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The Last Wagon

By James Edward Grant

I got him! I got him!
He's out of bullets. Come on.
Come on.
Whoa.
- We'll track 'im. You take the other bank.
- We'll get him.
Hyah!
Smack into Apache
country without no gun.
- Eh. - This is his third
day without food or water.
I'm gonna tell one and
all that Comanche Todd...
was the bravest man I ever hung.
You cover. I'll trail.
All right.
Well, now, lookee here.
No need to save water any longer.
Just enough to keep you alive.
Just enough to get
you back to that rope.
Heard of a hangin' up by Cheyenne.
Took nearly half an hour
for the fella to die.
Just chokin' to death.
You're gonna break that record.
Too proud to beg, huh?
Whoa.
Good day.
I'm Sheriff Harper from Oak Creek.
Got me a killer here I'm takin' back.
Sheriff. I'm William Normand, late colonel
in the Union Army. We're headed for Tucson.
You know where you're at?
Canyon de la Muerte, isn't it?
Apache canyon of death.
How come they let you take this
route with no military escort?
Fort was shorthanded due to
the Apache raids up north.
- All my men are veterans.
- At what?
- Fightin'.
- Apaches?

Well, no. We're from
beyond the Mississippi.
Well, then you can use an extra gun,
at least until you get to Oak Creek.
He'll be safe in your
custody, I suppose.
Just that we've got women
and children with us.
He'll be safe. First time he
don't look safe, he'll get dead.
Come on.
Who are the strangers, Colonel?
The sheriff from Oak Creek, Mrs. Clinton,
with a murderer he's bringing to justice.
Clint, form a crescent and
tie up at that far pine.
Yes, sir.
He really a killer?
Going to hang him?
Why don't we do it here tonight?
Matter of a thousand-dollar
reward from the territory.
Sheriff, you can bunk
under that far wagon.
Can we camp here, Brother?
Yes, Sis. This is our place.
Sis, look.
You stop that!
That's right, tadpole.
You keep that gun handy.
He's killed more people
than you got freckles.
I got no freckles.
And I don't care what he's done.
He's a human being, and you're
treating him like an animal.
The young woman's right, Sheriff.
Secure your prisoner,
but stop the brutality.
Now, look here, you Christers.
This here's Comanche Todd!
He killed three of my brothers - ambushed
'em like the Comanches he come from.
Don't be fooled by the color

of his eyes and his skin.
He may be white, but
inside he's all Comanche.
Lived with 'em 20 years
of his own choosin'.
And I say any Injun-lovin'
white who chooses
Comanches against his
own kind is no good.
No rotten good!
So don't nobody get
soft-bellied or sorry for him.
He's what they scrape off
the bottom of the barrel-
an Injun-lovin' murderer.
And still a human being.
Come on, Billy. Let's
feed and water the team.
Vittles, everyone! Come and get it!
Come and get it while it's hot.
Last of the Colorado apples.
Time for the feed bag, eh, folks?
Hello, Sheriff. Mrs. Clinton will
fill you a couple of mugs and plates.
If you'd like, the sergeant here can
guard your prisoner while he eats.
He don't eat.
Let us pray.
Our Heavenly Father...
we thank thee for continuing to
guide us through this hostile land.
We thank thee for the comfort that thou
hast given to those in need of thy grace.
We ask that thou guide
us toward goodness...
and kindness and love for each
other and for our fellow man.
With each day, teach us
to live with open hearts...
and to share with our
fellow man thy bounties...
thy infinite goodness...
each according to his needs.
Amen.

Would you like something
to wash it down?

- What was that?

- The sheriff.

I ain't warnin' you folks again.

I meant what I said.

He don't eat. I'll kill the
first man that tries to feed him!

I aim to deliver him
just alive-no more.

Put that rifle down, Sheriff.

- How come?

- We've taken all we can from you, Sheriff.

We're Christian people. We
like to think we're civilized.

We'd be neither if we left a
fellow man to thirst and starve.

Unlash him.

I don't buffalo easy.

Neither do I! Untie him.

You got no right to do this.

You may handcuff one of
his hands to the wheel.

That way your prisoner will be
safe, and he'll still manage to eat.

Now, if someone will bring
this man a plate of food.

Here's some.

Will you give me your word to
behave in a reasonable manner?

And, you, don't you ever raise your
gun against any of our people again.

Not even against youngsters
a third your size.

She's washing his face. It would
be her who'd throw herself at him.

Imagine, so man-hungry as to throw
yourself even at an Indian-loving murderer.

- She's just being kind.

- She's an outsider.

She doesn't have to
care what people think.

Just look at her.

Wouldn't surprise me if she

even went to him in the night...
when the rest of us are sleeping.
- She's got no shame.
- You're the shameless one.
What do you mean by that?
You act so clean and think so dirty.
I? Dirty?
Yes.
Like when you say "Indian-lover"
and make it sound so filthy.
That's exactly the
way I want it to sound.
It is something filthy.
It was something filthy when my
father took your mother as his woman.
I suppose you think that was clean.
A white man and a Navajo squaw...
sneaking off up some dark wash...
in the night like a pair of animals?
And look what came of it. You.
Oh, don't think an education and a white
name make up for where you came from.
You think I want you for even
a half-sister? Well, I don't.
You think I'm not ashamed
of my father and what he did?
Well, I am. I'm
sick-to-my-stomach ashamed!
You have every right to
be ashamed... of yourself.
You know I met Jolie's
mother before I knew yours.
And I loved her most dearly.
Most dearly? Did you ever
tell that to my mother?
Is that why she died?
Did you finally confess to her
you had once fallen in love...
with a filthy Indian
and had a baby by her?
Get into the wagon and stay there.
Jolie-
I can't even ask you to forgive her.
She has reason to be hurt.

She's ashamed of me before the others.
- Is there anything else I can get you?
- No, this is fine.
Are they truly gonna hang you, Mr. Todd?
Looks that way.
- Well, aren't ya scared?
- Not yet.
Well, I'd be. I bet it'll hurt.
Yeah, I reckon so.
Say, uh, what's the name of your sis?
Jenny. We're goin' to Tucson now.
Some fella there wants to marry Jenny.
What's she want to marry him for?
He said he'd see I was brung up.
- Well, I gotta help with the chores
now, Mr. Todd. - All right.
- I'll see you later.
- Sure.
I'm glad you like her too.
See his nose wrigglin'?
Bet he hasn't had a good
smoke in a long time.
Why don't you give him a puff?
Think I want him
slobbering on my pipe stem?
Your pipe? It's your pa's.
What's the matter? You scared
of a little old murderer?
Give it to me.
Smoke?
Thanks.
Guess it must taste pretty
good. I don't smoke myself.
Yeah, it sure does. It tastes real good.
- You askin' to get killed?
- Don't see it does no harm.
Tough plough-boy, huh?
Just lookin' for trouble.
No, sir. I ain't lookin'
for trouble. But I
don't see it does no
harm in givin' him a puff.
You don't, eh?
He's hurting Brother.

Leave him alone!

Leave him alone! Leave him alone!

Clint.

I told you Christers!

Aaah!

Get him!

He'll never try that again.

Gosh, I guess Comanches are about
the best battle-ax throwers there are.

Mr. Todd's not a Comanche.

He was trying to help Clint.

- Let's go see if he killed him dead.

- No, stay here.

You violated a trust.

And I feel responsible because I believed
you could act like a reasonable man.

Seemed reasonable to me.

I had a right to kill him.

But then I don't suppose my side of
the story interests you none, does it?

No.

You can save it for the authorities
when we get back to civilization.

And if you try to escape,
we're prepared to shoot you.

You understand?

Seems reasonable.

- I brung you somethin'.

- Oh, thanks, son.

Oatmeal cookies with
raisins, nuts and cinnamon.

- Sis calls 'em hermits.

- Good.

- M-Mr. Todd?

- Mm-hmm.

Did you really kill all those
fellas like the sheriff said?

Yep.

Well, could I ask you somethin'?

Sure.

Do you think you'll go to heaven?

Why do you ask?

Well, I was sort of figurin'
on going there myself someday...

and I thought it would be kind
of nice if you were up there too.
We could go scouting
- things like that.
What is it?
Somebody's movin' to
the colonel's wagon.
I'll look.
Got the nerve to do what we said?
My father's mad at me.
He's in his tent over there.
If he catches us, he'd kill us.
How will he know? We'll
be back before dawn.
It'll be fun. Come on.
Sure. Then you'll go around boasting
to the whole camp what we did.
I never went moonlight swimming
alone with a boy in my whole life.
Nobody'll know. If we start now,
we'll be back before moon-down.
It'll be dark. Come on.
- I won't tell anybody.
- Where would we undress?
Down there. Think we'd
do it on horseback?
Come on. It'll be our last
swim in a hundred miles.
- I've saddled my horse. - I won't
say I will, and I won't say I won't.
Never mind. I'd rather
take Jolie anyway.
Then go right ahead.
Jolie, how'd you know that-
I heard.
Well, as long as she won't, I will.
Ridge?
I'm ready.
We can't ride three on a horse.
I've only got one saddle.
Well?
Let him ride with you. I'll
- I'll ride bareback on Bell.
- I'm comin' too.

- Shh.
- This is for grown-ups. Beat it. - Who says you're grown-ups?
- I'll whale the tar out of you. - If you're not quiet, none of us will swim. He can ride with me.
- Put your arms around me.
- You bet.
I guess I sure started a mess when I gave you that puff on that pipe. Don't fluster yourself, son. You didn't have no part of it. Any time I had a hatchet and Bull Harper was handy-
What happened was as sure as moss growing on the north side of trees.
- Have either of you seen my brother?
- He's gone swimmin'.
- He what?
- Went swimmin'...
with that show-offy boy and the two sisters.
Back to the last fordin' place, he said.
- The little devil! - Yes. Got a lot of devil in him. Real fine boy. Colonel hears this, he'll be ravin' mad. Let's not make a fuss. We'll bring them back ourselves. Nobody need know.
- I'm on guard. - You run along. Any cause for alarm, I'll holler. Seems kinda wrong, havin' a
- a prisoner stand guard. I'm sure his eyes and ears are as sharp as anyone's.
- All right. I'll go get the handgun.
- Thank you, Mr. Todd.
You sure smell good.
Last one in's an old mule's tail. Where's your swimsuit?
I'm goin' in raw.
You dare, and I'll take a switch to your bare bottom. This naughty boy didn't even bring a swimsuit.

Neither did I. Beat it downstream.
- Whoo-hoo! - Stay clear
the falls, and no peekin'!
Did I hear you correctly?
You mean you didn't even
bring a swimming costume?
That's right.
Oh, that must be-
And she hasn't either?
Ooh, it's cold. But it feels so good.
You planned this just to humiliate me!
- Planned what? - She hasn't
got a single, solitary thing on.
How do you know? It's too dark to see.
- She's a savage.
- Sure. That makes two of us.
I think it's just shocking!
- A-And sinful! - And too
dark to make any difference.
Come on down here! Regular slide.
Ooh. Ooh! It's so cold.
It's gonna shrivel me all up.
Spying on us, huh?
Where's Billy hiding?
I suppose you're going to tell.
Why should I? I wish you'd
asked me too. Where's Billy?
Don't worry. I shooed him
downstream where he couldn't peek.
Help!
Help!
Jenny! Clint!
Help!
Help!
Help! Jenny! Clint!
Help! Jenny! Jenny!
Help!
Help! Jenny! Jenny!
Help!
You saw those falls this morning. Didn't
you know the kid could get swept over 'em?
Sure, but I-
Stop this! Billy didn't drown.
And it'll be daylight before

you get back if you don't hurry.

- And they'll find you're gone.

- Dawn's almost breaking.

- Aren't you gonna lick me?

- I'm too glad to have you back.

Oh, dear God.

The wagon where Mr. Todd was tied

- it's gone.

Mr. Todd! Under that wheel.

You can lower me down on the rope.

- Ready?

- Yeah.

Can you move any, Mr. Todd?

Not much.

I'm caught between these

rocks. That's what saved me.

Ah, anybody left alive up there?

Just us that went swimmin'.

Oh, it's real terrible.

- Uh-huh. -

Are ya hurt?

No, I don't think so.

How'd you get down here?

The rope. How can I help ya?

Can you move the wagon bed

that's pinnin' this wheel down?

I'll see.

I'm afraid if I do that, the whole
thing will go down and take you with it.

Well, let's try it. Go ahead. Shove.

- Shall I get on the wheel?

- Yeah, sure. Go on. Go on.

Billy! Billy!

We're all right.

They found somebody.

Can't budge it. What'll I do?

Well, you got a safe
place to roost there?

- Sure. There's a wide ledge. - All right.

Then tie the rope around the rim...

have 'em hoist me up, wheel and all.

Jenny!

Dally the rope to the saddle.

- Are you ready?

- Ah, go ahead.
Start haulin', Sis. Easy.
Okay. Haul away.
Thanks. Throw the rope
back for Billy, will ya?
- Haul away, Sis.
- Giddap.
- Are you all right, Mr. Todd?
- Yeah, I guess so.
How can we get you loose of that wheel?
Well, let's see.
Maybe if you loop the
rope through the spokes...
your sis could give 'em a
yank, bust 'em loose, huh?
All right.
- Who says we're gonna turn him loose?
- Yes. I left him on guard.
Maybe he better first tell us
why he didn't warn our folks.
I did.
But before they was full
awake, the Apaches swarmed 'em.
Nobody had a chance.
How was it they killed our
people and left you alive?
They didn't think they did.
I'll tell you why.
Because they weren't Apaches
- they were his own Comanches.
And he didn't warn anybody.
That's why he's alive.
If they was Comanches, you think my own
people would shove me over that cliff?
You've got no right to be living
when all our people are dead.
- You've got no right to be alive!
- Stop it, Valinda.
I won't stop it. Sure,
you're on his side.
You're nothing but an Indian yourself.
You haven't got any feelings.
You haven't even cried.
You don't care if our father's dead.

Come on, Val.
That gal's kinda
quick-sprung, ain't she?
Now, Jenny, if you'll just
take the slack out of that rope.
No, we don't!
Say, uh, while he's nursin' that rope...
if you'll just take that gun and
hold it against these spokes...
you can, uh, sort of blow me loose.
You do and he'll kill us all.
I got nothing against you folks.
Do you think he can survive with
that wheel chained to his back?
I don't care whether he does
or not. He's nothing to us.
He is to me, and to Jenny.
I think he is to each of you.
And I think we'd all
best face the truth.
We're more alone now than
we've ever been in our lives.
If we can get Mr. Todd to
lead us, maybe we'll survive.
- If he doesn't, we won't.
- Lead us? Him?
- We'll find our own way. We'll get our
father's maps. - They're burned black.
All we gotta do is follow this
rim road west a hundred miles.
You do that and the Apaches
will see you from 50 miles off.
We can always turn back the way we came
- back over the water crossing.
Can you? Take a look.
You got just one way outta here-
through the canyon of death.
So, uh, if you'll just shoot me loose-
We're not turnin' this killer loose!
Stand clear, all of you!
Tell her to stop or I'll kill you.
I mean it.
Well, sonny, I tell you what I think.
You might shoot a man...

if you was scared enough.
But you ain't quite
scared enough right now.
Not yet.
Go ahead, Jenny.
Giddap!
Well, now...
since you're in charge here, any
of them water barrels still whole?
'Cause there just ain't no water
where we're goin'. None at all.
How about food? Any left unburnt?
- I don't know.
- If you were anything but a savage...
you'd know our first thoughts
and duties were to our dead.
Your first duty is to yourself,
presumin' you want to live.
Our first duty's to our
folks. We're gonna bury 'em.
- I don't think you ought to.
- I don't care what you think.
Are you suggesting we leave our
people to the coyotes and the wolves?
They're dead, ain't they?
You're a beast!
- Billy.
- Yes?
- One of them horses yours?
- The bay.
Go get him, will ya?
You and your brother
helped me, and I feel bound.
These here people are gonna die soon.
If you want, you and Billy
can start west with me.
Maybe I can walk us through the canyon.
- We heard that was taboo to whites.
- That's why we'll take it.
We might get through
- you and me and the boy.
What of the others?
Fools just gotta get theirselves killed.
They'll dig them graves.

The first party of Apache
comes by will read the signs...
and know somebody
lived through the fight.
And Apache are all mighty good trackers.
They won't live long.
Mr. Todd...
may I go with you?
All right.
You show a sight more promise
than these others. You can come.
Mr. Todd knows Indians.
And he knows the country. Can't
you see he's your only chance?
I don't want 'em along.
I understand what you meant now about...
not buryin' our dead.
But you see-
well, me and my mother and
sister were awful close.
Well, death's a path we're all on, son.
The Indians say a warrior dies well...
if he gives his life for his loved ones.
Let's say your folks got a
chance now to do that for you.
I'd like to come along with ya too.
Sure.
All right. I'll go along too.
But let's all get this straight-
I don't take orders from nobody.
I keep the gun. And
his bracelets stay on.
Startin' now, we turn into scavengers.
Look for water barrels.
Maybe the Apaches left
more than this one.
We're gonna need every
drop of water we can get.
And you're gonna have to piece
together the makings of a wagon.
Well, lookit here.
I got me a keepsake.
That reminds me. Look for
something to kill with.

Somethin' like this.
And don't mind robbin' the dead.
They're beyond carin'.
About 300 Apache back at the
water. Comin' from all over-
White Mountains-
Mescaleros- a lot of tribes.
Seems some whites led a
sneak attack on Camp Grant.
Slaughtered 110 Apache
women and children.
They're gathering to make the whites pay up
- 10 to one.
Your folks was first blood.
So for the next two days they'll be
gatherin', working up to bust loose.
Means we got two days and nights to
travel as far and as fast as we can.
No stoppin' for nothin'.
Now, if anything happens to me...
you just-
Now, come on. You better take a look.
There she lies-
as far into the west as your
eyes can see, and then some.
Canyon of death.
The Indians say you can hear
cries in the night down there...
that you'll hear all your life.
Usually it's only the wind.
Now, if anything happens to
me, you just keep due west.
It'll be eight or 10 days till
water, if you live to see it.
And I ain't sayin' any of us will.
I am saying it's our only chance.
We hide out here till dark.
You drive us two days and
nights to get away from Apaches.
Now you tell us we
roost here all day. Why?
Dust. Five miles of it.
Cross it now, and every Apache for
So starting now, we hide

out by day, travel by dark.
This way.
Giddap. Come on, giddap. Hyah!
Hyah!
Seems safe.
Now, you've done real good.
You see, you can do
without no food nor sleep...
and only a few slurps
of water, can't you?
We were thinkin' of
our folks back there.
I, uh - I know it sounds kind
of foolish to most whites...
but, uh, Indians don't suffer when
somebody gets killed - not like you.
You see, uh, Indians
believe the brave dead...
go to the High Ground,
and that's a good place.
Game's never short, and
winter's never too hard.
Plenty of water. Plenty of grass.
A savage like you wouldn't know what
goes on in the hearts of human beings.
No, maybe not.
But not long back, the three
people closest to me was killed-
my wife and my two boys.
One about so size.
The other about so.
It's good I can keep thinking
they went to the High Ground.
Maybe you could think somethin'
like an Indian if you'd try.
I hate Indians.
It was very kind of
you to say what you did.
Well, I figured it would
ease the high-sprung
one if she could think
that way. It does me.
I think Indians is better
off believin' the way they do.

All right, gather round now.
I know y'all need rest, but
before you do we got the chores.
If we're finding food, we're doing
it by daylight in these woods.
- I'll find some plants my people
use for food. - Good.
There. You see? Give
me an Indian every time.
I suppose your people
know about plants with
secret buckets of water
hanging on them too.
Pigweed's got plenty of water in it.
Pigweeds! I'd rather starve than eat stuff
like that. I don't have an Indian stomach.
Now, listen-
I ain't aimin' to finish up
a skeleton along this trail.
Anybody makes too much trouble, I'll stick
a knife in 'em and leave 'em along the way.
So start walkin' soft.
And that goes for you too.
Around me, both of
ya start walkin' soft.
Real soft.
Now go help your sister.
Git!
You boys get some bone-dry wood.
If you don't find none on the ground, dig
down to the dead roots- non-smoking kind.
- Billy, you hunt us up some good tinder.
- All right.
You'd better come with me.
What are you gonna do
while the rest of us work?
I'll be sittin' right there in
the shade. Do you mind, sonny?
- How can I help?
- Know where the cups are?
- Uh-huh.
- Get 'em.
Gonna put Billy in charge of the
water. Cup each, night and mornin'.

Horses get twice that.
Here. You can scratch
their names with this.
Your wife-
was she a Comanche girl?
- Mm-hmm.
- Young?
Fifteen when she come to me.
That seems awfully young.
Well, girls and ponies both, the
younger you break 'em in, the better.
Apt to get wild otherwise.
- You been broke-in?
- To marriage?
- Mm-hmm. -
No, not yet.
Seems to me you should have
been broke-in some time back.
Well, I guess Indian girls
grow up quicker than whites.
They age faster too.
Yeah, I suppose they do.
Mine didn't.
Didn't have a chance.
Only 23 when it happened.
Say, what about this fella in Tucson?
- Billy tell you about him? - Said
you was aimin' to get spliced to him.
- Is that so? - Well, he's been
wanting me to for a long time.
He'd see that Billy was raised right.
Billy oughta to be raised out
in the open. Towns are no good.
What name will I put on your cup?
Comanche. Todd. Take your pick.
Haven't you ever had a real first name?
I ain't heard it called
since I was a boy.
I was baptized Jonathan.
My own pa baptized me.
He was one of them circuit-ridin'
preachers. Took me every place he went.
Even learned my ABC's
ridin' behind his saddle.

Yeah, guess he lived just for me.
And to carry the word of
his God to the whole West.
"His God"?
- Not yours?
- Nope.
Not after my pa got hurt awful
bad when we was off alone.
I was only eight. My pa died
in my arms, and I was alone.
I never left him for three days.
Just waited and prayed
for him to live again.
Then these Comanches come along
and the chief took me for his son.
That's how I become a Comanche.
That feels good.
Mighty, mighty good.
Well, now.
Look what we got here,
Jenny, me girl. Huh?
Look for animal signs-
runways...
fresh droppings.
Burrows, like that there. See?
You get a stick with a fork on
it, sometimes you can twist it.
Then you can yank 'em out.
- Suppose it's a snake hole.
- No, no.
It's a badger. Maybe a
rabbit that's took it over.
He's in there too.
Let's see what we've got here.
Rabbit. We eat good tonight.
- How can you tell what he is?
- That's rabbit fur. See?
- Think you can catch him?
- Sure.
- What do I do?
- I'll show ya.
Just make yourself a noose...
like this.
Just lay here, see.

The minute he comes out,
puts his feet into that...
yank-you got us a rabbit.
- Where'll you be?
- I'll be right close.
Just up canyon, rigging a few
snares. Try to spot some stew meat.
Don't you go wandering off.
Wait till you hear from me.
Medicine man, like Geronimo.
They always come ahead
of the warriors...
to make good medicine for the war trail.
Means they're still up there.
Come on. And bring your desert turkey.
A rattlesnake!
I'm hurt!
Stand still! Don't run!
Are you crazy?
A rattlesnake! He
struck me! I'm gonna die!
You sure oughta! You
got no more sense than
to run and pump the
poison through your veins!
Start a tourniquet.
I'll get a stick.
Hurry up with that stick before
the poison gets to her heart!
Where was it?

I:

- I'm gonna die!
Sure will die if she don't quiet down.
Picks a time when we
oughta be hidin' out quiet.
Instead we're holdin' a mass meeting right
out in the open. Head for cover. Quick.
That wasn't Apaches.
That was our own gun.
We got six bullets...
and that idiot uses up three on a stinkin'
rattler you could kill with a stick.
I found him, and I shot him.

Real proud, ain't ya?
If you wanted to tell the whole
Apache nation where we was...
you couldn't pick no better way.
You don't have to worry.
Been up and down those washes.
Didn't even see a sign of an Apache.
Come! Unless you fear one Comanche!
Asking them to come down?
Have you lost your mind?
They'll see we have no guns, no rifles-
They've already seen what we ain't got.
Thanks to you, they've seen the girls.
Come!
Here they come.
They'll see that we can't defend
ourselves. Why'd you ask 'em?
He's been on the
Indians' side right along.
You girls get back to
the wagon. Billy, you too.
Ridge, hand that pistol to Clint. Quick!
You seen what the Apaches did
to your mother and your sis.
If this don't work, don't
let it happen to the girls.
If what doesn't work?
Takin' on two now rather than 200 later.
You Comanche?
Comanche.
Always it's taken two
Apache to kill one Comanche.
Mr. Todd! Look out!
Get them horses under cover!
Git!
Come on.
- We gotta move out of here.
Strip the wagon. - Before dark?
Sunset. Quick as we can. How's
the one with poison in her?
Terribly fevered. Could she die?
Of course she could, pumpin'
venom into her heart that way.
Look, whatever happens, don't you

ever run if a rattler strikes you.

- I won't. Honest.

- What would you do first?

Sit right down and wait for you.

Bad fever?

She's gonna have some
powerful chills too fore long.

She might die, you know.

Do you care?

Yes.

I didn't think I would, but I do.

Thank you for what you did.

Thanks for everything, Mr. Todd.

Meet me at the end of
the trail. Hide the wagon.

Any chance they might be soldiers
'stead of Apaches? We've come a long way.

I'll find out. Hide the
wagon, just in case. Hyah!

Am I going to die?

Not if you want to live badly enough.

I'm so hot.

Get some rest, Jolie.

I'll watch her for a while.

Drink lots of water, Valinda.

It'll help.

More?

Lots of water?

Thought Mr. Todd said we
were almost at the end of it.

We are. Everybody's shared, but Mr. Todd
and your sister have done more than that.

They've gone without water since
you were struck by the snake.

Why? I thought they hated me most.

- They felt you needed it more
than they did. - Sis?

It's got Billy's name on it.

He wants to help too.

You know, Billy's grown
quite a lot on this journey.

Maybe you have too, Valinda.

Well, when we started
out on this trip...

I promised nothin'.
Now it looks like even
promisin' that was too much.
We can't neither turn back nor go ahead.
And we got three bullets
against 300 Apaches.
'Taint hardly enough.
Are you sayin' it's an Apache camp?
- Yep. Big one. Comin' from all over here.
- Just to attack us?
No, no. They wouldn't need to gather
no war party that size to take us.
If they knew we was here, we'd be dead.
Come dawn and their scouts head out, we
probably will be, so all
we can do is stay hid.
I don't think there's any
Apache out there at all.
If I said so, they're there.
They're soldiers. The colonel said
after five days we'd be meetin' soldiers.
It's been more than five days.
Well, if they was soldiers, why
do you figure I'd keep it from you?
- To save your neck from gettin' stretched.
- What?
What Ridge means is, we know the
troops must be out looking for you.
Be only natural you didn't
want 'em to catch up with you.
We'd all understand that.
- You don't think I'd lie about it, do ya?
- No, I don't.
- Me neither.
- Nor I.
How's the sick one?
- She's been asking for you.
- How do you feel?
I heard what you said out there.
I been worse to you than
anybody, and on purpose.
Well.
I've had it since the first
day. But I hated you, and-

The key to these.
Had it all the time.
That took a powerful
lot of hate, sister.
Billy goat, you do the honors, will ya?
You know, Billy...
if my sons had lived, I like to
think they'd have been like you.
Don't you never forget to be proud.
Where you goin'?
Up on top of that rise.
If I see any Apaches, I'll let out a
yell. That means take the last chance.
Ride the horses west, hard as you can.
What about you, Mr. Todd?
Like Ridge says, I got nothin'
to escape to 'cept a rope.
Save them bullets, son.
It's me. Jenny.
You shouldn't have come up here.
Is that where they'll come from?
Yep.
What you were saying back there...
sounded like good-bye.
Billy loves you.
He's a pretty big boy to cry
himself to sleep, but tonight he did.
He's a lot more man than boy.
A coyote.
Real one, not an Apache.
How do you know?
Well, after 20 years of your
life dependin' on knowin'...
you either know, or you're dead.
I suppose Mr. Whalen's
already given us up for dead.
That the, uh, fella from Tucson?
He has a fine place of business there.
He mailed me pictures of it
when he sent for us to come.
I suppose he'd be fixin' a house for
you and Billy to live in, wouldn't he?
Of course. Don't people usually?
Why have the drums stopped?

I don't know. Fire's
still burning bright.
One good thing-we can hear' em
better, should they start out.
I wish they'd kept up with the drums.
They're still there.
Me, uh-
I, uh- I-I never could
stand bein' in a house.
Walls creak and the windows squeak...
and things rattlin' all night long.
'Taint natural.
But folks have to have houses,
a roof over their heads.
The sky can be a roof.
Like now.
But in winter-
You ever been in a wickiup? Made
of willow. Smells real sweet.
Easy to build too. Anyplace.
Wherever you wanna be.
Come spring or summer, you can up
and move on, if you've a mind to.
That's not permanent though.
Permanent as you'd want.
For years, months...
or just a night.
Three days from here,
we could take our choice-
the bend of the Powder River...
a quiet valley...
or a high place.
There's a thousand waterfalls
on the Powder, all making music.
Please-
Along about now the grass'll be
turning, makin' a singin' in the wind.
I know it must be lovely, but-
I've seen wickiups 20 feet across...
with windmills in the doorway
to catch the night breeze.
It's just not practical.
The boy would see his
first big buffalo herd.

All the little calves half grown now...
playin' like puppies.
He needs schooling.
He'd get more than
he'd ever find in books.
The lasting kind.
The meaning of the seasons...
the sun, the moon...
and friendship-
real things.
Never having a real home?
Home's wherever we'd
be. We'd make it real.
It's not what I'd planned.
I planned-
I didn't know Comanches
kissed like this.
They don't.
You haven't said it right out...
but you don't really think there
will be any tomorrows for us, do you?
You were talking of what we
might have had, weren't you?
I'm not going back to the wagon.
If it's to be our last night, I
want to spend it here with you...
discover what kind of roof
the stars might have made.
You're not afraid?
Not with you.
Not from the beginning.
While you was asleep, them
Apaches busted camp real quiet.
Went around that butte.
Then I seen why.
- What do you see?
- Soldiers.
Only a handful.
No more than six or eight against the 300
Apaches waitin' on 'em around that butte.
Can you warn them?
Yep.
But that'll draw them to you.
Soldiers!

- Don't nobody tell 'em where he is.
- They're coming down now.
- And Jenny's with him.
- They'll hang Mr. Todd.
Ain't you kinda young to
be runnin' around loose?
We're the daughters of
Colonel William Normand.
Our train was massacred.
We're all that's left.
Did a renegade murderer named Comanche
Todd run across your path back there?
This is my father, Mr. Putnam.
You Mrs. Putnam?
- Are you the one that signaled us?
- Yeah.
- It's a good Injun trick, you signaling
us that way. - Indians taught it to me.
They'll be teaching you something too if
you don't get this party to your main body.
Few hundred Apaches waitin' on ya.
- Where?
- Around the south butte.
There ain't no main body, Mr. Putnam.
We been scoutin' ahead for an
ammunition and supply wagon escort...
about a mile back.
- Only got eight more like us.
Just two wagons. - Eight more?
Well, maybe we were
better off without ya.
- Think you can stay on a horse?
- I'll help her.
All right, get the horses. Let's
start movin', fast and light.
We'll have to leave the wagon.
- Where'd you pick up them Injun ponies?
- Back a ways.
Are they Comanche or Apache?
Never find Comanches this far west.
You oughta know that, Sergeant.
Thanks.
How long you been fightin' Apaches?
Six months.

How about you?

Twenty years.

I bow to experience. What do you advise?

Apaches ain't any showoffs in battle.

They'd like you to head for
them woods around that butte.

They don't like fightin' in
the open unless they have to.

We won't fight 'em their
way. We'll fight 'em our way.

Fight? Sixteen against 300?

Don't you think we'd better
make a run for it, Mr. Putnam?

- Run?

- Yeah.

Which way?

Circle wagons!

Forward! Yo!

They're filtering down
into the trees now.

Our people will be exposed to
their fire when we start the escape.

Yeah, them Apaches are gonna
be too busy runnin' to care.

Hope it goes right.

With your savvy of Indians,
you ought to be in uniform.

Or maybe hanged.

I didn't figure you for
a farmer from the first.

You're Comanche Todd.

What you aimin' to do about it?

We get out of this alive,
I'll have to take you in.

Seems reasonable.

If we get out.

Better get your people mounted.

All right, men, fall back.

Pass the word. Mount up.

I'll take care of things here.

I'm sorry I saw that star.

Me too.

- Now!

- At a gallop! Forward ho!

The prisoner will please rise.
Whether I like it or not, I am at
present the law in this hostile country.
My name is Howard. I've been
known as Bible-reading Howard.
But don't hold that against me. It's just
that I rely on the good book for guidance.
Since you're here accused
of killing four men...
it is apparent you do not.
Four brothers. Harpers, all of them.
Did you, or did you not, kill these men?
I killed 'em.
In cold blood?
What's that mean?
If a man kills another man in hot
anger, perhaps even temporary insanity-
in hot blood, that is-
the law calls it second-degree
murder, or even manslaughter.
But if a man plans to kill and
cold-bloodedly sets out to do it...
that's murder in the first degree...
punishable by hanging.
It was the second way with me.
- Cold-blooded murder?
- That's right, I guess.
I wanted to kill 'em, and I did.
How many men you killed?
- You mean, on the battlefield?
- Anyplace.
- How many?
- Why do you ask?
Man hangs me, I wanna know if
he knows the meaning of hangin'.
There's a difference between war and murder
- a great difference.
Tell me the difference.
In war you kill the
enemies of your people.
That's what I did.
Wasn't them people you killed
in the Civil War your people?
My people? The Confederates?

They was Americans, wasn't
they? And they're Americans now.
And they're your friends
now it's over, ain't they?
- Of course.
- Then you killed your friends.
You see, with my people it's different.
- We only kill our enemies.
- Your people?
The Comanches.
But you're a white man.
I was...
until the day the Harpers
come to my lodge...
and each of 'em took my wife...
and then killed her.
And when my boys went to help their
mother, the Harpers killed them too.
Smashed their faces into
pulp with their heels.
That's what they was doin' when I heard
the screamin' from the river and run back.
Too late.
But I wasn't too late
to see them Harper faces.
Even while they was pumpin' me full
of lead, I was seein' their faces.
Even as they left me for
dead, I was seein' their faces.
And when I was-
when I was buryin' my wife and
my boys, I was seein' their faces.
Then the anger in me was
hot-blooded, General, like you said.
But as I tracked 'em west it got cold.
Real cold.
And that's the way it
was when I killed 'em.
Cold-blooded.
And I was glad I killed 'em.
You wanna hang me for that,
General, you go right ahead...
'cause I'd do it all over again...
and I'd be glad.

No matter how deeply provoked...
no man has the right to take
the law in his own hands.
It's the Comanche law
to avenge your people.
You're a white man. You are
bound by the white man's law.
There was no "white man's
law" for hundreds of miles!
And even if there was, you show me
a "white man" jury in this land...
that'd hang four white men for killing
an Indian squaw and two Comanche boys.
I would. The color of the skin of
the victims makes no difference to me.
Murder is murder.
And law is law, Comanche
or white, if it's just!
General, you say you'd have
condemned them Harpers...
for killin' my wife and my boys, right?
- In due course of law. - Didn't I just
do what you'd have deputized me to do?
I didn't have to wear no star to do it.
I wouldn't have deputized
you to murder them.
All right, to hang 'em,
then. No difference.
In that Bible there, ain't
it justice that counts?
Everywhere on Earth people's got laws
that's maybe different
from their neighbors.
But justice don't change nowhere...
even in places where they give medals
for killin' Indians, like out here.
Medals like that one you're wearin'!
I have no need to
tolerate abuse from you.
You're in no position
to challenge my motives.
I've always done what I believed right.
Oh, and so has he!
All I've heard here is talk of

killing, of the taking of lives.
I've heard no one say
anything about giving lives.
You say he took four lives.
Well, isn't there anything in that Bible
about giving six lives back, and more?
Like these others who might
be dead if it weren't for him.
When he could have saved
himself, he saved us.
When he could have gone,
and I urged him to go...
he chose to stay and
see us through to safety.
Maybe this is a different
kind of an eye for an eye-
the giving of lives instead
of the taking of lives.
But I know any one of
us is willing now...
to give our lives for him.
He did more for me than save my life.
He made me grow up.
He gave me something I
couldn't have lived without-
pride in myself.
We want him to live, sir.
I was moved by what you said
about the giving of lives.
Do you love this man?
Of course.
Yes, son?
So do I.
The hearing will come to order.
By the authority vested in me by
the president of the United States...
I'm ready to pass judgment
on this man, Comanche Todd.
You've spoken well for the Indian...
and through your subsequent actions
have helped your fellow whites.
And as an alternate
to hanging this man...
would you both agree...

to take him into custody for
as long as you both shall live?

Oh, yes, I do.

Me too.