
BLOOD MERIDIAN

Adapted for Television by

David Wyn Jones

Episode Two:

The Savages

Based on the Novel by

Cormac McCarthy

EXT. THE VALLEY PLAINS - NIGHT.

The kid remains trapped under his mule as he regains consciousness. The ground is soaked with blood and urine from the voided bladders of the animals and he rides away stained and stinking like some reeking issue of the incarnate dam of war herself. The savages have moved to higher ground and he can hear them singing in front of their campfires. He makes his way among the pale and dismembered, among the sprawled and legflung horses, and he takes a reckoning by the stars and sets off south afoot. The kid keeps his eyes to the ground ahead. Wolves howl in the distance as the Kid climbs the tumbled boulders of the Bolson de Mapimi. He hears a voice calling in the vastness.

VOICE: (O.S)

Is anyone there!?

He looks out over the plain but can see no one. The voice calls again.

VOICE: (O.S)

Hey, you!

The kid turns to see something moving along the slope, a rag of a man clambering toward him over the talus slides. He wears a blanket over his shoulders and his shirtsleeve is ripped and dark with blood as he carries his arm against him with his other hand.

SPROULE:

It's me, Sproule!

KID:

How many others made it?

SPROULE:

Eight. Captain White included.

KID:

Where are the others?

SPROULE:

They went on, so did the Captain. My horse took several arrows. It caved under me.

They sit side-by-side among the rocks. Sproule coughs into his fist, and pulls his bloody arm against him.

KID:

How bad is your arm?

SPROULE:

I've seen worse.

They sit looking out over the reaches of sand and rock and wind.

KID:

What kind of fuckin' Indians was them?

SPROULE:

I don't know.

(coughs into his fist)

Damn if they ain't about a caution to the Christians.

KID:

Well, what do we do?

SPROULE:

We get some rest. Then tomorrow, we go after those savages.

They lay up on a rock shelf, scratching out a place in the gray lava dust to sleep as we CUT TO:

EXT. THE VALLEY PLAINS - DAY.

They hove towards the rimrock where Sproule points out a dark stain on the face of the barren cliff. The scalloped canyon walls ripple in the heat like drapery folds.

SPROULE:

It could be a seep.

KID:

It's a long ways up there.

SPROULE:

Well, if you see any water closer let's make for that.

The kid looks at him and they set off.

EXT. VILLAGE - AFTERNOON.

They walk through trampled ground left by the warparty and in the afternoon they come across a mule that has been lanced and left for dead and they come across another.

The way narrows through rocks and by and by they come to a bush on the branches of which are impaled seven or eight dead human infants. They stop side by side, reeling in the heat. The kid and Sproule hobble past before looking back. They come to a village on the plain where smoke still rises from the ruins and are all gone to death. They go slowly through the mud streets. They are goats and sheep slain in their pens and pigs dead in the mud. They pass mud hovels where people lie murdered in all attitudes of death in the doorways and the

floors, naked and swollen and strange. They find plates of food half eaten and a cat comes out and sits in the sun. At the end of the street, they come to a plaza with benches and trees where vultures huddle in foul black rookeries. They sit on a bench and Sproule holds his wounded arm to his chest and rocks back and forth.

KID:

What do you wanna do?

SPROULE:

Get a drink of water.

KID:

Other than that.

SPROULE:

I don't know.

KID:

You wanna try and head back?

SPROULE:

To Texas?

KID:

I don't know where else.

SPROULE:

We'd never make it.

KID:

Well you say.

SPROULE:

I ain't got no say.

Sproule coughs again. He holds his chest with his good hand.

KID:

What have you got, a cold?

SPROULE:

Consumption.

KID:

Consumption?

SPROULE:

(nodding)

I come out here for my health.

The kid looks at him, before walking off to the plaza towards the church. There are buzzards squatting among the old carved wooden corbels and he picks up a stone and squails it at them. The kid returns to the bench and props up one foot and leans on his knee. Sproule sits as before, holding his arm.

SPROULE:

Son of a bitch is dealin' me misery.
The kid spits and looks down the street.

SPROULE:

We better hold up here for tonight.

KID:

You reckon it would be all right?

SPROULE:

Who with?

KID:

What if them Indians was to come
back?

SPROULE:

What would they come back for?

KID:

Well what if they was to?

SPROULE:

(holding his arm)

They won't come back.

KID:

I wish you had a knife on you.

SPROULE:

(scoffs)

I wish YOU did.

KID:

There's meat here if a man had a
knife.

SPROULE:

I ain't hungry.

KID:

I think we ought to scout these
houses and see what all's here.

SPROULE:

You go on.

KID:

We need to find us a place to sleep.

Sproule looks at him.

SPROULE:

I don't need to go nowheres.

KID:

Well. You suit yourself.

The kid turns and goes down the street. He walks around the
area, looking for supplies.

INT. HOUSE 1.

The kid heads into a house with low doorways, and he stoops to clear the lintel beams, stepping down into the cool and earthy rooms. There is no furniture save pallets for sleeping.

MONTAGE: He goes from house to house, in one room, the bones of a small loom black and smoldering. In another, a man, the charred flesh drawn taut, the eyes cooked in their sockets. In one house, he finds a clay jar of beans and some dry tortillas, and takes them to a house at the end of the street where the embers of the roof are still smoldering and he warms the food in the ashes, and eats, squatting there like some deserter scavenging the ruins of a city he's fled.

EXT. STREET - LATER.

He returns to the square to find Sproule has gone. He crosses the square and mounts the stone steps to the door of a church.

CUT TO:

INT. CHURCH - SAME.

The kid enters the church and sees Sproule is standing in the vestibule. Long buttresses of light fall from the high windows in the western wall. There are no pews in the church and the stone floor is heaped with the scalped, naked and partly eaten bodies of some forty souls, the floor littered with arrowshafts where they've snapped them off to get the clothes from the bodies. The altars have been hauled down and the tabernacle looted and the great sleeping God of the Mexicans routed from his golden cup. The murdered lie in a great pool of their communal blood which lies in dark tongues on the floor. Sproule turns and looks at the kid as if he knows his thoughts but the kid shakes his head. Flies clamber over the peeled and wigless skulls of the dead and flies walk on their shrunken eyeballs.

KID:

Come on.

EXT. STREET - SUNSET.

The kid and Sproule cross the square in the last of the light and walk down the narrow street and we -- CUT TO BLACK

MAIN TITLES

FADE INTO SCENE:

EXT. ROAD.

The kid and Sproule are walking down a road, struggling across a terra damnata of smoking slag, passing from time to time the bloated shapes of dead mules and horses. Sproule drinks the

last bit of water from a flask, as they came across a carreta, tilted on its tongue, the great wheels cut from rounds of a cottonwood trunk and pinned to the axletrees with tenons. They crawl under it for shade and sleep until dark.

FADE TO:

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT - LATER.

The night sky is filled with starlight, the Pleiades straight overhead and very small and the Great Bear walking the mountains to the north as the kid and Sproule sit in front of a campfire. Sproule is holding his arm again.

KID:

You alright?

SPROULE:

My arm stinks.

KID:

What?

SPROULE:

I said my arm stinks.

KID:

You want me to look at it?

SPROULE:

Why? You can't do nothin for it.

KID:

Well, suit yourself.

SPROULE:

I aim to.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAWN.

The kid and Sproule climb among shale and whinstone under the wall of a dark monocline where turrets stand like basalt prophets and they pass by the side of the road little wooden crosses propped in cairns of stone. The road winds up among the hills, and the castaways labor upon the switchbacks, blackening under the sun, their eyeballs inflamed and the painted spectra racing out at the corners.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - SUNSET.

They crest the mountain at sunset, an immense lake lies below them with the distant blue mountains standing in the windless span of water and the shape of a soaring hawk and trees that shimmer in the heat and a distant city very white against the blue and shaded hills. They sit and watch, and see the sun drop under the jagged rim of the earth to the west and see it

flare behind the mountains and watch the face of the lake darken and the shape of the city dissolve upon it. They sleep among the rocks face up like dead men.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - MORNING.

Sproule collapses back among the rocks. The kid looks at him, worryingly. There are blisters along his lower lip and his arm through the ripped shirt is swollen and something foul has seeped through the darker bloodstains. He turns back and looks out over the valley.

KID:

Yonder comes somebody.

Sproule does not reply. The kid looks at him.

KID:

I ain't lyin'.

SPROULE:

(rising slowly)

It's indians, ain't it?

KID:

I don't know. Too far to tell.

SPROULE:

What do you aim to do?

KID:

I don't know.

SPROULE:

What happened to the lake?

The kid looks around.

KID:

I couldn't tell ye.

SPROULE:

We both saw it.

KID:

People see what they wanna see.

SPROULE:

Then how come I ain't seeing it now?

I sure as hell want to.

The kid looks out over the plain below.

SPROULE:

What if it is indians?

KID:

Likely it will be.

SPROULE:

Where can we hide at?

The kid sits dryly and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. A lizard comes out from under a rock and crouches on its small cocked elbows over a piece of froth and drinks it dry and returns to the rock again leaving only a faint spot in the sand which vanishes instantly. By early afternoon, they see horsemen on switchbacks coming up the face of the mountain below them. They are MEXICANS.

Sproule sits up with his legs outstretched before him.

SPROULE:

I was worried about my old boots
lastin' me.

He looks up to the kid.

SPROULE:

(to the kid)

Go on. Save yourself.

The eight Mexican riders look burnt and haggard coming up out of the sun and sit their horses as if they have no weight at all. They wear broad brimmed hats and leather vests and they carry escopetas across the pommels of their saddles and as they ride past the leader nods gravely to them from the captain's horse and touches his hatbrim and they ride on. Sproule and the kid go after them. The kid calls out and Sproule starts to trot clumsily along behind the horses. The riders begin to slump and reel like drunks.

* The following dialogue from the riders is in Spanish.

MEXICAN LEADER:

¿Qué quiere? [What does he want?]

The riders cackle and slap at one another. They nudge their horses forward and they begin to ride them about without aim. The leader turns to the two afoot.

MEXICAN LEADER:

¿Buscan a los indios? [They look for
the Indians?]

With this, some of the men dismount and fall to hugging one another and weeping shamelessly. The leader looks at them and grins, his teeth white and massive, made for foraging.

SPROULE:

Loonies. They're fuckin' loonies.

The kid looks up at the leader.

KID:

How about a drink of water?

The leader pulls a long face.

MEXICAN LEADER:

Agua? [Water?]

SPROULE:

We ain't got no water. But my friend,
how no? Is very dry here.

He reaches behind him without turning and passes a leather canteen across to the kid and Sproule. The kid pulls the stopper and drinks and stands panting before drinking again.

MEXICAN LEADER:

Basta! [Enough!]

The kid hangs on gulping. He cannot see the horseman's face darken. The man raises one boot backward out of the stirrup and kicks the canteen cleanly from between the kid's hands leaving him for a moment in a frozen gesture of calling with the canteen rising and turning in the air and the lobes of water gleaming about it in the sun before it clatters to the rocks. Sproule scrambles after it and snatches it up and begins to drink, watching over the rim. The horseman and the kid watch each other. Sproule sits back gasping and coughing. The kid steps across the rocks and takes the canteen from him. The leader knees his horse forward and draws a sword from its place beneath his leg and leaning forward runs the blade under the strap and raises it up. The point of the blade is about three inches from the kid's face and the canteen strap is draped across the flat of it. The kid stops and the rider raises the canteen gently from his hands and lets it slide down the blade and come to rest at his side. He turns to the men and smiles and they once again begin to hoot and to pummel one another like apes. He swings the stopper up from where it hangs by a thong and drives it home with the heel of his hand. He pitches the canteen to the man behind him and looks down at the travelers.

MEXICAN LEADER:

(in English)

Why you no hide?

KID:

From you?

MEXICAN LEADER:

From I.

KID:

We were thirsty.

MEXICAN LEADER:

Very thirsty, eh?

The kid and Sproule don't answer. The leader taps the flat of his sword lightly against the horn of his saddle. He leans slightly to them.

MEXICAN LEADER:

When the lambs is lost in the
mountain, they is cry. Sometime come
the mother, sometime the wolf.

He smiles at them and raises the sword and runs it back where it has come from and turns the horse smartly and trots it through the horses behind him and the men mount up and follow. Soon, all of them are gone. Sproule sits without moving. The kid looks at him before looking away.

EXT. MOUNTAIN - LATER.

The kid and Sproule descend the mountain, going down over the rocks with their hands outstretched before them and their shadows contort on the broken terrain like creatures seeking their own forms. They reach the valley floor at dusk and set off across the blue and cooling land, the mountains to the west a line of jagged slate set endwise in the earth and the dry weeds heeling and twisting in a wind spring from nowhere.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT.

The kid and Sproule sleep in the sand like dogs. Something black flaps up out of the night ground and perches on Sproule's chest. Fine fingerbones stay the leather wings with which it steadies as it walks upon him. A wrinkled pug face, small and vicious, bare lips crimped in a horrible smile and teeth pale blue in the starlight. It leans to him, crafting in his neck two narrow grooves and folding its wings over him it begins to drink his blood. He wakes up, shrieking, the bloodbat flails and sits back upon his chest and rights itself again and clicks its teeth. He picks up a rock but the bat springs away and vanishes into the dark. Sproule claws at his neck and gibbers hysterically and when he sees the kid looking down at him he holds out his bloodied hands as if in accusation and claps him to his ears and cries out a howl of outrage. The kid only spits into the darkness of the space between them.

SPROULE:

I know your kind. What's wrong with
you is wrong all the way through.

EXT. ROAD - MORNING.

The kid and Sproule cross a dry wash and the kid hikes up it looking for a tank or a hole but there is none. He picks out a sink in the wash and falls to digging with a bone and after digging two feet into the sand, the sand turns damp and a slow seep of water begins to fill into the furrows he has dredged with his fingers. He takes off his shirt and pushes it down into the sand and watches it darken and the water rise slowly among the folds of cloth until there is perhaps a cupful and then he lowers his head into the excavation and drinks. Then he sits and watches it fill again. Then, he puts on the shirt and goes back down the wash. Sproule tries to suck up the water and gets a mouthful of sand.

SPROULE:

Why don't you let me use your shirt?

KID:

Suck on ye own shirt.

Sproule takes off his shirt, which sticks to his skin. A yellow pus runs down his arm, which is swollen to the size of his thigh and is garishly discolored. He pushes the shirt down into the hole and leans to drink.

EXT. ROAD - LATER.

In the afternoon, they come to a crossroads. A faint wagon trace comes from the north and goes on to the south. The kid and Sproule stand scanning the landscape for some guidance. Sproule sits where the tracks have crossed and looks out from the great caves in his skull where his eyes lie.

SPROULE:

I won't rise.

KID:

Yonder's a lake.

Sproule does not look. It lies shimmering in the distance. Its edges rimmed with salt. The kid studies it and the roads. After a while, he nods to the south.

KID:

I believe this here is the most travelled.

SPROULE:

It's all right. You go on.

KID:

You suit yourself.

Sproule watches him set off, after a while he rises and follows. They walk two miles before stopping to rest. Sproule sits with his legs out and his hands in his lap and the kid squats a little way from him. Blinking and bearded and filthy in their rags. Sproule hears something.

SPROULE:

Does that sound like thunder to you?

The kid raises his head.

SPROULE:

Listen.

The kid looks at the sky, pale blue, unmarked save where the sun burns like a white hole.

SPROULE:

I can feel it in the ground.

KID:

It ain't nothin'.

SPROULE:

Listen.

The kid rises and looks about. To the north a small movement of dust. He watches it. It does not rise nor blow away. It is a carreta, lumbering clumsily over the plain, a small mule to draw it. The driver halts the mule and begins to go back when the kid seizes the raw leather headstall and hauls the animal to a standstill. Sproule comes hobbling up. From the rear of the wagon, two children peer out. They are so pale with dust, their hair so white and faces pinched, they look like little gnomes crouched there. At the sight of the kid before him the driver shrinks back and the woman next to him sets up a high shrill chittering and begins to point from one horizon to the next, but he pulls himself up into the bed of the cart and Sproule comes dragging after and they lie staring up at the hot canvas tarp while the two waifs draw back into the corner and watch blackeyed as woodmice and the cart turns south again and sets off with a rising rumble and clatter.

EXT. ROAD - SAME (TRAVELING)

A clay jar of water hangs by a thong from the bowstay when the kid takes it down and drinks from it and gives it to Sproule. Then he takes it back and drinks the rest. They lie in the floor of the cart among old hides and spills of salt and after a while they feel asleep.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT.

It is dark when they enter the town. The jostle of the cart ceasing is what wakes them. The kid raises himself up and looks out. Starlight in a mud street. The wagon empty. The mule wheezes and stamps in the traces. After a while, the man comes from the shadows and leads them along a lane into a yard and he backs the mule until the cart is alongside a wall and he unhitches the mule and leads it away. The kid lies back in the tilted cartbed. It is a cold night and he lies with his knees drawn up under a piece of hide that smells of mold and urine and he sleeps all night.

EXT. TOWN - DAWN.

In the first gray light, flies begin to land on him. They touch his face and wake him and he brushes them away. After a while he sits up. They are in a barren mud walled courtyard and there is a house made of reeds and clay. Chickens step about and cluck and scratch. The kid looks at Sproule. He is lying with his face to the wagonboards. The kid reaches to shake him. He is cold and wooden. The flies rise, then settle back. Suddenly, the kid is seized by a group of soldiers who tie his hands behind him and look in the cart and see Sproule's lifeless body.

EXT. STREET - SAME.

The soldiers drag the kid through the streets while a crowd of civilians watch on. Children walk with them and then old folk and finally a throng of brown-skinned villagers all dressed in white cotton like attendants in an institution, the women in dark rebozos, their faces stained red with almagre, smoking small cigars. Their numbers swell and the guards with their shouldered fusils frown and shout at the jostlers and walk on along the tall adobe wall of a church and into the plaza.

EXT. PLAZA - SAME.

There is a bazaar in progress. A traveling medicine show, a primitive circus. They pass stout willow cages clogged with vipers, with great limegreen serpents from some more southerly latitude or beaded lizards with their black mouths wet with venom. A reedy old leper holds up handfuls of tapeworms from a jar for all to see and cries out his medicines against them. In this container with hair afloat and eyes turned upward in a pale face sits a human head. The soldiers drag the kid forward with shouts and gestures.

SOLDIER:

Mire, mire!

He stands before the jar and they urge his consideration of it and they tilt it around so that the head faces him. It's Captain White. Lately at war among the heathen. The kid looks into the drowned and sightless eyes of his old commander. He looks about at the villagers and at the soldiers, their eyes all upon him, and he spits on the ground.

KID:

He ain't no kin to me.

INT. PRISON - LATER.

The soldiers place the kid in an old stone corral with three other ragged refugees from the expedition. They sit stunned and blinking against the wall. The kid falls in with a thin boy from Georgia.

GEORGIAN:

(PRE-LAP)

I was sickern a dog. I was afraid I was goin' to die and then I was afraid I wasn't.

KID:

(beat)

I seen a rider on the captain's horse up in the country from here.

GEORGIAN:

Aye. They killed him and Clark and some other boy whose name I never knew. We come on into town and the very next day they had us in the calabozo and this son of a bitch is down there with the guards laughin' and drinkin' and playin' cards, him and the jefe, to see who gets the captain's horse and who gets his pistols. I guess you saw the captain's head.

KID:

(beat)

Yeah, I seen it.

GEORGIAN:

(scoffs)

The worst fuckin' thing I ever seen in my life.

KID:

Somebody ought to have pickled it a long time ago. By rights they ought to pickle mine. For ever takin' up with such a fool.

The kid looks at the Georgian inquisitively.

KID:

What happened to him?

GEORGIAN:

The Captain?

The kid nods.

GEORGIAN:

After they took his head, they dumped his body in a wallow. To be eaten by pigs. Your other comrades were also slaughtered.

KID:

Where are they now?

GEORGIAN:

They're in the market. On slabs.

The Georgian runs his heel out in the dust and gouges a little place for it to rest.

KID:

Where are they takin' us?

GEORGIAN:

Chihuahua City.

KID:

How do you know?

GEORGIAN:

That's what they say. I don't know.

KID:

That's what who says?

GEORGIAN:

(looking towards another prisoner)

Shipman yonder. He speaks the lingo some.

The kid regards the other prisoner. He shakes his head and spits dryly.

CUT TO:

INT. PRISON - LATER.

Little children perch on the walls and watch them by shifts, pointing and jibbering. They walk around the parapet and throw

stones at the prisoners, until the kid throws one back, dropping a child from the wall, knocking him unconscious. The Georgian suddenly panics.

GEORGIAN:

Now yer gone and done it.

The kid looks at him.

GEORGIAN:

They'll be in here any moment with whips and I don't know what all.

KID:

(spitting)

They ain't about to come in here and eat no fuckin' whips.

INT. PRISON - LATER.

Later, a Mexican woman brings food to the prisoners, bringing bowls of beans and charred tortillas on a plate of unfired clay. She looks harried and smiles at them. She has smuggled sweets under her shawl and there are pieces of meat in the bottom of the bowls that have come from her own table.

KID:

(to the woman)

Thank you.

The woman bows her head and leaves. The kid tucks into the food.

EXT. OUTSIDE CHIHUAHUA CITY - TWILIGHT

A string of American prisoners rides through a mountain pass on the backs of mules. They are escorted by Mexican soldiers riding at the front and rear of the column.

The company rides through a gap in the mountains and looks down on the city.

A subtitle appears:

La Ciudad de Chihuahua, México

CUT TO:

INT. CHIHUAHUA CITY PRISON - NIGHT

The kid is driven with the other prisoners down a set of steps and into a dim stone cellar.

The soldiers shove the kid into the prison and retreat up the stairs. The iron gate clangs shut.

The kid stares blindly into the gloom until he is able to make out a number of dark figures crouched along the wall.

Others lie asleep in beds of hay.

The new prisoners take places around the cellar. The kid

squats in the corner and rubs his eyes.

A long-haired man in underwear crosses the room and urinates in a pail. Then he turns and makes his way over to the kid and stands looking down at him. It's Louis Toadvine.

TOADVINE:

You don't know me, do ye?

KID:

(squinting at him)

I know ye. I'd know your hide in a tanyard.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHIHUAHUA CITY STREETS - AFTERNOON

Toadvine and the kid sit side by side in the shade of a wall and eat piñole from clay bowls, manacles around their ankles. They watch a pair of dogs standing coupled in the street.

TOADVINE:

How do you like city life?

KID:

I don't like it worth a damn so far.

TOADVINE:

Yeah, I keep waitin' for it to take with me but it ain't done it.

They watch the overseer covertly as he passes, his hands clasped behind his back, his cap cocked over one eye. The kid spits.

TOADVINE:

I seen him first.

KID:

Seen who first?

TOADVINE:

You know who. Old Brassteeth yonder.

The kid looks at the sauntering figure.

TOADVINE:

My biggest worry is that somethin' will happen to him. I pray daily for the Lord to watch over him.

KID:

How do you think we're getting out of this fuckin' hellhole?

TOADVINE:

We'll get out. It ain't like the cárcel.

KID:

What's the cárcel?

TOADVINE:

State penitentiary. There's old pilgrims in there come down the trail back in the twenties.

The kid watches the dogs. After a while the guard comes back along the wall kicking the feet of anyone sleeping. The younger guard carries his escopeta at the ready if there might be some fabled uprising among their chained and tattered felons.

GUARD:

Vamonos, vamonos!

The prisoners rise and shuffle out into the sun. A small bell rings and a coach comes up the street. They stand along the curbs and remove their hats. The guidon passes, ringing the bell and then the coach. It has an eye painted on the side and four mules to draw it, taking the host to some soul. A fat priest totters after carrying a religious image. The coach passes and the prisoners replace their hats and shuffle down the street, chains clanking.

CUT TO:

INT. CHIHUAHUA CITY PRISON - NIGHT

Toadvine, the kid, and a grizzled veteran named Grannyrat Chambers are seated cross-legged on the floor of the candle-lit prison eating bowls of meat with their fingers.

CHAMBERS:

Them is some cruel sons of bitches. I know of one old boy up on the Llano near the Dutch settlements, they caught him, took his horse and all. Left him to walk it. He come crawling into Fredericksburg on his hands and knees buck naked about six days later and you know what they'd done? Cut the bottoms of his feet off.

Toadvine shakes his head. He gestures toward Chambers.

TOADVINE:

Grannyrat here knows 'em. Fought 'em. Ain't ye, Granny? Chambers wafts a hand dismissively.

CHAMBERS:

Shot some stealin' horses is all.
Down towards Saltillo. Wasn't nothin'
to it. There was a cave down there
had been a Lipan burial. Must have
been a thousand Indians in there all
settin' around. Had on their best
robes and blankets and all. Had their
bows and their knives, whatever.
Beads. The Mexicans carried
everything off. Stripped 'em naked.
Took it all. They carried off whole
Indians to their homes and set 'em in
the corner all dressed up but they
began to come apart when they got out
of that cave air and they had to be
thawed out. Towards the last of it
they was some Americans went in there
and scalped what was left of 'em and
tried to sell the scalps in Durango.
I don't know if they had any luck
about it or not. I expect some of
them Injins been dead a hundred year.

The kid watches him and chews silently.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHIHUAHUA CITY STREETS - DAY

Toadvine, the kid, and Chambers are down on their hands and
knees in the gutter tossing bits of refuse into sacks when...
A strange stillness falls. The wind stops blowing, the air
crackles.

The kid stares around him.

Down the street, a pack of dogs comes around the corner at a
run, their tails between their legs. They pass in front of
the prisoners and disappear up the street.

The sound of horse hooves drifts through the street, and then
a gale of crude laughter.

From around the corner emerges a company of filthy savages,
dressed in animal skins and armed to the teeth with huge
bowie knives and enormous revolvers and two barreled rifles
with massive bores. Their wild-eyed horses have bridles woven
of human hair and decorated with human teeth, and some of the
riders wear necklaces strung with desiccated human ears.

Foremost among them, outsized and childlike with his naked

face, rides the judge. His cheeks are ruddy and he's smiling and bowing to the ladies and doffing his filthy hat. The enormous dome of his head when he bares it is blinding white and perfectly circumscribed so that it looks to have been painted. He and the reeking horde of rabble with him pass on through the stunned streets and hove up before the governor's palace where their leader, a small blackhaired man, claps for entrance by kicking at the oaken doors with his boot. The doors are opened forthwith and they ride in, and the doors are closed again.

TOADVINE:

Gentlemen, I'll guaran-fuckin'-tee ye
I know what that there is about.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHIHUAHUA CITY STREETS - THAT NIGHT.

Toadvine, the kid and Chambers are huddled in a corner, whispering.

TOADVINE:

(sotto voce)

The captain's name is John Glanton.
He's got a contract with Governor
Trías. They're to pay him a hundred
dollars a head for scalps. I told him
there was three of us. Gentlemens,
we're gettin' out of this shithole.

KID:

We ain't got no outfits.

TOADVINE:

He knows that. He said he'd find
anybody that was a guaranteed hand
and take it out of their shares. So
don't let on like you ain't no
seasoned Indiankiller 'cause I
claimed we was three of the best.

SLOW DOLLY IN to the kid's face.

CROSS-FADE:

EXT. CHIHUAHUA CITY - DAY

The Glanton Gang rides out single file through the streets of Chihuahua City, Governor Ángel Trías riding at the head of the column alongside Glanton and the judge. Girls throw flowers from their

windows as the riders pass. Some blow kisses.
Young boys run alongside the horses,
cheering. Old men wave their hats and cry out
huzzahs.

At the rear of the column, the kid stares around in amazement.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE EDGE OF CHIHUAHUA CITY - MINUTES LATER

WIDE: Governor Trías gives the company his blessing and drinks
to their health and fortune.

And then the Glanton Gang sets out on the road upcountry.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The gang members sit around their campfires. Toadvine, the
kid, and Chambers squat a little ways off around a smaller
fire, watching.

The kid looks across the campsite to where the Delaware
Indians sit around their fire. One of them reaches barehanded
into the coals and withdraws a red-hot ember and with it
lights his pipe.

A man crosses the desert floor and seats himself beside
Toadvine. He has three fingers to his right hand and a few
teeth, and is Welsh by birth. This man is Bathcat.

BATHCAT:

I'll offer ye a wager. Which do you
think'll do for the other?

TOADVINE:

Which what?

BATHCAT:

Which John Jackson? Black or white?

Brown indicates with his eyes two men seated at different
fires. One Black, one white, both named John
Jackson. The white John Jackson eyes the Black
with hostility. The Black John Jackson stares
quietly into the embers.

BATHCAT (CONT'D):

I'll ask ye again. Which Jackson'll
kill which? Black or white?

TOADVINE:

I don't know them boys.

BATHCAT:

How do ye think then?

Toadvine spits quietly. He looks at Bathcat.

TOADVINE:

I wouldn't want to bet.

Bathcat squints at him.

BATHCAT:

Not a gaming man?

TOADVINE:

Depends on the game.

BATHCAT:

The blackie will do for him. Take your odds.

Toadvine regards Bathcat.

BATHCAT (CONT'D):

Ye've not hunted the aborigines afore.

TOADVINE:

Who says it?

BATHCAT:

I know it.

Toadvine looks into the fire.

BATHCAT (CONT'D):

You'll find 'em right lively.

TOADVINE:

So I hear.

Bathcat smiles.

BATHCAT:

Much has changed. When I first come into this country there was savages up on the San Saba had hardly seen white men. They come into our camp and we shared our mess with em and they couldn't keep their eyes off our knives. Next day they brought whole strings of horses into camp to trade. We didn't know what they wanted. They had knives of their own, such as they was. But what it was, you see, was they'd never seen sawed bones in a stew before.

Toadvine glances at the man's forehead but the man's hat is pushed down almost to his eyes. The man smiles and forks the

hat back slightly with his thumb. The print of the hatband lies on his forehead like a scar.

CUT TO:

EXT. MOUNTAIN LANDSCAPE - AFTERNOON

The company rides up through a dwarf forest of cholla and nopal through a gap in the mountains.

The white John Jackson drops back along the column and rides in the Black Jackson's shadow. He whispers something in his ear. The Black Jackson kicks his horse and moves up the column. The white man laughs.

The kid watches these proceedings apprehensively.

Glanton turns around and watches the men for a moment, then turns back and rides on.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - MIDNIGHT

The company rides upon a plain of desert grass and scattered palmilla, the moon glowing ghostly pale overhead.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORRALITOS - DUSK

The company enters the town of Corralitos, riding through the ash-covered street past low mud houses, the townsfolk standing wonderstruck along the side of the road. Smelter chimneys rise above the roofs of the town, belching smoke into the air while furnaces blaze.

A subtitle appears:

Corralitos, México

CUT TO:

EXT. CORRALITOS - NIGHT

The company sleeps in the town plaza, the soot from their campfires blackening the trunks of the cottonwoods.

The fire-bright eyes of the townsfolk peer out from darkened windows.

CUT TO:

EXT. CORRALITOS - MORNING

The company saddles their horses and mounts up, assembling a column in the square.

A family of nomadic magicians approaches on foot.

Glanton looks down at them from atop his horse.

The family consists of a man (the juggler), his wife (the prophetess), their young adult son, and their teenage daughter. They are dressed in fools' costumes embroidered with stars and half moons and they lead three burros laden

with goods in tattered panniers.

The juggler comes forward and takes the bridle of Glanton's horse.

GLANTON:

Get yer fuckin' hands off my horse.

The man speaks no English but does as he's told. He speaks to Glanton in Spanish, gesturing to his family gathered behind him. Glanton watches him. He looks at the boy, then at the two women, and then back at the man.

GLANTON: (CONT'D)

What are you, a show?

The man holds his ear towards Glanton and looks up with mouth agape.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

I said what are you? Are you a show?

The juggler looks back at his family.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

A show. Bufónes.

JUGGLER:

(brightening)

Sí! Sí, bufónes! Todo.

He digs in his pockets and comes up with a set of wooden juggling balls.

JUGGLER (CONT'D):

Míre, míre!

He juggles the balls in front of Glanton's horse. The horse snorts and lifts its head.

Glanton spits and wipes his mouth with the back of his hand.

GLANTON:

Ain't that the drizzlin' shits.

The juggler, still juggling, calls over his shoulder to the women. The women turn to the bags lashed to the mules.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

Don't start no more of that crazy
shit. You want to ride with us you
fall in the back. I promise you
nothin'. Vámonos.

He kicks his horse and the company begins to move.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT PLATEAU CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Fighting the gusting wind, the family of magicians struggles to pitch a tent. The canvas whips about and the tent lurches.

The daughter lies on the ground gripping a corner of the tent. She begins to drag through the sand.
The juggler takes small steps. The prophetess holds fast, jaw set.

WIDE: The Americans watch as the family and tent are dragged into the darkness beyond the firelight.
The wind howls.

CUT TO:

MEDIUM: The juggler is seated in front of his campfire staring into the flames. The tent is gone. Behind him, his family unloads the burros. They watch him uneasily.
Glanton watches him also.

GLANTON:

Showman.

The juggler looks up. He points to himself.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

You.

The juggler stands and walks over to where Glanton sits smoking a thin cigar.

Glanton looks up at the juggler.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

You tell fortunes?

JUGGLER:

¿Cómo?

Glanton puts the cigar in his mouth and mimes fanning a deck of cards.

GLANTON:

La baraja. Para adivinar la suerte.

The juggler nods vigorously.

JUGGLER:

¡Sí, sí! Todo, todo.

He holds up a finger. One moment. The juggler turns and goes to the bags of goods partly unloaded from the burros.
He returns with a deck of tarot cards, calling to the prophetess.

JUGGLER (CONT'D):

Vénga. Vénga.

The prophetess comes over. The juggler leads her by the hand to a place away from the fire and sits her down facing out into the pitchblack night.

He takes a kerchief from his shirt pocket and ties it around her eyes.

JUGGLER (CONT'D):

(presentational)

Bueno. ¿Puedes ver?

PROPHETESS:

No.

JUGGLER:

¿Náda?

PROPHETESS:

Náda.

JUGGLER:

Bueno.

The juggler turns back to Glanton and approaches, riffling the cards.

Glanton waves him away, indicating the men of the company.

GLANTON:

Los caballeros.

The juggler turns, passing his eyes over the seated men. His gaze lands on the Black John Jackson.

The juggler fans the cards. Jackson rises and approaches.

The juggler folds the cards and fans them again and passes his hand over the deck with an air of mystery.

He holds out the deck and Jackson takes a card and looks at it. The card shows a jester in harlequin and a cat. The Fool.

JUGGLER:

Bueno. Bueno.

He takes the card back and holds it aloft, showing the company. They watch in silence.

JUGGLER (CONT'D):

(calling)

El tonto.

PROPHETESS:

¡El tonto!

The prophetess begins a singsong chant.

Jackson stands uneasily, looking over the company.

His eyes find the judge sitting shirtless before the fire, watching him. The judge smiles.

The prophetess stops her chant.

JUGGLER:

¿Quién, quién?

PROPHETESS:

El negro.

JUGGLER:

¡El négro!

The prophetess raises her voice and begins to speak.
Jackson turns to the company.

BLACK JACKSON:

What does she say?

The juggler is making small bows to the company.

BLACK JACKSON (CONT'D):

What does she say? Tobin?

The ex priest Tobin shakes his head.

TOBIN:

Idolatry, Blackie, idolatry. Do not
mind her.

BLACK JACKSON:

What does she say, Judge?

The judge smiles.

BLACK JACKSON:

What does she say?

JUDGE:

I think she means to say that in your
fortune lie our fortunes all.

BLACK JACKSON:

And what is that fortune?

JUDGE:

Are you a drinking man, Jackie?

BLACK JACKSON:

No more than some.

JUDGE:

I think she'd have you beware the
demon rum. Prudent counsel enough,
what do you think?

BLACK JACKSON:

That ain't no fortune.

JUDGE:

Exactly so. The priest is right.

Jackson frowns. The judge leans toward him, the firelight
reflecting in his eyes.

JUDGE (CONT'D):

Wrinkle not thy sable brow at me,
my friend. All will be known to you
at last. To you as to every man.

Jackson stands for a moment staring at the judge, and then he
steps back from the firelight and sits.

The juggler walks around the ring of men, the cards outheld before him.

JUGGLER:

¿Quién, quién?

He arrives in front of the judge. The judge raises a pale finger and points to the kid.

JUDGE:

Young Blasarius yonder.

JUGGLER:

¿Cómo?

JUDGE:

(in whispered Spanish,
subtitled in English)

El jóven. {The kid.}

JUGGLER:

(sotto voce)

El jóven.

The juggler crosses to the kid. He squats in front of him and fans the cards.

JUGGLER: (CONT'D)

Una carta, una carta.

The kid looks at the juggler, then at the company.

JUGGLER: (CONT'D)

Sí, sí.

The kid reaches out and takes a card. He looks at it. The Four of Cups. The juggler takes the card and holds it up.

JUGGLER: (CONT'D)

(calling)

Cuatro de copas.

The prophetess raises her head.

PROPHETESS:

¡Cuatro de copas!

JUGGLER:

¿Quién?

PROPHETESS:

El hombre... El hombre más jóven.

El muchacho.

The prophetess begins to chant.

The kid looks at the judge. The judge is laughing silently.

The kid looks at the ex priest Tobin, then at David Brown, then at Glanton. None of them are laughing.

The kid looks down at the juggler. The juggler grins at him.

KID:

(looking disgusted)

Get the fuck away from me!

The juggler cocks his ear toward the kid.

KID (CONT'D):

I said get the fuck away from me.

A member of the gang leans down and whispers into the juggler's ear. The juggler rises, bows, and moves away. The prophetess is silent.

JUGGLER:

¿Quién, quién?

JUDGE:

(sotto voce)

El jefe.

The juggler crosses to Glanton and presents to him the spread deck. Glanton smiles. He reaches out a hand, hesitates, then takes a card. He looks at it. The Chariot.

The juggler reaches for the card but the wind snaps it away and it vanishes into the night.

The juggler lunges after the card, loses his balance, and falls against Glanton.

GLANTON:

Oh, for fuck's sake!

He shoves him away. The prophetess begins to chant. Glanton stands.

GLANTON:

Shut her up!

PROPHETESS:

(in Spanish, subtitled in English)

La carroza, la carroza. Invertido.
Carta de guerra, de venganza. La ví
sín ruedas sobre un río obscure...
{The chariot, the chariot.
Inverted. Card of war, of
vengeance. I saw a cart without
wheels on a dark river...}

GLANTON:

¡Cierra la boca!

The prophetess senses something. Her blindfolded head turns.

PROPHETESS:

(subtitled in English)

¡Perdida, perdida! ¡La carta está
perdida en la noche!

{Lost, lost! The card is lost in
the night!}

JUGGLER:

(whispering)

Perdida, perdida.

PROPHETESS:

(subtitled in English)

Un maleficio... Qué viento tan
maliente...

{A curse... What a villainous
wind...}

Glanton draws his revolver.

GLANTON:

By God you will shut up.

PROPHETESS:

(subtitled in English)

Carroza de muertos, llena de
huesos. El joven que--

{Chariot of the dead, full of
bones. The kid that--}

GLANTON:

(leveling his pistol at the prophetess)

I said shut the fuck up!

Suddenly the judge steps through the fire and restrains
Glanton, wrapping his massive hairless arms around the
captain.

Glanton struggles against the judge, cursing.

The kid watches. The wind howls.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT PLAIN - THE NEXT MORNING

The company rides upon the desert. The air is still.

The juggler on his burro moves up to the head of the column
and rides alongside Glanton.

The men ride in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. JANOS - AFTERNOON

The company rides into the crumbling mud town of Janos.

A subtitle appears:

Janos, México

WIDE, DOLLY FORWARD: In the center of the square, two of the Delawares and Webster (an outrider) squat beside a weathered old Native American woman.

The company approaches on horseback, circling around the old woman. She stares at the ground, unmoving.

Glanton looks down the street. The town appears vacant. Dust blows.

Glanton's horse sniffs at the old woman and jerks its neck and trembles. Glanton pats the horse's neck and dismounts.

WEBSTER:

She was in a meatcamp about eight mile up the river. She cain't walk.

GLANTON:

How many were there?

WEBSTER:

We reckoned maybe fifteen or twenty. They didn't have no stock to amount to anything. I don't know what she was doin' there.

Glanton walks in front of his horse, passing the reins behind his back. He steps in front of the old woman kneeling on the ground.

WEBSTER: (CONT'D)

Watch her, Cap. She bites.

The old woman raises her head to the level of Glanton's knees. Glanton pushes his horse back and draws his heavy saddle pistol from its scabbard and cocks the gun.

GLANTON:

(to the men)

Watch yourself there.

Several of the gang members step back.

The old woman raises her face, her eyes flat and empty.

Glanton points with his left hand and the woman turns her head to follow his finger and he puts the pistol to the side of her head and fires.

The woman topples to the side and falls dead on the ground. Blood pools.

The company looks on, most with disinterest.

The family of magicians watches in stunned terror.

Grannyrat Chambers swallows. He looks ill.

The kid watches the blood spreading out across the mud of the street.

Glanton puts the pistol at halfcock and flicks away the spent primer with his thumb and prepares to recharge the cylinder.

GLANTON (CONT'D):

McGill, get that receipt for us.

McGill draws a skinning knife from his belt and walks over to the old woman's body.

He bends down, twists her hair about his wrist, and sets the razor edge of the knife against the woman's hairline. The knifeblade rasps across bone. Glanton looks at the men, they are standing, some looking at the old woman, some already seeing to their mounts or their equipage. Only the recruits are watching Glanton. He inserts a pistol ball in the mouth of the chamber and then he raises his eyes and looks across the square. The juggler and his family stand aligned like witnesses and beyond them in the mud facade faces that have been watching from the doors and the naked windows drop away like puppets in a gallery before the slow sweep of his eyes. He levers the ball home and caps the piece and spins the heavy pistol in his hand and returns it to the scabbard at the horse's shoulder and takes the dripping trophy from McGill and turns it in the sun the way a man might qualify the pelt of an animal and then hands it back and takes up the trailing reins and leads his horse out through the square towards the water at the ford.

CUT TO:

EXT. CREEK - LATER.

The men have made camp in a grove of cottonwoods across the creek just beyond the walls of the town.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT PLAIN CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

Later, they drift in small groups through the smoky streets. The circus folk have set up a little pitchtent in the dusty plaza and stand a few poles mounted with cressets of burning oil. The juggler is beating a sort of snare drum made of tin and rawhide and calls out in a high nasal voice his bill of entertainments.

PROPHETESS:

(chanting)

Pase, pase, pase!

The woman sweeps her arms about her in a gesture of the greatest spectacle. Toadvine and the kid watch among the milling citizenry.

BATHCAT:

Look yonder, chappies.

They turn to look where he has pointed. The black Jackson stands stripped to the waist behind the tent and as the juggler turns with a sweep of his arm the girl gives him a shove and he leaps from the tent and strides about with strange posturings under the lapsing flare of the torches.

EXT./INT. CANTINA - LATER.

The men pool their coins and Toadvine pushes the dried cowhide that hangs for a door. They enter a place where all is darkness and without definition. A lone lamp hangs from a crosstree in the ceiling and in the shadows dark figures sit smoking. They make their way across the room to a claytiled bar. The place reeks of wood-smoke and sweat. A thin little man appears before them and places his hands ceremonially upon the tiles.

THIN MAN:

Dígame. [Tell me]

Toadvine takes off his hat and puts it on the bar and sweeps a clawed hand through his hair.

TOADVINE:

What have you got that a man could drink with just a minimum risk of blindness and death?

THIN MAN:

Cómo? [Sorry?]

Toadvine cocks his thumb at the man's throat.

TOADVINE:

What have ye got to drink?

The barman turns and looks behind him at his wares. He seems uncertain whether anything there would answer their requirements.

THIN MAN:

Mescal?

TOADVINE:

Suit everybody?

BATHCAT:

Trot it out.

The barman pours the measures from a clay jar into three dented tin cups and pushes them forward with care like counters on a board.

TOADVINE:

Cuánto.

The barman looks fearful.

THIN MAN:

Seis?

TOADVINE:

Seis what?

The man holds up six fingers.

BATHCAT:

Centavos.

Toadvine doles the coppers onto the bar and drains his cup and pays again. He gestures at the cups, all three with a wag of his finger. The kid takes up his cup and drains it and sets it down again. He is standing like the others with his back to the bar and he looks over the room. At a table in the far corner men are playing cards by the light of a single tallow candle. Along the wall opposite crouched figures seeming alien to the light who watch the Americans with no expression at all.

TOADVINE:

There's a game for ye. Play monte in
the dark with a pack of niggers.

He raises the cup and drains it and sets it on the bar and counts the remaining coins. A man is shuffling toward them out of the gloom. He has a bottle under his arm and he sets it on the tiles with care together with his cup. He turns the pitcher so that the handle of it stands to his right and he looks at the kid. He is old and wears a flat crowned hat of a type no longer much seen in that country and he is dressed in dirty white cotton drawers and shirt. The huaraches he wears look like dried and blackened fish lashed to the floors of his feet.

THIN MAN:

You are Texas?

The kid looks at Toadvine.

THIN MAN:

You are Texas. I was Texas three
year.

He holds up his hand, the forefinger is gone at the first joint. He lowers the hand and turns to the bar and pours wine into the cup and takes up the jar of water and pours it sparingly after. He drinks and sets the cup down and turns to Toadvine. He wears thin white whiskers at the point of his

chin and he wipes them with the back of his hand before looking up again.

THIN MAN:

You are *sociedad de guerra. Contra los bárbaros.*

Toadvine doesn't know. He looks like some loutish knight beriddled by a troll. The old man puts a phantom rifle to his shoulder and makes a noise with his mouth. He looks at the Americans.

THIN MAN:

You kill the Apache, no?

Toadvine looks at Bathcat.

TOADVINE:

What does he want?

Bathcat passes his own three fingered hand across his mouth but he allows no affinity.

BATHCAT:

The old man's full. Or mad.

Toadvine props his elbows on the tiles behind him. He looks at the old man and he spits on the floor.

THIN MAN:

Craziern a runaway nigger, ain't ye?

There is a groan from the far side of the room. A man rises and goes along the wall and bends to speak with others. The groans come again and the old man passes his hand before his face twice and kisses the end of his fingers and looks up.

THIN MAN:

How much monies they pay you?

No one speaks.

THIN MAN:

You kill Gómez, they pay you much monies.

The man in the dark of the far wall moans again.

MAN:

Madre de Dios.

THIN MAN:

Gomez, Gomez. Even Gomez. Who can ride against the Tejanos? They are soldiers. Que soldados tan valientes. La sangre de Gomez, sangre de la gente...

He looks up.

THIN MAN:

Blood. This country is give much
blood. This Mexico. This is a thirsty
country. The blood of a thousand
Christis. Nothing.

He makes a gesture toward the world beyond where all the land
lies under darkness and all a great stained altarstone. He
turns and pours his wine and pours again from the waterjar,
temperate old man, and drinks. The kid watches him. He watches
him drink and he watches him wipe his mouth.

THIN MAN:

I pray to God for this country. I say
that to you. I pray. I don't go to
church. What I need to talk them
dolls there? I talk here.

He points to his chest. When he turns to the Americans his
voice softens again.

THIN MAN:

You are fine caballeros. You kill the
barbaros. They cannot hide from you.
But there is another caballero and I
think no man hides from him. I was a
soldier. It is like a dream. When
even the bones is gone in the desert
the dreams is talk to you, you don't
wake up forever.

He drains his cup and takes up his bottle and walks softly
away on his sandals into the farther dim of the cantina. The
man at the wall moans again and calls upon his god. Bathcat
and the barman speak together and the barman gestures at the
dark in the corner and shakes his head and the men chamber
down their last cups and Toadvine pushes the few tlacos toward
the barman and they walk out.

EXT. CANTINA - NIGHT.

BATHCAT:

(to Toadvine)

That was his son.

TOADVINE:

Who?

BATHCAT:

The lad in the corner cut with a
knife.

TOADVINE:

He was cut?

BATHCAT:

One of the chaps at the table cut him. They were playing cards and one of them cut him.

TOADVINE:

Why don't he leave?

BATHCAT:

I asked him the same myself.

TOADVINE:

What did he say?

BATHCAT:

He had a question for me. Said where would he go to?

EXT. STREET - LATER.

The gang make their way through the narrow walled streets toward the gate and the fires of the camp beyond. A voice is calling.

VOICE:

(in untranslated Spanish)

Las diez y media, tiempo sereno.

It is the watchman at his rounds and he passes them with his lantern calling softly the hour.

EXT. DESERT MESA - SUNSET

The blood-red sun boils on the western horizon. Herds of deer cross the plain, pursued by wolves. A dry lakebed shimmers in the heat.

MEDIUM: Glanton sits atop his horse and looks out across the landscape.

A flock of birds passes in front of the sun in silhouette.

Glanton sits for a long moment. And then he puts heels to his horse and the company files out down the slope.

CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT PLAIN CAMPSITE - THAT NIGHT

The company is camped at the foot of a talus slope.

There are two fires in this camp. Around one sits the kid, Toadvine, Juan Miguel, and the Delawares.

The judge approaches through the smoke and squats before Toadvine and the kid.

JUDGE:

What's become of Chambers?

TOADVINE:

I believe he's quit.

JUDGE:

Quit?

TOADVINE:

I believe he has.

JUDGE:

Did he ride out with us this morning?

KID:

Not with us he never.

JUDGE:

(to Toadvine)

It was my understanding you spoke for your group.

Toadvine spits.

TOADVINE:

He appears to of spoke for hisself.

JUDGE:

When did you last see him?

TOADVINE:

Seen him yesterday evenin'.

JUDGE:

But not this morning.

TOADVINE:

Not this mornin'.

The judge looks at him.

TOADVINE (CONT'D):

Hell, I allowed you knowed he was gone. It ain't like he was so small you never would miss him.

The judge looks at the kid. Then he looks back at Toadvine. And then he rises and returns to his fire.

The judge settles on the ground and takes out a journal and pencil and begins to sketch. As he does so...

The Black John Jackson walks up and throws down his saddle blanket and sits. He begins stoking his pipe.

The white John Jackson looks up at him, eyes narrowed. He looks over to the other fire, seeing the Delawares and Juan Miguel seated around it.

WHITE JACKSON:

(gesturing with his hand)

Get the fuck away.

The Black Jackson looks up from his pipe. The other men around the fire watch uneasily.

BLACK JACKSON:

Any man in this company can sit
where it suits him.

The white Jackson reaches for his gunbelt where it lies on the ground and draws and cocks his revolver. Four men stand and move away from the fire.

BLACK JACKSON: (CONT'D)

You aim to shoot me?

WHITE JACKSON:

You don't get your black ass away
from this fire I'll kill you
graveyard dead.

The Black Jackson looks across the fire at Glanton. Glanton watches him.

He puts the pipe in his mouth and gathers up his saddle blanket and folds it over his arm.

BLACK JACKSON:

Is that your final say?

WHITE JACKSON:

Final as the judgment of God.

The Black Jackson looks at Glanton again. And then he moves away into the night.

The white Jackson uncocks the revolver and places it on the ground in front of him.

Two of the men come back to the fire and stand nervously.

The white Jackson sits cross legged with his left hand in his lap and his right on his knee holding a cigarillo.

The ex priest Tobin is seated to his left. Tobin's eyes widen.

The Black Jackson steps out of the darkness two-handing an enormous bowie knife.

Tobin starts to rise. The white Jackson looks up.

The Black Jackson steps forward and with a single stroke severs the white Jackson's head from his neck.

Blood spurts up from the dead man's neck and arcs into the fire where it pops and crackles on the hot coals.

The head rolls to the left and comes to a rest at Tobin's feet, its expression one of dull surprise. Tobin jerks his foot away and rises and steps back.

A cloud of dark smoke rises from the fire.

The white Jackson sits cross-legged, headless, drenched in blood, the cigarillo still between his fingers. Glanton rises and the men move away from the fire. All except the judge. He sits and sketches in his journal and smiles to himself.

EXT. DESERT PLAIN CAMPSITE - DAWN.

The gang packs for the journey ahead. The kid and the judge look towards each other before walking away.

TOADVINE:

Hurry, before the Apaches arrive.

KID:

What about Chambers?

TOADVINE:

To hell with him. Just get packing.

The judge takes the headless man's gun but leaves his boots. Later, the gang ride off, leaving the white Jackson's body behind. We CLOSE UP on the headless body, sitting like a murdered anchorite discolored in ashes and sark, drenched in blood.

CUT TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE TWO.