

(Name of Project)

by  
(Name of First Writer)

(Based on, If Any)

Revisions by  
(Names of Subsequent Writers,  
in Order of Work Performed)

Current Revisions by  
(Current Writer, date)

Name (of company, if applicable)  
Address  
Phone Number

EXT. OPEN DESERT COUNTRY - DAY

In the sun drenched isolation of a deserted land a nameless, faceless soldier examines a young American Indian Boy as if he were examining an animal.

The boy looks to him, pleading in his native language.

The soldier throws a stinging slap at the boy's face.

SOLDIER

Talk American.

Pulling him closer, the soldier cups the boy's head between his large dirty hands.

Forcing a filthy thumb in through the boy's pursed mouth he pushes his young terrified lips apart and examines his teeth.

Becoming increasingly excited the soldier looks around to make sure they are alone.

The boy sees this as his chance, and biting down hard on the soldier's thumb, he makes a break for it.

We hear the heartbreaking wail of an Indian mother on the soundtrack as the soldier looks at the small amount of blood on his thumb, slides it into his mouth, tastes it, and looks to the boy running away.

INT. OMAHA HERALD NEWSPAPER OFFICES, 1879 - NIGHT

Trembling fingers reach for the keys of a battered typewriter.

As one of the fingers hits the D key, one of the steel key arms from the typewriter soars in stunning slow motion through the air on it's way to a grainy white page.

The hammer at the end of the steel key arm slams against the page as a discordant gunshot explodes on the sound track.

The hammer of the type writer pulls back from the white page leaving the capital letter 'D' imbedded onto the paper.

The mother's scream rings out again as another slow motion key arm slams against the white page leaving the letter 'e' and we hear Thomas Tibbles voice over.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

My name is Thomas Tibbles and this is a true story. I'm a newspaper man. A hack. A trader in gossip.

The typewriter keys speed up, impacting hard, punching deep onto the grainy white page, spelling out the incomplete sentence -

- 'Death demands a'

EXT. OPEN DESERT COUNTRY - DAY

Running with terrifying speed the young Native American boy looks over his shoulder, desperate to see if there is anybody pursuing him.

Relieved to see nothing in the far off distance behind him, he slows down, gradually bringing himself to a halt.

Sweat glistens on his face and body as he stares into the distance behind him, the only sound being his heartbeat.

The shimmering heat on the desolate wasteland makes it difficult for him to focus as gradually another sound begins to combine with the sound of his heartbeat - the distant sound of a horse's hooves.

The boy strains to listen, then he sees it, bursting out of the shimmering heat - the soldier on horse back.

INT. OMAHA HERALD BUILDING - DAY

A flurry of activity in the Omaha Herald newspaper building as THOMAS TIBBLES, a cranky, fast talking, lovable hack, engages in his usual banter with his equally fast talking, cranky EDITOR, who is following him, reading a piece from the newspaper that Tibbles wrote.

EDITOR

What squandered talent. It's perfect. Why won't you report on the real -

TIBBLES

It's reprehensible muck and you know it but writing that kind of gossip keeps me and them alive.

EDITOR

You need a wife Tibbles.

TIBBLES

Trying to get rid of yours again?

EDITOR

She keeps finding her way back.

TIBBLES

I had one of them once, certainly don't want another. What I need is a different job.

EDITOR

There's the door.

TIBBLES

What would I do without your ugly face barking at me every morning?

EDITOR

Now you're making me sound like a wife.

TIBBLES

Can you cook?

EDITOR

I love to cook.

TIBBLES

I love to eat; let's do it; let's fall in love. I'm not doing it and that's it.

They arrive in Tibbles office.

EDITOR

I just want you to write the truth about the major changes happening in this country; pick up the sword again.

TIBBLES

You're actually trying 'the pen is mightier than the sword' metaphor on me? That's beneath you John.

EDITOR

I'm your boss; you're supposed to do what - I could fire you.

TIBBLES

You're too mean to fire me.

Tibbles runs out, grabs a flustered young SKINNY OFFICE CLERK and pulls him inside.

TIBBLES

Get him to do it. He's young.  
He's insightful. He's idealistic.  
(to young clerk)  
Aren't you?

SKINNY OFFICE CLERK  
Leave me alone you crazy man.

EDITOR  
He's barely out of diapers.  
(to young clerk)  
Get out of here you scrawny mutt.

The Skinny Office Clerk quickly scampers out as Tibbles puts on his coat.

TIBBLES  
Idealism is for the young, John.  
My reporter days are over. I'm a  
hack now, a salesman, a peddler  
of fantasy. A hero of gossip and  
cheap drama; brief distractions  
for lonely lives; that's truth  
enough for me. I sleep nights. I  
have a normal life. I'm a normal  
man who writes normal nonsense  
for normal people. And you know  
what? - I like it like that.

Tibbles makes to exit.

EDITOR  
Liar.

TIBBLES  
A man's got to feed the pig dirt  
in the morning to get pork in the  
evening.

EDITOR  
And you criticize my metaphors?

But Tibbles is gone. The Skinny Office Clerk appears.

EDITOR  
What the hell do you want?

SKINNY OFFICE CLERK  
Is he gone? I have a letter for  
him from a General George Crook.

EDITOR  
Throw it in the bin; Tom hates  
soldiers.

Skinny Office kid throws it in the bin and exits.

Editor pauses, staring at the bin, then has an idea.

He takes the letter out, opens it and reads.

EXT. OPEN DESERT COUNTRY - DAY

A deeper terror overtakes the Indian Boy and he runs the way one does in a dream, using all his strength and speed but getting nowhere.

He stumbles and screams as he collapses into a nest of scorpions; their tails poised, ready to attack.

The combined sound of his pounding heartbeat and the horse's hooves becomes deafening as he scrambles to get out.

He grips at the earth to pull himself out but it keeps giving way in his hands as he slips deeper into the nest.

With terrifying speed the scorpions jump onto the boy's hands, shoulders and face.

He looks up as he hears the thundering sound of the horse's hooves and sees the leering soldier.

Swiftly reaching down the soldier drags the boy up by the hair, lifting him, full body, into the air.

Pulling the horse to a halt and sliding off the saddle, the soldier holds the boy by the scalp as he screams for mercy in his own language.

SOLDIER

I told you to talk American.

He viciously punches the boy full in the face.

The boy's face smashes into the sand as he collapses, unconscious.

We never see the soldier's face as he stands over the boy, then slowly looks around the desolate desert.

Verifying that he is alone he drops to his hunkers and tentatively reaches forward, touching the boy's sun scorched back; the dirty finger nails of his hand ugly against the boy's red skin.

He tenderly caresses the boy's shoulders, then, tensing his fingers, he slowly digs his nails in under the boy's skin, until blood surges from the wounds.

CUT TO:

INT. STANDING BEAR'S HOME - NIGHT

The boy wakes up screaming and sees that he is in fact at home, with his kindly father watching over him.

The boy's father is STANDING BEAR, chief of the Ponca Tribe. He is a noble, powerful, giant of a man, who shows extraordinary tenderness to his frightened son, BEAR SHIELD.

STANDING BEAR  
I'm here.

BEAR SHIELD  
I don't like my dreams.

STANDING BEAR  
It's over. I'm here.

The boy relaxes into his father's safe arms.

BEAR SHIELD  
Who made scorpions?

STANDING BEAR  
They say God made Scorpions.

BEAR SHIELD  
Why?

STANDING BEAR  
Good question. But God has a reason for everything.

BEAR SHIELD  
Who made the earth?

STANDING BEAR  
God again.

BEAR SHIELD  
Who made the white man?

Standing Bear hesitates.

STANDING BEAR  
Get some sleep.

He kisses his son and tucks him in.

He quietly makes his way towards the door and as he is about to leave his son calls him.

BEAR SHIELD  
But, Father...who made God?

Standing Bear smiles and shushes his son to go asleep.

INT. STANDING BEAR'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Standing Bear comes back into his own bedroom where his wife is breast feeding their youngest child.

WIFE

How is he?

She gently smiles as he nods and slips into bed beside her.

STANDING BEAR

That boy is special.

He rests his head against her shoulder and watches his beautiful baby daughter suckle on her mother's breast.

We slowly move away from them out through the bedroom window, out their small home, situated amongst other small self made homes.

We move past the schoolhouse, the church, the small self sustained trade stores, and even though there is little else in this Ponca village of theirs, as we pull back higher we have the sense of a close and peaceful village.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

CARL SCHURZ, the Secretary of the Interior - an arrogant, sly man in love with the games and trappings of power - is in a discussion with an elderly BRIGADIER GENERAL.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

With all due respect, you're the master of war, leave the politics to me.

BRIGADIER GENERAL

I've had more dealings with Indians than you've had flatulence out of your skinny government desk chair so don't you humour me.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Then you will have learned the Indian propensity for martyrdom. If we march in and wipe out this small tribe we give them more power in death than they ever had in life.

BRIGADIER GENERAL

I'm listening.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
 Congress enacted a law granting  
 us the right to move any Indian  
 anywhere in the United States.  
 Any individual, anywhere,  
 anytime. No right of appeal, no  
 law for protection. Relocate them  
 to the Indian Territory. See how  
 defiant this Standing Bear and  
 his tribe are when malaria is  
 introduced to their water supply.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
 Mister Secretary, you should've  
 been a soldier.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
 Who am I to argue with congress?

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

JUDGE ELMER DUNDY - pragmatic, self educated, independent -  
 gets his papers together and calls out to the court.

JUDGE DUNDY  
 Court is adjourned.

JOE the MARSHALL slams his staff against the ground and  
 loudly bellows out to the court.

MARSHALL  
 Here ye, here ye, the honourable  
 district court of the United  
 States is now adjourned.

As Dundy stands he notices a small hole in his cloak.

Everyone rises with him and as he exits to his chambers he  
 turns to Joe the Marshall.

JUDGE DUNDY  
 Joe, you think you could hunt me  
 out a needle and thread?

EXT. PONCA VILLAGE - DAY

The church bell rings out as the Poncas warmly engage with  
 each other outside the church.

Big Snake, the brother of Standing Bear, examines an  
 unfinished hand carved stone made by the boy, Bear Shield.

Bear Shield dances to music in his head.

BEAR SHIELD  
I keep carving but it's slow.

BIG SNAKE  
Anything worth doing takes time.

Standing Bear approaches and embraces his brother.

STANDING BEAR  
Come back soon.  
(to Bear Shield)  
Say goodbye to your uncle.

Big Snake tenderly touches Bear Shield on the cheek.

BEAR SHIELD  
You going to dance in church too?

Big Snake gets on his horse and, as he rides away, Standing Bear and his son make their way into the church.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

As various Ponca Indians pass they respectfully nod to Standing Bear who returns the same.

He is seated beside his son, Bear Shield, who, holding his unfinished carved crucifix, is praying with the intensity of a recent convert.

STANDING BEAR  
What are you praying so hard about?

BEAR SHIELD  
Asking Him who made Him.

STANDING BEAR  
He answer you yet?

Bear Shield frustratingly nods no and returns to his intense prayer.

Standing Bear proudly touches his son's bowed head as the white PREACHER comes out onto the simple alter and blesses himself with the sign of the cross.

The Indians also humbly bless themselves - all except one - LONG RUNNER - a noble and suspicious warrior.

PREACHER  
Before we begin service I have an announcement.  
(MORE)

PREACHER(cont'd)

But I'd like to ask you, in advance, before you react, to remember that God has a plan for everyone. He will not desert his flock.

The Indians immediately become tense, knowing from painful experience that this is bad.

Bear Shield raises his head and looks to his father.

Long Runner also looks to Standing Bear, anger in his eyes.

PREACHER

The Secretary of the Interior has sent a directive. Effective immediately, all of you are to be moved to the Indian Territory.

The Indians react in stunned shock then, one by one, begin shouting at the Preacher, bewilderment, rage and hurt etched on their faces.

Everyone is on their feet except Standing Bear, who remains seated; sad and deathly silent.

Long Runner pushes past the other Indians and exits.

Bear Shield is worried, trying to touch his father's face, trying to get him to look at him.

BEAR SHIELD

What's wrong Father? Please tell me.

The shouting suddenly stops as the thundering roar of many horse's hooves reverberate through the church.

The Indians tentatively move towards the exit to see a long line of soldiers on horseback outside.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH, PONCA VILLAGE - DAY

The boy, Bear Shield, pushes through the crowd and recoils when he sees the soldiers.

The LIEUTENANT steps forward on his horse.

LIEUTENANT

Where is Standing Bear?

The Indians silently stare at him.

The boy runs back into the church and approaches his father, who is sitting alone in the pew staring at the crucifix of Christ behind the alter.

The boy stands beside his father and, as he too looks at Christ's face, he tries not to cry.

His father turns to him and in their eyes is the silent bond that only a father can have with his frightened son.

From outside they hear the Lieutenant call out again.

LIEUTENANT  
Where is your chief?

Standing Bear rises from the pew and looks down towards the exit.

Bear Shield hides behind his father's leg as the rest of the Indians turn to look at Standing Bear, then separate to make an opening for him.

Standing Bear lets his hand rest by his side for his son to take it.

His son hesitates, then takes his father's hand, and they both move towards the church exit.

CUT TO:

EXT. CHURCH, PONCA VILLAGE - DAY

Rifle in hand, LEECH, an arrogant, slug-like soldier who lives up to his name, casually disembarks from his horse as the Lieutenant takes out a government document and reads.

LIEUTENANT  
Under the jurisdiction of the  
United States government I have  
here a directive -  
(puts the document away)  
You know why we're here.

The Indians look to Standing Bear for guidance.

STANDING BEAR  
This is our home. By rite of  
title deed we own this land. A  
permanent treaty was signed.

The Indians, especially Long Runner, are excited by Standing Bear's quiet defiance.

LIEUTENANT  
Laws change.

Hiding behind his father's leg Bear Shield watches as Leech casually moves ever closer to Standing Bear.

STANDING BEAR

I won't tell my people to move.

Leech steps in front of Standing Bear and slaps him hard across the face.

The Indians are astonished and scared.

Long Runner rushes to intervene but Standing Bear raises his hand, ordering him to stop.

LEECH

We don't negotiate.

As Leech tries to eyeball him, Standing Bear doesn't respond.

LIEUTENANT

Leech, that's enough.

But Leech won't let it go.

LEECH

Big Chief?

He slaps Standing Bear again.

The boy looks up in horror at his father being assaulted.

LEECH

Not much of a chief now are you?

Leech looks to the frightened boy.

LEECH

Sometimes the easiest way to  
cripple a giant is to snap the  
ankles of his children.

Leech makes to slap the boy but Standing Bear calmly catches his hand in mid flight and twists it, breaking two fingers, and bringing a screaming Leech to his knees.

Scared by Leech's scream the horses nervously break the line and the soldiers struggle to keep them under control.

Standing Bear releases his hand and Leech slumps to the ground.

Standing Bear calmly looks down as Leech, struggling in vain to force his broken fingers onto the trigger of his rifle.

STANDING BEAR  
I will not fight you.

Standing Bear looks up as the Lieutenant speaks.

LIEUTENANT  
We will provide implements and  
tools and I give you my word that  
the land in the Indian Territory  
is as good if not better than -

Failing to pull the trigger, Leech pounces up and viciously swings the butt of his rifle at Standing Bear's head.

With astonishing speed Standing Bear disarms Leech, spins the gun around, cocks it, and jams the barrel up under Leech's chin.

The Indians scatter as the soldiers quickly draw and cock their rifles, aiming them at Standing Bear.

LIEUTENANT  
*Hold your fire!*

Leech is terrified as he stares into Standing Bear's calm eyes.

LEECH  
Please don't.

STANDING BEAR  
If you treated a white man this  
way, he would kill you, and  
everyone would say he was right.

The boy grips his father's leg tighter as he sees Standing Bear's finger squeeze on the trigger.

There is no fear in Standing Bear as he scans the soldiers' guns trained on him.

He looks to Long Runner who nods, ready to stand alongside him and go to war right now.

Then he looks to some of the other Indians and sees their fear.

He looks to Long Runner again then stares back at Leech.

STANDING BEAR  
I will not fight you.

He swiftly pulls the gun away from Leech's chin, spins it upside down, and expertly ejects the six bullets.

He drops the gun to the ground and addresses his tribe.

STANDING BEAR  
Prepare to move to new land.

INT. THOMAS TIBBLES OFFICE, NEWSPAPER BUILDING - DAY

As Tibbles works on an old typewriter, Skinny Office Boy opens the door and Tibbles doesn't even look up.

TIBBLES  
Go away.

SKINNY OFFICE BOY  
He's insisting.

TIBBLES  
*Get out!*

Skinny Office Boy quickly exits as Tibbles goes back to writing.

A scuffle outside then the door bursts open and in marches GENERAL GEORGE CROOK - a charismatic, powerhouse, career soldier who has fought many enemies and lost to none.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Are you Thomas Tibbles?

Tibbles looks at Crook's uniform with open contempt.

TIBBLES  
Who wants to know?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Lieutenant General George Crook.

TIBBLES  
Your parents must be very proud.  
I'm a little busy here Mister  
Crook so if...

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Lieutenant General.

Tibbles grins at the arrogance as Skinny Office Boy enters.

SKINNY OFFICE BOY  
There was nothing I could do; he  
just pushed his way in.

Tibbles dismisses Skinny Office Boy.

TIBBLES  
You're an idiot.

Skinny Office Boy exits as Tibbles, completely ignoring General Crook, goes back to his writing.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I read your column. It doesn't  
make sense for you to be Thomas  
Tibbles.

TIBBLES  
They teach you how to read in the  
army? I'm working here. Now you  
can push your way out. Good day.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I have a story for you.

TIBBLES  
Ain't that a surprise.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Do not presume to speak to me  
like I am other people Mister  
Tibbles.

TIBBLES  
Then you do not presume to  
threaten me with your military  
résumé.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I see I have the wrong man here.

TIBBLES  
Splendid eyesight. Close the door  
on your way out.

Crook pauses, then slams the door shut from the inside.

The Editor, Skinny Office Boy and the other newspaper  
people outside look through the window as the papers float  
across the room with the sheer force of the gust from the  
door.

TIBBLES  
Listen soldier boy, let's make  
something clear -

Before he can finish, Crook moves to Tibbles, grabs him by  
the throat, lifts him off the chair, and effortlessly slams  
him against the wall.

Tibbles freezes, his body limp, as Crook impassively stares  
into his eyes.

Outside Skinny Office Boy makes to enter but the curious  
Editor gestures for him to wait.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Are you, or are you not, the  
 Thomas Tibbles who was once  
 nearly hanged for freeing slaves?

Tibbles is astounded and struggles to speak through his  
 clamped voice box.

TIBBLES  
 How did you know about that?

Crook almost smiles, admiration etched on his face.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Maybe you are the right man after  
 all.

Crook releases his grip on Tibbles' throat, who slides to  
 the floor, struggling to regain his breath.

Crook opens the door and turns to Tibbles.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Let's have a whiskey.

TIBBLES  
 I don't drink.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 I do.

EXT. PONCA VILLAGE - DAY

On a hill, Standing Bear stares out across the Ponca land  
 where crops have been planted, ready for harvesting.

As he hears approaching horse hooves, he gently pulls the  
 leaf off one of the crops, crumples it in his hand and  
 inhales its moist scent.

Long Runner pulls up next to him on a horse.

The horse is snorting, having been put through a rage  
 fuelled ride by Long Runner.

LONG RUNNER  
 I'd prefer my children to see me  
 die protecting them than watch me  
 live as a coward.

Standing Bear is moved by this but doesn't turn to him.

STANDING BEAR  
 You run your horse too hard.

LONG RUNNER  
We have to fight.

STANDING BEAR  
If we do we'll die.

LONG RUNNER  
You call this living?

STANDING BEAR  
War is not the way to peace.

LONG RUNNER  
They take our land, our dignity,  
our lives, and all you do is pray  
to a white man's god.

Long Runner pulls away on the horse, leaving Standing Bear to look out over this beautiful land that is no longer their home.

EXT. COLLEGE - DAY

A banner across the college building reads 'Graduation day'

A young dog barks playfully as it is pursued by a gang of male graduates.

As the dog continues barking we move in through the building, down the hallway, to a classroom where a stunningly beautiful, young woman speaks, in French, with her tutor.

This is SUSETTE LA FLESCE aka BRIGHT EYES, a stoical, highly intelligent and often stern young Indian woman.

As they speak about the graduation, still in French, the dog's playful barking suddenly turns to terrified whelping.

Bright Eyes moves to the window, looks out, then sprints out of the classroom, down the corridor towards the exit.

Outside the graduating thugs gleefully laugh as they watch the terrified dog run around trying to get rid of the burning flag that someone has attached to his tail.

Bright Eyes bursts out through the front doors, runs down to the terrified animal, drops her books, spreads her arms, and shouts strict instructions at the dog in her own Indian language.

The terrified dog cowers down, the flames reaching ever closer to its tail.

Bright Eyes swiftly grabs the flag and tears it off the dogs tail, stamping out the flame with her feet.

The massively appreciative dog cowers down behind her as the graduating thugs run in her direction.

THUG

It was a joke.

The others laugh in disbelief as Bright Eyes smashes the palm of her hand into his face, breaking his nose.

BRIGHT EYES

So was that.

Nose bleeding, the thug drops all pretence of civility and rushes to attack her.

But she is too fast for him, as she delivers a swift kick to the groin, crippling him.

The headmaster comes rushing out the door.

HEAD MASTER

Miss La Flesh, we do not teach that kind of savagery in this school.

BRIGHT EYES

What do you teach? This kind of cowardice?

(To the other thugs)

You're supposed to be men. You're nothing but cowards.

One of the thugs steps forward and, pretending to be confused, he scratches his head as he looks from Bright Eyes to the wounded dog.

STUDENT

I'd apologize to you if I could distinguish which one was the animal.

Everyone laughs as Bright Eyes picks up her books and walks away.

The dog hesitates then follows her as the thugs perform imitation Indian war calls after her.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE SALOON - DAY

General Crook lights a cigar as he and Tibbles silently stroll in the direction of the saloon.

TIBBLES

I have no interest in writing about soldiers.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Good, I have no interest in  
 reading about them.

TIBBLES  
 That thing was over twenty years  
 ago. How did you know about it?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 We've all done things that come  
 back to haunt us at four in the  
 morning. If we haven't, we  
 haven't lived.

As they arrive outside the saloon Tibbles moves close to  
 Crook, invasively close.

TIBBLES  
 What you did back there; that was  
 a once off. Next time you'll have  
 a fight on your hands.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Won't be the first time.

TIBBLES  
 Might be the last.

Crook grins in admiration as he steps back and opens the  
 saloon door for Tibbles.

EXT. PONCA VILLAGE - DAY

The sombre church bells look down on the Ponca village as  
 soldiers torch the various empty buildings.

Wind blows through the flame through the fields as they set  
 fire to the unharvested crop.

INT. JUDGE DUNDY'S QUARTERS - DAY

Judge Dundy finishes sewing the hole in his cloak with the  
 needle and thread as Joe the Marshall look on.

MARSHALL  
 Maybe you need a new one.

JUDGE DUNDY  
 There's ten years left in this  
 yet.  
 (quoting)  
 'Something attempted, something  
 done, I Has earned a night's  
 repose'

MARSHALL  
H.W. Longfellow again?

Judge Dundy picks up a book by the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and lovingly taps it.

JUDGE DUNDY  
I'll pass it onto you when I'm finished.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Secretary of the Interior ignores the hesitant knocking on the door as he reads the paper.

Another knocking.

Slowly the door opens and in steps a tentative ALONSO BELL - ambitious young sycophant, new to the job.

BELL  
Forgive me sir, I knocked several times.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Eleven times. I wanted to see how long you'd do nothing. You're not impatient are you?

BELL  
No sir. I don't think so sir. Perhaps a little sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Nor indecisive. When did you start?

BELL  
Last week sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
You're the senator's son?

BELL  
Forgive the intrusion sir but...

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
There are a few rules.

BELL  
Of course sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Rule one is, there is nothing that cannot be resolved.

BELL

Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Rule two is, what we do matters.  
It's politics. What's it called?

BELL

It's called politics sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Don't call me sir.

BELL

No sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Okay then, do.

BELL

Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

What's on your mind?

BELL

The Indian territory sir. The  
same area sir, has been  
mistakenly allocated to two  
separate tribes.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Impressive you noticed that in  
your first week but what makes  
you think it's a mistake?

EXT. OMAHA TRIBE VILLAGE - DAY

Bright Eyes sits alone, reading a book as her father, Iron  
Eye, the noble chief of the Omaha tribe approaches her.

IRON EYE

So how was graduation?

BRIGHT EYES

Good.

Iron Eye sits beside Bright Eyes and relaxes.

IRON EYE

A friend is in prison. He needs  
help. Will you to come and  
translate the difficult words?

BRIGHT EYES

Of course.

IRON EYE  
So how was graduation?

BRIGHT EYES  
I told you.

IRON EYE  
This time I'd like the truth.

BRIGHT EYES  
Father, why do men...? Why do  
they treat...? Why are they...?  
Even the men in the tribe, they  
way they look at...

The dog runs up to Bright Eyes and curls up beside her.

BRIGHT EYES  
I got a new dog today.

IRON EYE  
Men fear a woman who is their  
equal. But you're worse, you're  
most men's superior.

BRIGHT EYES  
You want me to hide who I am? Be  
less?

IRON EYE  
Never. Just understand that to be  
different often means to be  
alone. We'll leave tonight.

Iron Eyes stands and makes to move away as Bright Eyes goes  
back to her book.

IRON EYE  
You should be married Bright  
Eyes. You can't live your life  
through books.

BRIGHT EYES  
Why not?

INT. SALOON - DAY

Crook gestures to the barman for another whiskey and tries  
not to grin at Tibbles.

CROOK  
Another glass of milk?

TIBBLES

Smirk all you like. I got involved in good causes before, noble, decent causes that bring nothing but heartache. And nothing ever changes - just stays the same. I'm not getting involved in another one.

CROOK

You'd prefer to peddle in underwear and secrets.

TIBBLES

The devil can dance a lot longer than the divine.

CROOK

Your parents must be very proud.

TIBBLES

Better than killing for a living.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You're not scared are you?

TIBBLES

Don't push your luck soldier boy.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Just hear him. I promise if you take this up I'll stand by you.

TIBBLES

People don't keep promises. Why would a soldier get involved in something like this? All that guilt weighing you down is it?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

I've done nothing to be ashamed of.

TIBBLES

Yet you still wake at four a.m. Why me?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You used to be somebody. I'm banking on resurrecting that part of you. It's my job to keep silent; it's your job to talk. And you've obviously got a big mouth.

TIBBLES

Did my editor put you up this?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 After the third letter you didn't  
 have the courtesy to answer, he  
 wrote me. I should see you in  
 person he said. As if that's  
 going to somehow make you more  
 impressive.

TIBBLES  
 So much charm for so little man.  
 It's a lost cause. Everybody  
 knows the Indians are - Apart  
 from the fact that it would cost  
 thousands of dollars. I know it's  
 an alien concept to you but I  
 work for a living. I have  
 responsibilities. Children.  
 Mouths to feed. You got kids  
 soldier boy?

Crook nods no.

TIBBLES  
 Didn't think so.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 The Indians have children too  
 Mister Tibbles. Only difference  
 is, theirs are dying.

EXT. TRAIL TO INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

The freezing, starving and diseased Poncas make their way  
 along the trail.

Standing Bear carries his son on his shoulders.

Bear Shield's lips are chaffed, his skin cold, as he  
 examines his carved crucifix.

BEAR SHIELD  
 I'm not thirsty.

STANDING BEAR  
 You have to drink soon.

BEAR SHIELD  
 Why did God give them more power  
 than us?

STANDING BEAR  
 He didn't. We are equal.

BEAR SHIELD  
 So why is he letting them do this  
 to us?

STANDING BEAR  
God does not decide what man  
does.

BEAR SHIELD  
Then why are we letting them do  
this?

Standing Bear slides his son down off his shoulders.

The rest of the tribe continue as Standing Bear unknowingly  
gives Bear Shield infected water.

STANDING BEAR  
Drink.

BEAR SHIELD  
Why does the water hurt?

STANDING BEAR  
God knows and sees everything.

BEAR SHIELD  
My feet were cold but they're not  
cold anymore. Isn't that good.

Standing Bear tries to hide his panic as he vigorously rubs  
his son's feet.

STANDING BEAR  
It's not much further, I promise.

BEAR SHIELD  
Farther, if I die -

STANDING BEAR  
Stop talking like that. Drink  
some water.

BEAR SHIELD  
Sometimes I don't like being by  
myself. Sometimes I get scared.

STANDING BEAR  
That's okay, we all get scared  
sometimes.

BEAR SHIELD  
You're just saying that. You're  
never scared.

STANDING BEAR  
Try to drink some more.

BEAR SHIELD  
What happens when you die?

STANDING BEAR  
That's not going to happen.

BEAR SHIELD  
But if it does?

STANDING BEAR  
Your soul goes to Heaven.

BEAR SHIELD  
What happens to my body?

STANDING BEAR  
Remember your grandfather? We  
burn the dead and bury their  
bones. Drink.

BEAR SHIELD  
Where?

STANDING BEAR  
Wherever they die.

Bear Shield looks out across the ugly arid wasteland and  
tries to control his fear.

BEAR SHIELD  
I don't want to be by myself.

STANDING BEAR  
You're not. I'm here.

BEAR SHIELD  
I mean when I die, I don't want -

STANDING BEAR  
I told you to stop saying that.

BEAR SHIELD  
I want my bones in our old home.  
I want to be buried where you are  
going to be buried Father - by  
The Swift Running Water. I don't  
want to be by myself.

STANDING BEAR  
I'm here.

BEAR SHIELD  
Will I go to God?

Struggling not to weep, Standing Bear nods.

BEAR SHIELD  
Will He tell me why?

STANDING BEAR  
He'll tell you everything.

Bear Shield feels the slow ebb of death entering him.

BEAR SHIELD  
Father...I'm scared now.

EXT. TRAIL TO INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Surrounded by the tribe Standing Bear is looking at the bones from the smoldering remains of his son.

STANDING BEAR  
Leave me.

Some of the tribe move forward to help him in his sorrow but the primal scream that erupts from him scares them off.

STANDING BEAR  
*Leave me!*

As the tribe move away Standing Bear falls to his knees by his son's bones.

He looks to Heaven.

He slowly reaches out to one of his son's charred bones but it burns his finger and he pulls his hand away.

Bracing himself, he wraps his fist tightly around the bone, lets it burn into his hand and looks to Heaven.

STANDING BEAR  
Am I praying to a white man's  
God?

As the bone burns deeper into his hand he screams to Heaven.

STANDING BEAR  
*Answer me!*

EXT. INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Surrounded on both sides by soldiers the Indians arrive at the massive wired fences that stretch for miles around the barren wasteland that is the Indian Territory.

They pass through the opening and look at the dry grey stony soil.

LIEUTENANT  
This is agent Davis. Follow the  
rules and you'll all get along.

Agent Davis grins at Standing Bear.

DAVIS  
We'll have no trouble with these  
Indians, will we?

The Lieutenant calls to his men.

LIEUTENANT  
*Move out!*

LONG RUNNER  
Where are the farming tools?

DAVIS  
In time.

LONG RUNNER  
Where do we live? Where do we  
sleep?

Leech stares at Standing Bear as the soldiers exit.

Long Runner grabs a handful of soil and it spills through  
his fingers like sand.

He looks to Standing Bear but all he sees is a broken man.

EXT. INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Alone at night, Standing Bear, ready for a journey, has  
packed.

From a distance Long Runner watches him.

Standing Bear tenderly packs the box with his sons bones  
and as Long Runner approaches.

LONG RUNNER  
We need a chief.

STANDING BEAR  
What we need is to think for  
ourselves.

LONG RUNNER  
Some of the tribe feel you have  
deserted them.

STANDING BEAR  
It's their right to feel what  
they wish.

LONG RUNNER  
Why?

STANDING BEAR

Which is more important, to be a  
free man, or king in a prison?

EXT. INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Packed and ready to leave, Standing Bear slowly walks towards the Indian Territory exit as the other Indians gradually spill out to watch him.

Agent Davis becomes uneasy as he watches Standing Bear approach.

DAVIS

What are you doing?

Standing Bear ignores him and continues towards the exit.

DAVIS

Stop.

When Standing Bear doesn't stop the Agent rushes to him and stands in front of him.

DAVIS

What did I tell you? I said stop.  
When I say stop, you...

Standing Bear steps around him and continues towards the exit.

Nervous, the Agent gestures to another two agents, then rushes to Standing Bear and grabs his sleeve.

Standing Bear stops, looks to his sleeve, then back at the Agent.

Agent Davis takes his hand off and struggles to be as officious as he can be.

DAVIS

You are breaking the law. Nobody  
from the tribe can leave this  
territory.

The other two Agents arrive, watched by the Indians.

STANDING BEAR

I am no longer from this tribe.

DAVIS

Don't be ridiculous; you are the  
chief of the Ponca tribe.

STANDING BEAR

Last night I cut all ties with this tribe. Absolved all leadership and all rights and protections that go with it.

DAVIS

You can't do that.

STANDING BEAR

I am no longer the chief of the tribe; I am no longer a member of the tribe. I am just a father trying to bury his son.

Standing Bear steps around them and continues towards the exit.

DAVIS

Stop him. He can't do this.

Two other agents run in front of Standing Bear and one of them violently pushes him back.

Suddenly a perfectly aimed, small stone soars through the air and smacks into the side of Davis' face.

Standing Bear turns to see Long Runner and thirty other Indians packed and ready to leave.

Long Runner grins and bounces another small stone in his hand.

Unnerved by the effortless power of Long Runner, the agents back off.

LONG RUNNER

Where you're going is dangerous.

Standing Bear is deeply touched by the courage and generosity.

STANDING BEAR

You've always been my greatest warrior.

LONG RUNNER

And you mine.

The other Indians, ready for travel, stand alongside them.

YOUNG INDIAN

I'm going too. With my wife.

STANDING BEAR

None of you have to do this.

FEMALE INDIAN

I want to.

YOUNG INDIAN

Me too.

STANDING BEAR

As you wish, but we are equals, I  
am no longer your chief.

LONG RUNNER

Equal and free.

The agents watch as the small band of Indians slowly make their way out the gate towards their homeland.

INT. CROOK'S OFFICE - DAY

Crook grins as an awkward Tibbles tries to blend in at the back of the overcrowded room as Standing Bear and the other Indians, surrounded by soldiers, take their places.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Thought you weren't going to get  
involved.

TIBBLES

Are we going to start this thing?  
I'm not a soldier sitting on my  
ass all day, I have things to do.

Crook pauses, enjoying Tibbles' obvious discomfort.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Are you finished?

Tibbles nods.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Let's begin.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Secretary of the Interior unfurls a large map over his desk.

Bell peers closely as the Secretary of the Interior points out specific areas on the map.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

The two tribes are the Sioux and  
the Poncas. This is where they  
are now.

(MORE)

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR(cont'd)

The Sioux won't be pushed around  
so this is where the Poncas will  
be sent - the Indian Territory.

BELL

That's about four hundred miles  
away.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

More.

BELL

What if they refuse to move from  
their homes?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Do I hear the hint of a  
humanitarian in you Bell?

BELL

No sir. I mean maybe sometimes  
sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Nothing to be ashamed of but this  
is politics. Manifest Destiny.

BELL

Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

You don't know what I'm talking  
about do you?

BELL

No sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Before you were born, President  
Jackson permanently set this  
entire region aside for the  
Indians but things change. So the  
mighty minds in Washington  
invented a justification to allow  
us take these lands.

BELL

What changed?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Gold, silver and zinc - the  
father, son and holy ghost.  
Magnificent in its simplicity,  
Washington's created Manifest  
Destiny, meaning we, the  
descendants of the Europeans, are  
ordained by destiny to rule all  
of America.

(MORE)

## SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR(cont'd)

What sublime arrogance -  
 'ordained by destiny.' People  
 have a right to the American  
 dream. Make their fortune. Their  
 future. We cannot allow a bunch  
 of Indians get in the way of  
 destiny now can we.

BELL

No sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

What's it called Bell?

BELL

It's called politics sir.

INT. CROOK'S OFFICE - DAY

Tibbles watches Standing Bear speak but we only hear Tibbles' voice over.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

So I listened to them. Listened  
 to the sins of generations.  
 Listened to the barbarism their  
 race endured.

Standing Bear's voice fades up as he finishes his story.

STANDING BEAR

We didn't get very far before we  
 were arrested. I never committed  
 a crime in my life, yet here we  
 are, prisoners.

Standing Bear rises, nods to Crook and the interview draws to a close.

As people mill around Tibbles sees Bright Eyes.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

And then I saw her. Susette La  
 Flesh or Bright Eyes as she was  
 more commonly known.

There is instant sexual tension between them but Bright Eyes is so surprised by this feeling, she immediately displays the opposite, and dismisses Tibbles.

BRIGHT EYES

Something I can do for you?

TIBBLES

What?

BRIGHT EYES  
You were staring at me.

TIBBLES  
Sorry.

He looks elsewhere but as she moves away he stares back at her.

She speaks without turning back around to him.

BRIGHT EYES  
You're doing it again.

Embarrassed, Tibbles quickly turns away to a grinning Crook.

TIBBLES  
How did she -? You're enjoying this aren't you.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Immeasurably.

TIBBLES  
Not a romantic bone in your body.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I bring you here to listen to him and you fall for the interpreter.

TIBBLES  
You didn't bring me, I came of my own volition.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Why did I think you were the man for this job?

TIBBLES  
Someone tried to hang me once.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
If only they had been less incompetent. Are you going to write about this or not?

TIBBLES  
I wonder what her name is.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I'm finding someone else.

Crook walks away leaving Tibbles to stare after Bright Eyes.

CROSS FADE:

- Bound bundles of *The Chicago Tribune* are dropped on the doorstep of a city building.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

So I wrote it.

- Bound bundles of *The New York Herald* are dropped on the door step of a building in a different city.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Wrote everything Standing Bear said.

- Bound bundles of *The Missouri Republican* are dropped on the doorstep of a building in another different city.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Wrote every horror inflicted on these Indians.

- Extreme close up of a bloodied, young, naked Indian child silently screaming into camera.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Every promise broken.

- Slowly pull back to reveal the silently screaming child sitting on the body of his dead mother.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Every treaty destroyed.

- Pull back further from the screaming child and his dead mother to reveal that her corpse is only one of many.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Every life taken.

- Pull back to reveal they are surrounded by death - bodies everywhere.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Half their tribe wiped out; women and children left to starve to death by government sanctioned forced relocation.

- Pull back further as blood rises from beneath the screaming child and the corpses around him.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

The story went out to every newspaper I knew.

(MORE)

TIBBLES(cont'd)

I ran from church to church to enlist the help, fully convinced that when people read what their lying, swindling, murdering politicians had done on their behalf, they would demand change.

- Pull back further to reveal an unimaginable number of Indian corpses becoming slowly awash with blood.

INT. PRINTING PRESS - NIGHT

Tibbles and Editor watch the front pages spurt out of the printing press.

TIBBLES

They can't ignore us now.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A panicked BELL shows the Secretary of the Interior a batch of newspapers.

BELL

Five other papers, that I know of, are carrying the same story.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

What did you have for breakfast?

BELL

Eggs sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

I'm rather peckish.

BELL

The entire country is reading about it sir. What do we do?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

I'll tell you what I'd like you to do?

BELL

Yes sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

I'd really like you to arrange some eggs. Poached preferably.

BELL

(Indicating newspapers)

I mean what do we do about this sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Nothing.

BELL  
Nothing sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Precisely.

BELL  
Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Three should do.

BELL  
The eggs sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
And while you're at it, contact those five newspapers. Mention nothing whatsoever about the arrested Indians, but tell them the Secretary of the Interior repudiates the suggestions of impropriety between...

(checking the paper)  
...Thomas Tibbles and several female Indians, stating that I am not interested in discussing the immorality of Mister Tibbles' personal life.

BELL  
Who told you he was - ?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Nobody.

BELL  
But sir - ?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
What's it called?

BELL  
Politics sir. So it's not true?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
No...but watch him deny it.

INT. TIBBLES' OFFICE - DAY

Tibbles is disgusted as Crook reads the newspaper article about Tibbles' suggested impropriety.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 You have been a busy boy haven't  
 you.

TIBBLES  
 It's not funny.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 What I'm curious to know is where  
 do you get all the energy for  
 these several ladies?

TIBBLES  
 They shot me with my own weapon.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Payback for all those half lie  
 innuendos you've been writing.  
 Accept you've been out  
 manoeuvered and move on.

TIBBLES  
 You're the military genius,  
 what's my next - ?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 They say that to truly understand  
 your enemy you must first learn  
 his culture, his secrets, his  
 private language.

TIBBLES  
 What are you talking about? Who  
 the hell are 'they'?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 By, 'they' I mean me. You might  
 have your newspapers, they have  
 the law. He beat you using your  
 weapon, now pick up his. They  
 can't ignore you if you learn the  
 law, their private language.

TIBBLES  
 You want me to...? In the time we  
 have, how am I supposed to...?  
 You fight for the rights of...You  
 sacrifice yourself for...they  
 claim they want change until they  
 realize they have to work for it.  
 And nothing changes. Nothing ever  
 changes. I owe nobody nothing.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 It's not as if you have a  
 difficult task.

(MORE)

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK(cont'd)

Just devise a case and a method to release these abused Indians and then recast our nation's entire Indian policy. Not much is it.

TIBBLES

I bet that biting wit of yours is a huge success in the army.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Curiously enough, not really. I haven't heard the word 'no'.

TIBBLES

No, how's that for you?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Suitably unconvincing.

INT. LAW LIBRARY - NIGHT

Tibbles is asleep in the library as a Library Assistant slams down several more volumes of books for him to read.

As the assistant moves away Tibbles shakes himself awake and tries to focus once more on the book in front of him but his eyes droop closed and he falls into a deep sleep.

INT. ARMY ROOM - DAY

Tibbles bursts into the room as Standing Bear, Bright Eyes, Iron Eye and Crook talk business.

TIBBLES

'The right of any person in the United States to his life, liberty and property unless they were removed by due process of law.' You hear that, 'unless removed by due process of law.' He has the right to call upon the court to defend him.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

And nice it is to see you too Tibbles.

Tibbles looks to Bright Eyes and falters.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You remember Miss La Flesh?

She tries to conceal any emotion as Tibbles nods bashfully.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
This is her father Iron Eye,  
chief of the Omaha tribe.

IRON EYE  
Read what you just said again.

TIBBLES  
It's the fourteenth amendment. It  
was adapted only eleven years ago  
and it hasn't been tested.  
Listen, 'unless removed by due  
process of -'

BRIGHT EYES  
Problem.

TIBBLES  
I beg your pardon.

BRIGHT EYES  
You heard me.

TIBBLES  
With all due - if you'd just let  
me finish -

BRIGHT EYES  
There's no point.

TIBBLES  
But you've no idea what I'm going  
to say.

BRIGHT EYES  
It doesn't matter. Read it from  
the beginning again.

TIBBLES  
Just to humour you I'll -

BRIGHT EYES  
Read.

TIBBLES  
The right of any person in the -

BRIGHT EYES  
Stop.

TIBBLES  
I haven't even read anything.

BRIGHT EYES  
You've read enough.

TIBBLES

Do you always inte--

BRIGHT EYES

You're overlooking one vital word.

TIBBLES

--rrupt people? What word? You're not even letting me - 'The right of any person in -

BRIGHT EYES

You see it?

TIBBLES

I'm only a hack newspaper man Miss you're going to have to spell it out for me.

BRIGHT EYES

You're a man of words Mister Tibbles. Look at the word, 'person.'

TIBBLES

What about it?

BRIGHT EYES

Is Standing Bear a person? Am I a person? Is my father?

TIBBLES

I don't understand your -

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

I do. In the eyes of the law she isn't. Nor is her father. Nor is standing Bear.

BRIGHT EYES

We are not citizens so we are not afforded the same protections as you.

TIBBLES

Has the room gone insane? You are the first Americans. The only true citizens of this country. You are obviously people. Or persons or -

BRIGHT EYES

You don't have to convince me. Convince his defence team. Convince the judge.

TIBBLES

He doesn't have a defence...

BRIGHT EYES

Then you'd better get him one.

TIBBLES

Where am I going to...?

BRIGHT EYES

Nobody said it was going to be easy.

TIBBLES

There's no time. They could be moved any day.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

I can delay their transfer for a short time more.

TIBBLES

Lawyers are expensive, we have no money. Apart from the fact -

Crook reaches into his pocket.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Here's a dollar.

TIBBLES

I'll have to go to the city.

IRON EYE

My daughter needs life experience. Bring her with you.

TIBBLES

I will not.

IRON EYE

Why not?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Yeah, why not?

TIBBLES

Because she's...she...

BRIGHT EYES

Excuse me all of you, I will decide where I do or do not go, not you or you or you.

Tibbles looks to Standing Bear for some sanity.

STANDING BEAR  
Don't look at me.

EXT. COUNTRY SIDE - DAY

A train screams its way through an open plain of countryside.

INT. MOVING TRAIN - DAY

A long awkward silence as Tibbles and Bright Eyes sit across from each other.

Tibbles tries to think of something to say as Bright Eyes turns a page on her book.

TIBBLES  
So, you like to read?

Bright Eyes looks up disdainfully, then back to her book.

Embarrassed to have asked such an inane question Tibbles stares out the train window.

Bright Eyes quickly glances up from her book, but when he looks back at her, she looks away.

EXT. LAWYER'S BUILDING - DAY

Tibbles and Bright Eyes stand outside the massive, foreboding building, then ascend the steps.

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Bright Eyes watches as Tibbles has just finished telling everything to the lawyer WEBSTER - Flash, rich and young.

WEBSTER  
Come back tomorrow. I'll give you my decision then.

TIBBLES  
But we don't have time for...

Webster looks at him witheringly.

TIBBLES  
Tomorrow is fine.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE WEBSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Tibbles and Bright Eyes stare at the hotel across the road.

TIBBLES  
Looks like we'll have to get an  
hotel.

She looks at him disapprovingly.

41 TIBBLES I didn't mean it that way. 41

INT. HOTEL - DAY

The Desk clerk looks as Tibbles fills in the form.

DESK CLERK  
No baggage Mister Tibbles?

Tibbles nods no.

DESK CLERK  
And you Missus Tibbles?

Tibbles winces as Bright Eyes glares at the desk clerk.

DESK CLERK  
My apologies...you're not Missus  
Tibbles are you?

TIBBLES  
Not by a long shot.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - DAY

As the elevator moves, Tibbles and Bright Eyes stare  
straight ahead.

TIBBLES  
Where did you get the name La  
Flesce?

BRIGHT EYES  
None of your business.

Long silence as they continue their journey.

BRIGHT EYES  
My grandfather was French.

Another long silence.

TIBBLES  
They say French is the language  
of love.

Bright Eyes looks at him in disbelief as the elevator doors  
slide open and they steps out.

Bright Eyes makes her way to her door, unlocks it, enters her room and locks the door behind her.

A disappointed Tibbles walks to the room next door, unlocks the door, and enters.

INT. BRIGHT EYES' ROOM - NIGHT

Bright Eyes sits on her bed and faces the wall dividing her room from Tibbles' room.

INT. TIBBLES' ROOM - NIGHT

Tibbles sits on his bed, facing the same wall.

For the rest of the scene we cross cut between their rooms.

- Against all his better instincts he slowly moves to the wall which divides her room from his and stands still, staring at it.

- In the room next door, without knowing anything at all about what Tibbles is doing, Bright Eyes finds herself staring at the same wall.

- Tibbles tentatively moves closer to wall, trying to hear what Bright Eyes is doing.

- In the silence Bright Eyes stands and stares at the wall.

- Both are slightly embarrassed by their behavior but they feel compelled to continue.

- In Tibbles room he moves closer to the wall until he rests his hand against it.

- In her room she still stares at the wall.

- Back in his room he puts his ear to the wall and listens.

- We end on a cross section of the wall where we see just how connected they are without either being aware of it.

EXT. CROOK'S ARMY BASE - DAY

A garrison of soldiers led by Leech arrives.

Leech slides off his horse and salutes Crook.

LEECH

Captain Leech sir. We're here to take the Indians back to the Territory. Our papers sir.

Crook pretends to read the document.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
You look tired soldier.

LEECH  
No sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
At ease.

LEECH  
Thank you sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I know what it's like to travel  
far.

LEECH  
Yes sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I'd like to offer you and your  
men a square meal and some rest.

LEECH  
That's very kind of you sir. Can  
I get you to sign our orders sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Leave it with me, I'll give it to  
you after your meal.

LEECH  
Thank you sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Dismissed.

Leech salutes and exits as Crook turns to his assistant.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Any sign of that dispatcher?

ASSISTANT SOLDIER  
No sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
What does a man have to do around  
here to get a writ served on him?

ASSISTANT SOLDIER  
Excuse me sir?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Get out.

ASSISTANT SOLDIER  
Immediately sir.

INT. WEBSTER'S OFFICE - DAY

Webster stares at Tibbles and Bright Eyes before speaking.

WEBSTER  
Forgive my curt response  
yesterday but I had to verify you  
were who you said you were.  
You've raised a constitutional  
question of vast importance  
Mister Tibbles. The principals to  
which you are appealing underlie  
all personal liberty. My services  
are at your disposal but this is  
no pro bono case. I'll need half  
my fee in advance and the second  
half upon verdict.

Tibbles reaches into his pocket and takes out two dollars  
and holds them up in the air.

TIBBLES  
I thought I made this clear, I  
have two dollars in my pocket.

Webster plucks one of the dollars from Tibbles' hand.

WEBSTER  
I'll be expecting the second  
dollar at the end of the case.

Tibbles is stunned by the kindness.

WEBSTER  
I read your newspaper last night.

Bright Eyes looks at Tibbles, uninhibited admiration  
creeping into her eyes for the first time.

WEBSTER  
Words have power. We need a judge  
to issue a writ of habeas corpus  
in order to start legal  
proceedings.

BRIGHT EYES  
What is habeas corpus?

WEBSTER

A writ ordering the person who is alleged to have unlawful custody of a prisoner to produce him before the court and to submit to whatever that court directs. The problem is we need to find the best judge to issue the writ, a man by the name of Dundy.

TIBBLES

How do we get to him?

WEBSTER

Right now, he's bear hunting.

EXT. CROOK'S ARMY CAMP - DAY

Crook anxiously watches the entrance, waiting for the dispatcher.

Leech approaches.

LEECH

Fine hospitality sir and much appreciated. We're ready to load up the Indians.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Indications of a storm arriving from the north.

LEECH

We'll still embark. You haven't signed the order form sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You should leave in the morning.

LEECH

I'm anxious to get these Indians back to where they belong sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You're going to turn down a General's hospitality?

Leech snaps to attention and salutes.

LEECH

No sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Get your men billeted.

EXT. DENSE WOODS - DAY

The sun is low in the sky as Tibbles and Bright Eyes search for Judge Dundy in the dense woods.

Bright Eyes stops and listens.

BRIGHT EYES  
I smell smoke.

Tibbles stops beside her and sniffs the air.

TIBBLES  
I smell nothing.

He looks at her, at the focus in her eyes, and is again almost knocked out by attraction.

TIBBLES  
I can see why they call you  
Bright Eyes.

BRIGHT EYES  
I can see why they call you Goop.

TIBBLES  
They don't call me that.

BRIGHT EYES  
Give it time.

As she walks away Tibbles hesitates then calls after her.

TIBBLES  
What does Goop mean anyway?

INT. STANDING BEAR'S CELL - NIGHT

Standing Bear caresses the unfinished crucifix and looks at the setting sun through the bars on his cell window.

Suddenly Leech appears at the window.

LEECH  
Remember me? We're bringing you  
back to your brother in the  
Indian Territory tomorrow.

Leech spits in Standing Bear's face and moves away.

Standing Bear wipes the saliva off his face and looks back out at the setting sun.

EXT. BEAR HUNTING TERRITORY - NIGHT

Judge Dundy and his pals are sitting around a campfire.

JUDGE DUNDY

So he says to me, 'Your Honour it was dark, if I had known the full amount, I would've only stolen half.'

They hear a noise, quickly reach for their guns and aim into the dark shadows as a disembodied voice calls out.

TIBBLES

Don't shoot.

JUDGE DUNDY

Who is that?

TIBBLES

Tibbles is my name, I'm looking for Judge Elmer Dundy.

Tibbles and Bright Eyes appear from the darkness.

JUDGE DUNDY

Don't you know better than to sneak up on a judge with a gun?

TIBBLES

You must be him Sir, this is Bright Eyes; I have a letter of the utmost urgency here from...

Dundy gestures for Tibbles to be silent as he has a closer look at Bright Eyes.

JUDGE DUNDY

Bright Eyes. Nice name. She's beautiful for an Indian.

TIBBLES

Sir, she -

JUDGE DUNDY

I've often wondered what these beautiful Indian women think of us white men.

BRIGHT EYES

Why don't you ask her?

The Judges friends burst out laughing.

JUDGE DUNDY

I see she also speaks English,  
thanks for letting me know Mister  
Tibbles.

TIBBLES

I tried to sir but -

JUDGE DUNDY

What do you think of us?

BRIGHT EYES

That one day your arrogance and  
greed might destroy the entire  
planet.

JUDGE DUNDY

Honesty is too rare. A fine  
answer, and unfortunately, I  
fear, probably true.

(To Tibbles) )

Make it quick Tibbles, what do  
you want?

EXT. ARMY CAMP - DAY

The band of Indians have been loaded onto a trailer as  
Crook apologises to Standing Bear.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

We tried.

Leech watches in disgust as Standing Bear shakes Crook's  
hand.

LEECH

Might I ask you to sign this now  
sir?

Crook grabs the order form and signs it.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

You're sanctimonious scum aren't  
you Leech.

Leech grins, takes back the order document and salutes.

LEECH

Yes sir.  
(Shouts to his men)  
Move out!

As the garrison make their way out of the camp a dispatcher  
on horse bolts in and speeds towards Crook.

Crook barks an order at the garrison.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

*Stop!*

Leech's horse rears up as the garrison stops.

Crook opens the dispatch envelope, reads it and grins at Leech.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Your orders have changed. The fate of these Indians is now a legal issue.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The Secretary of the Interior reads about the case in the *New York Tribune* as Bell enters.

BELL

You wanted me sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Find out what we don't know about General George Crook will you.

FADE TO:

INT. STANDING BEAR'S CELL - DAY

Standing Bear is preparing for court in full Indian dress.

INT. JUDGE DUNDY'S QUARTERS - DAY

The Judge is dressing in his formal court dress.

INT. GENERAL GEORGE CROOK'S ROOM - DAY

Crook is preparing for court in his military uniform.

Cross cut between their preparations, contrasting these three symbols of the law, the military, and the defendant.

INT. COURT HALLWAY - DAY

A soldier brings Standing Bear out in handcuffs.

Despite the handcuffs he looks incredible in his full chief's regalia.

TIBBLES

I see you dressed for the occasion.

STANDING BEAR  
I am here for more than me today.

INT. COURT ROOM - DAY

The courtroom is full to bursting as everybody awaits the Judge's entrance.

Tibbles is standing with Iron Eye and Bright Eyes.

Tibbles whispers to Iron Eye.

TIBBLES  
What does 'Goop' mean?

IRON EYE  
Imbecile.

As Tibbles reacts, Bright Eyes stares straight ahead trying not to grin.

All rise as Judge Dundy and Joe the Marshall enter.

MARSHALL  
In the case of Standing Bear  
versus General George Crook the  
court is now in session,  
honourable Elmer S. Dundy  
residing.

The prosecutor immediately stands.

PROSECUTOR  
I'd like to waste as little of  
the court's time as possible your  
Honor. The fact is, an Indian is  
neither a human being, a person,  
nor a citizen within the meaning  
of the law and therefore cannot  
bring a suit against the  
government. What next? Horses or  
dogs bringing suits against the  
courts?

Some of the gallery snigger at this.

PROSECUTOR  
The prosecution rests.

We hear Tibbles' voice as we cross fade various fragments of the first day in court.

TIBBLES (V.O.)  
And that was all the prosecution  
had to say.  
(MORE)

## TIBBLES(cont'd)

For the rest of the day the court descended into the standard dehumanized language created by the soulless writers of laws.

## INT. INDIAN TERRITORY - DAY

Leech, opening the newspaper, approaches Big Snake and a companion coming from the other direction.

## LEECH

I see he managed to get his day in court. It's going to leave a bad taste when he loses.

## BIG SNAKE

Or sweet one if he wins.

Disgusted, Leech watches him walk away then calls after him.

## LEECH

Don't get smart with me Indian.

But Big Snake and his companion just keep walking, an almost imperceptible smile on their faces.

## INT. COURT ROOM -DAY

As the day in court draws to a close a little white girl and an Indian girl tentatively smile at each other from across the courtroom.

As people sit down the girls enjoy making silly faces at each other.

The white parent looks down, sees her daughter playing with the Indian girl and slaps her.

## MARSHALL

Here ye, here ye, the honourable district court of the United States is now adjourned.

As Dundy and Marshall exit, all rise and Tibbles, Bright Eyes, Iron Eye and Webster move to Standing Bear as he is being handcuffed by a soldier.

## TIBBLES

What do you think?

## WEBSTER

It's difficult to tell.

STANDING BEAR

No man can talk for another as well as he can talk for himself. Can I address the Judge?

WEBSTER

How many times - We talked about -  
You have to be a lawyer to -

Bright Eyes looks to Tibbles.

BRIGHT EYES

Try. Please.

Tibbles hesitates then rushes to the exit where Dundy went out.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE JUDGE DUNDY'S CHAMBERS

Tibbles calls out to Dundy.

TIBBLES

Judge can I talk to you for - ?

JUDGE DUNDY

You're not allowed back here.

TIBBLES

He wants to address the court.

JUDGE DUNDY

So does half the nation Mister Tibbles. That's why we have a process of law that prevents -

TIBBLES

If you'd let him address the court -

JUDGE DUNDY

If you'd let me finish. Was Standing Bear ever admitted to the bar?

TIBBLES

No sir.

JUDGE DUNDY

There's your answer.

TIBBLES

But sir if you -

JUDGE DUNDY

While court is in session only qualified individuals may address the bench.

(MORE)

JUDGE DUNDY(cont'd)

I will not have the law broken in  
my courtroom. Now please leave  
before I have you forcibly  
removed.

Tibbles hesitates, sees Dundy is serious, and reluctantly  
moves away.

As Dundy enters his quarters he calls out to Joe the  
Marshall.

JUDGE DUNDY

Joe, hang around for a minute.

Joe follows Dundy into the chambers.

Joe waits as the Judge turns to him and pauses, a  
conspiratorial glint in his eye.

JUDGE DUNDY

Close the door would you.

The door closes in front of us, leaving us in the empty  
hallway, excluded from their plan.

INT. TIBBLES' OFFICE - DAY

Crook bursts into the office as Tibbles reads the article  
from the rival newspaper to Bright Eyes.

TIBBLES

And listen to...

Tibbles laughs out loud when he sees Crook's horrified  
response.

TIBBLES

Here he is. You're famous  
General. I thought they pushed it  
with me but it's nothing compare--  
At least I was just impregnating  
Indian women but you... and I  
quote...you're...

(reading from the paper)

...'the greatest Indian killer in  
history of the United States.'

Enjoying Crook's discomfort, Tibbles shows Crook the paper.

CROOK

Don't.

TIBBLES

It says it right here. You ridiculed me when they said-- I couldn't have dreamed of sweeter revenge. Look at this one...you killed your first Indian at...

Bright Eyes watches Crook, sensing there is something wrong.

CROOK

Please don't.

TIBBLES

Oh yes I will. This revenge is too sweet to--

Crook tears the newspaper out of Tibbles hands.

TIBBLES

What's -? Nobody has a sense of humour any - Everybody laughed at me when they printed -

Tibbles looks to Crook and begins to sense something is wrong.

TIBBLES

Why are you not laughing soldier boy?

CROOK

Most of my life I wanted to do right but somehow, on the journey- - I'm a soldier.

TIBBLES

Would somebody please explain to me what's going on here?

Words failing him, Crook looks to Bright Eyes.

As she looks back at him, realization dawns on her.

BRIGHT EYES

It's true?

TIBBLES

What is?

BRIGHT EYES

What they said about him in the papers.

Tibbles looks to Crook, whose silence says it all.

TIBBLES

This is - but that's prepos-- You approached me. You came to -

Crook still doesn't respond.

TIBBLES

Talk to me.

CROOK

I'm a soldier.

TIBBLES

Don't say - This is just - this isn't - *It was you who came to me!*

Bright Eyes calmly stares at Crook, trying to comprehend.

CROOK

They would have killed me. I'm trained to retaliate. I'm a soldier.

TIBBLES

Stop saying - everything is excused because you're a - ? You did these things? You. To people who did nothing.

CROOK

Don't you lecture me with that all Indians are innocent victims horsesh-- I may not be educated in the deeper political causes behind all this but let me tell you Mister Tibbles, I've been to the front line; I've looked into the eyes of many Indians; some good, some bad; some I cared for, some I killed. And the only difference between me and the ones I killed is I was a fraction of a second faster. So you'll forgive me if I insist there was nothing innocent about them. They would've ended me in a heartbeat. Maybe it is as you say, maybe we are pawns in a bigger game but I've never killed a man who wasn't trying to do the same to me.

TIBBLES

Why did you...you came to - Why?

CROOK

This was different. This was wrong.

TIBBLES

That's it? That's everything? 'This was wrong'? Give me more than that.

CROOK

I can't give you the profound answer you want.

TIBBLES

Why the hell not?

CROOK

Because there is none.

TIBBLES

It's over. We can't continue this campaign now.

BRIGHT EYES

Why not?

TIBBLES

I can't look Standing Bear in the eye now.

BRIGHT EYES

Why not?

TIBBLES

Why not? Is that all you can ever say? Why not? We're hypocrites. I'm a fraud, he's a murderer and you're more white than a -

Tibbles stops, his face a mixture of rage and shame, then quietly dismisses Crook.

TIBBLES

Get out.

Crook looks to Bright Eyes who nods no, then back to Tibbles.

CROOK

No.

TIBBLES

This is my office. You're not welcome here.

CROOK

It's not over.

Tibbles advances on Crook.

TIBBLES  
Get out now.

Tibbles pushes Crook, who instinctively adapts a fight stance.

BRIGHT EYES  
Don't.

TIBBLES  
What are you going to do soldier  
boy? Be a fraction of a second  
faster than me too?

Crook looks to Bright Eyes, drops his hands and looks to Tibbles.

CROOK  
Heaven and Hell will judge me for  
what I've done. Not you.

Crook exits.

EXT. OMAHA HERALD OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

Under the shelter of the porch an enraged Tibbles looks out onto the empty streets as rain pours down.

Bright Eyes comes out and stands in silence beside him.

BRIGHT EYES  
It's not over.

Tibbles ignores her.

BRIGHT EYES  
You're hurting.

TIBBLES  
What remarkable perception.

BRIGHT EYES  
I understand how you feel.

TIBBLES  
Well thank you for your - Damn  
right I'm - he was my - he lied  
to - How am I supposed to - You  
get involved in these kind of  
campaigns and it rips your - I  
don't want to talk about it.

BRIGHT EYES  
There are worse things.

TIBBLES

That's what you came out here to tell me? Go home.

BRIGHT EYES

He's right. We are at war. He is a soldier. Another instrument of politicians' hatred. But one day he did something. One day he disobeyed an order. We are at war Tibbles and it's only men like you and him who can stop it.

TIBBLES

Don't compare us.

BRIGHT EYES

They were my people he killed. I'm prepared to continue.

TIBBLES

Well pardon me for not being as instantly understanding as you.

BRIGHT EYES

He's trying to be a good man and you know it.

Tibbles viciously rounds on Bright Eyes.

TIBBLES

I give up Bright Eyes. I don't want to hear any more of your forgiveness. Frankly it's sickening. No wonder your people are being wiped out. Why are you here anyway? I give up. What do you want from me? You've beaten me. I give up. Tell me. I'm not the man you want me to be. What do you want? Because whatever it is I can't give it anymore. Go home.

Tibbles looks away back into the rain.

BRIGHT EYES

They won't let him bury his son. He gave up everything; his land, his title, his children, his future, all for what?

Bright Eyes makes to touch him, but stops short of contact.

BRIGHT EYES

Be whatever man you want to be.

She steps off the porch and walks into the night rain.

Tibbles makes to say something but words fail him.

He watches her walk through the downpour until he can see her no more.

INT. COURTROOM - DAY

Tibbles enters and sees Crook who is unshaven and sickly after too much drink.

They look to each other then quickly look away.

Cross fade various fragments of the morning as we hear Tibbles' voice over.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

Day two was much the same.

The Indian girl seeks out the white girl.

She sees her and smiles.

The white girl wants to smile back but looking up at her mother she decides she doesn't want another slap.

TIBBLES (V.O.)

That is until Judge Dundy did something none of us expected.

Almost imperceptibly, Judge Dundy speaks across to Joe the Marshall.

JUDGE DUNDY

Court is adjourned.

Joe nods, turns forward and raises the staff, but as he brings it down to the ground, he stops short of contact, so there is no sound from it.

Nobody in the court really notices except those in the front row and the prosecutor, who recognizes that something unorthodox is happening but he is powerless to stop it.

Joe the Marshall quickly whispers -

MARSHALL

Here ye, here ye, the honourable district court of the United States is now adjourned.

The prosecutor and a few others make to rise with the judge but Judge Dundy doesn't rise; instead he gestures for the prosecutor to remain seated and looks to Standing Bear.

The prosecutor is disgusted when he realizes that the Judge is, without breaking the law, pulling a scam to allow Standing Bear to address the court.

Standing Bear hesitates, almost overwhelmed by the court, then rises from his seat.

The confused people in the court gradually grow silent, deathly silent, all eyes on Standing Bear.

He nervously looks at the people all around, and sees their eyes, their fears, their prejudice.

He looks to his hand and sees the scar left by the burnt bones of his son.

He slowly extends his hand towards Judge Dundy and struggles to make sense of why his son had to die.

#### STANDING BEAR

That hand is not the color of yours but if I pierce it I shall feel pain. If you pierce your hand you shall also feel pain. The blood that will flow from mine will be the same color as yours. I am a man. God made us both. One God. I thought He had forsaken me. No man can understand God, or know why He deals with us as He does. I would take up my babies and run to save their lives. I love truth. Hate lies. He knows my thoughts. When I think wicked thoughts. He sees me here today. The people of the devil are trying to send me to hell. Trying to make me believe God tells them what to do. I am told that His son died for us, died that we might live. I want to try and do something for him. I need help to do what's right. No one of my race ever stood here before. But a man bars the passage. A thousand times more powerful than I. You are that man.

#### JUDGE DUNDY

You may be seated.

Dundy nods to Joe the Magistrate who, with a quick whisper, restarts the proceedings.

MARSHALL

Court is now in session,  
honourable Elmer S. Dundy  
residing.

JUDGE DUNDY

Under the law, an Indian is not regarded as a person. We have the power and influence of the National Government on one side while it is questionable if we even have a person on the other. As the learned prosecutor said our question is simple - Is he a person and does he have the inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness under the national constitution?

Dundy opens a newspaper.

JUDGE DUNDY

I want to read an excerpt from a letter printed in yesterday's New York Herald sent by the Omaha Indians to Standing Bear's tribe.

(reading)

We, the Omaha tribe, under a sense of the dictates of common humanity, are willing to share with them our lands, and to assist them until they can, by their industry, support themselves. They are our brothers and sisters, and although we are called savages we feel the sympathy for our persecuted brethren that should characterize Christians, and are willing to share what we possess with them where they may live in peace, enjoy good health, and the opportunity of educating their children to a higher state of civilization.

He looks up at Standing Bear then back to the newspaper.

JUDGE DUNDY

The New York Herald responded thus: 'This is one of the most extraordinary statements ever published in America.

(MORE)

JUDGE DUNDY(cont'd)

Many white men in Nebraska might have made the same offer without hurting themselves. Church members talked and petitioned, but not an acre of land did they offer. It was reserved for a band of heathen redskins to emphasize that sympathy which civilization and religion have talked about - and only talked. The world moves, but civilization seems sometimes to stand still, while savages pass to the front and into the position of honour.'

He closes the newspaper and looks to the courtroom.

JUDGE DUNDY

Lessons in Christianity from savages? Christ was the son of God. I don't know what it means to be a father. As yet I have no children. Someday I hope to. But what does it mean to be a father if not to honour the life of your child? I'd like to read one final quote from H.W. Longfellow -

He opens the book on the marked page and reads.

JUDGE DUNDY

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.

He closes the book and looks to Standing Bear.

JUDGE DUNDY

Perhaps those footprints might be yours sir, I don't know. Perhaps time may reveal you to be one of those great men, I don't know, But one thing I do know, beyond all doubt, Mister Standing Bear, is that you are indeed a person. A most remarkable person.

(Beat)

Court is adjourned.

As Judge Dundy rises some people applaud.

Some don't.

Joe the Marshall slams the staff down and bellows out.

## MARSHALL

Here ye, here ye, the honourable  
district court of the United  
States is now adjourned.

As Judge Dundy exits, a deeply moved Tibbles watches Standing Bear and Crook silently communicating their mutual appreciation to each other.

Standing Bear turns to Tibbles, love in his eyes, then is interrupted by a supporter shaking his hand.

Bright Eyes watches Tibbles as he turns to look at Crook.

Crook looks back at Tibbles but then breaks off contact and stands.

Watching Crook exit, Tibbles wants to say or do something but it's too late, Crook is gone.

Those who are not applauding watch in quiet disgust as the others move to shake Standing Bear's hand.

One of the people not applauding is the white girl's mother.

The Indian girl looks to the white girl with a tentative smile.

The white girl is confused by the ambivalence around her but when she sees the Indian girl's tentative smile she responds with warm comprehension and smiles right back at her.

## INT. ARMY ROOM - DAY

Soldiers stand around a seated Big Snake as Leech taunts him.

## BIG SNAKE

I'm going to visit my brother. He  
is free. And so am I.

## LEECH

You think we are equals big man?  
You, me and your brother? I met  
him; did you know that? Broke two  
of my fingers and stuck a gun  
under my chin. Think you can  
stroll out of the reservation?  
Steal your way into white man's  
worlds? Slide your way into white  
women's beds? I think not.

## BIG SNAKE

This new law says we are equal.

LEECH

What's this 'we' - that ruling will soon be overturned but until then it applies to that small group only, there is no 'we.' You tried to leave the Indian territory so you're under arrest, let's go.

BIG SNAKE

A precedent has been set. It is now the law of the land.

LEECH

See, this is what I'm talking about? Where does a dumb animal Indian get a word like precedent?

Leech is slightly embarrassed by his inability to drag Big Snake's massive bulk out of the chair.

LEECH

I said get up.

BIG SNAKE

I did nothing wrong.

LEECH

That will be for us to decide. Now don't you have me tell you again, Indian, get up.

Big Snake remains calm, staring straight ahead.

BIG SNAKE

Tell me why I'm being arrested.

The soldiers become uneasy as Leech throws a stinging slap to Big Snake's face.

LEECH

That answer enough for you?

BIG SNAKE

I don't want to fight.

Leech throws another stinging slap to Big Snake's face.

LEECH

Where did I hear that before?

He slaps Big Snake again.

One of the younger soldiers murmurs -

YOUNG SOLDIER

Don't be doing that.

Leech stares at the soldier and, without taking his eyes off him, throws another stinging slap at Big Snake's face.

LEECH  
What did you say?

SOLDIER  
Nothing sir.

LEECH  
You. Put the handcuffs on him

The soldier reluctantly approaches Big Snake and reaches forward with the handcuffs.

Big Snake looks to him and, without threat, shakes his head to show he will not be cuffed.

The conflicted soldier looks to Leech.

LEECH  
This is not a world of men.

Leech grabs the handcuffs to put them on Big Snake but Big Snake takes the cuffs and throws them across the room.

BIG SNAKE  
I did nothing wrong.

Leech grabs Big Snake around the back of the neck, choking him as he tries to drag him off the chair.

Big Snake tries to remain calm, his huge neck straining under the pressure as Leech screams to the other soldiers.

LEECH  
*Help me!*

The other soldiers converge on Big Snake, trying to drag him towards the door, but with his massive bulk, he throws them off.

Leech crashes against the wall and slumps to the ground as he watches the other soldiers struggle to subdue Big Snake.

Simultaneously scared and excited, he reaches for his gun but he fumbles and it falls to the floor.

Embarrassed, he looks around and realizes that in the melee nobody has noticed.

He picks up the gun and aims it.

Struggling to contain his excitement, he pulls the trigger.

The deafening gunshot blast roars through the small room.

Everyone freezes.

The shocked soldiers slowly back off as Big Snake stands, quiet, still, immovable.

Leech, sweating with adrenaline, holds the gun on him.

A childlike giant, Big Snake is suddenly confused by a small trickle of blood slowly trailing from one of his nostrils.

BIG SNAKE

I did nothing wrong.

One of his knees buckles and he struggles to stand but his other knee gives way and he slumps to his knees.

He looks around at the other soldiers and as his body gracefully folds into itself, Big Snake dies.

Leech looks around the room, ecstatic, delighting in his glorious deed.

The soldiers look at him with a mixture fear, disgust and the incomprehension of youth.

Leech sees their confused, accusatory stares and falters.

LEECH

Don't you look at me. You heard him. Threaten me.

The soldiers look to each other.

LEECH

It's what he did. Didn't you see? Threaten to kill. Me. Us. He was going to - Didn't you hear?

The soldiers hesitate. An ambitious soldier turns to Leech.

AMBITIOUS SOLDIER

I heard.

LEECH

See? He saw it. You all saw it.

The confused soldiers look to one another.

Some hang their head, some nod yes, some are scared, but none of them speak out against Leech.

LEECH

Put the handcuffs on him.

AMBITIOUS SOLDIER

But sir, he's dead.

Leech stands triumphantly over Big Snake's body.

LEECH  
He's still under arrest.

EXT. PARTY CELEBRATIONS - NIGHT

A band play rousing music as Indians and whites dance in celebration of the court ruling.

Iron Eye sits with Standing Bear, who, holding the box containing his son's bones, smiles, as he touches it.

STANDING BEAR  
He loved music.

Bright Eyes is beside them, slightly unnerved as Tibbles awkwardly approaches and looks to Iron Eye.

TIBBLES  
May I dance with your daughter?

IRON EYE  
Dance with the man.

BRIGHT EYES  
I'll decide who I will or will not dance with, not you or not him.

STANDING BEAR  
Well said.

Tibbles awkwardly extends his hand to her.

TIBBLES  
May I have this dance?

Making him suffer, Bright Eyes feigns indifference.

BRIGHT EYES  
Why not.

Bright Eyes steps up and moves into the dancing crowd with Tibbles, leaving the two bemused chiefs behind.

STANDING BEAR  
Has her mother's spirit.

IRON EYE  
Doesn't listen to a word I say.

STANDING BEAR  
That's wise of her.

They toast and knock back their drinks.

Crook arrives but, hesitant to enter the party, he stands on the outskirts.

He sees Tibbles and Bright Eyes dancing and can't help but smile.

                  BRIGHT EYES  
Sure this is a good idea?

                  TIBBLES  
I don't know, is it?

                  BRIGHT EYES  
Sometimes the only thing they  
treat worse than an Indian is the  
person who's with that Indian.

                  TIBBLES  
I can handle them; it's you I  
have no idea how to--.

                  BRIGHT EYES  
You dance like a half breed. Your  
grandfather probably had Indian  
blood in him.

                  TIBBLES  
My grandfather was Irish.

                  BRIGHT EYES  
Close enough.

Tibbles laughs and twirls her around as Standing Bear and Iron Eye grin to each other.

Crook watches them too, then as he tentatively makes to approach them, he is handed a letter by a junior soldier.

He watches Tibbles and Bright Eyes as he opens the letter and reads it, smiling at Tibbles' blushing awkwardness.

His smile becomes overwhelming rage as he crumples the letter up and throws it to the ground.

Tibbles and Bright Eyes look over as people scatter in confusion and panic at the sheer velocity of Crook's rage as he pushes through the crowd and rushes for his horse.

Standing Bear gestures for the musicians to stop as he sees Crook bolting away on his horse.

Noticing the letter on the ground between the opening in the crowd Tibbles makes his way to it, unfurls it and reads and looks to Standing Bear.

Standing Bear looks back at him, knowing all too well the look of death.

INT. BRIGADIER GENERAL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Young Soldier is nervously standing to attention as Crook rapidly questions him.

The BRIGADIER GENERAL, who we saw at the beginning arguing with the Secretary of the Interior, watches, indulging Crook a little but not happy about this cross examination or the fact that Crook is unshaven.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Who did he say he was going to  
kill?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
All of us sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
One by one he said I'm going to  
kill you? I'm going to kill you,  
I'm going to...?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
No sir - He said - Well not all  
of us sir, just some of us.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Who precisely?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Excuse me sir?

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Did he threaten to kill you?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Me? No sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Name the men he threatened to  
kill.

YOUNG SOLDIER  
The men sir? He said it to - he  
told -

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Who fired the shot?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Leech sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
You heard him threaten Leech?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
I don't rightly remember sir.  
There was a lot of confusion.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
There were eight to ten of you in  
the room?

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Possibly more sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
And one of him.

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Yes sir.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Where is Leech now?

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
I think that's enough now.  
(to Young Soldier)  
Dismissed.

Young Soldier salutes and makes to exit.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
He's quite the hero for saving  
all of you isn't he?

Young Soldier doesn't respond.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I asked you a question.

Young Soldier doesn't turn back around, too ashamed to look  
in Crook's eye.

YOUNG SOLDIER  
He's quite the hero sir.

Young Soldier exits.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I want to see the room where he  
was shot.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
Let me get this right, this is  
not official business?

Crook nods no.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
I've given you the Indian's body  
which is indulgence enough  
General. I'm sure you understand.

Crook stands, salutes, and exits.

INT. HALLWAY OUTSIDE GENERAL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Outside the office Crook rushes after Young Soldier, the one who told Leech, 'Don't do that.'

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Bring me to the hero.

The Young Soldier hesitates, looking back at his superior's office.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
What did I just tell you soldier?

INT. ARMY CANTEEN - NIGHT

In the busy canteen, Leech sits with Ambitious Soldier and a few others detailing his heroic shooting of Big Snake.

INT. BRIGADIER GENERAL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Brigadier General relaxes, looking out his window.

He suddenly tenses when, in the distance, he sees Crook and Young Soldier enter the canteen.

INT. ARMY CANTEEN - DAY

As Leech talks he doesn't see, in the background, Young Soldier pointing him out to Crook.

Crook rapidly moves across the canteen, drags Leech from his chair, and, with animal strength, throws him across the room.

Soldiers scatter as Leech crashes down onto tables and chairs.

Crook calmly moves to him and, viciously and repeatedly, smashes his fist into Leech's face.

The multitude of soldiers stand in a semi circle, not just unwilling to tackle Crook because he's a general, but because right now he looks like an animal.

Crook drags Leech off the table, throws him to the ground, takes ten paces away, then turns.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
I hear you're a good shot with a  
pistol.

Everyone backs off, creating a space between the two men.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Stand up.

Leech spits out some blood.

LEECH  
You know I can't draw my weapon  
on a general.

The other troops react in astonishment as Crook calmly takes off his uniform jacket.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
No rank. Help him up.

Two soldiers rush to pull Leech to his feet, then quickly back off.

Everyone watches in painful silence as Leech instinctively reaches for his gun but stops just short of actual touch.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Do it. Be a man.

Leech screams in abject fear and makes to draw his weapon but Crook, with remarkable speed, draws his gun first.

Like the coward he is Leech immediately drops his gun and breaks down sobbing.

LEECH  
I'm not armed. Please don't...

Crook trains the gun on Leech.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Pick it up.

Sobbing, Leech just keeps nodding his head no.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Show me how you shot him.

Crook slowly moves towards Leech, his gun trained at Leech's head.

LEECH  
Don't hurt me...don't hurt...

Crook puts the barrel of the gun against Leech's face.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Every Indian I ever killed  
deserved it, but none deserved  
death more than you.

Crook slowly squeezes on the trigger.

Suddenly a voice barks at them from behind and the soldiers snap to attention when they turn to see Brigadier General.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
General Crook. May I speak with  
you outside.

Crook looks at the Brigadier general and turns back to Leech.

Everyone freezes as he slowly squeezes the trigger tighter.

He looks around at the soldiers, at their confusion, their fear, their cowardice.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Is this how you stood around him?  
How many of you watched and did  
nothing?

He takes his finger off the trigger, holsters his gun and slowly walks towards the general.

Young Soldier steps out of the crowd and picks Crook's army jacket off the ground.

YOUNG SOLDIER  
Sir.

Crook turns and Young Soldier respectfully hands him his jacket.

The Brigadier General, trying to conceal his relief, tries to appear calm with the men.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
As you were.

But they don't move - instead they stay as they are, embarrassed and humbled by what they've just witnessed.

EXT. ARMY BASE - DAY

Crook stands with his horse, Big Snake's body over the horse's back, as the Brigadier General addresses him.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
You're lucky I don't have you  
court martialled. You're a  
soldier, act like one.

Crook hesitates then salutes the Brigadier General.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
That's better. Go home, have a  
shave and report back to me  
tomorrow.

Crook gets on his horse and, as he slowly leaves, with Big Snake's body hung over the back of his horse, a long line of nameless faceless soldiers watch him.

INT. TIBBLES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Editor watches through the window as Tibbles stares at the blank page in the typewriter.

Tibbles reaches for the typewriter keys but stops short of contact.

His fingers shake as he struggles to still them.

He tears the blank page out of the typewriter and rolls in a new one.

He reaches for the typewriter keys again but his hands still won't stop shaking.

He grabs the typewriter, raises it above his head and smashes it too the ground.

He storms out of the office past his Editor.

EXT. ARMY CAMP - NIGHT

Crook and Long Runner and other Indians slide Big Snake's body down off the horse as Standing Bear watches.

Crook turns to Standing Bear, wishing he could say something appropriate, but words fail him.

Tibbles watches from a distance as Crook get back on his horse and rides away.

Watched by the others Standing Bear, with effortless strength, lifts his brother's body and carries it towards his cell.

Tibbles approaches him.

TIBBLES

If I hadn't written about it he'd be alive.

STANDING BEAR

This is the price we pay for getting off our knees. He died a free man. Now he will take care of my son and I will see them again. And I will tell them how honoured I am to be their family.

Watched by Long Runner and Tibbles, Standing Bear carries his brother's body into the cell.

TIBBLES

We all have to pay that price?

LONG RUNNER

If necessary.

TIBBLES

I don't know if I...

LONG RUNNER

You gave us our chief back. That's enough.

TIBBLES

I mean there's only so much a man can do, isn't there?

LONG RUNNER

Goodbye Mister Tibbles. You shall never want as long as we have anything and while there is one of our tribe living you shall never be without a friend.

Long Runner follows Standing Bear into the cell, leaving Tibbles alone in the night.

INT. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S OFFICE - DAY

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

Do you think we should appeal the case?

BELL

Yes sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR

You do?

BELL

I don't know sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Haven't you learned anything?  
What did we do when the story  
first broke?

BELL  
We did nothing sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
If we appeal and lose in the  
Supreme Court then it becomes  
irrefutable law, whereas the  
ruling as it stands now? Despite  
what the philosophers claim,  
freedom is more than a state of  
mind. They're so desperate to be  
treated as individuals? Fine,  
then this ruling applies only to  
this individual case. Let them  
think what they want, and we'll  
continue to do what we want. It's  
called politics.

BELL  
What will happen to the Indians  
sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
There you go with that  
humanitarian streak again. How  
many of these Indians do you  
think, since the arrival of  
Columbus, have, either, through  
our hand, or the always so  
helpful hand of mother nature,  
been wiped out?

BELL  
I don't know sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Try to comprehend this figure -  
Ten million. Think of five  
friends of yours. You thinking of  
them?

BELL  
Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Multiply those five friends by  
twenty. What do you have?

BELL  
A hundred sir?

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
Multiply that by another hundred.

BELL  
Ten thousand sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
After all that it's still only  
ten thousand. Now try to conceive  
of ten million. It's beyond our  
imagination. Yet we achieved it.  
You think some sad little tribe  
are going to hold back Manifest  
Destiny? Some archaic tradition  
is going to impede the progress  
of the future? Well, do you?

Profoundly disturbed by what he's just heard, Bell doesn't  
answer.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
You must learn to venture an  
opinion Bell. Worry less about  
giving me a right or wrong  
answer, just venture an opinion.

BELL  
Yes sir.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
What's it called? It's called --

Bell doesn't answer.

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR  
I'm waiting.

Bell struggles with his conscience then, for the first time  
in his life, he calmly stands up for himself.

BELL  
It's called genocide sir.

EXT. OPEN DESERT COUNTRY USA - DAY

In the sun drenched isolation of a deserted land a  
nameless, faceless soldier examines a young American Indian  
Boy as if he were examining an animal.

The boy looks to him, pleading in his native language.

The soldier throws a stinging slap at the boy's face.

SOLDIER  
Talk American.

Pulling him closer, the soldier cups the boy's head between his large dirty hands.

Forcing a filthy thumb in through the boy's pursed mouth he pushes his young terrified lips apart and examines his teeth.

Becoming increasingly excited the soldier looks around to make sure they are alone.

The boy sees this as his chance, and biting down hard on the soldier's thumb, he makes a break for it.

The heartbreaking wail of an Indian mother plays on the soundtrack as the soldier looks at the small amount of blood on his thumb, slides it into his mouth, tastes it, and looks to the boy running away.

Running with terrifying speed the young Native American boy looks over his shoulder, desperate to see if there is anybody pursuing him.

Relieved to see nothing in the far off distance behind him, he slows down, gradually bringing himself to a halt.

Sweat glistens on his face and body as he stares into the distance behind him, the only sound being his heartbeat.

The shimmering heat on the desolate wasteland makes it difficult for him to focus as gradually another sound begins to combine with the sound of his heartbeat - the distant sound of a horse's hooves.

The boy strains to listen, then he sees it, bursting out of the shimmering heat - the soldier on horse back.

A deeper terror overtakes the Indian Boy and he runs the way one does in a dream, using all his strength and speed but getting nowhere.

He stumbles and screams as he collapses into a nest of scorpions; their tails poised, ready to attack.

The combined sound of his pounding heartbeat and the horse's hooves becomes deafening as he scrambles to get out.

He grips at the earth to pull himself out but it keeps giving way in his hands as he slips deeper into the nest.

With terrifying speed the scorpions jump onto the boy's hands, shoulders and face.

He looks up as he hears the thundering sound of the horse's hooves and sees the leering soldier.

Swiftly reaching down the soldier drags the boy up by the hair, lifting him, full body, into the air.

Pulling the horse to a halt and sliding off the saddle, the soldier holds the boy by the scalp as he screams for mercy in his own language.

SOLDIER

I told you to talk American.

He viciously punches the boy full in the face.

The boy's face smashes into the sand as he collapses, unconscious.

As the soldier stands over the boy, he slowly looks around the desolate desert.

*Only now do we see his face and realize that the soldier is General George Crook.*

Verifying that he is alone he drops to his hunkers and tentatively reaches forward, touching the boy's sun scorched back; the dirty finger nails of his hand ugly against the boy's red skin.

He tenderly caresses the boy's shoulders, then, tensing his fingers, he slowly digs his nails in under the boy's skin, until blood surges from the wounds.

A male adult scream pierce's through the air and we cut to:

INT. CROOK'S ROOM - NIGHT

Slumped on the chair, dressed in his shirt and trousers, and fuelled by alcohol and painful rage, Crook screams out as he wakes from his nightmare.

Struggling to get his bearings he greedily sucks another mouthful from the whiskey bottle.

He hangs his head and begins to sob then almost instantly slaps himself hard in the face.

He stands in front of the full length mirror.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Stop.

He snaps out a salute to his reflection but it doesn't feel right.

He slaps himself harder and stares at his reflection.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Stop.

He inhales deeply, trying to breath away the emotion, trying to become a soldier again, but ends up screaming at the mirror because it's not working.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

*Stop!*

He reaches for his military jacket and slips it on, careful not to spill any booze.

He checks his reflection in the mirror, breaths deeply again and struggles to cut off all emotion.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK

Be a soldier.

He looks at the medals of honor and badges of courage and various military emblems of honour attached to his jacket.

He stares into his own reflected eyes, snaps to attention and harshly salutes.

He stands like that for a few moments, determined, but his humanity seeps through the façade and he begins to well up.

He slaps himself hard in the face, stiffens his spine, puts back his shoulders, slaps himself hard again, and, utterly cold and unfeeling, he calmly stares back at himself.

He snaps out a final salute and holds it there, his eyes dead, emitting nothing - a soldier once again.

Draining another mouthful of the whiskey he stares at his military reflection then throws the bottle against the mirror.

The glass from the bottle and the mirror smash down onto the floor.

Stepping, barefoot, onto the sharp broken pieces of glass and mirror he stares down at his fractured image, watching his reflection as it becomes slowly blocked out by the gradual spread of the blood oozing from his feet.

INT. TIBBLES' OFFICE - NIGHT

Tibbles slowly walks into his office to see to see Bright Eyes as she gently picks up the smashed typewriter.

Unaware that he is watching her, she tries to fix the typewriter as best she can.

He watches her tender fingers as she untangles the overlapping key arms of the typewriter.

She turns to Tibbles, picks sheets of paper off his desk and rolls one into the typewriter.

BRIGHT EYES  
Change is possible.

Tibbles walks out of his office but she angrily calls after him.

BRIGHT EYES  
Don't walk away from me.

Tibbles keeps walking as she shouts out to him.

BRIGHT EYES  
How will the world know what  
happened if you don't tell them?  
Or are you just another coward in  
a long line of cowards?

Raw rage surges through him as Tibbles rounds on her.

TIBBLES  
Don't you call me a - I put my  
life on - They tried to hang me.  
People get killed for things like  
this. Standing Bear's brother is  
just the beginning. It'll happen  
again. I was with a group who  
freed slaves. So don't you accuse  
me of being - They put a rope  
around my neck and pulled me up  
onto a tree and - Wake up will  
you. It's over. I just want an  
ordinary life. What's so wrong  
with that? We can't all be like  
you. We can't -I just want to be  
an ordinary man in an ordinary  
world with none of this madness  
and fear, and fear, and...fear.

His voice trails off as he realizes what he's saying.

A broken man, he looks to her.

She extends the pages out to him.

BRIGHT EYES  
Death demands a witness.

Tibbles makes to speak but the words that come out of his mouth shocks both him and Bright Eyes.

TIBBLES  
Marry me.

BRIGHT EYES

What?

Profoundly confused Tibbles tentatively makes his way back into his office.

TIBBLES

I didn't know those words were going to come out of--

Equally confused, Bright Eyes stares at him.

Tibbles looks at her, surrounded by the wall to wall shelves filled with books, the paper in her hand, the confusion on her face, and he struggles with the dawning of slow epiphany.

TIBBLES

Lord knows I can't stand you... but I...I...

BRIGHT EYES

Shut up. Don't say that. Don't you dare say it. This is not the time or place for some childish -

TIBBLES

I'm sorry but I have to; you drive me insane but -

BRIGHT EYES

I told you don't - If you put it out there it's too late. Leave it alone and we'll concentrate on--

TIBBLES

I love you.

She throws the pages to the ground.

BRIGHT EYES

You had to say it didn't you. You couldn't just leave it alone.

TIBBLES

I do, I love you.

BRIGHT EYES

Shut up.

TIBBLES

Marry me.

BRIGHT EYES

Shut up Thomas, I told you not -

TIBBLES

You've never called me Thomas.

BRIGHT EYES

I didn't call you - I called you  
Goop. Which you are, so shut up.

TIBBLES

Marry me.

BRIGHT EYES

Do you listen to a word I-? What  
right do you have to toy with-?  
Give me one reason why I should?

Tibbles struggles to find an answer, then finding it, he looks her straight in the eye and calmly says two words.

TIBBLES

Why not?

An emotion unlike anything we've seen from Bright Eyes slowly works its way through her, inspiring the most exquisite smile ever to grace a woman's face.

BRIGHT EYES

Shut up and write.

Tibbles picks up the paper, sits down, rolls it into the battered typewriter, pauses, and, as his trembling fingers reach for the typewriter keys - in stunning slow motion one of the steel key arms from the typewriter soars through the air on its way to the grainy white page.

The hammer at the end of the steel arm slams against the page in sync with the sound of a discordant gunshot.

The hammer of the type writer pulls back from the white page leaving the capital letter 'D' imbedded on the paper.

The key arm of the typewriter speeds up, quickly followed by other key arms, as the letters, in sync with the sound of gunshots, crash against the white page -

- spelling out the formerly incomplete sentence
- 'Death demands a witness.'

The sound of the typewriter continues as Tibbles voice over begins and we fade to :

EXT. PONCA VILLAGE - NIGHT

Standing Bear looks into the night sky.

TIBBLES(VOICE OVER)  
 My name is Thomas Tibbles and  
 this is a true story. I'm a  
 newspaper man. A hack. A trader  
 in gossip. But not today. Today I  
 record the most important story  
 I'll ever write.

As Tibbles speaks, Standing Bear lowers himself to his  
 knees and, with his bare hands, slowly begins to dig his  
 son's grave.

INT. CROOK'S SUPERIOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

The Brigadier General is astounded as Crook places his  
 sword and the gun on the desk.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
 Take some time off maybe but I'm  
 not accepting your resignation.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 I promised a man - promised a  
 friend, I'd stand by him. I  
 intend on being the one white man  
 around here who keeps a promise.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
 You dare question the authority  
 of - you smug son of a -

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 There is only one authority. And  
 I'm pretty sure He never intended  
 us to wipe out an entire nation.

Crook makes to exit.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
 You're still a soldier Crook; get  
 back here and salute a superior  
 officer.

Crook stops, hesitates, then turns.

BRIGADIER GENERAL  
 Salute me.

Crook calmly tears his own rank stripes of his shoulder and  
 dumps them on the Brigadier General's desk.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
 Shame on us.

He walks to the door and turns one last time.

GENERAL GEORGE CROOK  
Shame on all of us.

Crook exits - a soldier no more.

EXT. PONCA VILLAGE - MORNING

In the early morning light Standing Bear puts the torch to the wood pile with Big Snake's body on it.

He touches his brother's face as the flames slowly lick the wood.

He moves to the grave he has dug for his son.

He takes his son's bones out of the box, kisses them and places them in the grave.

He picks up a handful of soil and empties it over the bones.

Another pair of hands picks up a handful of soil and Standing Bear looks up to see the warrior, Long Runner, who respectfully empties the soil into the grave.

Another pair of hands picks up soil and empties it into the grave.

- And another.

- And another.

- A long line of the surviving Indians queue to empty soil into the grave and pay their respects to the dead boy and his father.

As Long Runner walks back towards the burned village he calls enthusiastically out to the Indians who have paid their respects to Bear Shield.

LONG RUNNER  
Let's get to work.

Standing Bear looks to the sky, touches the carved crucifix around his neck then carefully takes it off and drops it into the grave.

Pull back high as Standing Bear looks to Heaven - a man at peace with his God.

INT. TIBBLES' OFFICE - DAY

Tibbles watches Bright Eyes asleep on the couch in his office with his coat wrapped around her.

He gently pulls the coat up to keep her warmer and exits his office.

As he moves down the hallway he passes his Editor.

The Editor shakes his hand and they silently say all there is to say between them.

EXT. OUTSIDE OMAHA HERALD OFFICE - DAY

An exhausted but satisfied Tibbles leans against the post on the street outside his office, watching people pass on their daily business.

He sees someone across the street reading his story on the front page of *The Omaha Herald*.

He hears someone strike a match and turns to see Crook standing against the wall, clean shaven, dressed in civilian clothes, lighting a cigar and holding a copy of *The Omaha Herald* under his arm.

CROOK

Read your article Tibbles.  
There's only one 's' in ancestor.

TIBBLES

You know what I like about you  
soldier boy?

CROOK

What's that newspaper man?

TIBBLES

Almost nothing.

Crook can't help but grin.

CROOK

Almost's not so bad.

TIBBLES

Let's get a drink.

CROOK

I thought you - never mind.

TIBBLES

What's with the civilian clothes?

CROOK

What are you, a reporter?

They walk away from camera toward the bar and continue talking as we slowly pull back.

TIBBLES

I was thinking of getting married.

CROOK

You're an attractive man Tibbles  
but I'll have to decline.

TIBBLES

There's that biting wit again.

As we pull up higher, Crook and Tibbles gradually become part of the crowd.

CROOK

What if she says no?

TIBBLES

I'll have to hang myself for real.

CROOK

I can get you good rope.

TIBBLES

How kind of you.

CROOK

What are friends for.

Pull back further and further, leaving them to vanish into the crowd - two men who will remain friends for life.

FADE TO WHITE:

The typewriter keys rapidly smash against the white screen as, before the final credits role, photographs of the real people fade in and out and we read what happened to them :

Thomas Tibbles, Bright Eyes and General George Crook continued to fight for the rights of Indians, going on lecture tours of America and Europe.

Three years after he asked her, Tibbles and Bright Eyes were married.

Judge Dundy also married...and had four children.

Standing Bear may have died in obscurity but today he is remembered as one of the first civil rights leaders to advocate non violent resistance, to fight illegal acts through the courts, and to use the power of an informed and aroused public opinion to achieve justice for the Native American.

The fight goes on.