

CRIMSON NATION

written by
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Contributions by
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based on
the true stories
and
bold legends
of the

Cherokee Nation
as told to the writer
by a full-blood
Cherokee tribal elder.

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CRIMSON NATION
Glory, Defeat and Resurrection
based on a true story

FEATURE FILM TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. CHEROKEE NATION FOREST - GEORGIA USA - CIRCA 1840 - DAWN

Breaking sunlight cuts through the dense old growth forest. The indistinguishable shadowed image of a man stands behind a huge oak tree.

The trim legs and ankles of a well-bred horse walks through the forest undergrowth.

A powerful golden mountain lion quietly lopes through the woods near the shadowed man startling him.

His face becomes partially visible as a thin streak of sunlight cuts across his body. It is JOHN ROSS (30's), a handsome sun bronzed part Cherokee Indian and Scotsman with long dark hair adorned with a few beads, dressed more like a woodsman than a Native American. His eyes search the area and he listens. Abruptly John runs across the colorful autumn landscape.

EXT. FOREST BLUFFS, GEORGIA USA, CIRCA 1840 - MORNING

John breathes hard as he sprints across the grey rocky bluff between a few Maple and red oak trees.

John nears the edge of the fifteen feet high moss covered bluff. He pulls his weathered bone handle hunting knife from its deer-hide scabbard a few feet from the edge of the bluff. John lunges off, sailing smoothly through the thick morning air.

A mounted rugged looking, blue coat CAVALRY TROOP (40's), listens intently for new sounds in the forest.

The soldier looks up and John lands with a THUD on top of him. They fall to the leaf covered ground.

In the confusion the soldier's powerful horse nearly tramples them as they fight hard for their lives next to his sharp hooves.

The animals feet sink deep in the soft ground as he fidgets next to a small clear spring that runs from the stone wall of the bluff.

John rolls away and quickly stands with his razor-sharp knife at the ready.

The soldier is confident as he pulls out a polished oak handled ARKANSAS TOOTHPICK hunting knife and watches for John's next move.

3D SUPER - FALL, CIRCA 1840, CHEROKEE NATION, STATE OF GEORGIA, UNITED STATES

John thrust forward and misses his mark. He and the soldier wrestle to the ground. John knocks the soldier's knife from his hand and gets the advantage. He holds his knife blade to the soldier's neck as they stare at each other sweating and breathing hard.

JOHN ROSS
(light Scottish accent)
Where are the rest of ya, lad?

CAVALRY TROOP
(American Southern accent)
Go to hell bred.

John slowly pushes the knife to the soldier's neck and blood begins to trickle from around the blade tip.

JOHN ROSS
If that's really what ya want.

John pushes the knife a little more.

CAVALRY TROOP
All right... They're at Echota.

John gets up and stands the man up holding the knife on him. He takes his blue military jacket off then puts it on. He grabs the soldier's pistol, a new COLT cap and ball revolver. John cocks the weapon and checks it over pointing it at the soldier.

JOHN ROSS
Nice... You steal this from the Texas Navy?

CAVALRY TROOP
Hell no, new issue ta shoot you with.

JOHN ROSS
Funny. Looks like it's not working so well.

He motions with the pistol barrel for the soldier to take his gun belt off. The soldier takes it off and gives it to John.

CAVALRY TROOP

When the colonel finds out about this. Your life won't be worth spit.

John puts the belt on with the holster positions backward and puts the gun in its scabbard.

JOHN ROSS

Right now, you should worry about who's life is worth spit.

The soldier just looks at him. John takes a piece of rawhide and ties the mans hands behind his back.

John kneels by a tiny clear pool of water that the nearby trickling spring has created. He sticks his knife in the ground next to him for easy access, then looks at the soldier that is eyeballing him.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)

Don't even think about it government man.

John washes his face and hands. He stands wiping his face with his sleeve.

CAVALRY TROOP

Why are you doing this? You ain't even full Injun.

John smirks.

JOHN ROSS

Why are you doing this. You ain't even a greedy politician screwin Indians over.

CAVALRY TROOP

You don't even look injun, cept for those stupid beads.

JOHN ROSS

The proper pronunciation ass-hole, is Indian and my beads are attraction you uncultured ass-hole.

CAVALRY TROOP

Don't matter, you ain't one.

John is amused at the soldier.

JOHN ROSS

I am a Cherokee, that just kicked your ass laddy. John Ross is the name. That injun enough for ya?

CAVALRY TROOP

I heard about you. The Army's lookin to take you down hard, set an example.

JOHN ROSS

Do ya see me hidin, you unholy devil?

CAVALRY TROOP

Reckon not.

John goes to the cavalry mount and gets aboard. He pulls out a new US Model 1833 HALL CARBINE rifle looking it over. John works the lever action and aims it at the soldier.

The soldier draws back.

John smiles and puts the rifle away.

JOHN ROSS

Nice, I like this carbine. Good stuff.

CAVALRY TROOP

My ass.

John smiles as the spirited bay cavalry charger fidgets and wheels around under him.

JOHN ROSS

Nice guns, nice horse. Looks like I'm all set... Guess you'll be walkin home.

CAVALRY TROOP

Enjoy your fun while you can.

John appears a little more serious.

JOHN ROSS

YOU TELL'EM.

(he composes himself)

Tell'em the Cherokee mean to keep their land, you sticky-fingered bastards.

CAVALRY TROOP

Ya...

JOHN ROSS

Shut ya ass now lad. We got no more
business.

He starts turning the horse to ride away through the forest.

The troop yells out.

CAVALRY TROOP

Ya just added horse thievin to the
rest of it.

John smiles, then turns and rides slowly away. He abruptly
raises up out of the cavalry saddle a little and farts. He
keeps riding giving the soldier a back handed wave as he
urges the horse to go faster.

Two soldiers quickly ride up from the forest trail. One of
the MOUNTED TROOPS (20's) speaks up.

MOUNTED TROOP

(American Eastern accent)

What the hell happened?

CAVALRY TROOP

Get'em, he stole my horse.

John looks back and sees the soldiers. He pushes his horse to
go faster up a hill.

The two soldier's immediately move-out after John.

John speeds the well-bred cavalry mount over the hill and
forward through the thick woods.

John sees a wide ravine that is very deep.

He points his horse toward it and urges him forward. The
animal goes into a run toward the crevasse.

The two soldiers are nearby now, cutting through the woods
headed straight for John.

John's horse comes to the edge of the ravine and lunges
forward sailing across with ease.

FREEZE FRAME DISSOLVE TO ANIMATED STILL

ROLL CREDITS

END OF TEASER

EXT. CHEROKEE NATION FOREST - DAY

Johns horse hits the ground on the other side of the ravine and keeps running.

The two soldiers stop their mounts at the edge of the Ravine and watch John ride away. John stops his horse and turns him to look back. The horse rears on his hind legs and then hits the ground on all four feet and speeds away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL CABIN FOREST SITE - SPRING - DAY

Elderly tanned slim fingers thrusting a sharpened stick into dark cultivated soil.

3D SUPER - SUMMER, 1956, OUTSIDE THE RURAL COMMUNITY OF HULBERT, CHEROKEE COUNTY OKLAHOMA, USA

A six feet long bronze Copperhead snake smoothly slithers through the short greening grass near the scene.

The shot further WIDENS to reveal GRANDMA DIRTEATER (80), a small and thin, full-blooded Cherokee woman wearing a red homemade shirt and blue jeans, squatting as she digs in her modest garden. Grandma stops to wipe her brow.

The snake raises his golden head to taste the air and moves on toward the elderly woman.

Grandma Dirteater begins to dig again then wipes her long silky grey hair from her face and goes to her knees to get more comfortable.

The big Copperhead coils silently in front of her.

Ms. Dirteater notices him and freezes staring at the snake while on all fours.

Grandma draws back a little. The snake pushes it's head forward matching her moves. Grandma sweats as she waits in suspense.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
 (Native American Cherokee
 accent)
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 It's your move, killer. I'm too
 slow to run.

The shiny bronze snake's forked tongue taste the air again focusing on Grandma. It strikes. Suddenly a big stick is under the snake and flips it into the air and across the garden.

Grandma Dirteater sits on her butt gathering her emotions. A long shadow of a human silhouette covers the ground before her.

SAMUEL WILDHORSE BASS (7), a smiling light-haired, blue eyed boy with a long scar on the side of his head and face, steps in front of Grandma.

SAMUEL
 (lite American Southern
 accent)
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Oh-si-yo (hello), Grandma. You bit?

Her Brown eyes twinkle. She turns her gaze on Samuel and brushes her gray hair behind her ear.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
 No, he missed. I see you have
 learned to gather the wind in your
 fist.

SAMUEL
 Yeah, that snake bout got ya.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
 I was just letting you practice.

SAMUEL
 Naa, I snuck-up on ya. You were
 scared.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
 I was not. I had that bronze devil
 hypnotised.

SAMUEL
 I could tell. When I saw your eyes
 bugged out.

Samuel's dog named POOCHY (2), A young beagle/coon hound mix comes from the woods and rushes to the location of the snake and starts barking at it. The snake hisses as he crawls into the woods.

Grandma creaks to a stand.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
Come here boy! I missed you. You
too, lazy dog.

SAMUEL
Missed you too.

Samuel embraces her. She strokes his hair.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
What brings you up here, little
man?

Samuel smiles. He looks up at her kind face and takes a small
box from his pocket.

SAMUEL
These. My dad said ta give'em to
you. What's in there?

She shakes the box.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
They're bullets for hunting my
food. Beats a hatchet.

SAMUEL
(Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
Tell me one of those shooter
stories. I like'em, e-qua ga-wo-ni-
s-gv (big talk).

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
Sure baby. I know one you'll like.
My grandmother told me many stories
about a mighty Cherokee Chief that
she once knew. He was part Cherokee
and part white. Scottish, I think.
They called him Little John when he
was young.

Samuel nods and smiles shyly and they walk down the trail
towards her ivy covered log cabin in the distance with Poochy
following.

SAMUEL
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
Like me?

She smiles and nods.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER
 Yes, a strong man like you... It
 all started way back...

SLOW DISSOLVE:

EXT. FOREST BLUFFS - DAY

Sparrows fly from a golden tree lined ridge above a shallow rolling blue river. The underbrush rustles and the sound of a horse's nostrils SNORTING can be heard.

A light morning fog rises from the pristine, softly flowing river. Ribbons of sunlight move across the top of the rippling waters.

QUATIE (20's), a very pretty slim full blood Cherokee woman with a nice smile and long black hair walks to the edge of the river carrying two clay water jugs and begins to fill them.

3D SUPER - SPRING, CIRCA 1840, CHEROKEE NATION, STATE OF GEORGIA, UNITED STATES.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
 Ancient customs where trampled on
 when thousands of European
 emigrants moved to America and onto
 Indian lands. All Indian lands, not
 just Cherokee.

A soldier scout watches from the underbrush holding a hunting knife.

SAMUEL (V.O.)
 Are emigrants, American's?

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
 Sort of, in those days in America
 there were great nations hidden
 away deep in the forest and on the
 plains. One of them was the Ani-Yun-
 Wiha. Their name means: Real
 People.

SAMUEL (V.O.)
 Like you?

TALMIDGE WATTS (late 20's), an average, well dressed, full-blood Cherokee man walks to Quatie smiling and helps her with the water jugs.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

Just like me. Their ancient name
was changed when their neighbors,
Your people, the mighty Choctaw
affectionately renamed them:
Chillaki. It means cave dweller.
Over time, The Real People became
forever known as: Cherokee.

SAMUEL (V.O.)

Could we get to the good parts?

Quatie and Talmidge have finished with filling the water and
walk back toward the village.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

Patients, a good story is never
rushed.

The hidden soldier/scout watches them closely.

A red-tailed hawk SCREAMS and soars low across the tops of
old growth oak trees growing on the ridge, just above
Grandma's cabin.

The soldiers looks up at the hawk.

EXT. 1800'S CHEROKEE NATION FOREST - DAY

The red-tailed hawk flies at tree top level over the forest
screaming his discontent.

John Ross rides the lathered cavalry mount hard and fast down
a hillside trail and through the forest taking notice of the
hawk then looks back down the trail.

The two soldiers are finally back on his trail. They stop and
see John pointing at him.

John urges his powerful horse forward.

EXT. FOREST - RIVERSIDE - CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

Under the canopy of the trees an ancient Cherokee Indian
Nation village sits next to the timber-lined riverbank.

3D SUPER - CHEROKEE NATION, ECHOTA VILLAGE, GEORGIA USA

The village's dirt main street is neatly lined with log
cabins and lean-to's with thatch roofs. A handful of
Cherokee, Caucasian traders and British merchants are
exchanging wares and money.

Talmidge and Quatie walk down the busy street carrying the water laughing and talking.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
Our people quickly adapted to the
European's ways and often traded
goods with them.

SAMUEL
Come on Grandma. You are putting me
to sleep.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE ECHOTA - DAY

On a secluded ridge well above the village two U. S. Cavalry officers dressed in trail worn blue uniforms sit astride powerful cavalry horses watching the busy Cherokee village below.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
On this day. The government has
sent the army to push the Cherokee
further west to make way for more
settlers. When the army pushes,
there is always destruction and
little talk.

The commanding officer, MAJOR JACOB SEVIER (30's), is a handsome campaign hardened veteran with dark hair. He pulls a brass telescope from its leather pouch then he allows his telescope to search the village below.

SEVIER
(Irish accent)
(quietly)
Ready the men.

His men nod.

CASTEEL
(American New York accent)
Yes sir.

CAPTAIN FRANKLIN CASTEEL (early 30's), the slightly younger light skinned second-in-command, moves his horse out and rides the battle line checking the troops.

EXT. CHEROKEE NATION FOREST - DAY

John is pushing the sweating cavalry charger to go faster as he dodges limbs moving down the trail.

The two pursuing soldiers are still trying to catch him.

EXT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

A closer look reveals traders examining stacks of fur, pottery and trade goods that line the fronts of the Cherokee merchant's dug-outs and log cabins.

Nearby, but away from the trading street, warriors repair weapons and care for their war-horses.

Immediately behind the trade area Cherokee women prepare food for the day. Quatie and Talmidge walk up and sets the clay water jug down beside a campfire next to the women.

Quatie smiles a bid of thanks at Talmidge and walks to a stick ball game being played in a nearby field.

Talmidge grabs a strip of cooked deer meat from a strip of rough hewn wood near the campfire. He is scolded by an elderly woman as he walks on

In the meadow, Cherokee children laugh as they play the game of Stick-ball (a game similar to Lacrosse). Quatie goes on the side lines and watches. She claps and jumps as the children play.

At the center of the village four British traders, two Cherokee chiefs and five select warriors talk around a vast council fire.

Talmidge stops and relaxes as he leans against a large tree watching the council.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

Doublehead, a minor village chief of high standing has surrendered his honor and barter with British traders to sell Cherokee land outside of council law. This always means trouble in the tribe.

SAMUEL (V.O.)

I'm snoring.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

You gotta know this part to enjoy the story.

One British trader points to a weathered map as the others intently listen.

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE ECHOTA - DAY

Sevier continues to observe through his telescope. He puts it away and rest his hand on the hilt of his battle worn sword watching the valley below.

Casteel and his men stand ready silently waiting.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
The Cherokee will learn the
Washington government's thirst for
land is never satisfied.

EXT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

The British traders and Cherokee continue their intense discussion around the council fire.

THE RIDGE (30's), a tall muscular warrior of the Cherokee Nation, dressed in traditional bright colored raiment and crowned by a colorful tribal turban, watches in seclusion from the dark forest.

Abruptly he steps from the shaded forest next to the council fire. Ten of his warriors materialize from the shadows behind him.

CHIEF DOUBLEHEAD (40's), a shorter and stocky Cherokee Village Chief sits next to the British traders. He looks up.

The entire group is surprised and starts to go for their weapons then relax when they recognize The Ridge, a fellow Cherokee.

Talmidge comes to attention, crosses his arms and continues to watch.

Angry at the interruption, Chief Doublehead abruptly stands.

DOUBLEHEAD
(Cherokee accent)
What is so important you would
interrupt a chief in council.

The Ridge casts a stern stare across the group and directly at Doublehead.

THE RIDGE
(Cherokee accent)
Doublehead, you cannot barter our
homelands. They are sacred.

The five white men appear concerned.

DOUBLEHEAD

Ridge, you are but a leader of your own band. I am a Village Chief of all who range here. I decide at this council fire.

The Ridge takes a moment to look into the eyes of each white trader. The time is tense.

THE RIDGE

Outside of Council law. This is the land of our ancestors. You know it is wrong.

Doublehead smiles.

DOUBLEHEAD

(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)

Your challenge surprises me, but every minnow wants to be a fish.

THE RIDGE

(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)

A fish like you, sees only the bait not the hook.

EXT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA PERIMETER - DAY

Two of Sevier's soldiers steal through the underbrush drawing large hunting knives as they approach two Cherokee sentries. The soldiers simultaneously attack the sentries and kill them.

One soldier takes two pieces of styled flint from his pocket and sparks them together.

EXT. RIDGE NEAR SEVIER AND CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

John Ross moves his horse around a bluff and down a slope loosing the two soldiers that pursue him. He slows the cavalry mount and stops. He gets off then looks around the area.

John turns his attention to the village. He sees the two soldiers that where chasing him stopped by a soldier in hiding. The hidden soldier points to the ridge where Sevier is. The two mounted soldiers quietly ride toward Sevier.

John quickly moves toward the village.

EXT. RIVER BANK ACROSS FROM CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

Sevier sees the flash of six sparks at random times throughout the shadowed forest surrounding the large village.

Sevier and Casteel watch the last of their horse troops move silently into attack positions across the river from the village.

INT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

Ridge paces looking on the traders and Doublehead harshly.

THE RIDGE
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
White agreements mean nothing!
Truth is an orphan.

The village camp dogs bark. Talmidge takes notice and puts his hand on his side arm listening.

Quatie looks toward the dogs.

Doublehead glances at them then the traders. He turns his attention back to The Ridge.

DOUBLEHEAD
The sun rises without your help and
this council can decide without
you.

The Ridge appears intuitive as if he has an ominous premonition. He looks toward the forest and the restless camp dogs.

EXT. RIVER BANK ACROSS FROM CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

Sevier and his hidden cavalry troop's horses fidget and the men watch intently. Random troops quiet their horses.

Sevier coolly draws his saber with the slice of cold steel.

SEVIER
Charge!

The troops obediently charge forward, blasting across the shallow river with sabers drawn.

John springs into action and starts shooting. He moves from the woods and blocks a cavalry mount. He then shoots a soldier from his horse.

Another cavalry troop rides him down slashing at John with his sword. John falls to the ground knocked aside by the charging horse.

EXT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

The village warriors and visiting traders have heard the shots and see the approaching troops. They grab their weapons and start shooting back.

Sevier and the troops drive headlong into the busy village.

Doublehead defends himself with a spear pole against a soldier with a saber. He knocks the soldier to the side and quickly surveys the area.

He sees the village being completely overrun.

Talmidge is fighting with a soldier trying to run him down with his horse.

Doublehead melts into the forest before he has to fight again.

A soldier charges Quatie on foot and she grabs gun from a nearby dead soldier and shoots him, then heads for the woods.

A SMALL CHILD (3) cries, as a charging cavalry horse passes. His mother shields him with her body and she is knocked to the side and mercilessly run over by a cavalry horse. The Baby screams louder.

Talmidge looks toward the scream.

Quatie looks back to see.

John grabs the baby from the path of the charging soldiers and gives it to a YOUNG CHEROKEE GIRL (12). John shoots at an approaching soldiers.

Bullets begin to hit all around The Ridge. He grabs a war hatchet from his belt. The Ridge glances to see Doublehead in the forest.

He is retreating over a nearby hill.

A soldier charges to pursue Doublehead. The Ridge throws his hatchet.

The hatchet hits the pursuing soldier in the shoulder blade and he falls to the ground.

Quatie sees the killing and moves on into the forest.

John Ross trips the horse of another soldier with a spear shaft that is charging The Ridge. He immediately attacks the downed trooper and kills him with his hunting knife.

The Ridge acknowledges with a nod.

At the council fire, two minor chiefs and a warrior lie dead.

The Ridge surveys the area and yells out to his men.

THE RIDGE
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
Get your horses! We'll fight them
on the trail.

Talmidge looks toward The Ridge as he shoots at a soldier.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)
Talmidge. Come with us.

A few soldiers attack The Ridge's men.

Abruptly Talmidge and The Ridge see a soldier on horse back, trying to run down the frightened Quatie as she runs through the woods.

Talmidge takes his pistol and shoots the soldier just as Quatie gets to him. Quatie hides behind Talmidge.

Talmidge takes notice of The Ridge and his warriors fighting their way through three soldiers trying to get to their horses that are tied just inside the forest timber line.

Talmidge takes Quatie's hand and pulls her with him to the horses, shooting a soldier on the way.

They mount up with Quatie behind Talmidge and they all ride into the forest and disappear.

The clamor of battle has lessened. The last victim stands looking at the destruction, a pretty TEENAGED CHEROKEE GIRL (14).

Casteel sits his horse a few feet away. He attempts to shoot the girl but discovers his bullets are depleted. He slowly draws his razor sharp sword from his belt and makes ready to finish her.

The teenaged Cherokee girl bravely awaits her fate watching Casteel closely.

Casteel urges his horse forward and swings. John come from out of no where and knocks him from his horse before he can connect with the young girl. While Casteel is dazed John puts her on Casteel's horse and slaps it on the rump and rushes her out of the village.

The pace has slowed. John sees The Ridge and his men leaving over a hill.

He looks around and finds he is the only live Cherokee left.

John sees a loose horse and tries to grab it's reins, but the horse runs from him. A soldier comes on John from a blind side and attacks. John shoots. The soldier falls and John retreats into the woods on foot.

Casteel is coming around.

He sees John and takes a shoot at him and misses. Casteel gets up and walks toward the action.

At the other end of the village, STAFF SERGEANT NATHAN PRINCE (late 20's), essence of a frontier soldier, takes notice of the ordeal between John and Casteel then rides through the village giving orders and observing the battlefield.

PRINCE
(American Southern accent)
Check the dug-outs. No survivors.

Casteel surveys the area as he walks up.

CASTEEL
That's the last of'em. Burn it,
boys.

A few of the marauders light torches while other just stand around. One approaches a nearby dugout and lights it. It is engulfed like kindling.

Casteel grabs a horse and mounts up.

The remaining soldiers mumble and slowly mount.

CASTEEL
Get to it damn-it.

The soldiers ride in all directions doing the work of burning the village. In moments the entire village is in flames. SCREAMS are heard in the background.

The remaining soldiers throw bodies into the flames of the dugouts and cabins to complete the task of clean up.

Prince looks at the distant knoll above him. A shadowed image of John Ross moves quickly across the rough hillside.

PRINCE

Scout on the horizon, sir!

Sevier turns to his men.

SEVIER

Corporal Conroy, Private Baxter...
get him before a war party finds
out where we are.

CONROY and BAXTER, (both mid 20's) athletic-looking enlisted men, ride out at full speed in pursuit of the scout.

EXT. WOODS NEAR CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

John hears Conroy and Baxter. He is tired and battered but manages to quickly move toward a small bush-covered cave hidden in the jagged rocks.

The narrow cave entrance has a spider-web glistening across the top. John lowers his head as he enters to leave the web undisturbed.

He turns and gets on his belly in the small cave to peer out.

POV JOHN

He sees the legs of the soldier's horses through the bushes as they move closer.

BAXTER (O.C.)

(American East Coast
accent)

Over there. Check the brush.

BACK TO SCENE

John watches nervously as Conroy moves closer to his location. He pulls his pistol, cocks it and waits.

Conroy looks in at the hiding place. His eyes search the area. Abruptly a large black-widow spider appears on the web before him. He sees the spider and pulls back, but can't see John hugging the cavern wall.

CONROY

(American Southern accent)
Ain't nothin here but spider webs.

Baxter scans the area. Prince rides near them.

PRINCE

Let's go! We're wasting time.

Conroy turns and gets back on his horse. Conroy and Baxter follow Prince back toward the village.

John cautiously watches them. He exits the cave carefully respecting the web.

The large black-widow spider sits in the upper corner.

He speaks to the spider as he moves by.

JOHN ROSS

Thank you, brother.

John follows the soldiers at a safe distance watching them through the trees.

EXT. CHEROKEE VILLAGE ECHOTA - DAY

CASTEEL

Form up, column of twos. Stand by.

The busy soldiers form a unit and move out with Prince at the head. Baxter and Conroy join the troop.

In the brush, John quietly moves closer to hear.

Sevier turns to Casteel.

SEVIER

We'll hit the village down river
before that scout can warn'em. Then
make our way back to Gillespie's
Station to resupply.

Casteel nods. He and Sevier think they hear a noise and look in John's direction.

They ignore it and ride to the head of the moving column.

John turns and move quickly through the woods.

EXT. DEEP FOREST CHEROKEE NATION - DAY

John runs through the woods dodging low hanging branches.

Suddenly, as if from nowhere, a shadowy horseman rides in front of him. John abruptly stops.

He recognizes his friend, The Ridge. Ridge holds out his hand and John swings up behind him. They quickly ride out of sight.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DEEP FOREST CHEROKEE NATION - DAY

Sevier, Casteel, Prince and two captains ride in front of their troops as they move through a narrow wooded pass that lies between two stone bluffs.

EXT. BLUFFS ABOVE SOLDIERS - DAY

John Ross and The Ridge sit patiently watching the soldiers from the hillside above.

JOHN ROSS

I tried to make it here before the attack.

THE RIDGE

It is all right John...

(looks curiously at him)

I wonder sometimes, why you care? With your money and education you could do anything.

John smiles.

JOHN ROSS

I don't know. Something drives me to help my people... My mother's people. They live under the boot heel of the government. I think it's wrong.

Ridge nods in agreement. John looks over to see Quatie.

Quatie is sitting at an ammunition station passing out bullets to the warriors as they walk by.

Her cousin, Talmidge enters. He sits with Quatie. Talmidge begins to help her with the ammunition.

John catches Quatie's autumn eyes.

Quatie smiles discreetly and turns back to her business. Talmidge coolly cuts him a look.

John returns the cool glance and looks back to the pass. He checks his rifle and pistol.

THE RIDGE
She's pretty.

JOHN ROSS
What?

The Ridge smiles.

THE RIDGE
You know... Just be careful. Women
are like a tornado, at first they
are warm, wet, and wild. But, in
the end they take your lean-two,
your horse and leave you with
nothing.

They smile together.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Sevier and his troops continue moving carefully through the narrow pass. Sevier's eyes anxiously search the area.

CASTEEL
This place is a damn death trap.

SEVIER
It's the only way to Gillespie.

Casteel warns the men.

CASTEEL
We're in a bad spot boys, stay
sharp.

EXT. BLUFFS ABOVE SOLDIERS - DAY

The Ridge glances across the bluffs high above the unaware soldiers. He gives a quiet gesture to hidden Cherokee warriors signaling an attack.

Warriors rise up. They rain down arrows, blowgun darts and gunfire on the soldiers.

John fires his rifle.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Sevier's troops are caught by surprise. They have no place to escape in the narrow foliage-covered pass. Soldiers and horses fall wounded or dead.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

In a haze of gunfire and blow darts, the able soldiers pick up their wounded comrades and retreat for cover. The killing field begins to clear. Two Captains and ten troopers are lying dead.

Captain Casteel lies wounded. Sergeant Prince quickly rides past. Casteel stands and grabs Prince's arm and swings up behind him on his horse. They ride hell bent for cover.

Sevier and his men move a safe distance away from the bluffs near Prince and Casteel.

The fight stops in eerie silence.

Prince and Casteel dismount. The sergeant lies Captain Casteel on the ground. He puts a handkerchief on his stomach wound. Casteel acknowledges.

PRINCE

You're safe here.

Prince remounts. Sevier rallies his troops and forms a skirmish line.

SEVIER

Charge!

The troops charge toward a group of Cherokee warriors trying to move down a narrow trail on the side of the hill.

The darts, arrows and bullets rain down again. Three soldiers fall to the ground dead.

The Ridge's brother STAN WATIE (late 20's), very stocky full blood Cherokee warrior moves along a narrow footpath on the side of the steep bluff moving down to meet the intruding soldiers.

Suddenly gunshots from the soldiers hit all around Stan causing him to slip and fall on the loose rocks. He rolls down the side of the bluff and into the pass below.

EXT. BETWEEN THE STONE BLUFFS OF THE NARROW PASS - DAY

Stan gets up from his fall. He is directly in the path of the charging soldiers. Stan pulls a set of pistols and makes ready to defend.

EXT. BLUFFS ABOVE SOLDIERS - DAY

The Ridge watches the pass intently.

POV RIDGE

He sees Sevier and his men charging toward Stan.

BACK TO SCENE

Ridge looks at John.

JOHN ROSS

I'll go.

John puts his rifle down and pulls his pistol. He quickly moves down the hill to help Stan.

EXT. BETWEEN THE STONE BLUFFS OF THE NARROW PASS - DAY

Sevier's saber is drawn as he and his troops bear down on Stan. Cherokee warriors begin to fire their weapons. The soldiers return fire on the warriors and Stan.

Abruptly John slides to a stop beside the injured Stan, just in time to ward off Sevier. He drops his pistol. Stan fires his weapons and misses. John grabs a nearby broken tree limb.

Sevier rides past the pair and knocks Stan down with his horse. He charges again and John strikes at Sevier but misses.

Sevier charges again. John throws his body against the horse's front legs. The horse stumbles and Sevier falls to the ground.

John recovers quickly and grabs Sevier's saber lying on the ground. He stands over the stunned Sevier with both hands in the air holding the saber high to run him through.

Sergeant Prince cocks his pistol and aims to shoot John.

Sevier solemnly looks up at John resigned to his fate.

John hesitates and looks up at The Ridge.

POV JOHN

The Ridge cocks his rifle to shoot Sergeant Prince.

BACK TO SCENE

Stan weakly struggles to get up.

STAN WATIE
 (American Cherokee accent)
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Kill him!

John looks at Sevier with a disgusted gaze and gets off of him. He then breaks the saber over his knee and throws it beside Sevier.

Sergeant Prince pauses and rest his weapon.

POV JOHN

The Ridge lowers his rifle.

BACK TO SCENE

John walks to the injured Stan and helps support him.

Sevier stands and puts a hand up to stop his ready troops from starting the fight again.

SEVIER
 Stand fast.

They continue to wait at the ready.

Sevier goes to his horse and gets on. He watches John help Stan walk up a trail leading to the top of the bluffs.

SEVIER (CONT'D)
 Who are you?

John turns.

JOHN ROSS
 I am Cherokee.

He walks on with Stan.

EXT. TOP OF BLUFFS ABOVE SOLDIERS - DAY

The Ridge steps to the edge of the bluffs. His body casts a shadow over the soldiers below.

RIDGE
 I am Ridge, War Chief of the
 Cherokee. Leave this land and end
 this war.

EXT. BETWEEN THE STONE BLUFFS OF THE NARROW PASS - DAY

Sevier glares at the shadowed image for a moment. He turns to his troops.

SEVIER

Move out.

The troops cautiously move out following the major.

EXT. TOP OF BLUFFS ABOVE SOLDIERS - DAY

The Ridge watches the pass.

The soldiers ride away with their wounded.

John turns Stan over to two waiting warriors. He steps beside Ridge. Ridge looks at his warriors and a battered Stan.

STAN WATIE

You should have killed them all.

THE RIDGE

(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)

Patience brother. Take him to my
home.

The warriors move to their horses.

John looks across the valley.

JOHN ROSS

Life is hard in this land.

THE RIDGE

Since the soldier's came.

JOHN ROSS

I'll ride as far as Gillespie's
Station with you.

Ridge nods. He and John walk together toward their horses.

John sees Quatie and others begin to ride out.

THE RIDGE

You saved my brother. I will always
think well of you, John Ross.

John quietly smiles at his friend.

The Ridge smiles and pats him on the shoulder. He looks at a nearby warrior as he moves on to his horse.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)
Get my friend a horse.

The warrior moves to find John a horse.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DEEP FOREST - DAY

A flutter of birds in the forest puts the Sevier's soldiers on guard. They watch the forest closely. PRIVATE KLINE (20's), A youthful dark haired man at the end of the column breaks the silence.

PRIVATE KLINE
(American Southern accent)
Them Choctaw are gonna hit us next.

PRIVATE BAXTER (20's), a slim and tall soldier chimes in.

BAXTER
(American East Coast
accent)
Why are we on these people's land
anyway?

The exhausted troops begin to grumble among themselves.

Casteel and Prince just look at them with disgust.

PRINCE
Save it. We got a long way to go.

BAXTER
We ain't goin' back, Prince.

PRINCE
You'll go back when ordered or by-
God I'll do ya in myself.

SEVIER
The station's twenty miles away and
there are plenty of savages that
would cut your throat between here
and there. So, stop the bull-shit
and try to be soldiers. Mommy's not
here.

EXT. FOREST NEAR GILLESPIE'S STATION - DAY

Fifty Cherokee, who are more soldier than warrior, prepare in hiding behind some rocks to attack the station. They begin to line up on horseback positioning themselves like trained cavalry. The Ridge rides the line looking at each man. John Ross is at the end of the line. Ridge stops next to John.

THE RIDGE

I am glad you are with us today.

John nods.

A Cherokee courier rides from the forest trail to The Ridge and speaks to him privately then rides away.

THE RIDGE

John, when this is over Chief Hicks wants you at Council.

JOHN ROSS

wha could he want with me.

The Ridge smiles with pride for John

THE RIDGE

He wants you to be a talker to the Washington fools.

JOHN ROSS

Speaking of Washington. Old General Jackson will be on you for this.

THE RIDGE

No, that evil old bird will do nothing. He's busy with the other tribes.

Ridge turns his horse to watch the station.

Talmidge is on the end of the battle line near John. His tone is smug.

TALMIDGE

(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)

Token white boy.

(John looks)

Look at these fine full blood Cherokee and Creek, fierce in battle.

JOHN ROSS
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 I've seen them many times Talmidge
 Watts. Why do you speak.

TALMIDGE
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Full-bloods should fight these
 battles. Not whites calling
 themselves Cherokee.

JOHN ROSS
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Big talk. You're here because The
 Ridge favors you. Your head is big.

Talmidge appears a little put down.

TALMIDGE
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 I am full-blood. Favored because of
 my blood.

The Ridge turns back to them and gives Talmidge a harsh look.
 Talmidge frowns and looks away.

THE RIDGE
 Quiet Talmidge.
 (to John)
 John, you have an important job now
 with the council. You stay.

JOHN ROSS
 I will fight.

THE RIDGE
 No, sometimes words are more
 powerful than bullets.

JOHN ROSS
 no today.

Ridge smiles and shakes his head.

THE RIDGE
 You will fight.

In the distance, Sevier and his men ride over a low hill and
 toward the inadequately guarded fortress and move inside.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)

I don't believe it.

TALMIDGE

That's the stupid soldiers in the pass?

The Ridge nods and positions for the attack.

THE RIDGE

(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)

Attack!

The Cherokee and Creek Warriors charge the garrison with The Ridge in the lead. John and Talmidge charges with the others.

EXT. GILLESPIE'S STATION - DAY

At the front gates, Indians and civilians fight in fierce bloody battles.

The Ridge kills a civilian trying to shut the gates. A man starts to shoot Ridge. John shoots him.

The Ridges notices and acknowledges John.

The warriors and Talmidge continue to pass through to the inside and are met with a token resistance. They dismount and take the fight further inside.

Sevier's tired men are caught off guard. They have just dismounted and defend themselves on the ground.

INT. GILLESPIE'S STATION - DAY

The battle is now down to warriors and soldiers fighting hand-to-hand. Screams and sounds of pain resonate as the tomahawks, knives and guns meet their mark.

John fights with a soldier, hand to hand. They break away and the soldier starts shooting At John. John dodges the shooting and the soldier is shoot by someone else.

John looks around. The Cherokee have overrun the station. Soldiers, Cherokee and civilians lie dead. All is quiet.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GILLESPIE'S STATION - DAY

The Ridge rides past his warriors that are picking up guns and supplies and putting them on pack horses. He stops his animal to survey the battle area.

Suddenly a soldier lying on the ground raises himself up with pistol in hand. He takes aim at The Ridge and cocks his pistol.

John sees the soldier as he moves out of the station to get his horse. He quickly knocks the gun from the soldiers hand.

The man's gun falls near a warrior. The warrior kicks the gun away then ties the soldier's hands with a leather strap. Two more warriors drag him to the garrison wall with Sevier, Casteel, Baxter and a few others.

Talmidge walks near John looking around at the after math of the battle.

TALMIDGE

Close up, war is grim.

John nods.

The Ridge rides toward them and stops in front of John.

THE RIDGE

I live another day.

John nods.

JOHN ROSS

That soldier was brave. Why do they fight for these greedy people?

TALMIDGE

For the gold. It's always about land or gold.

JOHN ROSS

Life has no value for them.

THE RIDGE

Yes it does, about ten dollars a head for Indians. Wolves and coyotes five dollars. Let's go home.

The Ridge rides away.

The warriors begin to ride from the trading post to follow The Ridge with John and Talmidge following.

Sevier, Casteel, Prince, Baxter, Conroy and the soldier who tried to kill The Ridge lie against the outside stockade wall with a few wounded civilians. All are bound with leather straps. Four Cherokee stand guard.

WHITEHAWK (50), an strong warrior, has singled out Sevier. He points a pistol at his head ready to shoot.

The Ridge turns in his saddle.

THE RIDGE

Whitehawk! Leave them to tell the story.

Whitehawk lowers the pistol.

WHITEHAWK

(American Cherokee accent)
(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)

Evil lives another day... Next time.

Sevier smirks.

The Ridge and the warriors continue to ride deeper into the forest.

Whitehawk attaches a parchment letter to the gatepost with a bone-handled knife.

He takes another hunting knife from his belt and moves toward Sevier and his men. He tilts his head for the guards to leave. Whitehawk stops in front of Sevier and jerks his bound hands up into clear view then cuts the straps loose.

The guards mount up and wait for Whitehawk with rifles ready.

Whitehawk goes to each person and surprisingly cuts them loose. He turns and hastily mounts his horse. He promptly rides into the forest with his Cherokee guards and fades from sight in the same direction of the distant war party.

Sevier has a curious look as he watches the Cherokee go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROSS FAMILY TRADING POST - CHEROKEE NATION - DAY

JACK FOURKILLER (40's), a spry Cherokee man dressed in western attire wearing long braided hair, runs up the steps of the large log trading post nestled deep in Cherokee Territory and goes inside.

The Ridge, John, Talmidge and his men ride up out front. They stop to water their horses.

John dismounts, ties his horse and moves towards the post.

INT. ROSS FAMILY TRADING POST - CHEROKEE NATION - DAY

JACK FOURKILLER (50's), a spry thin Cherokee man enters amid a discussion between DANIEL ROSS (60's), a greying average Scottish man and MOLLY ROSS (50's), young for her age attractive mixed-blood Cherokee woman.

Daniel looks up and smiles at Jack as he casually looks at the stock and a paper he is holding. Molly places more stock on the shelves of their trading post and smiles and nods to Jack while still talking to Daniel.

MOLLY ROSS

(Cherokee accent)

The Ridge and that brother of his are headed for trouble and don't even know it.

DANIEL ROSS

(Scottish brogue)

They fight for the old ways. Their intentions are good.

Molly glances at Quatie who sits on the floor at the back of the store stocking shelves.

MOLLY ROSS

Don't you get involved in all of that stuff Quatie. It get's people in trouble.

QUATIE

No ma'am.

Molly smiles.

JACK

(American Cherokee accent)

Hey, have you heard? Jackson's fightin' again.

MOLLY ROSS

Nothing new about that.

Jack picks up a blanket.

JACK

I hear he's bribing some chiefs to get the tribes to get out and the ones he can't bribe he's pickin' fights with.

MOLLY ROSS

I heard The Ridge is helping.

JACK

That's going around.

John is standing at the door. He enters.

JOHN ROSS

We should be careful of what we say about our friends.

POV JOHN

Outside, The Ridge and his men ride away. The noise interrupts.

BACK TO SCENE

MOLLY ROSS

(To John)

No hello for your mother?

JOHN ROSS

Hello, mither. I love you.

Mrs. Ross smiles and turns to Jack. They talk inaudibly as she fills his supply order.

Mr. Ross approaches John.

DANIEL ROSS

Son, You know we don't condone killing.

John nods.

JOHN ROSS

I know father.

Daniel straightens some merchandise.

DANIEL ROSS

You're probably tired. Why don't you go on home.

JOHN ROSS
That's a good idea.

DANIEL ROSS
We'll talk more tomorrow when
you're back at work. Don't forget
to see Chief Hicks. He sent a man
by to fetch you.

JOHN ROSS
I will.

John turns to leave.

JACK
Stop by sometime, John. I got a
bunch of deer meat we can cook up.

JOHN ROSS
I will Mr. Fourkiller.

John smiles and turns to the front door. He notices Quatie.

JOHN ROSS
wha are you doing here?

QUATIE
Your job... Molly hired me when you
didn't come in.

JOHN ROSS
I saw you in the woods with
Talmidge?

QUATIE
Yes, he's my cousin.

JOHN ROSS
What's your name?

QUATIE
Elizabeth Henly, but since I was
little everybody just called me
Quatie.

JOHN ROSS
All right Quatie. I'm John.

QUATIE
I know.

John smiles then strolls out. Quatie smiles back and watches him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TRAIL NEXT TO FARM - DAY

John rides casually down a wooded trail toward his home. As he approaches a plowed field, he comes upon three white men attacking an old Cherokee farmer, MR. BLACKFOX.

The men beat Mr. Blackfox and drop him face down in the soft dirt. They leave with his mule in tow.

John races his horse toward them and draws his pistol.

JOHN ROSS

Stop! Hey!

The criminals scurry away with the mule.

They are too far away to take a shot. John slides his horse to a stop and rushes to Mr. Blackfox.

A horseman bursts from tall grass along the trail. John turns to see The Ridge who halts his horse beside John and dismounts. John turns Mr. Blackfox over to reveal his face and wipes the fresh dirt off.

JOHN ROSS

Mr. Blackfox...

The Ridge's jaw clinches with anger.

Five CHEROKEE WARRIORS on horseback emerge from the trail. They lead the mule and the THREE MEN (40's) on foot back to Ridge.

The warriors force the men to the ground at The Ridge's feet.

John looks at The Ridge.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)

He's dead.

Enraged, The Ridge glares upon the men and pulls the nearest one to his feet by the collar.

THE RIDGE

Get up, murderer!

The other men stand. The Ridge rips his hatchet from his belt and shoves it toward John.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)

Kill them, John Ross.

The men appear frightened.

JOHN ROSS

We should take them to council.

The Ridge takes the hatchet and suddenly buries it in the first man's head. The man's eyes bulge and he drops to the ground dead with Ridge's hatchet protruding from his forehead.

The remaining two men struggle to break free from the warriors holding them.

THE RIDGE

My Cherokee brother, this is truth.
They are murdering thieves. It is
our law.

Ridge's anger projects onto a second man. He pulls his large hunting knife and slashes his throat. The man drops to the ground gurgling.

The third man, a heavy rough looking man struggles with his captors.

THIRD MAN

(American East Coast
accent)

We didn't mean ta hurt him. Don't
kill me.

THE RIDGE

John, you say you want freedom for
all men. Stop the killing of our
people. Use the gun I gave you. Put
a bullet in his head.

John looks at the bloody bodies on the ground.

JOHN ROSS

This is for the council. Only they
may judge.

THE RIDGE

You may be judged as harshly by the
white man someday.

JOHN ROSS

Our law is clear.

The Ridge nods to a warrior. He slowly strangles the third man with a leather strap. The man drops in the dirt.

A STRONG WARRIOR (20's) rides up with the three horses of the men in tow.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)

Leave the bodies. Let all who would murder see... Give their horses to William's family.

WARRIOR

(Cherokee accent)

There may be more.

THE RIDGE

We will bury William. Go ahead of us and check the other farms and kill any intruders.

The warriors mount and ride away.

JOHN ROSS

I'm sorry we disagree Ridge.

THE RIDGE

I love you, brother. You are a man of laws and there is a time for you. But as you said, not this day.

The Ridge gestures to John to take the reins of his horse.

John takes the reins and mounts up. He and The Ridge ride away in a cloud of dust.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DANIEL ROSS FAMILY FARM HOUSE - NIGHT

A council of five Cherokee Chiefs lead by CHIEF CHARLES HICKS (60's) arrive on horseback in front of the southern style home.

John and The Ridge arrive with four warriors. A guard takes the horses away as they dismount.

The Ridge signals his warriors to take their post. The well armed warrior guards assume positions around the house.

Daniel Ross exits the house and greets the chief, not seeing his son.

DANIEL ROSS
Welcome gents.

They shake hands.

HICKS
(Cherokee accent)
Daniel, I thank you for allowing us
to have council in your home.

DANIEL ROSS
You are always welcome Chief Hicks.

Daniel Ross and Chief Hicks start to enter the house.

John steps next to Chief Hicks.

JOHN ROSS
Chief Hicks, I got word you wanted
to see me.

HICKS
I do John. When I get this business
taken care of we'll talk.

Chief Hicks goes inside with Daniel. The Ridge pats John on the shoulder and walks inside to the meeting. John goes to a Cane chair on the front porch and sits down. He can see the tribal chiefs through the open side window.

POV JOHN

Inside the house, Chief Hicks proceeds with the council as they sit around a large oak table.

BACK TO SCENE

Talmidge sits down in another cane chair beside John.

TALMIDGE
We should do something. All we do
is hang around.

JOHN ROSS
I am doing something. I'm minding
my own business.

3D SUPER - CHEROKEE COUNCIL MEETING, ROSS FAMILY RANCH,
CHEROKEE NATION GEORGIA.

INT. ROSS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Oil burning lanterns light the dining room where the meeting takes place. Chief Hicks stands.

HICKS
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Chief Doublehead has been found
 guilty of treason for selling
 Cherokee land against council law.
 (looks at Ridge)
 Ridge... You are given the honor
 of executing the judged.

The Ridge stands.

THE RIDGE
 As the council orders.

HICKS
 You will choose a confederate and
 carry out your poor duty, tonight.

A council fire burns in the fireplace lighting the council member's solemn faces.

The Chief looks with admiration at The Ridge as he walks out.

The council meeting continues.

EXT. FRONT ROSS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The Ridge walks on the front porch. He looks at Talmidge and John.

THE RIDGE
 Talmidge, you and John come with
 me. The council has business. Get
 your guns.

Talmidge and John look at each other then Ridge.

JOHN ROSS
 wha are we doing?

THE RIDGE
 Get your weapons. Be quick.

John and Talmidge get up and move inside the Ross house.

INT. PARLOR AND GUN ROOM - ROSS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

John and Talmidge go to a gun cabinet and select a rifle each then check their pistols already in their belts.

TALMIDGE

We're finally on our way now.

JOHN ROSS

To wha?

TALMIDGE

To chief or something.

JOHN ROSS

I don't think chief is going to come from this.

EXT. ROSS FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

The Ridge has moved to his horse and pulls a rifle from his saddle scabbard and checks it. He returns it to its place. He takes his pistol from its holster, checks it and returns it.

The Ridge gets on his horse and rides out.

John and Talmidge come out of the house.

The ridge looks back.

THE RIDGE

Come on.

John and Talmidge mount their horses.

Quatie quietly walks behind them.

QUATIE

Talmidge Watts, you were suppose to help me get the wood in.

TALMIDGE

Sorry, I got tribal business.

John and Talmidge turn their horses. Quatie yells after them.

QUATIE

Talmidge Watts do you think you should be involved in this?

THE RIDGE (O.S.)

Come on, while we're young.

Their horses fidget. Talmidge rides on to catch The Ridge. John turns his horse back toward Quatie.

JOHN ROSS

Maybe we could see each other
sometime?

Quatie smiles mischievously and gives a sexy nod.

QUATIE

Maybe.

John grins big and rides on. Quatie is pleased as she watches him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Ridge, John and Talmidge ride past a small log house that sits near the tavern. A dim light shows through the window.

They stop, dismount and tie the horses. Ridge checks his side arm.

THE RIDGE

John cover the back.

John nods and moves to the back. Talmidge and Ridge move toward the tavern front entrance.

INT. TAVERN - NIGHT

The Ridge enters with Talmidge close behind. Ridge scans the dim room to see about twenty people, both Indian and white. He thinks he sees his target sitting at a crowded card table with two rough looking white men.

Doublehead looks up. The Ridge is looking directly at him.

Doublehead gazes at Ridge. The Ridge quickly raises his pistol and fires. Doublehead is hit in the face under his eye and falls back.

Talmidge draws his pistol and holds it on the crowd.

TALMIDGE

Don't move. This is council
enforcement.

Suddenly, Doublehead jumps up. He charges past a shocked Ridge and shoots at Talmidge almost hitting him. Talmidge recovers and looks at the crowd.

TALMIDGE (CONT'D)

Stay put.

The Ridge runs after Doublehead.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Doublehead weakly runs to the small log house near the tavern and moves inside.

As The Ridge exits the tavern, he sees Doublehead enter the house. The Ridge methodically follows him.

John comes from behind the tavern and follows.

INT. SMALL HOUSE - NIGHT

Doublehead breathes hard as he looks around. He sees blankets stacked on a small single bed. Doublehead grabs them and covers himself in a dark corner, to look like a pile of old blankets.

The Ridge enters slowly and cautiously. He turns his back to the blankets and looks around the room. He suddenly turns with pistol in hand and fires five times into the blankets.

THE RIDGE

Doublehead, you are executed by
decree of the Cherokee Council.

Doublehead raises up from under the blankets, a bloody figure, and attacks The Ridge who is taken totally by surprise.

They wrestle around the room. Doublehead hits The Ridge with his fist again and again. Doublehead knocks him down and runs for the back door. Suddenly it opens. John and Talmidge are standing in front of him with their guns drawn. Doublehead wheels around.

The Ridge is up. He jerks his hatchet from his belt and hits Doublehead in the front of the skull burying it deep. Doublehead's eyes get wide and he falls back on the floor, dead.

Talmidge, John and Ridge approach Doublehead with caution.

THE RIDGE

It's done. Leave the poor ole' boy,
his family will bury him.

They leave.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LOG HOUSE - DAY

John rides a fine black thoroughbred horse to the front of the well kept white washed log house and dismounts.

3D SUPER - ONE YEAR LATER

The beautiful Quatie, stands in the doorway. She walks from the porch to meet him.

John's face glows with his love for her. Quatie walks into his open arms. They embrace and kiss. She gazes into his eyes.

JOHN ROSS

I saw your family at the trading
post.

QUATIE

And you thought you would come out
here so we could do this.

John smiles and holds her head in his hands. He pushes back her raven black hair and kisses her with a passion. Quatie responds deeply and passionately. Their bodies press together. John's hands caress Quatie's bulging cleavage. She looks at him seductively and nibbles on his mouth.

John can hardly control his hunger for her. They kiss harder with more passion. Quatie returns his passion.

Quatie slowly stops. She looks deep into John's blazing eyes. She softly speaks with a controlled charm.

QUATIE

John, I love you, but you will have
to marry me first.

JOHN ROSS

I've been wanting to talk to you.

Flirtacious.

QUATIE

About what?

JOHN ROSS

The white government's treaty has called the Cherokee into their army.

Quatie thinks he will say something romantic, but is surprised.

QUATIE

You too?

John has to say it before he loses his nerve.

JOHN ROSS

Yes, I have to go to the Creek wars. Will you marry me before I go?

Quatie holds John's hand. She looks into his eyes and kisses him.

QUATIE

I will John and I'll be here for you.

They hug and kiss.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SMALL RURAL WHITE CHURCH - DAY

ZOOM - Through the double front doors of the white church, Talmidge can be seen playing the wedding march in an animated way to a full chapel of Cherokee people. He slows his play a little and adjusts the collar on his blue suit.

INT. SMALL RURAL WHITE CHURCH - DAY

John, dressed in his Federal uniform and Quatie, dressed in a white prairie dress, stand quietly in front. John's hands cradle Quatie's.

Quatie's family of full blood Cherokee huddle on the front pews dressed in their finest Cherokee attire. They all gaze across the isle at Daniel Ross and Molly Ross, with their family of fifteen mix-blood Cherokee attired in Cherokee and western clothing.

Talmidge plays flamboyantly wearing his best wool suit. He tugs at the neck of his shirt then changes to the WEDDING MARCH with zeal like a Cherokee Beethoven lost in the magic of his music. He sings and hums along.

On Quatie's family's side, an OLDER CHEROKEE COUSIN (30's) and two of Quatie's YOUNG COUSINS (5/male and 8/female), sit side by side. The FIVE-YEAR-OLD COUSIN's mouth gapes open. The EIGHT-YEAR-OLD COUSIN elbows him in the side.

EIGHT-YEAR-OLD COUSIN
(Cherokee accent)
Better shut that fly trap.

FIVE-YEAR-OLD COUSIN
(Cherokee accent)
I've never seen so many white people!

PREACHER JOHN ARMSTRONG (30's), a handsome full blood Cherokee man waits in his pulpit facing John and Quatie. Talmidge speeds the music up even more still lost in his playing. Preacher Armstrong cut a look at him.

Talmidge sits at attention and slows his music.

The preacher suddenly breaks into a huge animated fake smile.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG
(Cherokee accent)
Are you ready children?

John and Quatie smile then nod.

QUATIE
We are Pastor Armstrong.

Preacher Armstrong attempts to whisper.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG
Do you want old way or God's way?

JOHN ROSS
Aren't they the same?

PREACHER ARMSTRONG
Kind of, but not.

Quatie elbows John and then they smile and gaze upon each other filled with love. The preacher waits.

The couple appears a little uncomfortable. They look at each other and John looks at the preacher.

JOHN ROSS
We'll have the Christian wedding.

Pastor Armstrong smiles proudly.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG

Very well then.

The preacher glances at Talmidge still playing with zeal. Talmidge catches the preacher's eye and the piano music abruptly stops.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today... Wait.

(looks at the crowd)

Button your coats over those weapons. This is the house of the lord and the great spirit.

The men button their coats and make their pistols more discreet.

Talmidge gazes at his cousin and best friend with love.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

The whole nation was happy for John and Quatie that day. There was celebration everywhere.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHEROKEE TOWN - DAY

John and Talmidge travel in front of a column of Union Cherokee Cavalry Troops on the edge of a small Cherokee town.

3D SUPER - Two Years Later

JOHN ROSS

I've been thinking about Jackson and wha we've done.

TALMIDGE

Yeah, if I knew what I know now, I'd stayed an Indian instead of a blue coated camp dog.

JOHN ROSS

We're just dirt under Jackson's feet.

TALMIDGE

A axe in the head could fix that.

John is amused then becomes serious again.

JOHN ROSS

We're forced to kill our neighbors
for him and he spits in our face.

TALMIDGE

Yeah, he's an all out bastard.

GUNFIRE POPS. John looks toward the town. He signals his troops to move out. They ride fast to the middle of the town just short of a battle between Union soldiers and Cherokee townspeople.

John's eyes quickly survey the area to see Union soldiers and Cherokee townspeople in a shoot out. John speeds his horse down the street. He yells and shoots into the air.

JOHN ROSS

Stop! These people are Cherokee!
You are on Cherokee Nation land.

The fighting stops. All eyes are on John. John's horse spins in a nervous dance. Talmidge quickly turns to the Cherokee troops.

TALMIDGE

Troops... skirmish line ready, huh.

John's troops move to form a skirmish line and stand ready blocking the street.

TALMIDGE (CONT'D)

Rifles ready, huh.

A Union CAVALRY CAPTAIN rides unconcerned from the opposing army in front of John.

JOHN ROSS

The army's fight is with the Creek
Nation no these people.

The arrogant captain smirks, laughs under his breath.

CAVALRY CAPTAIN

Hell, major. I can't tell one from
another.

JOHN ROSS

Disburse your troops.

CAVALRY CAPTAIN

You and them Injun troops gonna
disburse us?

JOHN ROSS

Painfully.

The captain nods sizing him up. Talmidge commands the troops in the distance.

TALMIDGE

Stay alert. On my command.

The captain looks at Talmidge and his fierce Union warriors. The Cherokee troops' rifles all aim at the captain. The Cherokee townspeople take aim and stand ready near the Indian troops.

The captain's stare is cold. Without orders the captain's men suddenly take aim at the Cherokee soldiers.

CAVALRY CAPTAIN

Steady those rifles.

JOHN ROSS

Your ignorance has killed innocent people. You will be punished, either by dying here or by a conviction at court martial.

The captain smirks.

In the distance, a soldier chases a screaming Cherokee woman.

Talmidge quickly aims his rifle and fires. The soldier drops to the ground dead.

The shooting starts. Each side stands firm and fires. Cherokee and white soldiers fall.

John shoots the captain. The captain falls to the ground and the shooting stops. It's a stand off, Union soldier against Union soldier.

John faces the white soldiers. He looks at an OLDER SERGEANT (40's).

JOHN ROSS

Get your wounded and report to your battalion commanding officer.

OLDER SERGEANT

(American mid-west accent)

Sir...

JOHN ROSS

We will bury your dead. That is a direct order. Get a move on.

The old sergeant salutes.

OLDER SERGEANT

Yes sir.

The white troops get their horses then gather the wounded and their gear. The Older Sergeant takes charge by signaling his soldiers and heads the forming column.

OLDER SERGEANT (CONT'D)

Head'em up... Move out.

They form and move out. Talmidge yells out to his troops

TALMIDGE

Look sharp.

The Cherokee troops silently watch. They begin to call the white soldiers names and taunt them as they pass.

JOHN ROSS

Let them pass.

They get quiet.

TALMIDGE

You want the troops disciplined sir?

JOHN ROSS

No. Leave a few men to help the people here. Let's get on home.

He nods going about his duty. John stares into the distance looking at the white troop.

EXT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Weary John rides to the hitching post in front of his home. He gets off, ties the horse and moves up the porch steps.

INT. JOHN ROSS' HOME FOYER - DAY

John enters to see Quatie who stands with a newborn baby in her arms. Tears fill her eyes. Awestruck John slowly approaches and gently strokes the infant's head and gazes proudly up at the radiant Quatie. They kiss tenderly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHN ROSS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

John is before a dresser mirror, preparing to remove his shirt. He momentarily stares blankly at his military coat hanging on a peg on the wall.

CLOSE ON - The major's emblem on his shoulder.

3D SUPER - THREE MONTHS LATER

As John unbuttons the last button, he bumps the dresser.

The mirror shakes reflecting light. John rubs his eyes. He remembers.

JOHN'S FLASHBACK

John is back in the river at the Battle of Horseshoe Bend, looking down at the water. He sees blood pouring from the head of the wet-behind-the-ears Cherokee soldier who floats face up, eyes still open. Women and children SCREAM.

BACK TO PRESENT

John hurls his fist into the mirror. Quatie enters the room. She tries to sooth him with an embrace.

QUATIE

Everything is going to be all
right. You just need a little time.

She looks at his hand then goes to a drawer. Quatie gets a rag and wraps his wound.

She gazes at him tenderly and he slowly kisses her deeply.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROSS FAMILY FARM - AFTERNOON

John works with ten slaves in the field. He hoes a row of plants along-side them. Hearing HOOVES, John looks behind him and sees Talmidge riding up on horseback. Talmidge stops and dismounts.

TALMIDGE

Oh si yo. Good to see you next to
the land.

John smiles and approaches Talmidge.

JOHN ROSS
 (in Cherokee sub-title in
 English)
 what brings you out here, dee gah
 nah lee (brother/friend)?

TALMIDGE
 Chief Hicks sent me. He wants you
 to go to Washington since you are
 already experienced.

JOHN ROSS
 I would do almost onything for'em,
 but Quatie and I haven't been
 together much since we've been
 married.

TALMIDGE
 It's important John.

John listens as he unconsciously twirls his wedding band with
 his bandaged hand.

JOHN ROSS
 We have baby Allen and wee James. I
 want to spend time with them.

TALMIDGE
 I understand, but Washington pushes
 settlers on our land that kill good
 people. We need you.

JOHN ROSS
 I ...

Quatie walks up with a bucket of water.

QUATIE
 John, you are educated and
 understand English better than any
 of us and you know Washington.

JOHN ROSS
 All right.

Talmidge pats him on the shoulder. Quatie sets her bucket
 down and puts her arm around his waist. She kisses him and
 walks back to the house.

TALMIDGE
 Good, They meet tomorrow. I'll be
 by at seven to get you.

Talmidge gets on his horse and stops looking at the slaves.

TALMIDGE (CONT'D)

I always wondered why you and other Cherokee hold with the white ways keeping these slaves?

JOHN ROSS

I don't have the answer. It's in our father's culture and we have become dependent on them. Perhaps we'll be able to do without them someday.

He nods and rides away. John watches quietly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHN ROSS' HOME FOYER - DAY

John enters his house.

QUATIE (O.S.)

John, come here! I have finished making our new blanket.

INT. JOHN ROSS' BEDROOM - DAY

Through the window a beam of soft light radiates around Quatie as she lies on a new blanket partially nude.

John stops in his path.

QUATIE

How do you like it?

JOHN ROSS

I think it's beautiful.

He smiles, approaches and takes her into his arms.

INT. JOHN ROSS' BEDROOM - MORNING

As John dresses on the edge of the bed, he looks back at Quatie waking up with baby ALLEN (1) and JAMES (3) still asleep.

He smiles with pride as he gets dressed and leaves the room.

Quatie gets out of bed and quickly starts dressing.

EXT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE HOME - MORNING

John walks out on the front porch. Talmidge is standing on the porch waiting with a saddled horse for John.

TALMIDGE
Morning Little John.

Quatie walks out holding the hand of James and carrying baby Allen.

Talmidge hugs Quatie and the kids. Quatie gives Allen to Talmidge. She takes John by the hand.

QUATIE
Everything changes from here.

JOHN ROSS
You're right. I'll have to do
everything I've said I believed in.

Quatie hugs him.

QUATIE
I love you. You would do that
anyway.

John smiles looking at Quatie. Talmidge gives her the baby and John kisses the children good bye.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHEROKEE TERRITORY FOREST TRAIL - DAY

John rides his horse along side Talmidge.

JOHN ROSS
The Ridge is talking about moving
his people to the new territories.

TALMIDGE
He's talking about signing a treaty
to move us all.

JOHN ROSS
Only the council has that right.

TALMIDGE
I don't think Ridge is listening.
We need to stand our ground.

JOHN ROSS
Damn right.

Talmidge hears a RUSTLE and perks up to listen.

TALMIDGE
You hear that?

John nods yes and puts his hand on his gun. He and Talmidge ride on watching the trail closely. Talmidge and John's eyes scan the area.

Unknown to John and Talmidge, Chief Hicks casually walks behind their horses with a six feet tall hickory walking stick.

HICKS
(in Cherokee subtitled in
English)
Oh-si-yo, dee-gah-lee-nuh-he-duh's
(Hello, long eared donkeys).

Startled John and Talmidge nearly fall out of their saddles. They stop their horses.

JOHN ROSS
Where did you come from?

HICKS
You went right past me without
seeing.

TALMIDGE
Pretty good.

HICKS
Pay attention. We live in
treacherous times and you two are
easy prey like baby rabbits.

TALMIDGE
My heart's racing like a humping
rabbit.

They are amused.

HICKS
I will walk with you.

TALMIDGE
Where's your horse?

HICKS
Eat him.

Talmidge smiles and shakes his head.

They move on. Up ahead, four ROUGH LOOKING MEN (30's and 40's) ride horseback with two pack mules in tow.

JOHN ROSS
Looks like trouble.

The men move closer. John and his party stop.

HICKS
You trappers?

ALBERT (40's), a slim man and the lead trapper answers.

ALBERT
(American Southern accent)
No, we hunt for the army.

JOHN ROSS
Why are you on Cherokee land?

ALBERT
This ain't Cherokee land. Sides we
just passin' through.

HICKS
Did you trap those furs here?

ALBERT
Them's ours and ain't nobody
takin'em.

HICKS
You have broken Cherokee law. No
hunting.

Suddenly the trappers draw their pistols and start to shoot.

Talmidge and John draw their guns and return fire.

Two trappers drop from their horses.

Chief Hicks pulls the heavily armed third man from his horse
thumps him with the handle.

The man is dazed.

The fourth trapper rides away at full speed. All is silent.

As Chief Hicks puts his hunting knife away. He looks at the
trapper.

HICKS
Go on. You can go.

The trapper looks at them and then runs after the trapper on horse back.

Talmidge and John get off their horses.

HICKS

Why'd they shoot? I was going to tell them to take the furs and leave.

TALMIDGE

Good riddance. They work for the army.

JOHN ROSS

Men like those always shoot first.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HINASEE GARRISON GEORGIA, WILDERNESS STOCKADE AREA - DAY

Soldiers are building eight large log stockades with sheds inside for cover. The stockades, set in a wilderness area and out of sight of the public, hold the Cherokee and other tribes during the round up.

Five mounted soldiers drive ten Cherokee prisoners on foot into a nearby-completed stockade. Four guards take charge of the prisoners. They push them inside and lock the front gates.

Overhead three armed troops walk the high catwalk watching the prisoners inside.

GENERAL WINFIELD SCOTT (60's), a heavy man walks past the stockades with his adjutant, CAPTAIN COMPTON (30's), a model soldier.

GENERAL SCOTT

(slight American Southern accent)

Our country makes miserable history this day.

COMPTON

(American New York accent)

I don't envy you your position, sir. This removal will scar our country throughout history.

GENERAL SCOTT

Damn poor decision.

Sevier passes by with eighty troops riding under his command. He is a little older now and wears the rank of colonel. Sevier raises his hand and salutes as they pass.

SEVIER
General Scott.

Sevier and the troops ride toward the hills. General Scott nods and his captain watches them go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHEROKEE COUNCIL HOUSE - DAY

John and Talmidge ride up with the trappers bodies on the back of their horses and the pack animals in tow. Chief Hicks walks next to them. As John and Talmidge dismount, two Cherokee guards take the horses.

HICKS
Take the furs and animals to the people in the village. Give them to the poorest first and burn the bodies.

The guards nod and keep moving.

INT. CHEROKEE COUNCIL HOUSE - DAY

John and Talmidge enter and stand among the crowd. Chief Hicks steps inside and moves to the front of the room to address everyone.

HICKS
(in Cherokee sub-titled in English)
Oh-si-yo, knee-gah-nah-yea-sss-guh-nah ah-nah-sss-gah (hello bold council).

Everyone settles down and sits but Chief Hicks. Chief Hicks' forehead is moist with perspiration. He holds his arm for a moment as the crowd grows quiet.

HICKS
I have news. We are here to make yet another move to survive. Washington and Georgia wants our land... They have passed a law called the Indian Removal Act to get rid of us and take the land.

TALMIDGE

We should fight.

HICKS

I wish it were that easy. But we are forming a National Committee to speak as one.

TALMIDGE

More white talk.

HICKS

I have decided the Cherokee will become like them. We will use words to defend and defeat. The last resort is guns and arrows. We no longer have the resources or Warriors to fight an all out war.

RAYMOND FOURKILLER (30's), an average half-blood Cherokee man.

RAYMOND FOURKILLER

(American Cherokee accent)

Do we lay down like obedient dogs every time the likes of Jackson looks up?

HICKS

General Andrew Jackson has made treaties with two bands outside of council rule. A new National Tribal Committee will allow one voice to stop him through Washington Senators without war.

TALMIDGE

I nominate John Ross.

Chief Hicks sits down as The Ridge enters.

Raymond Fourkiller stands.

RAYMOND FOURKILLER

Most of you know me, I am Raymond Fourkiller, half-blood. I like John Ross, but the blood that flows through John's veins is less than that of a fat tick on a dog's back. John is too white.

The room erupts in whispers and few chuckles as Raymond sits.

An ancient Cherokee man, WILLIAM KEEN (80), creeks as he hoists himself to a stand with his walking stick. The room is reverently silent.

WILLIAM

(American Cherokee accent)

I am Keen, the last of my band and the oldest of the Cherokee. I have known you all since you were ugly cubs sucking your mother's tit.

Talmidge smiles.

TALMIDGE

Who you calling ugly?

WILLIAM

Well, it's the ugliest pup of the lot, but even he is for John Ross. I want to say that John Ross, is a loyal Cherokee and has proven himself to our nation, and its bands many times in battle and at the council table. I am full blood and I stand for John Ross, if he leads, we will prosper.

William sits down. Chief Hicks looks around the room.

HICKS

Show a hand if for John Ross.

All hands go up but Fourkiller's and The Ridge. The chief looks at John and the council.

HICKS (CONT'D)

Done, John Ross will represent the Cherokee Nation in the wolves' den. Except for two.

The Ridge looks toward John.

THE RIDGE

John, I want you to know, I am not against you. I disagree with this National Committee. My Band wants a say about our future, not by committee diluted by white politics in Washington.

HICKS

Ridge, we have had council for many years. Why do you go against us now?

THE RIDGE

My band, and many others want to go their own way. It is spoken, and we will make it so.

The Ridge turns to go.

JOHN ROSS

Ridge, we have been friends since I was a boy. Can we talk and not make this quick decision?

THE RIDGE

It is not quick, John. Our people have been at a crossroads for years. We just have not been brave enough to crossover until now.

The Ridge staunchly walks out. The long house door closes with a THUD.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON D. C. - DAY

John, Quatie and the children walk down the sidewalk past beautiful Christmas decorations. People pass them and speak.

They cross the street to a train station with a sign:
WASHINGTON D.C.

John give a porter money and he loads luggage on the train. John's family boards the train.

A caulk board sign has a porter writing in the schedule. In bold letters: Indian Territory - 11:00 A.M.

The train pulls out of the station.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CHEROKEE COUNCIL HOUSE - DAY

A Cherokee council is in progress at a log cabin council house that sits next to the tribal, "Indian Advocate Newspaper".

3D SUPER - ONE YEARS LATER

Long lines of Cherokee file through speaking to council members.

John Ross is dressed in a suit nearby making a speech in front of a poster with his name on it: JOHN ROSS, CHIEF OF THE CHEROKEE.

JOHN ROSS

I have represented you in Washington and now at home. I thank you for electing me Principal Chief of all Cherokee. Be assured I will treat each of you equal and well.

(the crowd cheers)

The Georgia and Washington Governments say we should be civilized. The Cherokee Nation has elected leaders before there wis a white government or an ivory assembly in Washington that would kill us for our land... Who is civilized?

A short, hard-core OLD CHEROKEE WOMAN (70's) turns toward John.

OLD CHEROKEE WOMAN

(American Cherokee accent)

You're white and the white army keeps arresting our people and taking them away!

John is patient and looks directly at her.

JOHN ROSS

My blood is part, but I am all Cherokee. Some full bloods say they resent my election. For that I am sorry. Let us unite in our hour of need. I promise peace and a quality life, but no at any price.

OLD CHEROKEE WOMAN

Is that the price Doublehead paid?

John turns back to the crowd.

JOHN ROSS

Doublehead broke tribal law and he was judged by council. Andrew Jackson now leads the white elitist and they mean to remove us from our land at any price and Doublehead helped him do that. The Cherokee must fight in a new way. no at war, but inside their governed chambers.

OLD CHEROKEE WOMAN
The Ridge will speak for me.

JOHN ROSS
Ridge is my friend and respected
here. Let him speak whenever he
chooses. But, only the council
speaks for all of the Cherokee
people.

John waves a thank you to the cheering crowd then steps down
and walks away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. INDIAN ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

John walks past the front of the newspaper office.

POV JOHN

SHERIFF PEARL (40's), a scuzzy looking pot bellied southern
sheriff, is inside talking to ELIAS BOUDINOT (20's), a well
groomed Cherokee man and the editor. Two BURLY DEPUTIES
(40'S) stand on either side of Elias. DEPUTY LYNCH (40'S), a
slim green toothed man looks around the room grinning.

INT. INDIAN ADVOCATE NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

John steps inside as the sheriff rudely waves a piece of
paper in Elias's face.

SHERIFF PEARL
(American Southern accent)
This here is a confiscation order
from Georgia, U. S. of A. We're
closin' this here paper down. Jest
too damn radical.

JOHN ROSS
You nor your court have authority
here. This is sovereign Cherokee
Nation land.

ELIAS
(American Cherokee accent)
I can handle this, Chief Ross.

The sheriff shakes the notice at his deputies.

SHERIFF PEARL
Go on boys, we got the papers.

Elias attempts to stop them. John puts his hand out before Elias can move.

JOHN ROSS

Sheriff, I order you to leave
Cherokee Nation property. The
Georgia Congress has no power here.

The sheriff laughs.

John puts his hand on his gun inside his coat.

Talmidge and three well armed and mean-looking warriors enter and stand in the doorway.

The sheriff turns to his deputies.

SHERIFF PEARL

Go on, do it.

The deputies begin to tear up the newspaper office. Deputy Lynch yelps with glee.

Talmidge and the warriors quickly subdue them. The sheriff starts to pull his gun. John boldly stops him by taking his own gun and cocking it under his chin.

JOHN ROSS

Make this a day to remember.

The give in. John turns him over to the warriors.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)

Eject them at the border. I warn
you sheriff. If you come back the
penalty will be severe.

The sheriff glares at John.

Talmidge and the warriors roughly take them away.

ELIAS

John, The Ridge and I have signed
the removal treaty. It is the only
way to stop the white governments
from killing us off little by
little.

The Ridge is in the doorway. He enters.

THE RIDGE

The white government has asked us
to sign for the nation and we have.

John feels betrayed.

JOHN ROSS

You have betrayed your nation. I respect you both, but only the council decides. That treaty will give the Georgia Congress what it needs to destroy us.

THE RIDGE

I am sorry, but we believe what we did is right.

John shakes his head as he walks out. The Ridge turns to Elias as he watches John.

THE RIDGE (CONT'D)

When we signed, it wasn't a treaty. It was our death warrant.

ELIAS

Ridge, if we stay they will kill us all. It is better to take our chances in the new land.

THE RIDGE

I do not know politics. I only know Cherokee way. They will not forgive us.

Elias and the Ridge watch John through the window. He walks across the street as the sun starts to go down. Stan Watie rides past John and doesn't bother to speak.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE GEORGIA HOME - DAY

John sits in the living room reading. The home is in excellent condition and well kept. It is decorated in a southern style with a few Cherokee artifacts around the room.

John looks up and sees Quatie move down the stairs, dressed in an elegant skirt and blouse with her long black hair flowing.

JOHN ROSS

Are the kids coming over today?

QUATIE

No, they're in town with their families.

Quatie sits beside John looking at him lovingly. There's a framed family picture on display nearby. Quatie admires it.

Suddenly the front door is kicked open. Sheriff Pearl holds a shotgun as he moves in.

John and Quatie scramble to defend themselves. The Sheriff hits Quatie across the face with the barrel of his shotgun. She falls backward to the floor. Blood splatters across John's face. The sheriff hits him with his fist.

Lying on the floor, Quatie tries to recover her senses. Blood drips from her head.

Sheriff Pearl jerks the dazed John to his feet. He hits him again, while he is still dazed and puts crude handcuffs on his wrist.

SHERIFF PEARL

Remember ole Sheriff Cable Pearl. I
got orders ta put ya in jail Mr.
Big Chief, John Ross.

John is dazed and angry.

JOHN ROSS

wha the hell is going on?

SHERIFF PEARL

The Government's movin' you injuns.
Hadn't ya heard about the new law.

JOHN ROSS

You're on Cherokee Nation land.

SHERIFF PEARL

Not anymore. Georgia don't want ya
and Andrew Jackson helpin' em ride
you outta town.

John sees Quatie is hurt.

JOHN ROSS

Let me take care of my wife!

The sheriff pushes John to the door. John turns and attacks him. He hits the sheriff in the face with his head and knocks him down. John is suddenly hit in the face by the butt of Pearl's shotgun as Pearl comes up from the floor. John falls back and recovers.

Pearl gets to his feet. He hits John with the shotgun again. John goes to his knees. Pearl gets John on his feet, drags him to the doorway then shoves John into the yard.

EXT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE HOME - DAY

John has fallen on the ground and gets up. The sheriff walks behind John.

SHERIFF PEARL
Git goin, big Chief.

He hits John again between the shoulder blades with his shotgun butt knocking him forward completely off his feet.

Quatie, weak and grieved, stands in the doorway watching John. Tears run down her face.

John tries to fight but is no match for the sheriff with his hands cuffed behind him.

Sheriff Pearl mounts his horse and prods John with his shotgun barrel. He urges his horse to walk against John pushing him down the trail.

QUATIE
I'll get help.

INT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Quatie sits in a wing-backed chair beside the front window gazing outside. She puts medication on her head, still dizzy and crying from her ordeal when she hears a noise and looks out through the window.

POV QUATIE

Sevier and his men are in her front yard. They guard twenty Cherokee on foot. Casteel is older now and wears the rank of Major.

BACK TO SCENE

Quatie jumps up.

QUATIE
Oh, my God!

Quatie weakly runs to the back door and jerks it open. She runs into the arms of Prince and Baxter. The soldiers grab her before she can exit.

PRINCE
Where you going so fast.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. LARGE SOUTHERN PLANTATION - DAY

Colonel Sevier, Major Casteel and the troops ride into the front yard with Quatie and the prisoners on foot in tow.

A SLAVE (30's), an average well-groomed black man dressed in fine clothes walks from the home and approaches.

SLAVE
(American Southern accent)
Hello mas-sir, may I help you?

Sevier looks at the slave for a moment.

SEVIER
Arrest him. Put him with the others.

Two soldiers dismount and put the black man with the other prisoners. Major Casteel and a few soldiers herd their Cherokee prisoners to the barn so they can drink from the water troughs.

The remaining troops standby.

SEVIER (CONT'D)
You men, round up everybody on this plantation. It is Cherokee owned.

The soldiers dismount. They enter the house and fields behind the house. The troops arrest Cherokee workers and black people owned by the Cherokee plantation owner.

A soldier jerks and drags KARRA (30's), a pretty Cherokee woman, from the house and past Colonel Sevier.

KARRA
(Cherokee accent)
You animal! This is my home.

SEVIER
You are under orders to vacate. You have not. It's your doing.

KARRA
This is my home! I worked for it and paid for it with my sweat! You have no right.
(Karra can see her children in the window inside her home)
My children. Let me get my babies!

SEVIER

Take her with the others.

The soldiers take her away. She bites and kicks all the way. Baxter takes the young children from their home as they cry for their mother.

A handsome Cherokee man, KARRA'S HUSBAND (40's), runs from the corner of the house.

KARRA'S HUSBAND

(American Cherokee accent)

Leave my children alone!

He runs towards Baxter. One of the soldiers with Karra pulls his pistol and fires, killing the man. The children scream and hurry to their father.

KARRA

You killed my husband!

She begins to cry and drops to the ground. The soldier guarding her jerks Karra up and drags her toward the barn.

The children scream for their mother.

SEVIER

(coldly)

Move'em out to the Stockade. Have some troops take the slaves to the auction house.

Sergeant Prince walks beside Colonel Sevier.

PRINCE

You heard the colonel. Morris and Clay take the slaves to the Auction. The rest of you move out.

Major Casteel and the soldiers at the barn move the prisoners out toward the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - DAY

The soldiers continue to herd Quatie and the Cherokee prisoners on a narrow trail between the trees.

Quatie leaves Karra and rambles from the rear of the prisoner group to the front along side her MOTHER (60's), a small Cherokee woman. Quatie puts her arm around Mrs. Henley.

QUATIE

Oh mother, what have they done to
you?

Quatie's mother has a large cut across her face and a
hopeless stare. She just looks at Quatie. Quatie holds her
closer as they walk.

Quatie's eyes fill with tears.

QUATIE (CONT'D)

Have you heard anything about my
children?

QUATIE'S MOTHER

(American Cherokee accent)

They're safe. They went on ahead
with Black Elk before all of this.

Quatie looks as if she is in a trance still walking.

INT. STOCKADE - NIGHT

Mounted Cavalry guards herd Quatie, her mother and the
Cherokee prisoners inside the giant log stockade gates. When
all of the prisoners are inside the gates slam shut. Mores
guards lock the gate and standby.

The group disperses and melts into the crowd already there
lined around the crude log walls.

Quatie's mother makes her way to the wall and sits alone.

Quatie scans the stockade and each person. She sees a weary
and beaten people.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STOCKADE - MORNING

Five more stockades are under construction.

Three different U.S. Army Cavalry platoons are mounted
herding one hundred Cherokee prisoners into the log
stockades.

A sergeant and five privates ride to the stockade aboard a
cargo wagon pulled by mules and loaded with water barrels and
salt pork.

INT. STOCKADE - MORNING

Quatie walks to the rear of the fortress past the prisoners. She stops next to her mother. Quatie kneels and puts her arm around her mother and helps her stand.

The wagon with supplies stops in the middle of the stockade. Quatie and her mother approach the wagon.

The SERGEANT (40's), a big man steps down with his men.

SERGEANT

(American Midwest accent)

All you injuns, line up it's
breakfast time.

(turns to his men)

Cut about a half a pound of salt
pork, and a cup a water. Hurry up,
let's get the hell goin'.

The five privates acknowledge and go about their jobs. Two privates cut the sides of pork with large butcher knives. Two others pass out cups of water as the Cherokee pass by.

After two of the Cherokee get their meat and water, a third steps up to the first private in the rear of the wagon.

The private looks at the pork. He sees an unsalted corner that has maggots. He cuts it off and throws it on the ground. He keeps serving. The Cherokee are so tired and beaten they don't notice. They keep moving through the line.

The Cherokee begin to settle down around the walls and slowly eat and feed their children.

Quatie sits against the stockade wall, feeding a female child when MOON (70's), a slim full blood Cherokee woman comes to her.

MOON

(Cherokee accent)

You need rest. I'll feed the
children.

QUATIE

All right Moon, feed this child.
I'll give the medicine. Is the herb
bag here?

Moon digs in a large leather pouch and finds the herb bag.

MOON

Here.

Quatie takes the bag. Moon sits and takes the child in her arms.

QUATIE

Ruth is caring for the orphans til
we find their parents. Take the
child with them when you finish.

Moon nods in acknowledgement. Quatie walks away toward the ailing people to medicate their wounds.

MOON

Get rest!

Quatie turns and acknowledges as she walks.

Quatie stops and kneels beside a badly beaten Talmidge. He holds his bloody arms close to his chest. Quatie pulls at his hands.

QUATIE

Let me see.

She pulls his hands and arms to where she can see them. She flinches from the sight.

The tops of Talmidge's wrist are almost cut to the bone from rope burns.

TALMIDGE

I'm all right. Take care of the
others.

Quatie pulls herb leaves from the bag and puts them on his wounds. Talmidge pulls back slightly from the sting. Quatie continues to doctor him and put rag bandages on.

QUATIE

You are a strong warrior. We need
you healthy to help the others.

TALMIDGE

What have they done with our Chief?

QUATIE

I'm worried. He has been taken
away. No one knows where.

TALMIDGE

Don't worry, John is smart. He'll
come get us.

Quatie stands and smiles at her cousin.

QUATIE

Get rest warrior. WE got a long
road ahead.

She walks to another injured person.

EXT. GEORGIA JAIL - DAY

Sheriff Pearl pushes John to the front door with his shotgun barrel. John's wrists are handcuffed. He stumbles and almost falls. The sheriff hits him hard in the back with his shotgun as he gets up.

SHERIFF PEARL

Git in there, stinkin' half breed.

John falls through the dirty weather-worn door.

INT. GEORGIA JAIL - DAY

John picks himself up and stands in the middle of the filthy wooden floor with bruises on his face.

Deputy Lynch looks up from his desk. He gets up from eating an apple holding a large hunting knife.

SHERIFF PEARL

Git them chains offin'em.

The deputy plays with his knife and looks at John.

DEPUTY LYNCH

(American Southern accent)
I's thinkin' of just skinnin' him.

The sheriff smiles and pushes John toward the deputy.

PEARL

Put him in the cross bar hotel.
He'll get what's comin' to'em when
he's fetched to the stockades.

DEPUTY LYNCH

I think we otta do it now.

Sheriff Pearl looks at Deputy Lynch as if he is stupid.

PEARL

Can't. The soldiers say he's a big
man. Chief of the Cherokee injuns
or some such.

DEPUTY LYNCH
I gonna cut'em.

PEARL
Shut up you fool. You ain't gonna
nothin. I'll hang you myself if you
do it. I don't want trouble with
the army.

The deputy takes John's crude handcuffs off and pulls him through a doorway and into the hall of the jail.

John is suddenly shocked to see the body of a hanged Cherokee in the cell.

JOHN ROSS
Are you people completely insane?

Deputy Lynch smiles a big green tooth smile.

DEPUTY LYNCH
Ain't no law against hangin'
injuns.

JOHN ROSS
What kind of people murder like
this?

DEPUTY LYNCH
You talk to much.

He tries to hit John in the kidney.

John is ready for him. He dodges and takes a glancing blow then hits Lynch in the face. John grabs the deputy's long greasy hair and slams his face into the bars.

Suddenly he hears a CLICK in his ear. Pearl's gun is pointed at John's head. John stops, waiting for the next move.

Deputy Lynch sports a bloody face.

PEARL
Open the damn door, Lynch. That
mouth of your'in is givin' me a
pain square in the ass.

Lynch takes a big key out of his back pocket with a long string on it. He unlocks the crude metal barred door. The Cherokee man who hangs is bloated and black from being there so long. The stench makes John ill. He puts his hand over his mouth and almost vomits.

Pearl shoves John inside the cell. Deputy Lynch glares cruelly at John as he slams the metal door locking it. He puts the key in his back pocket with the string hanging out. John grabs Lynch and slams him against the bars and takes the key from his back pocket unnoticed.

Pearl jerks Lynch away from John.

PEARL

You two don't know when ta quit.
 (turns to John)
 I'm sorry about you man there.
 We'll git him buried real soon.

JOHN ROSS

Just hang the deputy.

PEARL

You don't know how much I'd like to.

They leave with the sheriff pulling Lynch along.

DEPUTY LYNCH

Damn blanket ass.

PEARL

Shut up fool.

John closes his eyes and looks as if he's praying. He opens his hand with the key inside and smiles.

INT. PAUL DEERINWATER'S BARN - DAY

PAUL DEERINWATER (30's), a husky Cherokee man works and sings to himself as he brushes one of the two horses in his stable.

Sunlight shines through the back window of the barn and creates ribbons of light across the barn's well-kept floor.

A horseman's shadow ripples past the barn window, then another and another.

Paul looks up and exits to get a better look.

EXT. PAUL DEERINWATER'S HOUSE - DAY

Fifty soldiers on horseback, Colonel Sevier, Major Casteel and Sergeant Prince are mounted waiting in the front yard.

On the porch are three men, MCGUIRE (20), a boyish young man, Baxter and Conroy.

Paul walks toward the soldiers.

CASTEEL
 Conroy stay here. McGuire, you and
 Baxter help him bring in the
 stragglers.

The privates acknowledge.

MCGUIRE
 (American Eastern accent)
 Yes sir.

CASTEEL
 Let's go, Sergeant Prince!

PRINCE
 Column of twos! Move out.

Paul approaches. Conroy, the N-C-O in charge, pulls his
 pistol.

CONROY
 That's far enough injun!
 (to the men)
 Go get him.

Paul stops.

CONROY (CONT'D)
 Don't even think about runnin',
 blanket ass. I'll drop you before
 move good.

Private Baxter and McGuire grab Paul and push him towards the
 house. RUTH (20's), Paul's pretty young Cherokee wife opens
 the front door. The troops are startled. They point their
 rifles at her.

RUTH
 (American Cherokee accent)
 Paul...

PAUL
 (American Cherokee accent)
 Go in the house, Ruth.

Conroy looks at her with lust.

CONROY
 Stay where you are honey.

BAXTER
 We don't need to do this.

Ruth is frightened.

CONROY

Tie him to the porch post.

Privates Baxter and McGuire reluctantly tie Paul to the post as Conroy looks on.

BAXTER

Conroy, we're supposed to take these people in. What the hell are you doin'?

Conroy's eyes look mean.

CONROY

Shut your mouth.
(grabs Ruth by the hair)
When I'm done you can go anywhere ya want.

MCGUIRE

Conroy, you're asking for trouble!

Conroy smirks.

CONROY

You don't know nothin. Nobody cares.

Conroy pushes Ruth toward the front door of the house. He stops and looks at Paul.

Paul angrily attempts to wrench loose from his ropes.

BAXTER

Don't be stupid.

CONROY

I ain't worried.
(looks at Paul)
She needs a real man.

Conroy pulls Ruth inside kicking and screaming.

Paul erupts with anger. McGuire is disgusted. He feels a loose knot on his ropes and works to loosen them.

MCGUIRE

Don't hurt her you crazy bastard.

Baxter walks toward the barn.

BAXTER

This to much.

McGuire catches up.

MCGUIRE

It'll be over in a minute and we
can head out.

INT. PAUL DEERINWATER'S HOUSE - DAY

Ruth cries and screams as the Corporal rips her dress off.
Conroy hits her with his fist in the mouth.

CONROY

Shut up, I can't think with all
that noise.

Her mouth bleeds. He throws her on the hardwood floor near
the stone fireplace and rips part of her clothes off while
she is dazed. Conroy unbuttons his pants and crawls between
her legs.

RUTH

You don't have to do this.

Conroy grabs her hair and pulls her head back to the floor.
He kisses her. She moves frantically.

RUTH (CONT'D)

No, stop.

EXT. PAUL DEERINWATER'S HOUSE - DAY

McGuire and Baxter hear another scream. They look back toward
the house.

BAXTER

That idiot's gonna go straight ta
hell.

Conroy stumbles through the door of the house onto the front
porch bleeding profusely. He falls.

McGuire and Baxter run toward him.

BAXTER (CONT'D)

I knew somethin' bad would happen!

Baxter draws his pistol as he runs. He makes it to the porch
to see Conroy lying in a pool of blood. McGuire stops to help
Conroy. Baxter rushes inside the house.

INT. PAUL DEERINWATER'S HOUSE - DAY

Paul stands beside his wife holding a stick of firewood. Ruth lies on the floor badly beaten, partially nude and crying. CRIES from an infant echo from a back room.

Baxter watch in shame.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STOCKADES - NIGHT

The sun goes down behind the stockade walls as Major Casteel and his men ride in with a group of two hundred Cherokee prisoners. General Scott and Captain Compton watch.

Casteel stops in front of General Scott as the Cherokee are herded into the stockade. He salutes.

CASTEEL

Sir. This is the last of'em.

GENERAL SCOTT

What's the count?

CASTEEL

About seventeen thousand.

GENERAL SCOTT

Very good, major. Start moving them to the territories by noon tomorrow.

Casteel salutes and rides on.

INT. STOCKADE - NIGHT

Up on the catwalk, silhouettes of three stockade guard's can be seen against the moonlit sky.

Four hundred depressed prisoners sit around the stockade walls. Many conversations mesh into a quiet roar.

CROWD (V.O.)

(American Cherokee accent)

Mamma. I'm hungry. What's going to happen? How could this be?

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

John looks around the jail. The entire area is filthy. He sadly looks at the hanging corpse and grimaces from the stench.

John takes the key he took from Lynch and unlocks the jail door. He smiles and turns to the dead man.

JOHN ROSS
Sorry my Brother.

John exits the cell and quietly walks to the back door and tries to open it. It's locked.

He moves toward the front and looks through into the sheriff's office.

The big hunting knife is lying on top of the desk and the sheriff's shotgun is leaned against the same desk.

The sheriff stands. He farts big and speaks as he walks out.

PEARL
I gotta get some air.

John waits a moment for the sheriff to get far enough away then he bursts into the room and knocks the deputy out of his chair with his fist. John grabs the shotgun and points it at the stunned deputy.

DEPUTY LYNCH
Don't shoot me. I got family.

JOHN ROSS
I'm sure they won't mind. Get in the jail, moss mouth.

John takes the thin bladed hunting knife from the desk. The deputy's eyes get big and he gets quiet. John grins.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)
Git.

The deputy reluctantly moves into the jail cell with the corpse.

John cuts the bloated dead man down while holding his gun on green tooth.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)
Cover him.

The deputy puts a crude blanket over the man.

DEPUTY LYNCH
Shu-wee. He is P-U pitiful.

John looks at the dead man.

JOHN ROSS
You talk to much.

Lynch holds his nose and John hits him on the side of his head with his shotgun. He locks the jail door and walks outside.

EXT. JAIL - NIGHT

John throws the shotgun and keys into the bushes as he escapes into the darkness.

He passes the sheriff's house a run down shack a hundred yards from the jail.

EXT. SHERIFF'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The sheriff's coon hounds bark. The sheriff looks out the window. He sees John disappear into the dark forest. Pearl is caught by surprise and runs outside in his long johns and boots then rushes to the jail.

INT. JAIL - NIGHT

The sheriff finds the deputy just coming around sitting in the jail cell holding his nose.

SHERIFF PEARL
You let'em go dummy.

DEPUTY LYNCH
Ain't no lettin' to it. He tricked me. Git me outta here. The stink's dismal.

SHERIFF PEARL
Should of buried him, ya ignorant skunk.

The perplexed sheriff notices the smell has elevated from the body since John and the deputy moved it. He holds his nose to avoid the harsh odor.

DEPUTY LYNCH
Ain't my fault.

SHERIFF PEARL
Bein' able to open a pocketknife
would be a trick for you.

The Sheriff unlocks the jail door with his own set of keys.

They move through the office and grab a couple of shotguns from the gun rack and rip through the front door after John.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

John blasts through the deep woods breaking limbs and knocking leaves from the trees as he tears through the undergrowth. He has been running hard for an hour.

He slows the pace and moves along a riverbank. He can hear dogs and people in the distant forest.

He turns and crosses the shallow river. Shotgun blasts ring out. They break the water next to him. John moves faster. Shots ring out around him again.

He reaches the opposite overgrown riverbank and scurries up the side and disappears into the woods.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. COMMAND POST TENT, FRONT OF STOCKADES - DAY

General Scott and Captain Compton are sitting under a canopy at a wooden table in front of the tent having coffee. Casteel walks up.

CASTEEL
Sir, a soldier was killed by a
Cherokee man named Paul
Deerinwater. He's being held in
stockade six.

GENERAL SCOTT
What the hell happened?

CASTEEL
The man's wife claims Corporal
Conroy molested her. Conroy and her
husband fought and our man was
killed.

GENERAL SCOTT
Any witnesses?

CASTEEL

No sir.

GENERAL SCOTT

All right. Handle it, Major.

The major salutes and rides on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JOHN ROSS' TWO STORY WHITE GEORGIA HOME - DAY

John arrives at his home through the woods. He waits in the tree line surveying the area.

Union soldiers are camped around the front of his house and a white couple with six small children are moving in.

John contemplates for a moment and moves on.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

John stops at a watering hole and drinks.

Suddenly four soldiers stand in front of him with rifles drawn and aimed at him. A BIG SERGEANT (30's), speaks up.

BIG SERGEANT

(American Eastern accent)

Well, Chief Ross. From what I hear
you're lucky it was us that found
ya.

John is too tired to run. He stops and waits for the inevitable.

INT. FRONT GATES, STOCKADE NUMBER SIX - DAY

Casteel rides past six armed guards at the front gate. Baxter among them. Casteel moves inside and the guards slam the heavy gate shut. Casteel stops and dismounts. Prince casually stands nearby.

CASTEEL

Sergeant Prince, bring the
prisoner.

PRINCE
 (to the guards)
 Bring me the troop killer.

Two guards go to a dark corner and pull the bound and gagged Paul Deerinwater to his feet. Paul's face is covered with dried blood. They drag him in front of Casteel.

CASTEEL
 Are you, Paul Deerinwater?
 (Paul nods yes)
 You are hereby sentenced to death
 for the murder of Corporal Robert
 Conroy.

PAUL
 See you in hell.

CASTEEL
 Put him on the wall!

The guards drag Paul to the stockade wall. A third guard drives a spike in the wall above his head. Two guards hoist Paul up and hook the ropes that are around his hands over the spike.

The campfires against the full moon illuminate Paul's bloody body hanging from the spike. It appears almost biblical.

Casteel watches smugly.

CASTEEL (CONT'D)
 Get ten braves and ten of our
 troops with rifles and pistols.

PRINCE
 Yes sir.
 (turns to the guards)
 I need ten riflemen with pistols.
 Now!

Baxter rushes to the sergeant.

BAXTER
 Sergeant, that man was protecting
 his wife. Conroy raped her.

PRINCE
 It's too late, Baxter. Drop it.

BAXTER
 This ain't right!

PRINCE
Stop. Get back to your post.

Baxter is disgusted. He walks to the back of the crowd.

Ten soldiers come in from outside the stockade gates while other are gathering ten Cherokee men.

PRINCE (CONT'D)
We're ready sir.

CASTEEL
Line the ten Indians up facing the prisoner.

PRINCE
(to his men)
Line the ten bucks up in front of the prisoner. Double time!

Ten soldiers grab the ten Cherokee and line them up.

CASTEEL
Give the Indians your rifles with one bullet each.

The soldiers hesitate.

CASTEEL (CONT'D)
Now!

The soldiers check their rifles and give the Cherokee men their weapons.

The stockade guards on the catwalk stand ready.

CASTEEL (CONT'D)
Prince, if there are not ten bullets in the prisoner, execute the ten bucks and ten prisoners.

PRINCE
Yes sir.

There is silence as everyone contemplates.

CASTEEL
Cherokee... firing positions.
(The Cherokee are prodded by the soldiers and they raise their rifles)
Fire!

The ten Cherokee hesitate. The soldiers cock their pistols and point them at the back of their heads.

Crowds of Cherokee prisoners have gathered. They are pushed back by stockade guards. The prisoners start rumbling and talking.

Quatie pushes from the crowd and yells out to the major.

QUATIE

Stop this. It's insane!

CASTEEL

This is an execution for murder.
Stand back or you'll be next.

Quatie struggles against the guards still holding her at bay.

The gates open and a column of soldiers move into the stockade between the firing squad and the crowd of Cherokee prisoners being held at bay.

A large Cherokee man and woman pull Quatie back as the soldiers close in.

QUATIE

Murderers! You'll pay for this.

The major looks at her with disgust then the soldiers with cocked pistols. Suddenly there is a split second of calm and the Cherokee fire on Paul.

Paul's body jerks as ten bullets rip into him.

The Cherokee firing squad looks away, ashamed of their act.

Paul's wife, Ruth, carrying her baby yells out in grief from the crowd. Quatie quickly goes to her and holds her as the baby screams. She looks at Casteel defiantly. Their eyes meet in separate states of defiance. Casteel looks away.

RUTH

Paul, Paul!

Ruth drops to her knees crying.

The soldiers stand firm in a pushing match with the crowd.

CASTEEL

(to Prince)
Bury him.

PRINCE
 (to his men)
 I need a burial detail!

Four men step forward and move toward Paul's body.

Casteel walks towards the stockade gates. In the background, Paul's body is being taken off the wall.

The Cherokee watch Casteel walk out, with hate and tears in their eyes. Murmurs rise.

CROWD
 (American Cherokee accent)
 He was innocent. Murderer. Animal!

Private Baxter stands in a corner sadly watching.

EXT. COMMAND POST TENT, FRONT OF STOCKADES - NIGHT

John Ross rides to the tent's front entrance with two armed GUARDS. John's hands are bound at the wrist with a rope.

Chief Ross is stunned as he stares at the stockades. GUARD ONE (30's), a thin average man shoves him off of his horse and he hits the ground with a thud.

General Scott's guard comes from the tent.

GUARD ONE
 (American Southern accent)
 There the breed chief that's
 suppose to see the general.

The two guards ride away. The SCOTT GUARD (50) a powerful man glares at them as they leave.

SCOTT GUARD
 (American Midwest accent)
 I'll be reportin you jackass.
 (He helps John get up)
 Come on, let me help you.

The Scott guard helps him get up.

INT. COMMAND POST TENT, FRONT OF STOCKADES - NIGHT

Oil lanterns illuminate the tent. General Scott sits behind a field desk with Captain Compton to one side. Two Colonels nearby are eating and talking. They stop and watch the Scott Guard escort John inside.

SCOTT GUARD
Your Indian, sir.

GENERAL SCOTT
Thank you, corporal. Cut him loose
then Resume your post.

The guard takes out a knife and cuts John free. He exits in a relaxed military manner.

General Scott gestures to a chair near him.

GENERAL SCOTT (CONT'D)
Chief Ross, sit down.

John remains standing.

JOHN ROSS
General, I protest the cruel
treatment of my people.

The General has the smug look of authority.

GENERAL SCOTT
There is no cruelty. We're just
carrying out orders.

John is just as commanding.

JOHN ROSS
General many Cherokee will die on
this trip just because powerful men
in Georgia and Washington want our
land.

GENERAL SCOTT
Chief Ross, you will be removed
under the provision of the Indian
Removal Act.

JOHN ROSS
Winter's coming. Our people do no
have clothing or food supplies...
(John humbles himself)
At least allow the council to
supervise the removal. We may be
able to forage along the way.

The General has a change of heart as he ponders.

GENERAL SCOTT
All right, I'll take your word
there will be no trouble.
(MORE)

GENERAL SCOTT (cont'd)

Be ready to leave by noon tomorrow
or your people will perish in the
winter cold.

JOHN ROSS

We will be ready. Many will die,
but that will be the albatross you
and Andrew Jackson have put around
your own necks.

John exits. General Scott and the others watch him go.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STOCKADE - DAY

The Cherokee pack their meager supplies into ten wagons for
the thousands readying for the trip. The very old CHIEF WATTS
(70's) walks beside John.

CHIEF WATTS

(Cherokee accent)

We are almost ready, John.

JOHN ROSS

Chief Watts, I'm sorry we are in
this position.

CHIEF WATTS

Don't be, if not for you there
probably would be no Cherokee
people to move.

JOHN ROSS

We made a mistake by not killing
them all when they were few and we
were many.

CHIEF WATTS

They are the warden of this land
now. We can only retain our
heritage.

Talmidge comes into sight carrying a bed roll as he walks
with Quatie. She sees John and runs into his arms. They kiss.

Talmidge greets his uncle Chief Watts in the background.

TALMIDGE

Good to see you uncle.

Quatie grabs John. She kisses and hugs him.

QUATIE

I missed you.

John is elated.

JOHN ROSS

I thought I had lost you!

QUATIE

I'm so glad you are all right.

He looks into her eyes and they embrace.

They turn and watch people begin to form a column. The people move along with just a few belongings. A cold wind blows over John and Quatie. Quatie shivers and gets closer to John while looking at their miserable people.

QUATIE (CONT'D)

This has truly become a trail of tears.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TRAIL - NIGHT

In the hard rain, scantily dressed Cherokee people walk shivering from the cold. A wagon wheel breaks and falls on Ruth as she walks beside the wagon.

The fall knocks another family member off the slippery bluff into a deep canyon. a SCREAM echoes as they fall.

Ruth has dropped her baby near the bluff's edge. Chief Watts tries to save it. He slips and falls into the canyon but saves the infant by pushing it behind a rock so it will not slip over the edge.

A woman that was walking near Ruth picks the child up.

Talmidge, the driver of the wagon, jumps down and checks Ruth. Quatie runs to her aid.

TALMIDGE

Ruth's dead. Her whole family and my uncle are dead!

Quatie puts her arm around him.

QUATIE

Talmidge, we must keep moving or we'll never get to the top.

Two people gather to help. The others stumble by in the background not realizing what happened.

TALMIDGE

The men in Washington caused this.

Quatie tries to comfort him.

QUATIE

I know, I guess our land is more
valuable than our lives.

TALMIDGE

Our people die for nothing. I will
kill each one of them when my day
comes.

Five CHEROKEE MEN (30's and 40's) gather at the wagon. A
stocky man steps forward.

CHEROKEE MAN

(American Cherokee accent)

Grab the wagon, and heave!

The men raise the wagon. Talmidge pulls Ruth's crushed body
out. Quatie puts her hand on Ruth's forehead as Talmidge
picks her up in his arms.

QUATIE

You're better off.

Talmidge lies Ruth on top of the canvas-covered supplies in
the wagon with tears in his eyes.

TALMIDGE

There's no blanket for her. I hate
The Ridge and his Washington
weasels.

Talmidge gets in the wagon and drives the team up the hill
with the Cherokee men pushing. Quatie walks on.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP CLEARING - NIGHT

The rain continues to pour down. Wagons have circled near the
timberline. Around the area canvases are tied to trees making
lean-tos for shelter. More canvases are tied to the wagons to
cover the center of the circled wagons.

John is checking the shelters and his people to see to their
needs.

Near the wagons are hundreds of make-shift tents made from
blankets hung over tree limbs. People huddle under the covers
trying to stay dry.

John walks across the muddy grounds toward the wagons. He turns and looks as if he feels Quatie's presence.

Quatie walks up the mountain trail with twenty stragglers following.

QUATIE

You can make it! I'll be along to help you.

John moves through the mud and rain to help her. He passes six men digging graves with bodies stacked around them.

John stops in front of Quatie. Her eyes have dark blue circles under them. Her lips are blue and her face is gray. Quatie's lips quiver from the cold.

JOHN ROSS

My God, Quatie.
(John embraces her)
I'll get you some place warm.

EXT. CAMP AREA - NIGHT

John leads Quatie to the camp area looking for an open spot to get in out of the driving rain. They walk past the wagons, all are packed with people.

They pass by the last wagon.

MOON

John!

John sees Moon with three children and her elderly husband, all wrapped together in a blanket. Water pours off of another blanket that covers them like a lean-to. They all sit in mud. Moon cries.

MOON (CONT'D)

Take Henry to the gravesite. We can take Quatie and you.

John is thankful for the shelter.

JOHN ROSS

I'm sorry about, Henry.

MOON

He's not suffering now.

John pulls Henry's body from the lean-to. Quatie shakes as she enters in his place.

JOHN ROSS
I'll be back, Quatie.

John picks Henry's body up in his arms and carries him toward a nearby gravesite.

EXT. GRAVESITE - NIGHT

John gently drops Henry into a water filled mass grave. He pushes mud over his body. He is frustrated and makes a final, futile effort to push more mud into the grave. He slips and braces against the fall.

To his horror, John sees his mother's and father's bodies on the edge of the mass grave. Their faces are pale blue.

He shrinks back from them then looks closer. John touches their faces. He tenderly covers them with mud and debris from the forest. John cries. He stands and walks almost defeated back toward Quatie.

EXT. CAMP AREA - NIGHT

Quatie sits shivering uncontrollably. She hears a young woman cry from a difficult childbirth. A few people gather around the woman in the cramped quarters under the canvas.

Quatie turns and weakly moves over people to get to her. She stops in front of the young woman who frantically gasps for breath.

Quatie feels under her dress and finds the baby's head. Two old women hold the young woman's back and assist.

QUATIE
Help me now, the baby is coming.

The YOUNG WOMAN (20's) grabs her arm and looks into her eyes.

YOUNG WOMAN
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
Be sure my baby is taken care.

Quatie nods. The young woman pushes hard and groans. Quatie pulls a screaming baby girl from under the young woman's dress. She bites and chews the birth cord to sever it from the mother.

QUATIE
It's a girl.

The young woman smiles. A little boy gives Quatie his coat. He shakes from the cold.

The two women lie the child down. They cover the baby with the coat. Quatie wraps the baby and turns to lay it on the young woman.

MOON

I'll take care of the baby. She is gone, so is the baby's father. Killed by soldiers.

The men begin to remove the deceased young woman's body.

Quatie has a glazed stare for a moment. She shivers violently from the cold and cannot stop.

She moves back to her place next to Moon. The others look at her with hollow exhausted eyes.

John peers in and sees Quatie shivering and coughing. He takes his coat off and drapes it around her and embraces his love.

QUATIE

John, I'm afraid. I feel cold and hollow.

John holds her tighter.

JOHN ROSS

It'll be all right. I'm here.

John cries silently.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP CLEARING - MORNING

The sun comes up. The rain has stopped. John wakes up still holding Quatie. People are milling around, campfires are going, and the wet wood makes heavy smoke.

JOHN ROSS

Time to get going, Quatie. Come on.

John turns her face toward him. Her eyes are closed. He moves his face close to hers to check her breathing. John is in shock. He openly cries and holds her tight.

The people begin to notice John. He picks up Quatie and carries her to the gravesite. They look sad and regretful as he passes.

John stops at the gravesite. He lies Quatie tenderly on the ground next to his parents site and fixes her hair.

He stands and grabs a shovel then sticks it in the muddy ground. He starts to dig.

TALMIDGE

Let me help, John.

John stops and watches the other people standing in front of many more graves.

A gust of wind cuts through the woods behind John. He turns. The wind whisks the dew drops off the Autumn leaves. Leaves touch the ground forming a blanket of glittering silver light that floats over the forest floor around Quatie's body. Everything seems frozen in time.

A peace comes over him as he watches the scene. He whispers to himself.

JOHN ROSS

I love you.

Talmidge is grief-stricken and puts his arm around John trying to console him.

John stares at his love.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

That day changed John's life forever. Women of the Cherokee Nation are honored council. They give us great strength. Quatie was his greatest strength.

Ten people carry their dead to be buried with the beloved Quatie, the first lady of the Cherokee Nation.

The older Cherokee preacher, Pastor Armstrong, drives an empty cargo wagon up and stops. He gets off of the wagon.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG

John, remember me? Pastor Armstrong.

John gives him a weak smile.

JOHN ROSS

Of course.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG

Some Christians in Little Rock have opened their homes to us and their cemeteries. There's a plot at Mount Holly for Quatie.

John is too grieved to speak. He turns to Talmidge.

TALMIDGE

Pastor Armstrong, thank the people for us. We'll be along.

The pastor turns to the people around the grave sight.

PREACHER ARMSTRONG

Put your loved ones on my wagon and I will arrange for proper burial.

They go about their business of getting the wagon loaded.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OPEN VALLEY TRAIL - DAY

Four thousand Cherokee arrive in a green valley in the new Indian Territory. Two wagons are left. A line of Cherokee stragglers walk behind the wagons near two bubbling springs.

3D SUPER - TWO MONTHS LATER

The two wagons stop beside the springs. The people gather around.

John walks past Moon who is supported by two young Cherokee women. She reaches out and touches John as he passes. He smiles at her.

He gets on the nearest wagon bed and faces the beaten crowd.

JOHN ROSS

Cherokee... you have survived a perilous Trail of Tears. Orphans of our soldiers and the unfortunate of this trail are among us. Take them and the old into your homes. They are the seeds of our new nation. Get rest. We Begin tomorrow.

The Cherokee weakly cheer. John gets down from the bed of the wagon and helps unload it. He feels a chill and looks toward the forest. A shadow ripples past a tree. He hesitates then walks on towards the forest.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

John turns into the forest toward a small grassy opening. He relaxes slightly and looks around, uneasy.

JOHN ROSS

I feel you, Quatie. I miss you.

John's eyes fill with tears. He hears a faint roll of thunder. He looks up and sees a beautiful white cloud roll across the sky above him. A gentle breeze blows over him. He starts to move away.

Suddenly an owl flies from a high branch across the opening to a lower branch across the way.

He smiles with a renewed confidence and walks back to his people on the trail.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)

John felt good that day about
himself and the people's future.
But, as our city began to build the
people remembered the bitter past
that had brought them here.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ELIAS BOUDINOT HOME - MORNING

A group of twenty Cherokee with red bandannas over their faces ride to Elias Boudinot's house. They dismount and go inside.

The men drag Elias from his home. He is pushed to his knees and stabbed to death.

The men jump on their horses and ride away.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHALLOW STREAM NEAR BOUDINOT HOME - MORNING

The masked group rides into the waterway just down from the well-traveled crossing. They form a line across the stream. Five riflemen draw their rifles. The Ridge crosses the stream. He hears rifles cock and stops to look.

The rifles all fire at the same time. The Ridge is hit five times in the head. He falls to the stream dead.

The mask vigilantes ride away.

INT. UNDERTAKER'S ROOM OFF THE GENERAL STORE, TAHLEQUAH - DAY

The grocer has the bodies of The Ridge and Elias laid out in a side room.

Confederate General Stan Watie, dressed in uniform, stares at his brother, The Ridge.

Cherokee people of the town stand outside watching. His soldiers are lined in a column on the street.

Watie approaches the door and yells outside to all.

STAN WATIE

I'll pay ten thousand dollars for
the killer of my brother.

The crowd is silent.

EXT. THE GENERAL STORE, TAHLEQUAH - DAY

Watie walks out in a state of anger. He mounts his powerful gray horse and rides away. His troops follow. They pass a building with a sign on it:

CLOSE ON THE SIGN - "CHEROKEE NATION SUPREME COURT".

EXT. PARK HILL, SUBURB OF TAHLEQUAH - DAY

John Ross exits his white southern home located on Main Street.

He walks down the street. The streets are lined with wooden sidewalks and modern metal hitching posts in front of new retail buildings that are shaded by a few large oak trees.

John passes a building with a sign on it - "PARK HILL NATIONAL BANK, CHEROKEE NATION"

White and Indian people pass by John dressed in business suits and western attire. They all smile and greet him. Two well-dressed ladies pass by Chief Ross smiling.

An expensive carriage rolls down the neatly kept dirt-street in the background.

A confederate uniformed Stan Watie and his soldiers ride through the street toward John. They stop in front of him.

STAN WATIE

My brother and my nephew are dead.
You betrayed your friend and I hold
you accountable for their murders.

John is dismayed by the news of his friend's death.

JOHN ROSS

I am sorry and I will grieve for my
friends, but I don't carry the
responsibility. Elias and Ridge
alone do that.

STAN WATIE

Your lackeys have killed The Ridge
and little Elias! Your day will
come.

John puts his hand on his gun handle inside his coat just
looking at Stan.

JOHN ROSS

You could no do more than has
already been done to me. But, if we
must do this. You will be the first
to die.

STAN WATIE

My brother was murdered. I won't
forget it.

General Watie glares. He looks at his two bodyguards behind
him. They stand ready to shoot John down.

Stan rides on and his large column of soldiers follow.

THOMAS, a young Cherokee boy (8) walks from the livery stable
leading a strong black horse. He hands the reins to John as
he watches Stan Watie ride away.

THOMAS

(American Cherokee accent)
Chief Ross, your horse.

John smiles and pats the boy on the head. He takes his hand
from his gun and hands the boy a silver coin. John mounts up
and rides away.

JOHN ROSS

Thank you, Thomas.

EXT. PRINCIPAL CHIEF'S OFFICE, TAHLEQUAH - DAY

John rides on a trail toward a rural community. He passes a sign with painted letters both in the Cherokee language and in English.

CLOSE ON SIGN - TAHLEQUAH, CAPITOL OF THE CHEROKEE NATION

John rides down the main street. There are Cherokee merchants and two Cherokee Light horse policemen. John nods to them.

He stops his horse and dismounts. MR. GOURD (70's). an older clean-cut Cherokee stableman takes the horse.

JOHN ROSS

Thank you, Mr. GOURD.

Mr. Jumper nods. John casually walks toward the office.

INT. PRINCIPAL CHIEF'S OFFICE, TAHLEQUAH - DAY

Cherokee Council members sit at a long conference table having an informal hot debate. Talmidge is among them. Two CONFEDERATE GENERALS (40's) sit near the head of the table.

TALMIDGE

We are allied with the Union. We can't do this.

John enters. He hears horses outside the building and soldiers shouting orders. He goes to the window.

POV JOHN

Outside, Confederate soldiers begin to line the streets. Stan Watie dismounts and gives his horse to a waiting soldier.

BACK TO SCENE

John turns and moves to the head of the conference table that is now quiet. Papers lie before him.

JOHN ROSS

I have worried over this proposal that lies before me for many days. This document ask the Cherokee Nation to form a coalition with the Confederate States of America and fight the Union for independence.

A COUNCIL MEMBER (30's) speaks up.

COUNCIL MEMBER
 (American Cherokee accent)
 Set us free.

JOHN ROSS
 The Confederate government has
 stated if we do no, the Cherokee
 Nation will be considered an enemy
 and we know genocide will be the
 order of the day. So today we
 decide, North or South.

Stan Watie enters the room with a body guard as the last word
 is spoken. John cuts him a look and ignores him.

STAN WATIE
 Carry on.

JOHN ROSS
 Our Nation is in a weak position
 this day.

TALMIDGE
 Let's stand neutral and let them
 kill each other off.

JOHN ROSS
 Neutrality is not an option. The
 Union has no seen fit to protect
 us, but have disarmed us. So, today
 we vote for immediate death or slow
 death. A familiar choice. All in
 favor of the alliance with the
 Confederate States, say aye.

The council votes overwhelmingly for the confederates.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)
 Opposed, Nay.

John looks across the long table. Talmidge is proud as he
 raises the only hand against the coalition. John raises his
 own hand in defiance.

TALMIDGE
 I say no to the South and Stan
 Watie.

Stan just stares at John and Talmidge.

The general next to John pulls more papers from his coat and
 lays them in front of John.

Stan Watie is pleased and smiles nodding toward the papers.

John pulls a quill pen from the ink well in front of him and slowly signs the document.

JOHN ROSS

As a matter of record, I sign this
under protest.

The Confederate general next to John takes the papers from the desk and puts them in his inside coat. The generals and General Watie stand.

CONFEDERATE GENERAL

(American Southern accent)

Thank you Chief Ross. We take our
leave.

John turns his back to the Confederate generals.

STAN WATIE

Our nation is at war... Prepare
yourselves.

TALMIDGE

With its self.

John suddenly takes a pistol from under his coat and points it at Stan's face and slowly cocks it.

Stan's bodyguard pulls his pistol up and points it at John.

Talmidge draws his weapon and aims it at the guard.

Watie is shocked by the pure revenge on John's face.

JOHN ROSS

You go to far. Your brother went to
far. It is time to stop you.

Everyone in the room is frozen in place.

TALMIDGE

John this is not our way. We abide
by the law. Stan is just misguided.
He does not deserve to die.

JOHN ROSS

He does.

TALMIDGE

John, you can't kill every idiot
you meet, but you can change a few.
Stop before one of us shoots.
Remember I am a trigger happy
Indian.

John stands his ground and looks coldly at Watie.

Stan stares at John then glances at the guard.

Another Confederate guard enter the room and position himself ready to shoot.

The Cherokee Council begin to draw their weapons and point them at the guards.

The Confederate general motion for the guards to put their weapons down.

Sweat runs down Watie's face.

CONFEDERATE GENERAL

Sir, let us end this hostility. We are allies now.

John's finger slowly squeezes on the trigger.

STAN WATIE

John, we have had our differences, but don't let us end this way. We both want what is best for our people.

JOHN ROSS

You want glory. I want peace. I want us to be left alone. You want war. Money making war. Tell me how war is best for our people?

TALMIDGE

Not today brother. Let him go. This is about to become bloody.

John moves the gun slightly and pulls the trigger. The gun shot rings and everyone sees John has shot into the wall.

The guards start to shoot.

STAN WATIE

No, leave him.
(Watie relaxes and regains his composure)
I will file charges against you, Ross. Your days are numbered.

John looks at him with contempt.

JOHN ROSS

You have destroyed our nation with the actions you take now.

TALMIDGE

This is over. Leave it here. You will never get a charge of any kind through this council.

The two generals approach Watie and speak to him privately.

CONFEDERATE GENERAL

This man is right. We leave it here.

They exit with Stan. He looks back in defiance.

John goes to the window.

POV JOHN

Outside, the Confederate troops formation is breaking up. The soldiers dismount and take their horses to a stake out area. Military wagons enter the city.

INT. JOHN ROSS' PARK HILL HOME - NIGHT

A party is in progress. The men are dressed in suits and confederate uniforms. The ladies wear beautiful gowns. Cherokee and white friends socialize. Waiters serve punch and champagne.

3D SUPER - CHIEF JOHN ROSS ESTATE, PARK HILL, CHEROKEE NATION, ONE YEAR LATER.

The ballroom is elegantly decorated with fresh flowers. A night shadow ripples past the French paneled patio doors, lit from an outside plaza lantern.

John Ross mills around the room greeting guests and shaking hands.

Talmidge comes his old friend.

TALMIDGE

I'm sorry John, I have bad news.

JOHN ROSS

wha news?

TALMIDGE

It's about James.

JOHN ROSS

My God, is he all right?

TALMIDGE

No, John. He died in a Confederate
prisoner of war camp before we
could retrieve him.

John is almost crying. Tears run down his cheeks.

JOHN ROSS

He wis always such a brave boy. How
I will miss my dear son.

TALMIDGE

Me too, John. I loved him.

They try to compose themselves.

The Elderly William Keen walks up.

WILLIAM

I saw Stan Watie a few minutes ago.
He said he has forgotten the, "John
Ross, I'm going to shoot you in the
face" incident.

John smiles.

JOHN ROSS

You're a funny man, but he has no
forgotten onything.

TALMIDGE

William, we have just received news
about James death.

WILLIAM

I am so sorry, John. He was a fine
boy. I will take my leave, but
please call on me for anything.

William walks away.

Talmidge pats his friend on the back and they start walking
to John's study.

Suddenly Colonel Sevier leads twenty Union soldiers including
Major Casteel to burst into the room from every exit with
rifles pointed at the party guests.

SEVIER

Shoot anyone that moves.

Everyone is silent. Sevier surveys the crowded room. His eyes
meet John's.

JOHN ROSS

Please don't harm anyone. Take me
and the soldiers. We're the only
political people here, the rest are
citizens.

The colonel is amused.

SEVIER

John Ross, the token white Chief,
I'll take that advice. The Union
army is in control of your Capitol
city and we may as well control the
government.

Suddenly Confederate General Stan Watie pulls his Navy Colt
Revolver and shoots Sevier in the chest. Sevier falls to the
floor.

General Watie and two of his officers exit through the French
doors, gunning down two Union guards along the way. Four
Union soldiers pursue.

The entire ballroom is quiet for a moment waiting for the
next shot to be fired.

A Confederate officer suddenly pulls his revolver and shoots
a Union soldier. The soldier falls to the floor, wounded. Gun
shots ring out. People run and fall from the gunfire.

The four remaining Confederate soldiers pull their dress
uniform sabers and make a valiant attempt to fight but are
cut down by rifle fire.

Colonel Sevier reaches for a saber on the ground. He grasps
it tightly and struggles to stand with it.

John lies on the floor. Blood trickles down the side of his
head. He gets to his feet as Sevier moves toward him.

John catches Sevier as he falls back to the ground.

Sevier can barely speak as life slips away from him.

SEVIER

(to his men)
Take him.

The room is completely still. Suddenly a rifle butt hits John
from behind and John goes down knocked out.

Sevier takes his last breath. His eyes roll back.

Casteel hangs his head. Talmidge is being pushed back by a soldier.

John is coming around.

CASTEEL
(to Prince)
Take the chief out and chain him.

PRINCE
Yes, sir.

CASTEEL
Keep him chained until you get to Washington.

The sergeant pulls John toward the door. Talmidge stands by under guard watching from the background.

EXT. JOHN ROSS' PARK HILL HOME - NIGHT

The Union soldier pulls John away from his beautiful house. Two more soldiers put chains on his wrist and force him on a horse. Three soldiers mount up.

Casteel is still in shock as he makes his way to the Park Hill Main Street. Sergeant Prince appears in the darkness.

PRINCE
We're ready sir. The troops are mounted. The colonel's buried.

CASTEEL
Move'em out. Back to our lines at the Capitol.

PRINCE
(to the soldiers)
Move'em out.

A sergeant and the column of forty-five soldiers rides out with the sergeant calling inaudible orders.

The major mounts his horse. He rides out to catch up with his soldiers.

Prince and three heavily armed soldiers take John's horse in tow and ride in the opposite direction.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PARK HILL - DAWN

A column of three hundred Cavalry dirty and dusty troops ride toward Park Hill. The dust is so thick you can hardly see rank or emblem.

They stop at the outskirts of the picturesque town. Stan Watie is in front with his picturesque CAPTAIN (30's).

STAN WATIE
Disperse the troops.

CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN
(American Southern accent)
Company A, move out.

One hundred men race their horses to the north end of the city. A voice sounds off in the background.

Stan Watie turns to nearby SERGEANT JONATHAN JUMPER (30's), a strong looking Cherokee man.

STAN WATIE
Sergeant Jumper, your column follow me.

JONATHON JUMPER
(American Cherokee accent)
Yes sir.
(to the men)
Form on me!

A hundred saber soldiers form a column behind Sergeant Jumper.

Suddenly a Cherokee Union soldier runs from a hiding place. Sergeant Jumper pulls his pistol and fires. The soldier falls to the ground near the Park hill bank.

The entire battalion stands ready. Sergeant Jumper rides to the soldier and gets off of his horse to check the body. He turns the body face up and discovers a young boy. Tears form in Jumper's eyes.

JONATHON JUMPER
Damn it.

STAN WATIE
What is it, Sergeant Jumper?

JONATHON JUMPER
This boy, this soldier is my sister's baby.

STAN WATIE

Sorry, but we are at war, Sergeant Jumper.

JONATHON JUMPER

Not with my family.

Jumper calls to two nearby soldiers.

JONATHON JUMPER (CONT'D)

Bury him.

The Cherokee soldiers pick up the body and carry him away. Watie turns to the CAPTAIN of the remaining column.

STAN WATIE

Keep your company here for a south guard. Watch close, Union troops are in the area.

He turns to his remaining men that sit ready on their cavalry mounts.

CAPTAIN

Post the guard!

The soldiers take their guard positions and ready their rifles and sabers.

The north company's horses fidget and snort. A single horse's hooves are heard on the trail.

STAN WATIE

Hold your positions.

Cherokee Confederate Major WHITEKILLER (30's), a tall powerful looking Cherokee man, rides fast from the northeast and past the north guard. He runs his horse down Main Street to Watie and stops. He tries to catch his breath.

WHITEKILLER

(American Cherokee accent)

Sir, the capitol has been secured. We control Chief Ross' offices, the treasury and all access roads. The Capitol City is ours again.

General Watie seems pleased.

STAN WATIE

Very good, Major Whitekiller. Relay my gratitude to the men.

The major salutes. He turns his horse and speeds away. Watie speaks loudly to people hiding in their homes.

STAN WATIE

Don't be afraid! I am General Stan Watie. Your capitol city is secure. I have assumed governing as Chief. Union sympathizers may surrender to any of my soldiers and be guaranteed good treatment.

The Cherokee townspeople look out the windows and doorways. They slowly begin to walk out.

Stan Watie relaxes and looks at his officers and troops.

STAN WATIE (CONT'D)

Steady rifles. Continue to post the guard. Let the men socialize with kin.

The rifles go down with clicking and clanging as townspeople put them away.

Twenty soldiers from each position ride away with unintelligible commands shouted in the background.

Watie looks at Jumper as soldiers dismount and move towards the townspeople.

STAN WATIE (CONT'D)

Sergeant, have a council fire built in front of the Ross house.

Jumper is hesitant.

STAN WATIE (CONT'D)

Find some cattle and pigs to roast. It's time to celebrate.

The sergeant is relieved. He nods and goes about his business.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON D. C. - NIGHT

Prince and John arrive in a heavily guarded government coach. Two armed guards ride on top and two on the sides. The carriage moves through the front war-time barricades.

It stops at the well landscaped White House side entrance.

The sergeant gets out. Two WHITE HOUSE GUARDS (30's) stand ready. John exits.

Prince escorts John to the door. The guards stand at attention on either side of the entrance.

Sergeant Prince stops in front of the guards.

PRINCE

This man is Principal Chief John Ross, of the Cherokee Nation. We are expected.

WHITE HOUSE GUARD

(Boston accent)
Follow me, Sergeant.

The sergeant and John follow the guard into the White house.

INT. WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON D.C. - NIGHT

The White House Guard walks down a long beautifully paneled hall past twelve other guards. John and the sergeant follow.

The White House Guard stops and opens a door to a large study. Prince extends his hand to John.

PRINCE

It's been an honor knowing you, sir.

John and the sergeant shake hands.

JOHN ROSS

Thank you sergeant. It's an honor to accept an old enemy as a friend.

The sergeant nods and walks away with the guard. John enters the study.

INT. STUDY LINCOLN'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

John is surprised to see PRESIDENT LINCOLN (50's) behind a mahogany desk.

Lincoln stands and moves from behind the desk to meet John.

LINCOLN

(American Midwest accent)
Welcome Chief Ross.

They shake hands in front of a rich oil painting in the background.

EXT. JOHN ROSS' PARK HILL HOME - NIGHT

A bon fire burns in the middle of Main Street, Park Hill. Four cows and three pigs cook over spits setting in front of the estate.

Watie sits on a step of the wood sidewalk watching his men. The soldiers laugh and talk with their people. He turns and stares at the large fire while dusting himself off.

Two men ride in with flaming torches. They dismount near Watie and the bon fire. Sergeant Jumper joins Watie.

JONATHON JUMPER

Our people are adapting well to this occupation.

Watie picks up a torch and lights it in the fire.

STAN WATIE

There is only one obstacle to total harmony.

Jumper gives him a questioning glance.

JONATHON JUMPER

Don't do this Stan.

STAN WATIE

I need to end his meager influence, once and forever.

Watie walks toward John Ross' vacant home and breaks out a window with the burning torch. Jumper is dumb founded.

Watie sets the curtains on fire. He walks to the next window. He repeats the deed and throws the torch inside the house.

Watie walks back to the street to watch the house burn.

The people and soldiers don't move as they look on sadly.

STAN WATIE

Burn in hell, John Ross!

The flames from the burning mansion fill the sky.

JONATHON JUMPER

You've gone too far, general.

Stan glares at Jumper and attacks him. He takes a large hunting knife from his belt trying to cut his throat. Jumper fights back and knocks the knife from his hand.

Watie pulls his gun on Jumper and Jumper knocks it from his hand.

Jumper draws his pistol and points it at Watie. A few soldiers stand around watching.

JONATHON JUMPER

I respectfully request you relieve me of my duty, sir.

Watie nods and walks away as Jumper puts his pistol back in it's holster. The flames of the Ross home burn high.

INT. LINCOLN STUDY - WHITE HOUSE - WASHINGTON D. C. - DAY

The flames in the fireplace resemble John's burning home.

JOHN ROSS

Our people were loyal to the Union, but we could no get Federal Troops to defend us until we could build our own army. The Confederacy wis ready to destroy us, so I signed.

Lincoln has a look of compassion.

LINCOLN

You're a great statesman, John. I am sorry we couldn't help you in your hour of need.

JOHN ROSS

Our need wis great.

A soldier opens the door and walks in with a message and hands it to President Lincoln. He reads the note. The soldier leaves.

LINCOLN

I was sorry to hear about your son, but I am proud to know he fought for freedom like his father always has.

JOHN ROSS

I miss him.

LINCOLN

Losing a child is the greatest loss. We love them so.

John stares at the fire in the large marble faced fire place with large tears in his eyes.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
 All of John's memories came rushing
 back that day. As you may imagine
 he was overwhelmed. John always
 missed his children when he was
 away and now he finally has time to
 think about them and his beloved
 Quatie. The burden was great.

John stands and walks out as Lincoln watches him go.

INT. WHITE HOUSE HALL - DAY

John walks past the guards to his room and goes inside.

INT. WHITE HOUSE BEDROOM - DAY

The room is lit from another high burning fireplace that casts its shadow on the elegant walls and furniture. John sits in a corner grieving for his son and Quatie. He clasps his hands in the form of prayer.

JOHN ROSS
 God, why do you allow this? Quatie
 and James did no deserve to die.
 You kill the ones I love when I try
 so hard for you.

He sees a picture of Quatie, his sons and daughter on his dresser. John gets a determined look.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)
 I'm sorry. I will take this brutal
 yoke away that was put there by
 hateful greedy men.

John sits back in his chair, relaxes and closes his eyes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL ROAD, PARK HILL - DAY

John rides a strong black horse. A mature Baxter, wearing sergeant's stripes, rides as military escort. They move down a well-traveled dirt road.

3D SUPER - SIX MONTHS LATER

They see a beat-up sign.

CLOSE ON THE SIGN - TAHLEQUAH - 1 MILE, PARK HILL - 3 MILES.

The two pass by a meadow with two thousand new grave markers in front of fresh graves.

TWO ROUGH AND RAGGEDLY DRESSED MEN (30's) jump from the brush with an old military pistols drawn.

ROUGH MAN ONE
(American Cherokee accent)
Give us your money.

John and Baxter look at the pitiful sight of the shattered man.

Baxter unceremoniously pulls his revolver and shoots the man dead.

He aims at the second man. The man drops his gun and babbles.

ROUGH MAN TWO
(American Cherokee accent)
I'm sorry. We ain't bad men. We was
just starvin'.

JOHN ROSS
(to Baxter)
It's all right, put your gun away.

Baxter hesitates for a moment and then holsters his weapon.

John takes a twenty dollar gold piece from his pocket, leans forward, and hands it to the man. He gently takes the money.

JOHN ROSS (CONT'D)
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
You're not fooling anybody with
that bad English. Bury your friend
and get a job so you can feed your
family.

The man nods as he goes to his dead friend and picks him up.

ROUGH MAN TWO
(in Cherokee sub-titled in
English)
Thank you, sir. I'm sorry.

John and Baxter ride on past a newly freed and tattered slave, his wife, and four children, all walking beside the road.

Next they pass a Cherokee man with no legs and missing one arm. He wears parts of a Union uniform. A one armed Confederate soldier helps him unwrap some food.

John sits back in the saddle looking sad and defeated.

BAXTER

It's over now. We've all learned a poor lesson.

JOHN ROSS

Lessons learned at a high price for the Indian people. But, as they say, hopefully, the wounds will heal.

EXT. TAHLEQUAH, CAPITOL CITY - DAY

John and Baxter pass the Union army headquarters brick building.

Two soldiers take down a sign - CONFEDERATE STATES ARMY HEADQUARTERS, CHEROKEE NATION, GENERAL STAN WATIE COMMANDING.

Watie stands near the sign. He surrenders his sword to a Union general. His battered troops wait unarmed in the background.

John and Baxter stop at a large army garrison tent with the sides rolled up. A long table lined with chairs are inside.

COMMISSIONER BLAKE (50's), a thin, mean looking man, stands at the head of the table with twenty-five people listening.

John dismounts. He check his gun inside his coat and walks to the tent.

INT. TENT - DAY

Blake watches John as he enters and sits.

COMMISSIONER BLAKE

(American Northern accent)

We have a serious day of business ahead of us gentlemen.

Talmidge walks in holding papers. He sits behind John, leans forward and whispers.

TALMIDGE

John. These are the papers of the Washington committee. They leave us blameless.

John takes the papers.

COMMISSIONER BLAKE

Well, gentlemen, here's your demise. The Cherokee Nation is guilty of crimes of succession from the United States. With that act comes many penalties.

John shows anger for the first time. He stands.

JOHN ROSS

Sir, My nation has committed no crime.

(holds up the papers)

This U. S. Congressional inquiry states we are exonerated due to imposing events during the war.

The commissioner is exasperated.

COMMISSIONER BLAKE

Sir, I know who you are and you are not Chief of the Cherokee now. A new chief has been appointed by the government. You sir, are a traitor to the United States of America. If you want concessions above my order you can take it up in Washington.

The angry John understands too well. He moves to go inside his coat for his gun. Talmidge put his hand over the gun and shakes his head.

TALMIDGE

Our time will come. But, not today.

John takes a moment to think. He leaves the tent.

EXT. TENT - DAY

Baxter is listening outside as John exits the tent.

Three TATTERED MEN (20's and 30's), sit on a log and make rude comments.

MEN ON FENCE
 (overlapping dialogue)
 (American Northern accent)
 Get out of town. Dam Injun lover.
 You lost, get lost.

Baxter glares at them as he follows John to the horses.

BAXTER
 Ignore them. Your fight is in
 Washington, sir.

JOHN ROSS
 My first fight starts here.

John goes to the three men. He hits the first one with his fist and knocks him down.

The other two come after him. He hits one then the other until he knocks both of them down. John stands ready for more. The men just sit on the ground looking at him.

Baxter is coming to help.

John holds up his hand and signals him to not to come.

John walks away.

The sun breaks through the clouds. A fierce looking young warrior resembling The Ridge rides past with five intense youthful warriors following him. He stares coldly at John as he passes. Baxter comes to his side.

JOHN ROSS
 I'll go alone from here.

BAXTER
 Are you sure?

John nods. Baxter smiles and nods to his friend as he rides away.

BAXTER
 (in Cherokee sub-titled in
 English)
 Good by old friend.

Baxter smiles.

John rides into the sunset. Suddenly the six young warrior's images join John. They ride together toward infinity in the distance.

A young warrior stops and turns his horse while holding a bow with an arrow drawn. He lets it fly.

The arrow soars toward the meeting tent. It sticks in a post near Commissioner Blake with a piercing thud. He and the soldiers turn to see where it came from. Talmidge stands and smiles.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
The great nation of earth, wind and
fire is once again cast out.

John and all of the warriors fade into the sun.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RURAL CABIN - DAY

PAN across the Grandma Dirteater's land and home.

GRANDMA DIRTEATER (V.O.)
Now in this modern world, our
people have evolved to take their
place in history. We have been
tempered in the fires of battle.
But, still deal in good faith with
our national neighbors, The United
States of America.

Three tomb stones are erected near Grandma Dirteater's ivy covered log cabin.

SAMUEL BASS (30's), a handsome grown man identified by his long scar on his head and face stands beside the graves holding the hand of his SON (5), a handsome blonde boy.

CLOSE ON THE HEAD STONES -

1st headstone: RIP MY DEAR FRIEND, Edith (Grandma) Dirteater.

2nd headstone: RIP MY DEAR FRIEND, Poochy.

3rd headstone: RIP MY DEAR FRIEND, Bob Cat.

Samuel's eyes are filled with big tears as he contemplates their times together. He kneels with his son.

DISSOLVE TO:

Grandma Dirteater, Samuel, Poochy and Bob Cat sit on the big log in front of her cabin.

ROLL VIDEO CUTS OF ALL CHEROKEE DECENT ENTERTAINERS WITH SUB-TITLES -

CHEROKEE ENTERTAINERS

Wes Studi, Elvis Presley, Johnny Cash, Johnny Depp, James Earl Jones, Will Rogers, Gordon Litefoot, Val Kilmer, Stephanie Kramer, Kim Basinger, Cher, James Garner, Crystal Gayle, Loretta Lynn, Lou Diamond Phillips, Burt Reynolds, Wayne Newton, Jonathan Winters, Dennis Weaver, Rita Coolidge, David Carradine, Chuck Norris, Malese Jow, Della Reese, Hunter Tylo, Ava Gardner, Carmen Electra, Clint Walker, Clu Gulager, Corbin Bernsen, Demi Moore, Jeremy London, Jason London, Tommy Lee Jones, Rebecca Gayheart, Quentin Tarantino, Steven Tyler, Liv Tyler, Tina Turner.

FADE OUT.

THE END