.

CUT TO:

KNOX.

Slumbers in his bed, very out, even as Reich shakes him and
shouts at him.

REICH
Knox! Doc!
(he slaps him)
Doc! Ah, fuck it.

CUT TO:

A STEAMING TUB OF WATER

Hart, Boyd, Madison, and Toffler gently lower the naked Man
into the tub, then continue their rub-down underwater,
causing a whirlpool effect.

HART
Toffler, more water!

CUT TO:

MADISON

Pulls a cot from the Enlisted Men's quarters and drags it
down a hallway and into the parlor and parks it next to the
fireplace as...

THE OTHERS

Carry in the Man, draped in towels, and load him onto the
cot, smothering him with blankets.

After all the excitement, a still moment. Panting.

THE PILE OF TATTERED CLOTHING

Lies next to the fire where the Man was stripped, and Boyd
fingers through the cloth, coming across a stain of some

sort, dark -- could be dirt, could be dried blood.

REICH

Any name on those?

BOYD

No.

HART

Well, boys, I think he's gonna live. Heartbeat's fine. Temperature's pretty good. Frostbite didn't do much damage. But we'll see what the doc says...when-
ever he wakes up.

(re: the Man)

For now, let's let him rest.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE HART'S WINDOW

Snow begins to fall. Exhausted, Hart returns to his watered-down cocktails, Boyd in tow.

HART

Snow. That's novel. Theory: people in cold climates are more intelligent than those in warm weather.

BOYD

Where do you think he came from?

HART

That's tomorrow's worry. C'mon: people in cold-weather climates are more intelligent...

BOYD

What are your premises?

HART

I have two. The first being scientific. Warm weather softens the brain. Think about it. Ever had a great thought on a hot day?

BOYD

That's empirical, not scientific. And it's subjective. Next.

HART
(a little miffed)
Okay: second premise. It's so goddamn cold outside, everyone stays in and reads.

(drinks)
I have no idea where he's from. But, God, I hope he was alone.

(beat)
You seem a smart fellow, Boyd. Where are you from?

BOYD
Florida.

HART
(toasting him)
Well then: the evidence against.

CUT TO:

THE FORT - THE NEXT MORNING

The snow has ceased, leaving only faint remnants of the Man's footsteps, which Reich traces, from Hart's window, eastward, into a forest.

BOYD

Observes Reich from inside his window. A KNOCK at the door.

HART (O.S.)
Boyd. He's up.

CUT TO:

THE MAN.

Awake. Sitting up in his cot. Toffler hands him a cup of coffee. The Man struggles to sip it, nods thanks.

HART, BOYD, REICH, TOFFLER, AND MADISON

Stand about, watching. Hart drinks also/shudders.

HART
For god's sake, Toffler. What kind of coffee is this?

TOFFLER
Sorry. Best I could do.

After a beat:

MAN
(barely a voice)
Where...where am I?

HART
Fort Spencer, California. Western Sierra
Nevadas.

The Man squeezes his eyes shut -- on the edge of tears.

MAN
Excuse me.
(a beat; he regains composure)
Name's Colburn. F.W. Colburn.

HART
How do you feel, Mr. Colburn?

COLBURN
Not bad, considering. Probably look like
death.

HART
Not bad, considering. How long were you
out there?

COLBURN
Eight days on foot. I think. The last
few blur. Altogether, I've been in the
mountains near two months.

HART
Without food?

Colburn nods. The company reacts.

CUT TO:

KNOX.

Snores like a monster in his bunk, and when Toffler runs in
and wakes him, the snores turn to moans.

TOFFLER
Doc! He's awake! Doc!

KNOX
What?!

TOFFLER
He's awake!

KNOX
Who?

TOFFLER

The man. Who showed up last night. He's gonna tell us what happened.

Knox rolls over, away from Toffler. Too hungover to care.

CUT TO:

COLBURN BUCK-NAKED.

Trim but muscular and not nearly so emaciated as one might suspect for a man who's spent two foodless months in the wilderness. He pulls on a spare private's uniform, keeping close to the parlor's fire.

COLBURN

Good Lord. You should've seen me two months ago -- thirty pounds heavier.

HART

Nothing to eat for two months.

COLBURN

There wasn't any food. I didn't say there was nothing to eat.

(lifting his cup to Toffler)

Son? It tastes like dirt, but it's hot.

Toffler refills Colburn's cup.

COLBURN (CONT'D)

I suppose I owe you gentlemen a story. Seeing that you saved my life.

HART

Only if you feel up to it.

Colburn nods. He settles into a chair and starts in...

COLBURN

We left in April. Six of us in all...

CUT TO:

COLBURN'S STORY -- SOMEWHERE IN MIDDLE AMERICA

It's summer here, green and yellow and full of promise, as TWO COVERED WAGONS and TWO RIDERS travel across a meadow.

COLBURN (V.O.)

...Macready and O'Brien outta New York. Mr. Janus from Mississippi and his negro body servant, Jones. Myself, I'm from Maryland, and...

THE BACK OF AN OFFICER'S HEAD

COLBURN (V.O.)

...our guide, an army man coincidentally,
a Colonel Ives?

CUT TO:

HART AND COLBURN -- BACK AT FORT SPENCER

HART

Don't know him.

COLBURN

The better for you. A mostly detestable
man and a disastrous guide. He professed
to know a new, shorter route through the
Nevadas. Quite a route it was...

CUT TO:

A VARIETY OF HARDSHIPS.

Wheels grind to a halt in calf-deep mud; machetes slash away
at foliage; horses are coaxed over rocky terrain; the wagons
are literally lifted over a wall of stone.

COLBURN (V.O.)

Longer than the known route and
impossible to travel. By the time of the
first snowfall, we were still a hundred
miles from this place. That was October.

CUT TO:

SNOW.

Plummeting in sheets over the Sierra Nevadas and the covered
wagons. One HORSE lies dead in the fresh powder, and the
rest of the animals look close behind. The six travellers
huddle around a fire.

COLBURN (V.O.)

Proceeding in the snow was futile. We
decided to wait until the storm passed.

CUT TO:

A CAVE.

In which the six men huddle as, outside, snow continues to
fall. And fall. And fall.

COLBURN (V.O.)
But the storm did not pass. It stayed.
The trail was shortly impassable. And we
had run out of food.

CUT TO:

COLBURN IN FORT SPENCER.

Drinks a bit of coffee, his enrapt audience waiting
breathlessly for him to continue.

COLBURN
We ate the Irishmen's steer, all the
horses, even my own dog. That lasted us
about a month. Then we turned to tree
bark, any roots we could dig up -- but,
you know, there's no real nutrition in
those. We remained famished.

(drinks)
The day Janus's negro was killed I was
out digging roots.

CUT TO:

A DEAD BLACK MAN.

Lies face-down in the cave.

COLBURN (V.O.)
The others had pistol-whipped the man to
death. When I returned, they were
cooking his legs for dinner.

CUT TO:

COLBURN IN FORT SPENCER:

COLBURN
Would I have stopped it had I been there?
I don't know. But I must say: when I
stepped inside that cave and smelled meat
cooking, I thanked the Lord...

(he sips)
But then things got out of hand.

CUT TO:

THE BACK OF THE JANUS'S HEAD

He stands atop the cave as COLONEL IVES, MACREADY, and
O'BRIEN pace below. Like a vulture scouting his prey.

COLBURN (V.O.)
I ate sparingly, but others did not.
Jones' meat did not last us a week, and
we were soon hungry again. Only now our
hunger was different...

CUT TO:

COLBURN IN FORT SPENCER.

COLBURN (CONT'D)
...it was more severe...savage...wanton.

CUT TO:

COLONEL IVES

Buries his face in a search for roots. A LOG rises over his
head, then strikes down -- THUNK!

COLBURN (V.O.)
Colonel Ives was the next to be killed.
Mr. Janus argued it was proper
remuneration for the misery he had led us
into. Subsequently, he did the honors.

CUT TO:

OVER JANUS'S SHOULDER: O'BRIEN

As Janus raises the log again, preparing to strike...

COLBURN (V.O.)
Then came O'Brien...

CUT TO:

MACREADY

Prays on his knees. Up comes the log.

COLBURN (V.O.)
...then Macready.

THUNK!

CUT TO:

COLBURN IN FORT SPENCER.

COLBURN (V.O.)
That left Mr. Janus and I alone. In that
company, I knew my days were numbered. I
fled.

CUT TO:

A SNOW-COVERED MOUNTAINSIDE

From a distance, a FIGURE wades through snow. As fast as he can. Not very fast.

COLBURN (V.O.)

Eight days. The first five, the weather remained fair. But on the sixth day...

CUT TO:

A BLIZZARD.

A sea of white and dimly-visible within it the FIGURE trudges uphill, struggling over an enormous slope.

COLBURN (V.O.)

...I lost all direction.

CUT TO:

COLBURN IN FORT SPENCER.

COLBURN

It was nothing less than pure providence that I arrived here.

End of story. Toffler crosses himself.

HART

Janus is still up there?

COLBURN

(nods)

Probably still in the cave. He had a good supply of Macready when I left.

Everyone pauses at the thought, appetites ruined.

HART

Toff, why don't you, uh, whip up something to eat for Mr. Colburn.

CUT TO:

COLONEL HART'S OFFICE

Hart leads Boyd in, then shuts the door behind him.

HART

Thoughts?

BOYD
(shrugs)

Wow.

HART
He seems to have survived it well.
Mentally as well as physically. I don't
think I would have come through so sane.

BOYD
You call eating human flesh sane?

HART
I can hardly fault him for going to
extremes. I was lost up there once, too.

BOYD
You were?

HART
Routine training operation. I was
separated from the group, spent a day up
there alone, hungry, thinking I was dead.
Turned out I was a stone's throw from
this place.

BOYD
I thought cold weather made you smarter.

HART
Just colder. We better pack up.

BOYD
What?

HART
We've got to go up there. We've got a
man in distress.

BOYD
But he's a killer.

HART
It's our job.
(A KNOCK at the door)
Yeah?

Madison enters.

CUT TO:

AN INDIAN CLOTH PAINTING

Depicting an ape-like man, blood circling his mouth,

crouching over a dead Indian. Madison has unrolled it on Hart's desk, and the three men view it.

MADISON

Tanatka.

HART

Tanatka. Never heard of him.

Madison explains the painting in Sioux, and Hart translates for Boyd's benefit.

HART (CONT'D)

"...it's an old myth...a man eats the flesh of another...to steal his strength...and he goes backwards..."

BOYD

Backwards?

Hart asks Madison for clarification.

HART

"...he reverses, reverts. To a primal state. The more he reverts, the more he wants to eat. The more he eats, the more he reverts..."

(pauses, amused)

That a temptation with your people, Madison? You got a thing for human flesh?

Madison responds. Hart laughs.

HART (CONT'D)

"Just scalps."

BOYD

How much do you have to ingest to...?

HART

(laughs, dismissing the legend)

I wouldn't worry about it, Boyd. Just an Indian ghost story. Those men up there went stir-crazy, not...

(he must think of the word)

...paleolithic?

(then, to both men)

Keep this to yourselves, though, huh? Wouldn't want Toffler to catch wind of it. Might irk his religious convictions.

(to Madison)

Thanks. Go tell everyone to get dressed: we're moving out in an hour.

Madison exits, and Boyd, lost in thought, heads out, too.

HART (CONT'D)

Boyd.

Boyd stops.

HART (CONT'D)

What is it?

Boyd shakes his head.

HART (CONT'D)

You don't have to go.

BOYD

No. I want to.

CUT TO:

THE ENLISTED MEN'S QUARTERS

Toffler, Madison, and Reich prepare for the expedition as Hart and Colburn study a topographical map of the Nevadas.

COLBURN

No...no. I'm sorry. Nothing looks familiar. Perhaps...no. It's no good.

HART

Do you think you could find your way back by memory?

COLBURN

I suppose.

HART

Well, Mr. Colburn, by regulations I can't ask you to do this...

COLBURN

...but you won't stand a chance of finding him without me. Of course, I'll come with you.

HART

You seem well enough.

COLBURN

Absolutely I am. Just a little more food in me and I'll be ready. Preferably something vegetarian.

HART
(patting him on the back)
You're a good man.

Hart notices Knox, awake, as he staggers past the door.

HART (CONT'D)
Morning, Knox. You met Mr. Colburn?

Knox turns to acknowledge the stranger, but then his stomach begins to roll and he hurries away. Hart signals to Colburn: too much drink.

CUT TO:

THE FORT SPENCER ARSENAL.

A thick-doored closet in the supply room. Hart unlocks it with a key. Hands three rifles to Boyd. Collects several boxes of ammunition.

BOYD
Only three?

HART
You, Reich, Toffler. I've got my pistol.
And the Sioux do not believe in the white
man's weapon.

BOYD
Colburn?

HART
Uh-uh.

Hart closes, locks the arsenal.

CUT TO:

THE FORT OUTHOUSE

From within, the sounds of VOMITING. Hart approaches and KNOCKS on the door.

HART
Knox, we're leaving. You're in command
until I return. Cleaves and Jefferson
should be back tomorrow. Knox, if we
don't return within ten days, send a
search party. You got that?

KNOX (O.S.)
Yes, Colonel.

Hart laughs, turns away to join...

BOYD, REICH, TOFFLER, MADISON, AND COLBURN.

All bundled up in heavy coats and headgear, wearing snow shoes and backpacks.

HART

Ready?

(everyone is)

Then we're gone.

AERIAL VIEW

The six men start off toward the eastern mountains, leaving the warmth of Fort Spencer behind, moving at snails' paces -- it's going to be a long trip.

CUT TO:

THE TOP OF THE FIRST MOUNTAIN

And when Boyd arrives there, he's panting like mad from the climb, and he turns to look back down as the rest of the party passes him...

BOYD

I can still see the fort.

Boyd pants a moment more, then turns and plods on.

AHEAD OF THE PARTY

Mountain peaks jet up from the horizon, a dazzling if strenuous hike before them.

CUT TO:

ANOTHER MOUNTAIN

The six zig-zag up its side. The order in which they climb tells us quite a bit about each man:

Madison leads, the naturalist by birthright, carving a smart trail in the snow;

Toffler next, young and overeager;

Then Colburn, the navigator and stranger to the group, who whistles (and hikes to the rhythm of) "Pop Goes The Weasel";

Hart, the easygoing commander, feeling no need to assert his authority and, therefore, hanging back;

Boyd, advancing despite his instinctive trepidation; trailing also because his inexperience with snow shoes makes his stride awkward and clumsy.

REICH

Lift your toe.

And, finally, Reich, the too wary loner: he turns his back on no one.

CUT TO:

MORE HIKING.

Faces flush with cold. Everyone stops while Hart confers with Colburn; Colburn scans the area, then points: that way.

Hart prepares to continue the march when he notices Boyd bringing up the rear, exhausted.

HART

(mercifully)

Okay. Camp.

CUT TO:

NIGHT.

A tent has been erected.

INSIDE THE TENT

A minimum of activity: Reich whittles a piece of wood; Hart reads; Madison sleeps; Boyd shivers; Toffler works on his hymn...

TOFFLER

(quietly singing)

"Lord/ What great reward/ Can You afford/
A loyal servant..."

(searching for a rhyme)

Servant. Lervant, mervant, dervant...

COLBURN

Fervent.

Toffler smiles at Colburn: a good suggestion. He continues...

TOFFLER

"Who/ Has been so true/ Entrusts in you/
A faith so fervent."

It is a miserable tune.

COLBURN

Bravo.

Hart looks up from his book, notices Boyd's shivering..

HART

(with a smile)

Florida.

CUT TO:

A FLASK

Uncapped and upturned. Hart guzzles a bit. Hiking: day number two.

HART

(offering the flask to Boyd)

Warm you up.

BOYD

(takes a swig)

Knox's?

HART

Stole a little more before he woke up.

(offering)

Mr. Colburn...?

Colburn does not respond. He is shivering slightly, despite the sunny day.

HART (CONT'D)

Mr. Colburn...whiskey? It'll keep away those shivers.

COLBURN

Thank you, no. Teetotaler.

TOFFLER

...here here...

HART

You're alright to continue?

COLBURN

Perfectly.

HART

Reich, drink...?

Reich shakes his head. Hart puts the flask away. They continue on.

DISSOLVE TO:

MADISON

Leading the pack over a very high pass and he chooses his footings carefully, each step slowly packing snow beneath his shoe -- CRUNCH. Toffler follows close behind.

HART, BOYD, COLBURN, AND REICH

They hang back, appreciating the breathtaking view surrounding them.

REICH
(awestruck)

Shit.

HART

Quite.

TOFFLER
(from up ahead)

Hey! Look!

Attention turns to Toffler, in the distance.

HART

My God, he's seen a squirrel.

They follow Madison's trail. Ahead, Toffler is waving something in the air. Moving closer: it's a bone.

REICH
(quick to grab his rifle)
Shit, he's been here.

HART
(examining the bone)
Would seem that way -- it's fresh.

Hart holds the bone next to his own forearm.

HART (CONT'D)
Who do you think, Mr. Colburn: Macready?
O'Brien?

Colburn shudders: not funny.

TOFFLER
What should we do? I mean, he's been here.

HART
(deliberates a moment)
Reich, your rifle loaded?

REICH
Yessir.

HART
Okay. Janus might be nearby. No footprints around, so no reason to believe he's too close. Until we do find any tracks, we continue toward the original destination. Everyone clear?
(everyone is)
Toffler, souvenir.

Hart tosses the bone back. Catching it, Toffler slips, sliding off the trail and uncontrollably downhill.

HART AND REICH
Toffler!

TOFFLER

Sliding perilously towards a ridge -- a two hundred foot drop beyond it. He grapples at the ground, slowing himself, just enough to stop right on the ridge; he dangles half over.

EVERYONE ELSE

Hauls ass downhill, but they haul ass carefully, not wanting to turn into sliders themselves. Reich reaches Toffler just as he's slipping.

REICH
Hold on, Toff!

TOFFLER
S'okay, I got a foothold.

Jinx -- the foothold gives, and Toffler drops, dragging Reich with him, and if Colburn is not there to catch Reich, both men will fall. But Colburn is there.

COLBURN
Gotcha.

Colburn holds tight until...

HART AND MADISON

Arrive and together they drag Reich and Toffler up from the brink of death.

HART
You okay, Toffler?

He is not; his side is bruised considerably.

TOFFLER
Oh Lord...

HART
Madison, take a look at this. Reich,
you?

Reich nods -- he's fine. His attention focuses on Colburn as they catch their breath together: the man just saved his life.

HART (CONT'D)
Nice catch, gentlemen.
(to Toffler)
Some lousy toss, huh?

Hart peers about for Boyd: where is he? Then, everyone notices...

BOYD

Remains at the top of the ridge. Shamefully. The only one without the nerve to chase Toffler down.

CUT TO:

TOFFLER'S TORSO

Scraped raw on one side, bleeding a bit from a cut near the ribs. Madison cleans it, and Toffler whines. They are inside the unit's tent.

TOFFLER
(shouting, in pain)
Hey! I could go for some of that whiskey
now!

OUTSIDE THE TENT

It is night. Reich stokes a fire; with Toffler injured, dinner is his responsibility.

Close by, Hart marks on his map the path traveled that day as Colburn observes, drinking heartily from a canteen.

COLBURN
If only we'd had a map like this two
months ago...

HART

Yeah, you can get pretty turned around
out here without one.

TOFFLER (O.S.)

Hey! I mean it!

HART

The fair-weather abstinent.

(handing him the flask)

Boyd. Administer a little of this stuff
to Toffler, will ya?

BOYD

Takes Hart's flask and marches...

INSIDE THE TENT

...and into full view of Toffler and his bloody wound. Boyd
averts his eyes as he hands over the flask.

TOFFLER

Thanks.

Shivering, Boyd grabs a blanket and hastily retreats, as
Madison bandages Toffler's wound.

BACK OUTSIDE

Boyd, freezing, moves to the fire and warms his hands...

BOYD

(to Reich)

"You get to know your limits." You fight
in the war at all?

REICH

Most of the first battles. Led a
platoon. Used to be a Major, Captain.

BOYD

What happened?

REICH

I killed a man. They court-martialed me.

BOYD

Who'd you kill?

REICH

One of my troop. Retreating without
orders. I shot him in the back.

The comment stings Boyd.

HART (O.S.)

Reich. What do we have for dinner tonight?

REICH

Beans and bacon.

HART (O.S.)

I don't smell it yet. Let's get a move on.

CUT TO:

BEANS AND BACON.

Slapped onto a metal dish by Reich and served to Hart.

REICH

Colonel.

HART

Service with a smile.

Reich prepares another plate for Boyd.

BOYD

Just beans for me.

COLBURN

Kindly leave the swine off my plate, too, Reich.

Boyd and Colburn share a brief look.

CUT TO:

DARKNESS.

Some LIGHT SNORING: the company sleeps. Then MOVEMENT. Someone stirs within the tent.

QUIET now. Another beat. Then: SCREAMS.

TOFFLER'S VOICE

Get offa me! Get off!

Everyone STIRS. Madison lights a lantern, illuminating Toffler, who is hysterical, examining his opened, bloody bandage...

...and Colburn, who cowers in the tent's corner, the faintest hint of blood on his lips.

TOFFLER

Oh Lord! He was licking me! Oh my god!

Reich discerns this, lunges toward Colburn.

HART

Reich!

Stops him cold. Reich, frozen, glares at Colburn. Boyd, seeing blood, must swallow his repulsion.

HART (CONT'D)

Madison, rebandage Toffler. Mr. Colburn: please step outside. You, too, Boyd.

TOFFLER

He can sleep outside! Sick bastard!

OUTSIDE THE TENT

Hart steps out first, fully in control, followed by Colburn, then Boyd. It's snowing slightly.

COLBURN

Colonel Hart, please, I can explain.

HART

Explain.

Colburn on the spot. He searches for the right words.

COLBURN

It will sound savage. It will sound lunatic. The young man's blood, the smell of it. I'm sorry, I was totally overwhelmed. I found myself craving it. I know that's mad.

Hart and Boyd share a look: "Tanatka" on both their minds.

COLBURN (CONT'D)

Please, Colonel, I'm sorry. It won't happen again.

Hart stares at Colburn: decision time.

CUT TO:

COLBURN'S HANDS BOUND TOGETHER -- HIKING: DAY NUMBER THREE.

Rope is wrapped tightly around his wrists and held like a leash by Reich.

The order in which the group now travels tell us how things have changed:

Madison still leads, bow and arrows slung around his shoulder; then comes Hart with his revolver, alert for any surprises; next, Colburn, navigator-cum-prisoner, shivering worse than ever; then Reich, Colburn's keeper; Toffler, his injury not debilitating, keeping his distance from Colburn; finally, Boyd, guarding the rear.

HART

Madison: "Tanatka." How much do you have to ingest?

Madison shrugs -- he doesn't know. Both men glance back at the object of their suspicions: Colburn.

HART

Mr. Colburn, how much farther?

COLBURN

Otherside of this.

Directly ahead: a long, steep hill. They start up.

DISSOLVE TO:

HALFWAY UP THE SLOPE

Each man staggers upward, knee deep in snow, hunched forward, nearly on all fours, which causes particular difficulty for Colburn with his restrained hands. But he's not the one who slips.

Reich is, and the soldier begins a fast descent downhill until the rope he's holding brings him to a fast stop. Colburn has caught him.

Reich rises, resumes climbing, does not return the friendly smile Colburn offers.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE TOP OF THE HILL.

Everyone arrives. They overlook a wide valley.

COLBURN

There. There it is.

Colburn points and Hart looks: in the distance, the cave. Hart notes it on his map.

HART

Okay. Everyone ready and loaded? I want to enter this valley with as much speed as possible.

TOFFLER

Colonel...

HART

Yeah?

(reading his gesture)

Okay, pee, but hurry.

Toffler steps away to relieve himself, passing Boyd who shudders nervously.

HART

Boyd...

BOYD

I'm fine. I'm ready.

CUT TO:

THE VALLEY

Hart and his men enter. If not stealthily, then with a great deal of caution. Mid-way to the cave.

REICH

I'm not seeing any tracks, Colonel.

HART

Mr. Colburn, are you certain this is it?
Mr. Colburn?

COLBURN

Something has happened to him. Call it catatonia, call it cannibalistic shell shock, Colburn has checked out. He is not responding. What he is doing is shaking. Like a frightened dog.

REICH

Terrific.

HART

Mr. Colburn...

(no response; Hart sighs)

Madison, take the rope. Reich, you and I up front. Boyd, keep watch on the rear.

Madison hesitates: Colburn's behavior scares him.

HART
(sharply)

Madison...

The Indian follows orders. The approach continues, uneventfully, right to...

THE MOUTH OF THE CAVE.

Inside, maybe five yards of visibility, then FORBIDDING DARKNESS. No sound except for the WIND'S ECHO.

The men move to either side of the entrance. Hart boldly stands before it, peering in through his glasses.

HART
(calling within)
Mr. Janus! Mr. Janus!

His voice ECHOES. Without response. Hart glances below him: smooth, clean snow.

HART
Still no tracks.
(deliberates)
Boyd, Toffler, Madison, stand guard.
Reich, with me.

Hart steps out of his snowshoes, and Reich follows suit. Hart removes his backpack and digs out a lantern, losing his map in the process, but only momentarily: he stuffs it back in his pack.

HART
Directions home.
(beat)
Boyd, next time I say "it's our job"...
mutiny.

BOYD
I'll make a note of it.

REICH
Colonel...

HART
Reich...

REICH
Regulations. "In a potentially dangerous situation, it is proper procedure for the commanding officer to keep the hell out of the way."

HART
Screw propriety, Reich, let's go.

REICH
Sir...
(tapping Hart's glasses)
...it's dark in there. I don't need a
blind man watching my back.

Hart sighs; he knows Reich's right. He exchanges weapons
with Reich, revolver for rifle.

HART
Boyd. Shoes off.

Boyd follows orders, shedding his shoes and backpack.
Despite his best efforts, he can't keep his hand from
shaking.

HART (CONT'D)
Sorry. I want an officer in there.

As Reich and Boyd prepare to enter...

HART (CONT'D)
You got five minutes.

INSIDE THE CAVE

Reich and Boyd enter, poised with revolver and rifle,
respectively. Reich leads with the lantern. Inspects the
cave's walls, then its ground...

...remnants of a campfire.

BOYD
This is it.

REICH
(noticing something else)
Look.

A TRAIL OF DRIED BLOOD

Leading from the campfire farther into the cave's darkness.
Reich follows it with his lantern, Boyd trailing. With each
step the cave's entrance and Hart's silhouette within it grow
dimmer behind them.

At last, they reach the cave's end and...

A HOLE IN THE CAVE'S FLOOR

Smooth and round and just large enough for a man to squeeze

through. The blood trail disappears into it. As does a thick, secured rope. Boyd trains his rifle on the hole -- just in case something pops out.

REICH

Colburn didn't mention this.

Reich waves the lantern above the hole: it's impossible to see below. He holsters his revolver, bites the handle of the lantern, and grabs the rope.

BOYD

You're not going down there.

REICH

Uh-huh.

Reich starts his descent into the hole, pausing briefly as Boyd's rifle is now pointed at him, too.

REICH

Captain...

BOYD

Sorry.

Reich continues down...

OUTSIDE THE CAVE

Hart, Madison, and Toffler wait.

TOFFLER

If he's not here, we go back, right?

No answer. Hart eyes the surrounding landscape coolly. He's getting a bad feeling.

And so, it seems, is Colburn. Because right now IT starts. Low-pitched, almost inaudible, unsettling. A DEATH MOAN.

INSIDE THE CAVE

Reich lowers himself down the rope, through the hole, into...

A SUBCHAMBER

..and it's pitch-black down here. Reich waves his lantern about -- all he can see at first are a few stalactites and his own foggy breath.

REICH
It's freezing down here.
(then)
Mother.

He sees them...

FIVE SKELETONS

Hanging by rope tied to stalactites. One of them missing an arm.

OUTSIDE THE CAVE

Colburn's DEATH MOAN builds and so does his shaking, like a man on the edge of a seizure.

TOFFLER
Colonel...

HART
He's spooked.

TOFFLER
He's spooking me.

Colburn drops to his knees, the DEATH MOAN growing louder -- eerie, admonitory, almost mournful.

HART
(into the cave)
Boyd!

INSIDE THE CAVE

Boyd hears Hart shouting...

HART (O.S.)
Reich!

BOYD
Hey, Reich...

INSIDE THE SUBCHAMBER

Reich examines the skeletons. All chewed to the bone.

BOYD (O.S.)
...Colonel's calling.

REICH

Wait a minute.

(then)

Colburn said there were six in his party,
right? And four murdered? There are
five bodies down here...

(counting the skeletons)

Jones, Ives, Macready, O'Brien...

Reich stops to examine one skeleton's skull. It has a bullet
hole in it. Peering about, Reich discovers, so do all the
rest.

REICH (CONT'D)

Fuck.

He scrambles for the exit.

OUTSIDE THE CAVE

Severe uneasiness.

Toffler and Madison don't know what to do with Colburn as he
begins scraping at the snow before him, his hands still
bound, his MOAN turning to a WAIL...

...and all Hart can think to do is scan the valley for some
possible threat and Madison does the same thing, readying his
bow and arrow...

INSIDE THE CAVE

Reich struggles frantically to pull himself out of the
subchamber.

BOYD

What is it, Reich?!

REICH

(ignoring Boyd; shouting a warning)
Colonel Hart!

OUTSIDE THE CAVE

Colburn, WAILING and stark raving mad, frantically burrows
deeper into the snow, freaking out Toffler...

TOFFLER

Colonel Hart!

The call echoes from inside the cave...

REICH

Colonel Hart!

Hart turns and peers inside the cave, cupping his hands and shouting...

HART

Reich?!

Consequently all backs are turned when it happens, and it happens fast.

COLBURN

Finds something, deep in the snow, something shiny, and rises. His freak-out has been an act.

TOFFLER

Colonel! He's got something!

It's a bowie knife and Colburn plunges it into Hart's back. Hart gasps, collapses, as Colburn snatches his rifle, turning it on...

MADISON

Who cannot draw his bow before Colburn FIRES Hart's one round into his chest. Two down.

TOFFLER

Caught away from his weapon as Colburn, bloody knife back in hand, targets him next.

Toffler flees. Colburn severs his binds and chases.

INSIDE THE CAVE

BOYD hears the GUNSHOT and looks for sign of someone at the end of the tunnel but no one is there.

He yanks Reich out of the hole and together they double-time it to...

THE CAVE'S ENTRANCE

...and there at their feet lie two dead soldiers. Hart and Madison. Both coloring the snow red.

A CRY OF ANGUISH echoes from somewhere in the valley -- Toffler's voice -- then is cut off abruptly.

Reich and Boyd listen. A moment passes...

...and Colburn streaks across the distant horizon, carrying Toffler's limp body over his shoulder, effortlessly, SHRIEKING victoriously.

REICH

C'mon.

Reich starts to pursue. Boyd stands frozen...lingering at Hart's body.

REICH (CONT'D)

C'mon!

Boyd swallows his fear and follows.

MOVING WITH REICH AND BOYD

Down into the valley.

REICH (CONT'D)

He killed all five of his group.
Motherfucker set us up.

Reich pulls up short on...

COLBURN'S TRACKS IN THE SNOW

Leading toward a forest.

REICH (CONT'D)

We got him.

REICH AND BOYD

Follow the tracks, quick time, the crazed man too far ahead to be seen, though his SHRIEKS are audible...and growing closer.

They pursue the trail into...

THE FOREST

...and immediately the SHRIEKS stop. Silence.

Reich freezes, listening. Can't hear a thing. Both men are sweating in sheets.

REICH

You loaded?

BOYD

Of course.

Reich continues tracking, slowly now, as the trail curves around...

A GREAT BOULDER

...and Colburn could pop out anytime, from the side or up top. They move prudently around the boulder. Colburn does not appear.

But there's something worse waiting for them on the other side. Something gruesome...

TOFFLER

Very dead. Torso split open with a knife -- parts missing. Boyd recoils, Reich does not.

BOYD

He took out his --

Another SHRIEK startles them. Coming from up ahead. Reich and Boyd push forward, their pace quickening...

REICH

He's close.

...even as they notice the first of two strange changes to Colburn's tracks.

First Change: once clean footfalls turn to dragging strides with a third impression, that of a hand, falling between them.

Reich and Boyd continue on, regardless, but they must stop at...

The Second Change: the tracks stop. A cold trail. No Colburn in sight.

Reich thinks, then spins around, revolver ready: nothing there.

REICH

Thought he might have backtracked.

Boyd looks upward, spots something, points it out to Reich.

A TREE BRANCH

A thick one, sturdy enough to bear the weight of a man. The snow has been knocked off this branch. And it's been knocked off another nearby. And another past that. And another.

A different kind of trail.

REICH

Guy's a fucking monkey.

NEAR THE EDGE OF A CLIFF

A hundred foot drop down to a frozen lake.

REICH AND BOYD

Try to keep their distance from the edge, but the branch trail borders it. Both men are strung tight, proceeding cautiously when...

THE TRACKS STOP AGAIN.

No branches nearby without snow.

Reich thinks, realizes something awful...

REICH

He backtracked --

COLBURN

Drops from a tree behind Reich in Neanderthal fashion and flings his knife at the soldier.

REICH

FIRES his revolver reflexively, straight down into the snow, as he staggers back, bowie protruding from his chest.

BOYD

Turns and hastily FIRES his rifle at Colburn, who spins to the ground.

REICH

Eyes the knife in his body. Face horror-stricken. The realization that his life is over. He stumbles backwards and blindly steps over the edge of the cliff.

BOYD

His gaze lingers on Reich's last step. He's all alone now, and defenseless, having discharged his one round, and in a lot of trouble because twenty yards away...

COLBURN

Rises. Hunched over, eyes possessed, inhaling deeply, like an animal, Toffler's blood circling his mouth. He touches his arm and draws blood -- Boyd's shot just grazed him.

BOYD

The old cowardice overtaking him, and it pushes him into the one reasonable course of action at this time: he turns and runs like hell.

COLBURN

Smiles. And SHRIEKS. And attacks.

THE CHASE BEGINS.

MOVING WITH BOYD.

If this were a simple foot race, a question of outright speed, Boyd could conceivably win -- he's a pretty fast guy, and nothing fuels a runner like fear. Yet it's not a simple foot race because...

...there are two feet of fresh snow beneath Boyd's feet and tree branches lashing his face and an icy log to climb over.

MOVING WITH COLBURN

And these obstacles are true for him, too, only he's closing in on Boyd because, first of all, he's moving low, in his primal crouch, avoiding the branches, and when the fallen tree blocks his path, he scampers over it, monkey-like.

MOVING WITH BOYD

He clears the forest and starts down a steep slope, doing fine for the first few steps, but then gravity plus ice play a nasty trick on him, and Boyd tumbles ass over head, somersaulting all the way down to...

THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL

...and when Boyd rises...

COLBURN

is right there, pursuing relentlessly, unfalteringly, not slipping, not tumbling, but running at top speed.

A LONG, FLAT STRETCH

Boyd sprints across it. All the previous obstacles have disappeared now -- no branches, no logs, no slope, even the snow's pretty thin here. Only one problem: Boyd's exhausted.

The distance between Boyd and Colburn narrows rapidly as...

AHEAD OF BOYD

There is clearly a place where earth ceases and air proceeds:
a cliff. Redwood treetops loom over the horizon.

COLBURN

Sensing victory, starts reaching for Boyd but...

BOYD

doesn't slow down as he approaches land's end; instead he
makes his last footfall a good one, and unhesitatingly
leaps...

...off the cliff's edge, flying through the open air, over a
fifty foot drop...

...crashing into the top of a redwood tree, and he falls,
smashing into tree branches, stuttering his descent, until,
at last -- THUNK -- he lands on a tuft of snow.

Boyd does not move thereafter. Just lies there in a ball.
Unconscious.

COLBURN

Remains above, on the cliff's edge. No one who didn't have
to would make Boyd's jump, and (judging from Boyd's
consciousness) Colburn doesn't have to.

He searches for another way down...

CUT TO:

SNOW.

Falling softly through the air, settling upon branches of
redwood trees, accumulating on a canyon floor, and covering
any tracks leading away from Boyd's savior-redwood.

COLBURN

Having worked his way around and down into the canyon,
searches for Boyd. But he's gone, or at least so it seems.

BOYD

Hides in a crevice of the cliff, in shadows, watching as
Colburn withdraws. He remains squeezed between two rocky
walls until...

CUT TO:

NIGHT

...and then, under cover of darkness, Boyd extricates himself.

His face ripe with scratches and cuts, his nose bleeding, his right leg broken, Boyd limps away from the canyon a wreck.

The snow continues to plummet in sheets, becoming a full-fledged...

CUT TO:

BLIZZARD.

Boyd is struggling through the icy haze, fighting gale force winds, but he is losing the battle, and at last he resigns.

He starts to burrow into the snow.

CUT TO:

THE MORNING AFTER (DAY 4).

The storm has passed, leaving in its wake a fresh foot of snow over the Sierra Nevadas.

A HAND

Wrests its way up through the snow, soon followed by the rest of Boyd, raising himself from his snow-covered shelter as he did from the "Dead Cart."

CUT TO:

BOYD'S RIGHT LEG AND A SHORT TREE BRANCH.

Tied together with some ripped cloth. A splint. Boyd tightens it once more before setting off.

CUT TO:

BOYD.

Laboring uphill, and each step he takes stabs him painfully in the leg; by the time he reaches the hill's summit, he's on the brink of blacking out.

He scans the countryside in every direction -- nothing looks familiar.

He is lost.

CUT TO:

HART'S TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP.

The one item above all others which Boyd needs right now. It flaps in the wind, sticking out of Hart's backpack, at the mouth of the cave.

The sound of someone approaching...

COLBURN

Drags Toffler's half-mauled body into the cave, adding a third streak of red in the white snow. Hart and Madison have already been stored away inside.

In the distance, a storm approaches.

CUT TO:

A BROKEN WHEEL.

Half-buried in snow. Together with some tattered canvas flapping in the wind, and the skeleton of a horse, it constitutes...

THE LAST RESTING PLACE OF COLBURN'S WAGON TRAIN.

And right now Boyd stumbles onto the location, which he peruses, scrounging for any object he could possibly use. All he finds is...

A SHREDDED DIARY

Its pages ripped out almost entirely, except for the bottom corner of one page. Boyd reads it...

BOYD (V.O.)

...has gone completely lunatic since what he did to Jones. The rest of us are starving and weak and without defense and, I fear, soon to be victims of this madman. Again, I pray to the Almighty for delivery.

CUT TO:

THE BROKEN WHEEL.

Boyd affixes it over his burrowed hole in the ground, then covers it with tree branches -- a roof.

He's preparing his shelter for a second night and just in time, too, because snowflakes as big as his eye begin to fall and Boyd shudders in apprehension.

He is freezing.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE COLBURN'S CAVE.

As the snow thickens. The faint glimmer of flames within the cave. The CRACKLING of a fire.

Dinner time.

CUT TO:

BOYD AND HIS FIRST ATTEMPT AT EATING.

Tree bark. Boyd pries it off an oak, then feeds himself in small amounts, hoping small portions will minimize the atrocious flavor -- it doesn't.

CUT TO:

INSIDE HIS SHELTER.

Boyd sleeps. A shadow falls over him. He awakes:

Colburn stands over him.

CUT TO:

INSIDE HIS SHELTER.

Boyd awakes for real -- no Colburn in sight.

CUT TO:

BOYD AND HIS NEXT ATTEMPT.

A root. The size of Boyd's thumb, dug up from the earth. Boyd is truly in the throes of hunger and so he eats it voraciously. Still, it's unsatiating.

On the flip side of wilderness dining...

CUT TO:

A BONE.

Flies out from Colburn's cave, into the snow, chewed clean. Inside, the smorgasbord continues.

CUT TO:

INSIDE BOYD'S SHELTER.

Boyd tosses and turns, tries to sleep, but the pain in his stomach won't allow him.

He is starving.

CUT TO:

BOYD.

He emerges from his shelter. Gaunt and sickly pale. Quivering from the cold, from hunger, from sheer weakness.

He is dying.

CUT TO:

A STEEP ROCKY SLOPE.

Boyd scales down it, hands raw and numb, barely grasping boulders, and these rocks are ice-covered and slippery and Boyd learns this the hard way: he slips, scrapes over rock, then recovers.

Behind Boyd: the cliff over which Reich fell. Below him: the frozen lake. Near its edge...

CUT TO:

A HOLE IN THE ICE

Where Reich landed five days ago. A thin layer of ice has formed over it. Boyd's foot kicks it clean. Beneath it: the lake's water, freezing cold.

BOYD.

Facing his last resort. He strips off his shirt and jacket, his boots, his threadbare socks. Pauses a moment to ball up his courage...

...before lowering himself into the hole. The cold seizes him instantly, and he gasps for breath. Once again he builds up his resolve before advancing to the next step...

...he submerges.

UNDERWATER.

Boyd breast-strokes through the water, and each push away from the hole delivers him into darker waters. Above him: ice -- thick, solid, unbreakable.

Boyd scans the area, spots something: a dim figure ahead, floating, trapped against the icy surface.

CUT TO:

ABOVE THE WATER

Boyd surfaces, nearly blue in the face. His first desperate inhalation sounds like a backwards SCREAM, followed by COUGHING. He pulls himself out of the water, then drags up...

REICH

Frozen stiff, bowie knife still impaled in his chest.

CUT TO:

A FIRE

Inside Boyd's shelter. Made out of twigs and bark and anything Boyd could scrounge. Boyd, dry and dressed again, feeds it a little more wood, then turns his attention to...

REICH'S BODY

...and the bowie knife is no longer in Reich's chest, it's in Boyd's hand, and Boyd starts cutting Reich's pant leg off, preparing him for...

...the fire. Boyd hesitates, gulping loathsomely, before he lifts Reich's leg over the flames and cooks it.

OUTSIDE THE SHELTER

The fire's smoke seeps out through the broken-wheel roof. We will not be witnesses to the depravity within.

CUT TO:

THE BROKEN WHEEL.

Undergoing a series of transformations. It is Boyd's hand which performs these, but his face and figure are never seen.

...the bowie knife saws off several of the wheel's spokes...

...canvas from the broken-down wagons is wrapped tight around the remaining spokes...

...the front of Boyd's new creation is shaved at an angle, ultimately creating...

CUT TO:

A MAKESHIFT TOBOGGAN.

Resting against a tree. It is night now, overlooking Colburn's valley, from the same viewpoint where Hart and company first scanned it. Next to the toboggan stands...

BOYD.

His own transformation apparent now: he is noticeably stronger, hunched, with a week's beard on him. As he enters Colburn's valley, he moves in a low, primal crouch, like Colburn's, but augmented by his limp.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE COLBURN'S CAVE

Hidden behind brush, bowie knife in hand, Boyd peers inside at...

COLBURN'S SILHOUETTE

Projected against a cave's wall by orange flames. Next to the shadow: Reich's and Toffler's rifles as well as everyone's backpacks.

BOYD

Moves away, climbing around the cave, up to...

THE CAVE'S ROOF

...and Boyd peers over the edge, sees the reflection of Colburn's campfire on the snow.

He lies down, flat on his stomach, pulling his jacket over his head as snow descends.

CUT TO:

THE NEXT MORNING.

A layer of white camouflages Boyd on the roof and his footprints leading there.

Colburn -- seen from above and, therefore, only partially -- exits the cave below Boyd. He breathes the morning air and marches off.

BOYD.

Rises stealthily as Colburn's figure disappears over a horizon, then moves quickly into the cave, not by scampering down and around, but by simply dropping from the roof.

INSIDE THE CAVE

Boyd ransacks the backpacks. No ammo: the remaining rifles are useless to him. But he does find Hart's map. He stuffs it in his shirt: his ticket home.

And that's when he hears the MOAN.

Boyd looks around: no one there. Another MOAN. It's a familiar voice. Boyd has a choice to make: get the hell out or investigate.

He chooses the latter. Moving deeper into the cave, Boyd hears the MOAN again. It's coming from...

THE HOLE.

Boyd checks the cave's entrance: no sign of Colburn. He lowers himself down the rope and into...

THE SUBCHAMBER.

Colburn's meat locker. Very dark. But Boyd detects the five old skeletons and two new ones: Madison and Toffler, looking like two half-carved Thanksgiving turkeys.

Another MOAN. From behind Boyd. He spins -- it's...

HART

Barely alive and barely conscious. Emaciated. Traces of blood around his mouth.

BOYD

Colonel.

HART

(eyes closed, voice half gone)
What?

Hart slowly opens his eyes, recognizes Boyd. Sees Boyd's bowie knife.

HART (CONT'D)

Cut it.

Boyd notices Hart's hands, bound with rope, and he begins to saw them free.

HART

No.

(extending his neck)
Cut it.

Boyd considers the request. For less than a second. He cuts the rope.

CUT TO:

SOMEWHERE IN THE VALLEY

Colburn can be heard TRAMPLING through the fresh snow, HUMMING a sonorous "Pop Goes The Weasel."

His shadow falls into view, hovering over...

A FOOTPRINT

Left by Boyd under a tree's foliage and consequently not fully covered by the night's snowfall. Colburn (unseen still) studies its direction: it's headed toward the cave.

CUT TO:

THE CAVE'S MOUTH.

Boyd exits, Hart slung over his shoulder fireman's style. Hurries away from the cave and into the valley.

MOVING WITH BOYD.

Wading through the snow, and he's not moving very quickly, yet his speed is remarkable considering...

...the dead weight on his shoulders. Hart fades in and out of consciousness, head bouncing against Boyd's back, as...

...Boyd begins the climb out of the valley, huffing and puffing, but smiling slightly because he's made it, or at least he thinks he has...

HART

Boyd...

Bad news. Boyd turns to see what's wrong.

Fifty yards back...

COLBURN SPEEDS TOWARD THEM.

At this distance, Colburn is a shadowy figure, but this much shows clear: he is primal, he is hungry, and he is hell-bent in their direction. A nightmare vision fully realized.

BOYD

Shit.

Boyd kicks it into high gear.

THE CHASE BEGINS. AGAIN.

Only this time it's different...in three ways.

First Difference: IT'S BI-LEVEL.

Because the next time Colburn appears -- and he does so only intermittently between trees -- he has taken the high road, leaping and swinging from tree branch to tree branch, carving a zig-zagging but ferocious trail...

...and Boyd is on the low road...struggling through fresh layers of snow...with Hart on his back...up a steepening slope...on a bum leg.

Second Difference: IT'S NO CONTEST -- COLBURN'S GOING TO WIN.

An absolute certainty. Colburn's velocity is just too great. Boyd's handicaps are too overwhelming. This is a done deal.

As Colburn swiftly reduces the distance between him and his victims, and prepares to intersect their path and pounce down upon them, he SHRIEKS.

But the curious thing is...

...no fear enters Boyd's eyes. Pumped full of determination and cannibalistic courage, he knows...

The Third Difference: IT'S NO CONTEST -- BOYD'S GOT A RINGER.

THE TOBOGGAN.

As soon as he reaches the hill's top, Boyd grabs it and throws it down on the snow and unloads Hart on top of it. He pushes off, jumps on himself, starts down...

THE LONG, STEEP HILL

MOVING WITH THE SLED

Boyd and Hart whisk away, safe at last. Except for one thing.

Hart slips off. Boyd reaches for him -- MISSES.

The sled continues to fly down the hill, leaving Hart near the top.

HART

Boyd!

An echo of his squad's cry in Mexico. But this time Boyd acts. He hurls himself off the sled, rolls a bit, and, the

instant he rebounds, starts scrambling back uphill toward...

HART

who lies helpless fifteen yards away, extending his hand.

HART

Boyd. Hurry, Boyd.

BOYD

thrashes in the snow, fighting the slope, but he's winning the fight and has nearly reached Hart when...

COLBURN SWOOPS DOWN FROM ABOVE.

A hulking, growling savage. He lands directly between Boyd and Hart.

BOYD

Recoils. He fumbles for his bowie knife, wards off Colburn with it.

COLBURN

Snarls at Boyd, urging him to attack. When Boyd doesn't, Colburn GRUNTS -- a sneer -- and takes his time gathering Hart's limp body up into his arms.

Then, with a final, derisive SNORT, Colburn scrambles up into the tree tops as quickly as he descended.

He and Hart are gone.

BOYD

Remains frozen. Paralyzed with fear. Knees sunk in the snow. Nothing he can do.

BOYD

Hart!

His anguished cry is wiped out by...

CUT TO:

HOWLING WINDS.

Driving Boyd back as he trudges through a blizzard. He stops to refer to Hart's map, then struggles onward...

CUT TO:

MOUNTAINS.

Boyd scales them, alone, injured, in conditions impossible to endure. Boyd endures them.

CUT TO:

FORT SPENCER.

Evening now and the storm is milder here.

CLEAVES

Exits the outhouse, buttoning his fly. As he starts back to the fort, he notices...

A FIGURE

Emerging from the timberland. Stumbling toward the fort.

BOYD.

Haggard. Exhausted. He takes one last torturous step...

CLEAVES (O.S.)

Jefferson! Hey, Jefferson! It's Boyd!

...and collapses.

FADE OUT.

TITLE: TWO WEEKS LATER.

FADE IN:

THE SIERRA NEVADAS.

Still the dead of winter here. Fresh blankets of snow cover the mountainsides. Still not a sign of life.

CUT TO:

FORT SPENCER.

Almost as lifeless. Except for...

JEFFERSON

who stands outside the yard's fence, watching the surrounding forest, waiting (in vain) for his brother to return. Nearby...

CLEAVES

chops firewood with an axe.

INSIDE THE FORT PARLOR

Knox drinks and plays chess by himself.

A grandfather clock strikes ten a.m. GONG. GONG. GONG.
GONG.

INSIDE BOYD'S QUARTERS

GONG...Boyd lies in his bunk.

GONG...Cast on his foot.

GONG...Scars on his face.

GONG...Wounds internal and external languishing.

GONG...Sick, gaunt, melancholic.

GONG...He glances out his window at...

CLEAVES.

Outside, finishing his work. He puts down his axe and
collects the wood he's splintered.

When his arms are full of timber, he turns to find...

BOYD.

A few feet away. Leering fiendishly. Axe in hand.

Before Cleaves can mutter a word, Boyd swings the blade into
the private's mid-section, splitting him open, splashing
blood across the snow. Nearby...

JEFFERSON

Continues his vigil. Deaf to the whole incident.
Meanwhile...

BOYD GUTS CLEAVES.

Thrusting his arm from the incision up into the torso, he
struggles, then finally succeeds to withdraw Cleaves' heart.

Boyd starts to take a bite.

CUT TO:

INSIDE BOYD'S QUARTERS

Boyd snaps out of his daydream. Horrified and repulsed.
Desperate to banish his murderous thoughts. But hungry.
Killingly hungry.

Boyd is in the full throes of Tanatka.

He uncaps a canteen and guzzles water, liquid spilling out and down his shirtfront.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE KITCHEN

Cleaves enters, alive and fine. Unloads his timber into the kitchen oven.

IN THE PARLOR

Knox hears someone WALKING in the hall. STEP-THUMP-STEP-THUMP.

KNOX

Boyd, I told you to stay off it. Boyd?

IN THE HALLWAY

Boyd, cane in hand, limps to...

THE ENLISTED MEN'S QUARTERS

where he zeroes in on...

A TRUNK

Full of Indian paraphernalia. Madison's.

Boyd feverishly scrounges through it. A desperate man in a desperate situation. He finds...

THE "TANATKA" CLOTH PAINTING.

Boyd unrolls it, hands shaking slightly, and just as the sketch of the regressed Indian reveals itself...

SLAP! The trunk slams shut.

JEFFERSON

towers above Boyd, glowering -- Boyd is trespassing in his brother's belongings.

BOYD

I need to talk to you. Jefferson...
(referring to the painting)
Tanatka. You know it?

Jefferson doesn't flinch.

BOYD (CONT'D)

It's critical...

(a different tactic)

I'm sorry about your brother. I wish I could have helped him. By the time we got to him, he was already...

(this isn't getting him anywhere)

Jefferson, I need to know. Tanatka. How do...

JEFFERSON

Story.

BOYD

It's not just a story.

(flustered, he pauses)

The hunger. The more you eat, the more you want to. How do you stop it?

(no response)

How?

JEFFERSON

(exiting)

You don't.

BOYD

Jefferson...

(the Indian turns back)

...watch me.

Jefferson exits. Boyd lingers.

DISSOLVE TO:

A GLASS.

Whiskey splashes into it. Some of the booze misses the glass completely. It's Knox pouring -- his third or fourth of the day.

The Grandfather clock STRIKES TWICE -- two p.m.

OUTSIDE THE FORT

Jefferson resumes his vigil, Boyd's last request troubling him.

He spots something approaching from the west. Alerts Knox with a knock on the parlor window.

AERIAL VIEW -- A COVERED WAGON

Rolls into the fort's perimeter. Knox steps out to welcome THREE FIGURES who disembark.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE KITCHEN

Jefferson enters as Cleaves cooks.

JEFFERSON
Brigadier general's here.

CLEAVES
Any news? Search party find anything?

SLAUSON (V.O.)
Nothing.

CUT TO:

BRIGADIER GENERAL SLAUSON AND HIS AIDE, LINDUS.

Inside Boyd's quarters. Slauson addresses Boyd, back in bed.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)
No sign of anyone. No sign of a sign of
anyone. Not Colonel Hart's rescue party.
Not the original party.

BOYD
You found the cave.

SLAUSON
Nothing in there. No blood tracks, no
rope. No bodies.

BOYD
The hole.

SLAUSON
Just some stalagmites.

LINDUS
Stalactites, sir. Stalagmites go up.

SLAUSON
(a stern look to Lindus, then)
How are you feeling, Boyd?

BOYD
Fine.

SLAUSON
Major Knox says you've been suffering
from nightmares. Waking the place up at
night screaming. You want to tell me
about them?

BOYD
(curtly)
No. What about Reich's body?

SLAUSON
(a beat -- affronted)
We didn't find it. Or, rather, its
remnants.
(another beat: let that thought linger)
We did get some information on Mr.
Colburn. Lindus?

Lindus fumbles for, produces a pad. Reads from it.

LINDUS
F.W. Colburn. Born in Andover,
Massachusetts, 1804. On his way to
California to open a mission. He was a
Jesuit priest.

A beat.

BOYD
You don't believe my story.

SLAUSON
We have five missing persons, Captain.
And no bodies. We need a supportable
explanation. Your "story" -- this
"Tenkata" -- is the stuff of campfires.
It is not supportable.
(to Lindus)
Stop squirming, Lindus. I know I
mispronounced it. I'm making a point.
(to Boyd)
The point is, Captain: we need facts, not
myths.

BOYD
You have them.

SLAUSON
I don't doubt you believe that, Boyd. I
don't. But push aside for the moment
what you believe happened, and consider
what probably did happen.

BOYD
It is what happened, sir.

SLAUSON

If you altered your story now, Boyd, it wouldn't be perceived as retracting a lie. Only clarifying a muddled recollection. Major Knox had you pretty hopped up on painkillers the day we spoke to you, and I can see how you could have garbled the events up there with this story you'd heard about...

BOYD

Sir, I was coherent then and I'm coherent now and I distinctly remember...

SLAUSON

...and that's why I'm giving you this second opportunity.

BOYD

(a beat)

To do what?

SLAUSON

Change your story.

(a beat)

Boyd, you may or may not know: a few months ago a man struck gold just outside San Francisco.

BOYD

Sir..?

SLAUSON

Word's spread to the rest of the country faster than...fast. Now every country yokel who owns a hoe is planning to "up 'n' move" to California this summer. Reports are we should experience an influx of ten times the usual number of settlers. California's population, its economy are both going to explode. Consequently, Congress'll probably grant us statehood in a year or two. Now...

Slauson spots the Tanatka cloth painting at the foot of Boyd's bed and plucks it up.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)

...word gets out about this, that there's an "apeman" lurking up in the Sierra Nevadas who's got an appetite for human flesh...well, you can kiss the Rush of Forty-eight goodbye.

BOYD
Find him. He's up there. Find Colburn.

SLAUSON
(sighs)
If he was up there, Boyd, we would have.

INSIDE THE KITCHEN

Cleaves peels potatoes and Jefferson hovers, peering down the hall where Knox chats with the THIRD SOLDIER from the covered wagon.

CLEAVES
Who's that?

JEFFERSON
New c.o.

INSIDE BOYD'S QUARTERS

Slauson studies Boyd.

SLAUSON
Well. What to do. I could take you back with me now, to San Miguel. But I don't know if my command could afford your story finding a public ear. And this fort is short-handed as it is. Might just be better keeping you on.

BOYD
Whatever's best for your command, sir.
Boyd starts to drink...

SLAUSON
Thirsty, Boyd? But not hungry, I'm told.
Curious.

Slauson and Boyd stare each other down.

LINDUS
Sir, the colonel is waiting...

SLAUSON
Thank you, Lindus.
(to Boyd)
We've brought in an interim commanding officer. Until we can appoint a permanent replacement for Colonel Hart.

Slauson nods to his aide who promptly opens Boyd's door and summons in...

THE THIRD SOLDIER

It is Colburn. Beard shaved off, hair military short.

SLAUSON

Boyd, this is Colonel Ives. Colonel,
Captain Boyd.

COLBURN/IVES

Captain. How's the leg healing?

IVES offers his hand. Fists clenched, Boyd doesn't take it. Stricken by fear, flooded with rage, Boyd has the presence of mind not to let either emotion overwhelm him.

BOYD

General Slauson, may I speak to you alone
for a moment?

Slauson sighs.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Please, sir.

SLAUSON

(to Ives and his Aide)

Gentlemen...

They step outside. Boyd's eyes stay locked on Ives's until he is gone.

BOYD (CONT'D)

Sir, may I speak freely?

SLAUSON

Yes, Captain.

BOYD

Do you know Colonel Ives personally?

SLAUSON

We rode out together from San Miguel. I
met him two days ago.

BOYD

How was he assigned this command?

SLAUSON

By his own request.

BOYD

(a beat)

Sir. He's Colburn.

SLAUSON
Colonel Ives is.

BOYD
He Is The Man.
(a beat)
Colburn said his party was guided by a
Colonel Ives. He was talking about
himself.

SLAUSON
You never mentioned this before.

BOYD
I had a head full of morphine before...
Talk to Knox. He saw Colburn...Ives.
Have Major Knox look at Colonel Ives.

CUT TO:

KNOX.

Peers out the parlor window at Colonel Ives as he unloads his
bag from the covered wagon. Slauson and Boyd stand nearby.

KNOX
He doesn't look familiar to me, sir. As
I've said, I was not feeling my best that
day. I do remember the man wore a beard.

BOYD
(to Slauson)
Sir, there is one other thing.

SLAUSON
Captain.

BOYD
Sir. A scar...

Ives enters the room.

IVES
General, Lindus says you should leave now
in order to beat the storm.

BOYD
(sotto voce)
Sir, the man who ambushed us up in the
mountains, I fired upon him. Grazed his
arm, I'm pretty sure.

SLAUSON
And you'd like me to check. Will that
satisfy you?

BOYD
(a beat)
Yessir.

SLAUSON
Very well. Left or right?

BOYD
Left.

Slauson approaches Ives.

SLAUSON
Colonel Ives...

IVES
General...

SLAUSON
Would you humor me for a moment.

IVES
Of course.

SLAUSON
(after another glance at Boyd)
Would you...would you take off your
shirt, please.

Ives chuckles, hesitates.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)
Please, Colonel.

IVES
(shrugs)
My last physical examination was not too
long ago. Surely Major Knox has no
driving desire to hear me cough?

As Ives strips, Boyd and Knox position themselves to
witness...

...IVES'S NAKED ARM. No scars. Clean.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)
Thank you, Colonel.

IVES
Not at all.

Slauson shoots Boyd a look. Exits.

CUT TO:

THE COVERED WAGON.

Slauson and his Aide prepare to embark. Slauson addresses Boyd.

SLAUSON

I corresponded with your superior in Mexico, Boyd. General Shaw. He told me about your real record down there. Two massacres, one survivor. Curious.

(a beat)

This accusation was foolishness.

BOYD

Sir. He is a killer.

SLAUSON

Do you want to go to the brig, Boyd? Is that what you want? I'll take you there right now.

Boyd considers this -- it's an easy escape from his dilemma. But then he turns around to view...

JEFFERSON, CLEAVES, AND KNOX.

Easy pickings for Ives.

BOYD

(under his breath)

Breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

SLAUSON

I'm sorry -- what was that?

BOYD

(rallying his courage)

No, sir. I'll stay.

Slauson studies Boyd a moment more, then...

SLAUSON

Colonel Ives.

Ives approaches. Boyd loiters.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)

Captain...would you leave us.

Boyd steps reluctantly away. The two ranking officers

consult.

SLAUSON (CONT'D)

Colonel, I'm not very comfortable with Captain Boyd's state of mind. He's delusional, I'm certain. Possibly dangerous. Especially toward you, Colonel. He seems to think that you...that you murdered his outfit.

IVES

(locking eyes with Boyd)

Oh.

SLAUSON

(a reluctant offer)

If you like, I'll remove him from your command.

Ives considers this, or at least pretends to, before...

IVES

No, sir. Leave him.

SLAUSON

You're certain?

IVES

If Boyd has delusions, sir, especially concerning me, then perhaps the best way to cure him of those is to let him remain here.

SLAUSON

(relieved)

Very well. He's your charge. Just please keep a wary eye on him.

IVES

I will, sir.

SLAUSON

(to Lindus)

Okay.

Slauson and Lindus drive away, leaving...

COLONEL IVES AND CAPTAIN BOYD.

Face-to-face. Silent confrontation.

A storm brews on the horizon.

CUT TO:

THE KITCHEN

Cleaves gossips with Jefferson through a mouthful of food: he's got the munchies.

CLEAVES

Boyd told the general that Colonel Ives killed everyone.

JEFFERSON

What?

CLEAVES

He said Colonel Ives was the man. Boyd's kinda lost it. I think he's the reason no one came back.

Jefferson reacts to this, hungry to avenge Madison, when...

...Boyd enters. He shoots past both men, heads straight down to...

THE SUPPLY ROOM

and more importantly to...

THE ARSENAL CLOSET

but there's a problem -- it's locked.

CUT TO:

THE KEY TO THE ARSENAL.

As it is transferred from Knox's hand to Colonel Ives's. The two officers stand in the fort hallway.

In the distance behind them, Boyd emerges from the supply room.

KNOX

...and this is the key to the arsenal. It's the only lock in Fort Spencer. We pride ourselves on that, Colonel.

IVES

As you should. Thank you, Major.

Boyd realizes his predicament -- every weapon in Fort Spencer is in Ives's control, including the one holstered on the colonel's waist.

Boyd turns to Cleaves and Jefferson.

BOYD
I have to warn you.

CLEAVES
Yeah, Captain?

Boyd meets each man's glance, reads their thoughts -- it's useless to explain.

BOYD
Consider yourselves warned.
He grabs a butcher knife, points it at Cleaves.

BOYD (CONT'D)
You need this?
Cleaves nervously shakes his head.

BOYD (CONT'D)
Good.
And Boyd's off. Alarmed, Jefferson grabs a knife of his own.

MOVING WITH BOYD DOWN THE HALLWAY

On his way to his room, he hears something. Stops to listen.
"Pop Goes The Weasel." Whistled playfully. From within Ives's new quarters.

Boyd glares at Ives's closed door.

IVES (O.S.)
"Round and round the mulberry bush/ The monkey chased the weasel..."

KNOX
(approaching)
Boyd. Put back the knife.

BOYD
No.

As Boyd proceeds to his room...

IVES (O.S.)
"...pop goes the weasel."

CUT TO:

THAT NIGHT.

The storm begins.

CUT TO:

RIBS AND MASHED POTATOES.

Dinner. As plates are passed down the mess table, eyes dart between...

BOYD

Who is strung tight -- each time Ives's hand sweeps over his knife, Boyd stiffens a bit -- and...

IVES

Who, reversely, is cool. He moves and gestures and eats with an officer's easy poise.

There's only one thing in common between these men -- neither will touch his entree.

KNOX

Not an eater of ribs, Colonel?

IVES

No, Major Knox. I don't care for most red meat. Can never forget it used to be an animal.

KNOX

Sentimental fellow.

IVES

What about you, Captain Boyd? Don't you eat meat?

KNOX

Oh, he won't --

BOYD

Only as a last resort.

Knox, Jefferson, and Cleaves react to this -- what the hell does that mean? -- and Ives mimics their reaction. Boyd appears deranged, knows it. He chugs one of two glasses of water before him.

IVES

Well, gentlemen, I am new to this post and to this environment. There seems much to know, quite a bit of time to learn it. I thought then it might be instructive, at least for me, and beneficial to company health, if we were to enjoy a mountain excursion of sorts.

CLEAVES

A what?

IVES

A hike.

KNOX

Excellent idea, Colonel. As soon as possible. Of course, we'll have to wait for this storm to pass.

IVES

Of course. Captain Boyd, will you be able to join us?

Boyd grimaces: he knows what Ives is up to. Before he can reply, though...

KNOX

I'd have to prohibit that, sir. Boyd's leg needs at least another two weeks of rest.

IVES

Hmmm. Pity.

CUT TO:

IN THE PARLOR

Post-dinner recreation. Everyone is present. And hawk-eyed.

In a corner, knife overtly at his side, Boyd doesn't try to hide his venomous observation of Ives.

Jefferson, carving an arrow, keeps a hostile eye of his own on Boyd.

Knox steals furtive glances in Boyd's direction between chess moves against Cleaves, and when Cleaves does the same, Knox cheats.

Only Ives seems oblivious to the multiple surveillances. He reads -- Melville's "Typee."

KNOX

Checkmate.

CLEAVES

Ah, screw.

KNOX

Care for a game, Colonel?

IVES
No, thank you, Major.

KNOX
Jefferson?

JEFFERSON
What?

KNOX
Game?

Jefferson declines. Knox considers asking Boyd, thinks better of it.

A moment passes, and then...

...Ives rises fast, SLAPPING his book closed. Triggering Boyd to rise and reach for his butcher knife. Which triggers Jefferson to stand, too, poised for action.

An awkward, embarrassing moment.

IVES
I'm turning in for the night. Appears a number of us could use some rest.
Goodnight, gentlemen.

Ives exits. Everyone stares at...

BOYD

Who's appearing more deranged by the hour.

CUT TO:

COLONEL IVES'S DOOR.

Late at night. It CREAKS open. Ives prowls out of his quarters -- noiselessly. Nevertheless...

BOYD

Steps out immediately, knife in hand, a watchdog. Ives hesitates, then struts down the hallway. As he brushes past Boyd, no words are exchanged. Just looks.

CUT TO:

THE outhouse.

Boyd monitors from a distance.

CLACK-CLACK. The stable doors swing freely in the night

wind. CREEEAAKKK. CLACK-CLACK. Eerie.

Ives exits the outhouse, buttoning up, and moves toward Boyd. He stops, surveying the sky.

IVES

Clearing up. We should be able to hike tomorrow.

(a beat)

Found your Private Reich up there. What was left of him. You didn't finish? Can't blame you: he was tough. But a good soldier ought to be.

Boyd tightens his grip on his knife: on the brink of attack.

IVES (CONT'D)

Why don't you do it, Boyd? Stab me. Go ahead.

Boyd hesitates. Ives' gaze turns from the stars to Boyd.

IVES (CONT'D)

Why don't you? Because you know you'd never survive it. I'd shoot you. Or if I didn't, and you killed me, you'd be tried and executed within the week.

(confidently turning his back on Boyd)
Your only alternative would be to run -- something you're familiar with -- and in this weather that's as certain as a death sentence.

BOYD

I think you'd shoot me first.

IVES

I think I would, too.

BOYD

Then why don't you?

IVES

Shoot you?

BOYD

That's why you came back.

IVES

Is that what you think? I came back to kill you? Eat you?

Ives chuckles, amused.

BOYD

You didn't come for the climate.

IVES

We're a lot alike, Boyd.

BOYD

No. We're not.

IVES

We are. We both do what we have to to survive. Take what you did with Private Reich. That was survival instinct. Same as what I did.

BOYD

What you did was murder, not survive.

IVES

Was it, though? Do you know all the facts? Let me tell them to you: Not long ago I was suffering from consumption, bronchitis in an advanced stage, coupled with extreme mental fatigue -- fierce headaches, erratic black moods. I was on my way to a sanitarium in Colorado, to "convalesce", more likely to die. En route, however, my wagon train grew lost in the Rockies...

BOYD

I've heard this one before.

IVES

Yes. Abstracted, of course, and recast, but factual at heart. Anyway, that was the first time I ate. Twelve men in just over two months. The bronchitis quickly vanished. As did the black thoughts. I reached Denver that spring happy and healthy. That was a year ago.

BOYD

Lot of bodies under the bridge.

IVES

You can only imagine. Well, one year later, here I am, healthier, better-spirited than ever before.

(a beat)

Now...tell me it wasn't survival.

BOYD

It wasn't.

Ives grins. Slowly advances on Boyd.

Boyd tries to keep him at bay with his knife, but when Ives pushes too close, Boyd swipes at him.

Ives smiles -- a cut on his left hand. He begins to play with his own blood, sliding it over his fingers, dripping it on the snow, with a magician's artistry.

Boyd ogles it.

IVES

Remember this, Boyd? Smell it -- scent always jogs the memory. Remember the energy. Another man's virility in you. And his courage. Remember it? Then the slow disappointment as you felt it dissipate, the strength slipping from your grasp. Followed by the growing, killing need to replenish. Of course, I don't have remind you of that -- you're feeling it right now.

BOYD

Colonel...

IVES

Boyd...

BOYD

You've convinced me. We are a lot alike.
(beckoning with his knife)
Please...step a little closer this time.

Ives chuckles, applying a handkerchief to his wound.

INSERT -- A VIEW FROM INSIDE THE STABLES.

The doors have stopped swinging. WIND mutes Ives's LAUGHTER. Agamemnon and Menelaus WHINNY in the background.

BACK TO BOYD AND IVES.

IVES

All right. You're angry.

BOYD

You sensed that.

IVES
But you're also hungry. Don't deny it,
Boyd. You and all that water -- trying
to kill your appetite?

BOYD
Why did you come back?

IVES
The trick is acquiescence. If you simply
resign yourself, I'm sure you'd enjoy it.
Given the chance.

BOYD
Why?

IVES
(ignoring the question)
Who knows. Maybe you'll get that chance.

Ives strolls inside. Boyd must follow.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE HALLWAY.

Boyd watches Ives return to his room, then -- just as he
turns his back on the colonel...

...A SCREAMING WHISTLE pierces the air. It comes from...

CUT TO:

A BOILING KETTLE.

Steam explodes from its spout. Cleaves removes it from the
kitchen stove.

It is the following morning.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE MESS

Breakfast is served. Knox and Jefferson and Cleaves eat,
keeping an eye on...

BOYD

Who can't drink enough coffee. Exhausted from his all-
nighter, raccoon circles around his eyes, Boyd fuels himself
with another cup as...

...Ives enters, hand bandaged.

IVES
Good morning, gentlemen.

KNOX
Colonel, what happened to your hand?

IVES
Clumsy, I dropped my razor. Witless, I caught it.
(glancing out a window)
The storm has abated, I see.

KNOX
Looks like a good day for that hike.

CLEAVES
What about a hunt?

IVES
I'm sorry, Private?

CLEAVES
A hunt. I've seen jack rabbits in the forest. We could hunt them.

IVES
As you like.

KNOX
Don't you hunt, Colonel?

IVES
Jack rabbits? No. I only kill what I eat. Well, gentlemen, breakfast, then we move out.

Boyd exits quickly.

CUT TO:

INSIDE BOYD'S QUARTERS

Boyd wraps his exposed foot with a sheet, sheaths it with a pillow case, secures it all with a shoestring.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE FORT SPENCER

Everyone shuffles out the front door, dressed and armed for a hunt. Knox and Toffler and Ives with rifles, Jefferson with bow and arrows.

Boyd exits, knife in hand.

KNOX

Boyd, go back inside: that leg's not healed yet.

BOYD

I'm coming. Gimme a gun.

KNOX

Oh no.

Knox, Jefferson, and Cleaves start off. Out of their earshot:

BOYD

I thought you weren't going to hunt.

IVES

Jack rabbits.

Ives joins the others. Boyd follows, slowly, with his cane.

CUT TO:

JUST INSIDE THE FOREST

The company assembles.

KNOX

All right, Mr. Cleaves, where are these hares?

CLEAVES

In holes. We gotta scare 'em out.

IVES

Then do so, Private. Put some fear in those bunnies.

Cleaves turns to Jefferson: this is more in his line. Jefferson scans the snow, spots a hole, and points it out to Cleaves.

Cleaves circles the hole, then squats, pushing his hand into it.

CLEAVES

Don't feel anything.

JEFFERSON

Yell.

CLEAVES

Hey-yeh-yeh-yeh-yeh!

Nothing. Looks are exchanged.

KNOX

Well, I for one was frightened.

A FLASH OF BROWN in the distance. Scurrying away. A rabbit.

CLEAVES

Woo-hoo! We're in business!

THE HUNT BEGINS.

And it's a romp. A laughingly dizzying chase through the woods as this tiny, furry creature outmaneuvers grown men with guns.

INTERCUT:

MOVING WITH CLEAVES.

The most gay-spirited and energetic of the company. He tries to keep pace with the rabbit, LAUGHING and HOLLERING as he pursues.

MOVING WITH KNOX.

A far cry more sluggish than Cleaves, yet surprisingly sober: he wants that rabbit.

MOVING WITH JEFFERSON.

Hunting is his second nature. He chases less, stalks more.

MOVING WITH BOYD

as he follows Ives, or tries to, but it's no easy task with his leg, and consequently he quickly loses sight of him. Boyd traces Ives's tracks instead, but they soon intersect with others, and Boyd is lost.

Colonel Ives can't be found. Chiefly because...

HE STANDS TWENTY FEET ABOVE THE GROUND.

Perched on a sturdy branch. A bird's eye view of the action.

CLEAVES (O.S.)

It's over here!

KNOX (O.S.)

(sotto voce)

Shut up, Cleaves.

CLEAVES (O.S.)

Okay!

Ives spots Jefferson in the distance and smiles: he's hunting as well, for different prey.

CLEAVES

Finds his trail cold.

CLEAVES

I lost him.

THE RABBIT

Huddles beneath a fallen tree, perfectly still, and blind to...

KNOX

Creeping up from behind. He levels his rifle, when -- THUMP -- an ARROW penetrates the log, barely missing the rabbit and scaring it away.

KNOX

Dammit, Jefferson. You could have hit me.

IVES

Lurks above, overhearing Knox's complaints. Then, with a nimble leap, he disappears.

MOVING WITH JEFFERSON

As he picks up the rabbit's trail and follows, unaware that Ives follows him. Meanwhile...

BOYD

Continues to search for Ives. At last, out of breath, he remembers to turn his sights upward.

And there it is. A branch with snow knocked off. Boyd follows the new trail in a panic -- he may be too late.

Far ahead...

JEFFERSON

Spots the rabbit. Bow ready, he crouches low, causing...

IVES

to descend from the trees, rifle ready.

BOYD

arrives at last, spotting...

IVES

who trains his rifle on...

JEFFERSON

who trains his arrow on the hare.

BOYD

No!

Ives FIRES -- BANG!

The rabbit rolls into a ball, shot dead.

Ives lowers his smoking rifle.

Jefferson lowers his bow.

Boyd slumps against a tree, drained.

Knox and Cleaves arrive.

CLEAVES

The colonel got 'im!

KNOX

(wishfully)

Jeez, Boyd. Almost made him miss his shot.

CLEAVES

(gathering up the hare)

It's a big one. Five pounds. We got meat for dinner.

Everyone heads back toward the fort, passing Boyd who can't move just yet, paralyzed from exhaustion. Ives passes him last.

IVES

Such fun.

CUT TO:

FLESH.

That of a dead, skinned, cooked rabbit. Carved in the kitchen by Cleaves, then...

INSIDE THE MESS

...served at table. Knox comes to dinner pissed, rubbing his hands together.

KNOX

Cleaves, you left your window open.

CLEAVES

No, I didn't.

KNOX

Well, it was standing wide open, so it was either you or brownie...

Ives quiets Knox, gestures for him and everyone else to take their seats.

IVES

Thank you, O Lord, for the bounty you have delivered to us. Let it strengthen our bodies and wills to continue Your good work. Amen. Thanks to you, too, Mr. Cleaves.

Everyone eats, except, of course, for Ives and Boyd, who is so overtired he can hardly keep his eyes open.

BOYD

Cleaves, how 'bout some coffee?

CLEAVES

(begrudgingly)

Alright.

Ives and Boyd lock eyes. Ives feigns an exaggerated yawn, mocking and encouraging Boyd's drowsiness.

CUT TO:

THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

Everyone has gone to sleep, except...

BOYD.

Who sits up on his bunk, knife at his side, standing guard another night. And not very well. He keeps drifting off to sleep, then snapping back to consciousness.

FOOTSTEPS wake him: Cleaves passing by his door.

BOYD

What're you doing?

CLEAVES

I gotta pee. Go to bed, Boyd.

Cleaves continues on. His OPENING and CLOSING the front door can be heard as...

THE GRANDFATHER CLOCK IN THE PARLOR.

Strikes two a.m.. Two soft GONGS.

BOYD.

His eyes flutter, reopen, then -- gradually -- close. He's out. Dreamland...

BOYD'S DREAM --

White. Snow rushing past. On the toboggan.

Hart. Falling off. Again. Again. Again.

HART

B-o-y-d! B-o-y-d! B-o-y-d!
(in Ives's voice)

Boyd.

BOYD.

Awakes. Ives stands over him. Just like his earlier dream. But this is not a dream.

IVES

Boyd.

BOYD EXPLODES.

Leaping up, he pushes Ives across the room, up against a wall, and starts tearing into the colonel, slamming his fist into the man's face and riddling his torso with blows.

IN THE HALLWAY

The PUMMELING wakes Knox, Jefferson.

IN BOYD'S QUARTERS

Boyd knocks Ives to the ground, retrieves his knife from his bed, but just as he applies it to Ives's neck, another blade introduces itself to his own.

Jefferson hovers above Boyd, ready to slit his throat at the slightest move.

JEFFERSON

He die, you die.

Boyd freezes -- he could end this all right now. At last, he withdraws the knife and himself from Ives.

KNOX

(arriving and tending to Ives)
Good god. What happened?

IVES

...I was on my way to the latrine...

BOYD

This is a lie.

KNOX

Boyd, get out of here.
(to Jefferson)
Where the hell is Cleaves?

IVES

...I heard a commotion...Boyd called me in...

BOYD

This is a lie!

KNOX

Jefferson, get him out of here!

Jefferson drags Boyd out to...

THE PARLOR

where he pushes Boyd into a chair to cool down.

JEFFERSON

(with both knives now)

Stay.

CUT TO:

IN THE ENLISTED MEN'S QUARTERS

Jefferson enters.

JEFFERSON

Cleaves?

No response.

KNOX (O.S.)

Jefferson!

IN BOYD'S QUARTERS

Knox treats Colonel Ives's bloodied face. Jefferson enters.

KNOX

Find him?

JEFFERSON

No.

KNOX

Check outside.

IVES

Aahh! Careful, Major.

KNOX

Sorry, Colonel.

IN THE PARLOR

Boyd waits impatiently. His eyes follow Jefferson en route outside to search for Cleaves, then they dart to two items of interest...

First: the crossed swords above the fireplace. Second: Knox's half-drunk whiskey bottle.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE FORT

Jefferson trails Cleaves' footprints leading to the outhouse. The return trail -- heading back from the commode -- diverges toward the stables. Jefferson follows it.

This trail soon meets with another, a roundtrip between the stables and Boyd's window.

Jefferson continues toward the stables.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE STABLES

Flesh. Not human. Not rabbit. Horse. Agamemnon and Menelaus have been murdered.

Jefferson discovers them.

CUT TO:

IN BOYD'S QUARTERS

Knox bandages Ives's nose.

KNOX

Alright, Colonel. Finished.

A KNOCK on the window. Knox opens it. Jefferson stands outside. Ashen-faced.

IVES

What is it, Jefferson?

JEFFERSON

Horses are dead.

KNOX

What?

JEFFERSON

Stabbed to death. Trail -- here to stables, back.

ON BOYD IN THE PARLOR

Eavesdropping.

KNOX (O.S.)

Good god. Any sign of Cleaves?

ON JEFFERSON OUTSIDE

He shakes his head in reply. A drop of water splashes on his forehead. He looks up...

A LINE OF ICICLES

Hang off the fort roof uniformly. All clear and white and the result of water plus cold. Except for two. Hanging directly over Jefferson.

They're both red.

CUT TO:

ON THE ROOF

Jefferson's head peeks over the roof's edge -- he's standing on a ladder. Nothing in sight but snow, so he hauls himself up.

It only takes a moment for him to find...

CLEAVES' BODY

Disemboweled, like Toffler's before. Sunk slightly in the snow. His blood the source of the red icicles.

CUT TO:

KNOX'S WHISKEY BOTTLE.

Upturned, the whiskey splashes out.

CUT TO:

IN THE PARLOR

Jefferson and Knox enter, looking to arrest Boyd. But he is gone.

KNOX

Boyd? Boyd?!

Jefferson hears the last SPLASH of Knox's whiskey coming from...

THE KITCHEN

where Boyd now hastily pours a jug of kerosene into Knox's emptied bottle, then dampens a strip of cloth and stuffs it in the bottle -- a pre-Molotov Molotov cocktail.

Jefferson and Knox arrive just as Boyd withdraws a flaming branch from the oven.

BOYD

Okay, hold it! Step within ten feet of me, you'll have fire for clothes!

Jefferson and Knox freeze.

BOYD (CONT'D)

(to Jefferson)

You find Cleaves?

KNOX

Take it easy, Boyd. We just want to talk to you.

BOYD

Go piss in your shoes, Knox. Jefferson, what happened to Cleaves?

JEFFERSON

Dead.

KNOX

So are the horses, Boyd. Thought you'd keep us trapped here?

BOYD

Shut up, Knox.

KNOX

Have yourself a little picnic?

BOYD

Jefferson -- Cleaves: was he eaten?

Jefferson nods. Meanwhile, Boyd has problems:

First, Jefferson and Knox have circled him, appropriating pans, knives, and carving forks as weapons.

Second, the fire on Boyd's branch has closed in on his grip. He'll have to choose soon: drop the branch or light the bomb.

BOYD

Believe me, I did not do this. Ives is setting me up.

KNOX

Put the branch down, Boyd.

BOYD

You have to leave the fort. Both of you. Now. He's just eaten so he's strong.

KNOX

Drop it.

BOYD

Please, goddammit! Leave!

Boyd can't hold out any longer. But, at the last moment, Ives appears in the hallway. Boyd has his answer...

HE LIGHTS THE MOLOTOV COCKTAIL AND HURLS IT.

Jefferson and Knox duck.

Ives leaps away.

The bottle shatters in the hallway.

Explodes with flames.

Seizing the opportunity, Boyd makes a run for it, into...

THE PARLOR

where he manages to wrench away one of the crossed swords above the fireplace, but immediately Jefferson tackles Boyd

from behind and Knox helps pin him to the floor.

BOYD
Don't do this! Don't do this!

KNOX
Colonel! There are some shackles
downstairs!

IVES
Where, Major?

KNOX
In the arsenal!

Ives exits, grinning.

BOYD
No! He'll kill us all! Jefferson, don't
do this!

KNOX
Boyd -- this is for Cleaves.

Knox cold-cocks Boyd with the butt of the sword. As Boyd
blacks out...

KNOX (CONT'D)
(panting)
Alright then. Let's put out this fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

A GRAVE -- THE NEXT MORNING

Being dug in the snow by Jefferson. For Cleaves.

KNOX (V.O.)
Alright, Jefferson, here's the short of
it...

CUT TO:

THE PARLOR

Knox confers with Jefferson.

KNOX (CONT'D)
...I've conferred with Colonel Ives, and
we agree that Boyd is doubtlessly insane.

BOYD'S HANDS AND FEET IN SHACKLES.

Fastened around his own bed post in his own quarters. Boyd

jerks at them: no use -- he's stuck...

...and alone with Ives who savors his new total dominance; when a little blood trickles from Ives's nose, he wipes it away with his index finger and sucks it clean -- delicious.

KNOX (CONT'D, O.S.)

From now on, he is to be considered a prisoner and, therefore, rankless. Boyd will be transported to a military prison as soon as possible. Since our transportation is gone, however...

BACK IN THE PARLOR

KNOX (CONT'D)

...one of us must travel to San Miguel by foot to get help.

(a beat)

Volunteers?

Jefferson doesn't have a choice: he's going.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE FORT.

Jefferson finishes loading his backpack. Ives approaches.

IVES

Jefferson, when you're in San Miguel, I must insist, not a word of this to anyone save General Slauson. Please allow Mr. Boyd his right to a fair and proper military hearing.

JEFFERSON

Yessir.

IVES

Very good then. I will see you in a few days with the brigadier general. Safe travel to you.

AERIAL VIEW -- FORT SPENCER

Jefferson marches away from the fort -- a long trip ahead of him. Ives and Knox watch him go, then turn in.

DISSOLVE TO:

A KNIFE.

Dices vegetables -- carrots, onions, mushrooms. Ives is

preparing dinner in the kitchen.

BOYD.

In his confinement. He hears Ives's chopping.

BOYD

Knox. Knox! Listen to me!

KNOX.

Sits in the parlor, drinking. He ignores Boyd's warnings.

BOYD (CONT'D, O.S.)

Get a weapon! Get one now!

Knox sips his scotch, then glances up curiously at something.

Above the fireplace, the sword Boyd grabbed is missing.

Knox scans about for it.

A LONG LONG-SHOT -- THE HALLWAY

Viewed from the kitchen.

Ives can be seen intermittently in the foreground, cooking. He HUMS Toffler's old hymn, chopping to its rhythm.

Behind him, the empty hallway. Stained black in places by Boyd's firebomb. It dead-ends at the door to the enlisted men's quarters.

One door along the hallway is open -- Boyd's.

Knox wanders from the parlor, to the kitchen, to his own room...

BOYD (O.S.)

Knox! He's going to kill us! Now get a weapon!

KNOX

Colonel Ives...

IVES

...yes, Major...

KNOX

...you didn't notice where the sword went, did you?

IVES

I'm sorry, Major?

KNOX
The sword Boyd took from the wall.

BOYD (O.S.)
He took it, Knox! Grab the other one --
protect yourself!

KNOX
Quiet, Boyd! Good god!

BOYD (O.S.)
You better hope so.

IVES
I don't recall seeing it, Major. When
I'm through here, I'll help you look for
it.

KNOX
Thank you. What are you...?

IVES
Stew, Major Knox.

KNOX
Meatless, I suppose. Need any help?

IVES
No, no. Later, maybe, I might.

KNOX
Let me know.

BOYD (O.S.)
Colonel Ives...Colonel Ives!

IVES
Yes, Captain.

BOYD (O.S.)
How did you do it?

IVES
Do what, Captain?

BOYD (O.S.)
Kill Cleaves, the horses. Without waking
me up. How'd you make those tracks?

KNOX
I mean it, Boyd: you don't quiet down, I
will sedate you.
(noticing a draft)
Good god.

IVES
What is it, Major?

KNOX
Jefferson. He left the window open
again.

Knox enters the enlisted men's quarters, shuts a window.

Ives is visible in the foreground, so there should be no threat to Knox as he returns to the hallway, and therefore all the more surprising when...

A MAN'S FIGURE

appears in the enlisted men's quarters, behind Knox, wielding the missing sword. As the Figure swings the instrument at Knox's head...

THE LONG SHOT ENDS.

ON BOYD.

He hears the THUNK-THUNK of Knox's decapitated head.

BOYD
Knox?

FOOTSTEPS. APPROACHING. Boyd watches his doorway anxiously as...

HART

steps into view. Alive. Slightly Neanderthal.

HART
Hello, Boyd.

BOYD
No...no...

Ives appears in the door.

IVES
I told you my regimen had certain curative powers.
(handing Hart the cuff key)
Get him up and around. I'll take care of Knox.

Hart unlocks Boyd from the bed.

BOYD
You aren't.

HART
I am.

BOYD
Why?

Knox helps him stand. Boyd winces in pain.

HART
Your leg still hurt? It doesn't have to.

BOYD
You were in the stables...

Hart nods.

BOYD (CONT'D)
You killed the horses...you killed
Cleaves....

Hart nods.

BOYD (CONT'D)
...and...

Hart nods.

HART
I asked you to kill me, Boyd. Now look
at the mess we're in.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE COLONEL'S OFFICE

Formerly cluttered with Hart's books. Now the shelves are bare. Outside the window, Ives quarters Knox's body (unseen) with an axe.

HART
All my books. Gone. Crated up and
shipped to some loved one with a message
of deep condolence. Shipped to whom, I
wonder? I'll miss them -- Aristotle,
Plato, the whole gang. Remarkable:
writers a millennium or more ago,
struggling with the same issues we can't
lick today: happiness, how to achieve it.
We keep imagining utopias, looking
forward to some ideal future, seeking an
idea into which we can entrust our faith.
In the wake of war, in the absence of God
and good and love, where do we place our
faith? What won't disappoint us?

Hart opens a desk drawer: old peanut shells. He smiles.

HART (CONT'D)

Always we've looked forward -- to the state, usually, or a divine deliverance. Letdowns. Meanwhile, the answer -- the cornerstone of happiness -- has been behind us. The Self. Think simply, think clearly. Place faith in the self, invest in your own being, and only you can let yourself down.

BOYD

Plato sought truth, not happiness.

HART

(nods)

And the truth is I'm a monster now. A murderous, cannibalistic semi-simian. But I'm happy.

BOYD

I don't believe that. I know you. You must...

HART

Feel some pangs of guilt? Yes. Albeit mitigated pangs. And they are pushed to the moral wayside in light of the one great truth, newly rediscovered but so overpowering, I'm surprised Plato missed it.

BOYD

Yes?

HART

I gotta eat. If I don't, I die. Necessity has invalidated morality. No more regrets, no more guilt. Get food on the table. I fouled up my one chance at real love: doesn't matter, I gotta eat. I was a coward in battle: forget it, I gotta eat. I murdered someone: I gotta eat. Simple and true and satiating.

BOYD

And horseshit.

HART

Maybe. But I feel terrific. And from where I stand, everything appears twenty-twenty.

BOYD
Why are you doing this?

HART
Because I like you, Boyd. Because you
gotta eat. Let's get some air.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE FORT

Ives finishes quartering Knox and wipes some sweat from his
brow. Hart and Boyd exit.

HART
Finished?

IVES
(exhausted)
Quite. I'm afraid Major Knox's penchant
for whiskey did not leave him in the
pink. How is Captain Boyd?

HART
Coming along. Ready for the bigger-
better picture.

IVES
Excellent. Would you take Major Knox
from here?

HART
(nods; to Boyd)
Cheer up, kiddo. Worst part's over.

BOYD
There's a good part to this?

HART
I owe you one, Boyd. You tried to save
my life once. The least you could do is
let me try to save yours.

As Hart drags Knox inside, Ives leads Boyd away to view...

THE SIERRA NEVADAS.

As usual, breathtaking.

BOYD
Alright. Show me the bigger-better
picture.

IVES

You're looking at it.

(an expansive gesture to the Sierras)
Manifest Destiny, Boyd. Westward
Expansion. Come April, May, it'll start
again. Hard-handed, hard-headed
Americans, thousands of them, driving
over those mountains, on their way to new
lives. Passing right through here. Like
a great, traveling smorgasbord.

BOYD

That's the good part?

IVES

We would not kill indiscriminately. Only
selectively. Loners, drunkards,
ne'erdowells. We break up no families.

BOYD

You won't succeed. People will catch on.

IVES

Probably. If it's just the two of us,
Hart and I. That's why we need others.
You for one. The Brigadier General
another. We're not looking to found a
fraternity here, Boyd -- we have enough
mouths to feed as it is.

(re: the fort)

We need a home, simple as that.

Stepping behind Boyd, Ives withdraws a knife.

IVES (CONT'D)

The country is seeking to be whole, Boyd.
It is stretching out its arms and
consuming all it can. Strength through
expansion. Not a totally dissimilar
notion.

BOYD

Why me?

IVES

Because you're already one of us. Well,
almost. You just didn't eat enough last
time. So you'll just have to eat a
little more.

Ives plunges the knife into Boyd's back. Boyd begins to
collapse, but Ives holds him up, starts leading him back to
the fort.

IVES (CONT'D)
S'alright. It's not fatal. If you take
the necessary precautions.

BOYD
And if I don't?

IVES
Well...then...you'll die.

CUT TO:

IN THE MESS.

Dinner is served. A steaming plate of chunky beef stew
slides under Boyd's nose.

HART
Beef Stew à la Major Knox. A couple
helpings of this and you'll be right as
rain.

Boyd grows gradually paler/weaker. Blood soaks through his
shirt and drips over his chair onto the floor below. His
hands and feet are shackled once again.

Hart sits to one side of Boyd, preparing to spoon-feed him.
Ives stands at the head of the table.

IVES
Ben Franklin once said: "Eat to live.
Don't live to eat." Wise man, Mr.
Franklin. Alas, we find ourselves bound
to disregard his advice. We must live to
eat. Sad perhaps, yes, very sad, but
true. And you, Mr. Boyd, you must live
to eat as well. However, momentarily,
you must eat to live. It's not a
difficult decision: sink or swim, live or
die...feast or famine. The choice is
yours. It should be a simple one.

(beat)

Open wide.

Hesitant, weakening, weeping, Boyd nevertheless denies Hart's
spoon.

IVES (CONT'D)
(sighs)

Oh my...

Ives moves behind Boyd, and, despite Boyd's resistance, pries
his mouth open. Hart begins to pour Knox stew into Boyd's
mouth.

A GRUESOME, MESSY FORCE-FEEDING.

Boyd WAILS throughout, and consequently much of the Knox stew spills out and down his shirtfront, but some of it sneaks down Boyd's gullet and then lots of it, so that soon Boyd's WAILS turn slightly to HOWLS as we...

FADE OUT AND BACK IN ON:

THE SIERRA NEVADAS.

The next day.

BRIGADIER GENERAL SLAUSON, LINDUS, AND JEFFERSON.

On horseback and trotting toward Fort Spencer. A trio of long faces and cloudy breath.

They arrive within the fort's perimeter and dismount.

CUT TO:

INSIDE THE FORT.

The three enter into an empty front hallway.

SLAUSON
Hello! Colonel Ives!

No answer.

IN THE PARLOR

No one at home. One sword remains over the fireplace. Slauson, Jefferson, and Lindus move through.

THE KITCHEN

Still no sign of anyone. But the pot of beef stew is on a low flame.

SLAUSON
Well, someone must be around.

A MOAN emanates from somewhere. Jefferson follows it to...

THE SUPPLY ROOM BASEMENT

Dark except for natural light from the kitchen. Jefferson grabs a lantern, lights it, moves downstairs, followed by Slauson and Lindus. They find...

BOYD.

Slumped in a corner. Still in shackles. Head drooped over his body. Mouth gagged.

SLAUSON

Boyd?

Boyd tilts his head up. He opens his eyes slowly and gradually recognizes Jefferson, just as Hart recognized him in the cave.

LINDUS

Good Lord...

IVES

Gentlemen...

IVES

stands at the top of the stairs. Like a vulture peering down on its lunch.

SLAUSON

Colonel Ives...

IVES

Morning. We didn't expect you so soon.

SLAUSON

What is Captain Boyd doing down here?

IVES

He grew hysterical last night. Ranted most of the evening. We were forced to gag him, bring him down here just to keep him quiet.

SLAUSON

Well, he seems placated now. Jefferson, Lindus, bring him upstairs.

Jefferson starts to lift Boyd and discovers blood on the back of his shirt.

JEFFERSON

Blood.

IVES

A treatment advocated by Dr. Benjamin Rush. Gets rid of the bad blood supposedly. I don't subscribe to it myself, but Major Knox does.

SLAUSON
And where is Major Knox?

IVES
Outhouse. Upset stomach. Upset head.
Perhaps, Mr. Lindus, you could fetch him.

Slauson nods to Lindus -- do so -- and the aide departs. As Jefferson hauls Boyd to his feet, Ives beckons the brigadier general upstairs.

IVES
Please, General, I've prepared lunch.
You must be starving.

CUT TO:

BOYD'S QUARTERS.

Jefferson carries in Boyd, shackled, and lays him down on his bunk. He strips off Boyd's shirt to examine his wound, then finds a spare shirt to clean off the surrounding blood. That done, he discovers something remarkable...

Boyd's wound has healed. In fact, there's barely any scar at all. Jefferson removes Boyd's gag.

BOYD
(a rasp)
Jefferson...get them out.

IVES (O.S.)
Jefferson!

Jefferson hesitates a moment, exits.

CUT TO:

IN THE MESS.

Jefferson enters to find everyone seated and ready to eat. The pot of stew rests on the mess table.

IVES
Sit down, Jefferson.

Jefferson reluctantly does so.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE THE FORT

Lindus treads innocently from the fort's yard towards...

THE outhouse.

A lantern's light escapes through cracks in the shutter's door. Someone is inside.

LINDUS

Major Knox?

Knox does not reply. Chiefly because...

CUT TO:

A PLATE OF KNOX STEW.

...he's being served for lunch. Ives ladles out generous portions for Slauson and Jefferson.

IVES

Please don't wait on courtesy, gentlemen.
Eat. And don't be bashful: there are plenty of seconds.

SLAUSON

Doesn't Boyd need to eat?

IVES

He's had his fill. Please...

Forks are lifted when...

SLAUSON

Thank you, Lord, for the bounty which we are about to receive...

Forks are lowered and heads bowed. Ives grows impatient.

IN BOYD'S QUARTERS.

Boyd feels something in the spare shirt Jefferson left. He investigates.

In the breast pocket: his medal from General Shaw. Boyd applies its pin to his handcuff lock.

CUT TO:

THE outhouse.

Lindus knocks on the door.

LINDUS

Major Knox? You in there?

No answer. Then...

A VOICE WITHIN

Yes...

LINDUS

Colonel Ives requested you inside.

THE VOICE WITHIN

All right. Open the door, please.

Lindus rolls his eyes -- he doesn't want to witness this. But hierarchy dictates. He opens the door...

...and there stands Hart. Facing him. Lindus's jaw drops.

LINDUS

Colonel Hart?

Hart nods. And suddenly his hand lashes out with a carving fork, and as it pierces Lindus's throat...

CUT TO:

IN THE MESS

...General Slauson's spoon scoops up a bit of beef stew.

SLAUSON

Smells delicious, Colonel. You cook this yourself?

Ives nods, demurely. But he's fixated on Slauson's spoon -- waiting for that first bite. Slauson starts to take it...

...when Jefferson rises from his chair -- SCREECH -- and Slauson lowers his spoon. Ives blushes, flustered.

SLAUSON

What is it, Jefferson? No appetite?

Jefferson shakes his head as he moves to a window and a view of the outhouse. No sign of Lindus out there.

CUT TO:

IN BOYD'S QUARTERS

Boyd continues to pick his handcuff lock. At last, the sound he's waiting for -- CLICK. He's free.

CUT TO:

IN THE MESS

Slauson sniffs his spoonful of stew.

SLAUSON

What kind of beef is this, Colonel?

At the window, Jefferson's growing concerned -- there's no sign of Lindus or Knox outside. Ives notices the Indian's unease.

IVES

(dodging Slauson's question)

Jefferson, I'm sure Major Knox and Lindus are fine. Please...eat.

SLAUSON

(re: the stew)

Colonel?

Jefferson starts away from the window...

...when suddenly a wind blows the outhouse door open, revealing...

LINDUS

Sitting inside. Murdered and gutted.

Jefferson sees it and spins.

JEFFERSON

General!

Slauson freezes. Just in time, too: his spoon hovers an inch from his open mouth. A rifle COCKS offscreen.

HART (O.S.)

Eat.

HART

appears in a doorway, rifle trained on the table.

SLAUSON

(rising)

Colonel Hart!

HART

Sit down, General. Jefferson, you too.

They do.

SLAUSON

What's going on here?

HART
It's chow time. The first meal of the
rest of your life.

SLAUSON
Colonel, where is Major Knox?

IVES
(mock-ceremonial)
Major Knox is dead. But, in a way, he
lives on inside us. Or, at least, he's
about to. Eat.

Ives gestures toward Slauson's plate. The brigadier general
doesn't understand at first. And then it hits him. He is
horrified.

HART
(training his rifle on Slauson)
Please, General. Eat.

With a gun literally to his head, Slauson has no choice. He
takes up his spoonful of stew and, wincing, slowly draws it
into his mouth.

IVES
Now swallow.
Slauson does -- GULP.

HART
Thank you, General.
And just behind Hart appears...

BOYD
Wielding the remaining sword from the fireplace.
Free of his shackles.

IVES
Colonel!
Hart ducks.
Boyd swings -- SWOOSH, miss.
Hart fires his one round -- BANG!
Boyd's arm catches it.
THE BATTLE FOR FORT SPENCER HAS BEGUN.

The action occurs concurrently.
And very quickly.

Slauson pulls his revolver.
Ives slaps it away.
Grabs the brig gen by his hair.
Slings him -- CRACK -- into a wall.

UNCONSCIOUS, BRIGADIER GENERAL SLAUSON IS NOT A FACTOR.

Rebounding, Boyd tackles Hart.
Both Knox-wired, wrestling, GRUNTING.
Gorillas.

BOYD

Get him outta here, Jefferson!

Jefferson collects Slauson before Ives attacks.
Lifts/launches the general out a window -- CRASH.
Ives pounces on Jefferson's back.
Slams him face-down on the dining table.
Glasses shatter, candles overturn -- firestarters.

IN THE REST OF THE FORT

Hart attacks -- his discharged rifle club-like.
Boyd defends -- his sword.
Angry caveman versus wounded musketeer.

IN THE MESS

Ives pushes Jefferson's head into the pot of stew.
The Indian's face inches from chopped Knox.
Jefferson manages to resist the push/bash away the stew.
Angry, Ives collars Jefferson, swings him across the room.
And out the window Slauson flew through.
Ives's attention turns to the mess: flames lick its walls.

IN THE PARLOR

Hart knocks Boyd's sword away.
Optionless, Boyd turns.
Flings himself through a window, landing...

OUTSIDE THE FORT

He rises and carves a beeline for the stables.

IN THE FRONT YARD

Jefferson rises, weary.
Spots Ives dousing the mess's fire.
He collects Slauson/hurls him over a horse.
Mounts up himself.
Starting away, there's a problem...
Ives blocks the yard's exit, axe in hand.
Jefferson's horse recoils -- WHINNYING.

Bad vibes: Ives not equine-friendly.

IVES

You have something I want, Jefferson.

Jefferson: jump the fence -- he dashes toward it.
No good: with Slauson aboard, his horse refuses.

JEFFERSON IS TRAPPED.

ON THE OTHERSIDE OF THE FORT

Hart pursues Boyd -- a trail of footsteps and blood to...

THE STABLE DOORS.

Fastened shut from the inside.
Hart tugs/kicks/pries the doors open.
Steps inside -- CLANG! -- right into...

A BEAR TRAP

Hart grasps his leg, HOLLERING.
Quiets only when he hears something.
Something distressing.

...SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS....

THE CANNON

Aims straight at Hart.
Boyd stands beside it.

BOYD

(his hand to the fuse)
I can stop it.

HART

(a beat; shakes his head)
Let it go.

A last, fraternal moment shared.
A wistful smile crossing Hart's face before...

BARRRRROOOOOM!

The cannon EXPLODES.
Hart is a memory.
But not the cannonball.
It plows through the fort's roof.
Lands on the front yard's fence, creating...

ANOTHER EXIT.

Jefferson spins his horse.
Gallops over the collapsed fence.
And away.
He and Slauson hell-bent for San Miguel.

Ives closes his eyes.
His general gone, his secret out, his fort burning.

THE BATTLE IS OVER.

But his troubles aren't.

BOYD (O.S.)
Colonel!

Opened eyes behold...

BOYD

staggering out through the smoky stable doors.
Bloodied and beaten, and brutish.
A murderous glaze over his eyes.
Monster turned on his creator.

IVES
B-o-y-d!
(he throws a cavalier salute)
Another day.

And Ives bolts. Forest-bound.

Boyd -- on the offensive now.
First move: pluck up Toffler's shovel.
Third move: head, hunched and hungry, into...

THE FOREST AND THE FINAL CONFRONTATION.

Steps inside the woods, Boyd halts.
Ives's footsteps have disappeared, as expected.
Boyd scans the galaxy of trees, branches, limbs before him.

IVES (O.S.)
(unseen, echoing)
Captain Boyd. Spoiled my party and now
won't leave well enough alone.
Unsatiated, Boyd? Get used to the
feeling.

MOVING WITH BOYD THROUGH THE FOREST

Eyes-peeled, weapon ready, weaving skillfully between trees.

IVES (O.S.)
Look to the future, Boyd. You may feel
sated now, but in three days' time, when
the hunger itches again -- and believe me
it will -- what then?

ANGLE ON IVES

Poised high above on a branch. Axe still Knox-gilded. He
licks a side clean.

IVES (CONT'D)
Suffer through it? Fight it? The whole
Pacific won't drown your appetite.

Ives leaps off his branch, swings two trees over and down a
tier. Listens -- no sound from Boyd.

IVES (CONT'D)
Well, Boyd? After you kill me -- if you
kill me -- what then?

BOYD (O.S.)
First things first.

Ives spins. There's...

BOYD

hovering three trees behind him.

Boyd springs.
Ives springs.

It begins. A brutish, primitive battle above ground.

Boyd and Ives leap, scale and scramble between branches for
position before...

...they ATTACK -- GRUNTING and SHRIEKING -- and when the
savages clash, axe and shovel are used as lances, and
consequently several skirmishes leave Boyd's weapon
castrated...

...and Ives seizes his advantage, ambushing Boyd from above,
sending him plummeting fifty feet to his death...

...but Boyd catches the last branch down and swings himself
back into the game and back on the attack.

Ives retreats. Boyd pursues.

Zig-zagging across branches -- over, under, sharp turns and
sudden drops -- a DOG FIGHT THROUGH FOLIAGE, and every trick

Ives executes, Boyd anticipates and copycats.

Except the final trick -- a dead stop.

Boyd can't apply the brakes before he hurtles straight into Ives's waiting axe. Slicing his stomach open.

BOYD PLUNGES.

Somersaulting down, shattering branches -- SNAP, CRACK, and CRASH -- he hits the snow hard, his landing a scratch compared to that axe wound -- it looks terminal.

As Boyd writhes bloodily on the ground...

...Ives descends triumphantly, bouncing from tree to tree.

IVES

The battle is over, and to the victor goes the spoils. Soup's on.

Boyd crawls away as best he can, a wide red trail in his wake. Losing blood fast.

He pulls himself up and over a fallen tree and disappears behind it. Something familiar about this log, though: the one the hunted rabbit hid beneath.

IVES (CONT'D)

(re: Boyd's spilled blood)

C'mon, Boyd: you're squandering yourself.

Ives peers over the log.

Boyd springs up.

Jefferson's arrow in hand.

Thrusts it through Ives's neck.

BOYD

Come and get it.

Ives spasms/dangles limply on Boyd's stick.
A marionette/a kebob.

IVES

(gurgling blood)

Now we're both dead.

(slyly)

Unless, of course, you...

Pissed, Boyd twists the arrow -- Ives convulses. Time to finish this. In one swift motion, he yanks out Jefferson's arrow and, in the split second before Ives falls, clocks him across the face.

Ives is dead.

ANGLE ON BOYD.

He wipes his sweaty brow. A red streak across white skin. Breathing heavily. Staring down at Ives' flesh. There's a choice to be made here: bleed to death or...

SKIER #6 (V.O.)

The next day Jefferson returned with the cavalry...

CUT TO:

THE CONTEMPORARY CAMPFIRE

Now burnt to just a few cinders. Several skiers have fallen asleep. Outside, dawn breaks: the storm has mellowed.

SKIER #1

...but Boyd had disappeared. Despite exhaustive searches they never found him. That spring Jefferson returned to his tribe. Brigadier General Slauson, infected with Tanatka, went raving mad and hung himself. And Fort Spencer, burnt to a crisp, was abandoned. Throughout the gold rush, though, rumors persisted of a "savage" who roamed these hills, murdering western settlers. And even today, whenever a hiker goes missing...

A DISTANT VOICE (V.O.)

Hello?! Can anyone hear me?!

The group's Leader turns toward the voice. Squinting his eyes, he sees in the distance...

...the FIGURE of a RANGER in the middle of the canyon. The Leader leaps to his feet and waves.

LEADER

In here!! Over here!!

The Ranger starts towards them. The other skiers, awakened, rise to look. A general SIGH OF RELIEF sounds from them all, along with a few CHEERS.

SKIER #2

Thank God.

SKIER #3

I've always depended on the kindness of
Rangers.

As the skiers start to assemble their gear, their Leader
moves to greet....

THE RANGER.

As he enters the alcove, he flips back his hood.

It is Boyd. Alive and virile. And, seemingly, not a day
older than we left him.

BOYD

Everyone okay in here?

LEADER

Yeah. Man, are we happy to see you.

Boyd smiles at the Leader. Wickedly.

BOYD

Always glad to help people in trouble.

FADE OUT.