

The Manifestation of Destiny

1852

Chapter 1

The door swung open. A man stands in the frame, his clothes are worn and ragged, his hands and face are covered in dirt and he is wet with sweat. He enters the house. It is almost as dishevelled and worn as him and his clothes by this point, only being one room, and having one bed, and barely any floor but the soil. The place reeks with a most dreadful smell too, but he has lived in it too much to even notice. In the house, his wife and children are preparing to go to sleep, as the sun has already set long ago. The man collapses on the bed and goes to sleep as his family joins him. Another long day has ended, only to begin all over again the next day.

Suddenly the man jolts awake to a knock on the door. The sun has only just begun to rise outside the window, the birds are chirping peacefully, but the knocking goes on, persistently. Drowning out any sense of peace he may have been able to have in the moment. He rubs his eyes and gets out of bed.

“Who’s there!?” He asks.

“Tax collector, sir. Is this Bryant Landon?” a voice replies and the knocking ceases.

“Yes, that would be me.” Bryant walks over to the door and opens it. The man standing in the doorway is dressed rather finely with a jacket, a top hat, and a white tie tucked into his vest.

“You are to pay 15 pounds sir.” The tax collector told him.

“15? But that’s practically all our earnings this month! It’s too much sir would you plea-”

“Listen sir, your job is becoming more and more useless every minute. The new steam machines can do it much better than you ever could. So if you would like to keep your work, I suggest you better pay up.” The taxpayer interrupts. There is silence. A long, dreadful silence between the two men as Bryant stares at the man standing before him. After what felt like minutes, Bryant nods and walks back into his house. He grabs his money from the table and gives the 15 pounds to the tax collector.

“Thank you, good sir. Have a splendid day.” The tax collector climbs on top of a horse behind him and rides off. Leaving the man with only three pounds for himself and his family.

Devastated, Bryant walks back into the house and rouses his family. Another long day of work. Him, his wife, even his children must work, over, and over and over again. But this had been it. They have been living on nothing for far too long. And he finally gets an idea. Later in the evening, after the day's work is done, he approaches his wife.

"Hey, Ellie, I would like to speak to you on something"

"Yes? What is it...?" She asks, exhausted.

"What would you think of moving to America? I've heard it's much better than over here. We could live free on the wild frontier, getting paid good and helping people! It would be much better than slaving away down here I'd reckon."

The two of them think about it for a while, before Ellie replies.

"I think... well, why not... It is quite risky but I am really tired of this life... Can we even afford such a journey though?"

"Well... I do have just enough to pay for all five of us I'd say." Bryant says.

"Well, let's try then. If we can't afford it, tis' no matter."

Bryant nods. Maybe, just maybe, things might finally change for the family.

The door bursts open in the morning, producing a loud creak, abruptly waking Ellie and her children.

"I have some wonderful news for you all!" a booming voice says from the doorway. It's Bryant, and he's holding five pieces of paper in his hand.

"Ellie, Jessy, Sukie, Thomas! Wake up! We're going to America next week!"

"Wha-...? America...?" Thomas asks, half asleep.

"Really father!? We really are going there?" Sukie says, already upright and seemingly quite excited and the prospect.

"Yes! These here are the tickets! Make sure not to lose them, lest you be left behind here.."

Bryant pauses, the room goes still, before he begins laughing.

"Don't worry, don't worry! I only jest. I would never leave any of my wonderful family behind! We finally have a good life ahead of us. Only one last week of work is left."

There is grumbling from the children about having to do one more week but it is ultimately not their matter to decide, but the nobleman's. Unfortunately they have to continue working until the very second they have to leave.

Chapter 2

Today is finally the day. The family wakes up once again, this time not to work, but to set off on a journey to the new world. They take the coach down to Bristol, from where they finally get on board a steamship. The journey lasts several days. They sit in the cramped barracks below deck, with all the other poor people, however the food available to them is some of the best they've ever eaten: tastefully cooked meat with potatoes and bread, for lunch, with a breakfast of eggs and a supper too. For the first time they don't have to worry about food, even if for a few days only. The ship eventually does safely arrive in New York, and the passengers all get off, and Bryant, with his family, take a train down South, before joining up with another set of colonists, planning to go out west to New Mexico. There they join up with the fellow settlers and set off with the caravan on the trail west. On the journey they get to know and meet some of the men and women who they will be staying with for the foreseeable future.

There was Milton, a middle-aged man, wearing dusty clothes and has a balding head, with a much heavier carriage than everyone else. He says that he makes the journey regularly, for he is a gun and ammunition salesman. Riding just behind him was the carpenter, Quinton. He was a quiet, younger man, most likely in his 20s. He didn't speak to anyone often, only sometimes with his friends. In front of the family was another family of farmers, like them, except these come from Virginia rather than England. The father of the family, Joseph was dressed in ragged clothes, in his thirties, like Bryant, but unlike him, only had one child: a son named Edward. The boy quickly befriended Bryant's children and they often talked and played together, so as a result the parents got quite close as well. The wife, Sussana was a quiet, kind woman, always listening to her husband, though for some, the relationship seemed particularly one sided, as the woman did not seem to be enjoying the predicament of being married to a man a few years older than her.

Eventually, as the caravan rode and days turned to weeks, woods turned to fields, and the fields turned to steppe. They eventually reached a town, where they stopped and the mayor gave a speech to the newcomers.

"Welcome! Welcome to Eustis! I am the mayor, Charles. I welcome all you wonderful people to this town, we invite you in with open arms, though this town is new, the men and women here are hospitable and nice to all coming in. So, whether you are here to stay, or just passing through, please, enjoy your time here in Eustis, it's safe here."

"So when do we get to fight some Indians!?" Asks a man enthusiastically from the crowd.

“C’mon Alf, we just got here, don’t be so eager. The time will come.” replied another man next to him, looking over, Bryant notes that the two men stand out in that their clothes are white and cleaner than everyone else’s.

“Well we came here cuz it was too boring back there, I’s leavin’ if its too boring out here too! I came here to show em’ dirty indians! Not to sit ‘round doin’ nothin! You’d know as much, Thornton!” Alf shoots back.

“Oh be patient! The time will come!” Thornton replies. Then, a new voice speaks out from the people.

“Boys, boys, calm down here would you? This is no place to fight. Simply take a breather, and think of the Lord, surely your fights will end then.”

“And who’re you meant to be?” Alf asks the man.

“I’m the messenger of God, the priest of this humble town. You may call me Benjamin. Now please, relax, you may sort out your issues later, now is the time for cheer and celebration. You are all new to this town after all!” The priest replies. The two men want to continue fighting, but by now all eyes are on them, and they decide not to until a better time opens itself.

“Thank you, Benjamin” The mayor says, getting down from his podium to approach the priest.

“No need, Charles, it’s just doing the Lord’s work.” Benjamin replies, shaking hands with the mayor.

“Of course, of course. Now, ladies and gentlemen! I invite you to the local inn! We shall all celebrate and get to know one another! To-morrow we’ll start building your homes, but to-night we dance!” proclaims the mayor. The people cheer and follow him.

Bryant joins them along with his wife and children, together they all have a day of fun and celebration. They get acquainted with the whole town and settle down in their inn room for the night.

Chapter 3

They wake up to the sound of dozens of footsteps outside. Looking out of the window they see a column of twenty or so blue coat soldiers marching into the town, the flagbearer proudly carrying the colours of the U.S.A. The soldiers stop and the man on a horse in front rides up to the mayor and the two begin to talk. The people gather outside to look at the soldiers and maybe hear what the mayor and sergeant are discussing. The soldiers also begin to make small-talk with the locals and they also all quickly get rather well acquainted. However, for the new arrivals, it is now the time to start building their new homes. There was a caravan full of logs arriving from the east, and everyone gathered around it to take what they can.

“Alright then! Thomas, you’re coming with me, we’re gonna build ourselves a new home!”

Bryant says to his son.

“Ugh.. Is it really necessary that I help too...?” asks Thomas.

“Yes, of course, son. You are the only other man in the family after all! Don’t be lazy, lad.” he replied. The son reluctantly obliges, and the two go down to the carriage of logs and grab what they can. As Thomas struggles to carry the logs, a man comes up to him.

“Hey there, young man, do you need help with that?” he asks, notably with a posh English accent. He was tall in stature and bore a top hat on his head and had a grey coat, dressed similarly to most rich Englishmen of the time.

“Uh.. Yes, if it doesn’t bother you, sir.” Thomas replied as Bryant turned to face them.

“Ah, sorry, it is rather rude of me not to introduce myself, I am Randell, an explorer from Great Britain. And you are?”

“I am Thomas, also from England, nice to meet you, sir.” Randell picks up the planks for Thomas and carries them for him, walking up to Bryant.

“Greetings there sir. I assume that is your son back there?” Randell asks him.

“Greetings, Indeed it is, why do you ask?”

“Do you mind if I help you in constructing your house? I’ll only be staying here for so long before I continue out west and I’d like to do something helpful here before I leave.”

“Sure, you may help.” Bryant accepts.

A man in his thirties approaches, wearing clothes similar to everyone else’s and asks

“Are you building a house over here?”

“Yes, we are” Says Bryant.

“Well, I’d like to help, not like I got anything better to be doing” says the man.

“That would be nice, you may take some logs and follow us! What’s your name?”

“Very well, I’m Hector.” Hector goes over to fetch some logs and returns to the three. As they begin to approach the construction site.

“You’re planning to build there? Wouldn’t suggest it. Bad place for a house. Here follow me, I’ll show you better.” Hector states.

Bryant, after contemplation decides to listen to the man, after all, he does live here.

However after that, Hector begins to practically take over in the project, and eventually is calling the shots, despite it being Bryant’s house. During the construction of the small house, they also got to know the Sergeant of the army now staying just outside the house. Apparently he was sent to protect the town from “increased Indian activity” in the area. Eventually, as everyone completed their house, and moved their furniture in to settle down. The real harshness of living out west began to show itself, food began growing scarce as the town exclusively relied on hunters bringing bison meat from nearby. But eventually they grew used to it, and toughened up to it. The situation wasn’t too different from being a British peasant in terms of food at least. They also met a tall and strong-looking man named Heinrich who seemed really educated and long lived with many experiences. He entered the town walking into it on foot from the west one day and simply stayed there, he never gave a last name and he stayed in a tent just outside the town. Overall the man was a mystery, but at the same time, extremely sociable, and talked to everyone, even to the quiet carpenter. Ellie was seemingly already accustomed to the situation and was good friends with Sussana. The Sergeant, Micheal, was also befriended by Bryant and joined his circle of friends along with Heinrich, Milton, Randell, and Joseph. The children also befriended the local children rather quickly and it was all going quite swimmingly.

Chapter 4

Thomas wakes up, it is morning, his mother and father are nowhere to be seen in the house. Nothing unusual, but the sound of commotion is outside, and he sees Suki looking out of the window.

“What’s going on out there?” He asks. She squints as though it’s hard to understand and says: “I have no idea... They’re all gathered looking at something... Can’t quite tell what though... Think we should go outside?”

“Hmm.. Yeah, there’s no reason not to.”

The two of them exit the house, leaving their youngest sister, Jessy, behind in the house and join the gathering. Looking out, they can see a group of natives being confronted by Micheal’s soldiers, and a few other men, Bryant being among them. The confrontation looks as though it’s getting heated but when the men draw their guns and the natives, armed with nothing, are forced to back down and leave. The men return to the town and Micheal proclaims

“Worry not, ladies and gentlemen! The savages have been dealt with!”

The crowd applauds but Thomas and Suki are simply confused. How silly is it that they can build houses here, but those men can’t simply pass by? Maybe they were trying to attack the town? But that wouldn’t make sense because they had no weapons. So the two decide to ask their father and his new friend, Randell.

“So, why can’t they be here?” Suki asks.

“Who, the savages?” Bryant replies.

“Yeah. Why do you call them that? Who are they? Where do they come from?”

Bryant sighs and kneels down to her level.

“Well, it is quite complicated, you wouldn’t understand at your age, young lass. Just know that they’re the people who were here before us, but they don’t use this land properly, and they’re also all rather... stupid, see they aren’t like us. They’re different from us white, civilised folk, and you shouldn’t trust them. Got it?”

Suki looked confused though, it didn’t quite make any sense.

“Well... I suppose I understand, but doesn’t that mean that we are steal-”

“How dare you talk like that about your own race, little one!? Bryant, you ought to teach that

girl some proper manners. She has no sense of respect.” Randell suddenly interrupts.

“Don’t talk about my sister like that!” Thomas yells at the man before Bryant grabs both him and Sukie and drags them away, scolding them for their atrocious behaviour.

The next day something else happens. There’s a piece of news that has travelled to the town. Apparently a group of whites killed a native and one of them was later murdered by the natives. The details are unclear, but over the next few days more news keeps coming in. The white men killed a native family in response. All of them were found dead and cut up on the way back from the site where they killed the family. As a result, the town set up a militia. It is unknown what they did, but whatever it was, the natives burned down a white town in response. They could look out into the horizon and see smoke rising high into the sky.

The soldiers looked excited, there was finally something to do. The gun salesman too, seemed enthusiastic, and began selling guns to everyone, with the pitch that they can defend themselves from “them dirty savages!”. They could hear the yells and shrieks of native warriors and gunshots that night. And as the sun rose the next morning, Hector awoke Bryant and his family with urgency.

“Wake up Bryant! We’re forming a militia to fight em’!” He yelled into the sleeping house.

Bryant jumps out of bed and the whole family is awake and confused.

“Is it time to go now?” He asks hurriedly

“Yes. Quick! Get your gun, we’re going!” Hector responds. Bryant grabs his rifle and revolver and kisses his wife and kids goodbye and rushes out as they follow him out.

“What’s going on, father?” Asks Thomas.

“Yeah what’s happening? Why won’t you answer us!?” Sukie joins in.

“I’m sorry, I can’t explain right now, I’m sure your mother can tell you while I’m away, right Ellie?” Bryant replies as he is climbing on his horse, the town is filled with commotion, people rushing about to get their guns and get on their horses as soldiers run alongside them following Micheal.

“Yes, of course” Ellie responds, while gently ushering her children back inside, away from the chaos. With that Bryant rides off, following Hector and Micheal, he sees Heinrich, Randell, Thornton and Alfred are riding along with them while Charles and Benjamin wave goodbye enthusiastically.

“You remember all your lessons right Bryant?” Asks the Sergeant loudly to speak over the noise.

“Of course!” He yells back as they ride on. And with that the group rode on west towards the territory of the Apache.

Chapter 5

They ride on through the infinite sea of dead grass, on and on, seeing nothing but the fields and bright blue sky, riding under the scorching hot sun for a dozen hours. Eventually, the sun begins to dip below the horizon, the sky turns orange as the bright ball of flames descends into the earth, turning the sky black. The men set up camp, planning to sleep for the night. But suddenly, as they do, Randell rushes to their site to report that he sees an Apache village out in the distance. They begin to ride towards it, the cavalry soldiers and of course Micheal all join them and they find another militia group riding to the village who they also join up with. They make final preparations and under Micheal's orders, they surround the village, hiding in the dark. Most of the villagers are all asleep and don't see as the army of militiamen slowly encircles them.

At the sound of a gunshot, all of them ride into the village. They fire their guns into houses and charge at the people in the streets with axes and revolvers. Warriors rush out of their huts to try and stop the white men, but they are gunned down or hit in the face with a hatchet from a horse galloping at them at full speed. As women and children try to escape, and the militia sets houses alight, Heinrich and Hector get a group to close off all the main roads out of the village, and slaughter anyone trying to get out. Others raid the houses, with the families still inside, taking anything of value, including their lives. A warrior tries to attack Thornton but is shot down and Thornton, gets off his horse and enters the house the warrior came out of, before screams begin emerging from the house and three gunshots sound from that hut later on, not that it stood out particularly to the screaming and the grotesque crunchy, squishy, mushy sound that comes out from axe cutting into flesh. After an hour, blood and small chunks of flesh flowed down the street like a river, as the men washed their hands using the nearby well the natives constructed. Not a single Apache was left alive there.

They laughed about it. Joking about the people who tried to escape so foolishly. The soldiers complained about blood on their uniforms and Heinrich seemed to be particularly satisfied and silent, he merely stood there watching the men, the fire behind him, still dressed as smartly as though he was merely at a formal restaurant, and not where he was in reality. Bryant was silent about the situation. He neither laughed nor cried. He was simply indifferent. For, he thought, these were not people. These barbarians attacked a neighbouring village. They deserve this. After resting in the blood of hundreds, the men reloaded their guns and then set off into the night to set up camp so any warriors wouldn't find them. They set up camp and as night turned

to day, and the camp woke up and got on the march, Bryant began to talk to some of the new militiamen. On their way however, suddenly Randell, acting as a scout, runs back in haste. "They're coming!" he yells out.

"Who?" Hector asks.

"The Cherokee! They're coming!"

Micheal takes out his periscope. "Where!?"

"Right there! See?" Randell says, pointing to them. Micheal looks in the direction and freezes for a second, before regaining his confidence.

"Alright. Are you ready boys!? That village was the test and now this is the real thing! We will slaughter these barbarians like we murdered the others!" he proclaims to his men.

They cheer and ride forth towards the Apache. They ride along a small ravine with a small stream of water running through the middle, filled with shrubs and bushes. The natives too, keep charging towards them. As they get closer the militiamen fire off a shot from their guns and begin to reload as the natives keep approaching and also fire off guns and arrows at them. But as the men reload, the Apache keep charging, walloping and swinging their tomahawks and hatchets around, they ride into the militia men's lines.

Axes strike the faces of everyone in the front, splitting their skulls in a crunch, as bits of flesh fling out in all directions and as red splashes out and the men fall backwards on their horse, revealing their split faces to all behind them. Gunshots sound at point-blank range and smoke fills the air. Bryant's face suddenly gets covered in a hot liquid and as he opens his eyes stinging with pain, vision red, and the taste of iron on his tongue, he sees the man in front of him limp on his horse, with a hole in his head. An Apache rides into the side of his horse, swinging a hatchet into the poor creature, causing a disgusting fleshy squelch and a loud scream to emerge from the horse as it falls on its side and Bryant falls off face first onto the ground, feeling the pain in his nose, his ears filled with yells, cries gunshots and the sounds of bones crunching, he tries to get up, but slips again on some slippery squishy substance, most likely a piece of someone's head and tumbles down into the ravine, as the spiky plants cut into his body, tumbling down into the bush.

He lay there for what felt like hours, in the ravine, motionless, only being able to hear the sounds of his friends screaming in pain and Indian warriors yelling, and after a while, they rode off. Leaving nothing but destruction in their wake. But Bryant still lays there.

Chapter 6

An hour passes, two hours pass, he lay there, in pain, god knows where he is, god knows where his comrades are, god knows if they're even still alive. What if the Apache are at his village right now? What will they do? Ellie, Thomas, Sukie, Jessy... What will happen to them...? He tried to get up, but the pain kept him there. It was intense, a thousand needle all over him, hugging him in an embrace of blood and torture. So he lay there, for so long he lay there, that the boredom began to take over the pain, he could do nothing for so long, it was driving him mad. He was simply laying there, with nothing but his pain, his actions and the potential consequences to think about. He thought about what they had done, he thought about why, and he thought and decided that he must not let these horrid beasts roam alive. Bryant got up from his grave and crawled out of the small ravine and gazed upon the scene in front of him. His friends, the soldiers, all slaughtered with no idea where he is. Notably some were missing from the dead bodies littering the floor, but that was no indication that they were alive. Bryant picks up his rifle, checks his revolver, and takes his water canteen from the body of his horse, and begins to walk into the desert. He walks north for days, seeking for anything, but he finds nothing as he wanders the plains for days.

By the time he finds a town he has no food, is half dead and limps in, only to find the place has been abandoned, with the dead littering the streets. At least there is still some food in the houses. He stays at the town for a night, sleeping in someone's bed, though they were dead, it felt like stealing their land. Later on he sees in the distance a tall man in a top hat and seemingly a fancy suit and jacket, calmly walking towards the ghost town. He gets out to see who it was. It looked to be Heinrich.

"Heinrich!?" Bryant calls out.

"There you are!" the man answers. Before he knows it, Heinrich is already there, towering over him as though Bryant was a mere child.

"How glad I am to have found you. Here, follow me, I will lead you to camp."

Bryant, having no choice but to follow him or starve, goes with Heinrich, and they walk to a camp behind a hill, with a quite sizable amount of people gathered around it, but nothing like what was before. They arrive in the camp and Micheal approaches them.

"Oh good! Bryant! You're alive!" he exclaims as the two men greet and shake hands.

"Barely..." He replies as they walk to a blanket on the floor.

"Who else is alive?" Bryant continues.

“Well.. let’s see here, Heinrich, obviously, but also Ivan, Thornton, Hector, Me, of course. Thornton is half dead however and Ivan is... Well he’s a wild card, I don’t know if he’s staying. Of course a bunch of my soldiers made it too” Micheal replies as the two sit down on the floor.

“So... what are we to do now?” Asks Bryant.

“Well, first off, eat and have a drink. Then we march back to Eustis to resupply, and then we’ll recruit some more and slaughter those goddamned Apache warriors.”

He hands Bryant some hardtack. The peasant soldier takes the solid cookie and bites into it.

Nothing.

“You have to bite really hard, it’s very dry.” Micheal tells him. So he does and begins eating it, and for the first time, he truly takes in the landscape around him. He is stuck here now. This is not England. This is a different land. The landscape is bare, a field of nothing but dried grass, spreading for as far as the eye can see, only a few hills here and there, but nothing much apart from it. A sea of brown, empty, nothingness, stretching on forever. How could anything survive here? As they march on their way back to the town, the men begin to talk about the nature of what is happening here. This war, if you could call it that.

“At first I thought what we were doing was an overreaction,” Bryant began. “But now I realise, it wasn’t enough. Because those savages are pure evil. Look how they fight! It is barbaric! I remember what they did to that village, and I believe they deserve everything we did to them and more.” He continues.

“You’re exactly right. They are not to be treated with the same level of respect as one of us anyways. Their race has proven itself to be unable to advance past savagery. They are below us in every way.” Thornton agrees, and goes on. “You know, I got a large plantation of slaves back in Carolina, and I can say for sure, they too are absolutely useless with anything but pickin’ cotton all day. These Indians ain’t different, except ‘stead of pickin’ cotton it’s just yelling and killing.” As they keep walking, suddenly Micheal spots a relatively small band of Apache warriors.

“There! There are those bastards!” He yells and grabs his gun.

“Fix bayonets boys! We are going to slaughter those bastards!” Micheal commands as the soldiers begin to fix their bayonets and at his command, they fire at the natives, who are now charging towards them. Taking out multiple before bracing themselves to take on a cavalry charge. Those who do not have bayonets simply unload all their ammunition into the charging Indians and grab their hatchets, ready for a fight. But the warriors, having taken too many casualties, decided to retreat as the men breathed a sigh of relief before celebrating and grabbing some of the weapons off the warriors and continuing to head back to town. They had finally gotten the victory they so long craved for, and could now return home with an achievement to boast about, rather than just a defeat after a massacre.

Chapter 7

The town cheers on the return of the militiamen and the mayor throws a great celebration and feast that night. The townspeople cheer, the men restock their ammunition at Milton's store, bringing him great joy. The Mayor gives official payments of great money to everyone who partook in it, apparently sent by the US government itself. Bryant is hesitant to partake in the celebrations after everything he had been through, but decides to join in anyways, and after a few drinks he's just as joyous as everyone else there and they tell the stories about the evil Apache and the battles they fought, making up so much as they go along. Turning the devastating defeat into a glorious victory for the crowd's cheer. They celebrate and cheer for hours, and scatter in the night to their houses, stumbling along the street in drunken stupor.

Bryant enters his house, where his wife and children lay asleep, having long ago retired from the celebrations. He collapses into bed and falls asleep in an instant.

The next morning when he awakes, his entire family is standing over him. As he wakes and gets dressed, his children beg for him to tell them too the stories of what happened over the past few days. So he begins.

"Well, firstly we rode off into the wild, and it was beautiful, and when night came, our good friend Randell said he spotted an... evil Apache... uh..." he pauses, and thinks about what to say next for a moment, his children waiting patiently with curiosity for him to continue his story.

"See, Randell spotted this village, filled with those evil savage people. Remember them right? They burned down that town a while ago?" He continues, the kids nod. "Well, we burned them right back! The satanic savages scrambled to stop us, but they could never do anything to stop righteousness and justice from being enacted upon them! Haha! They deserved everything that happened to them that night! Remember, never, never trust them, they are not like you! They are savage animals, you haven't seen how evil they are. It has been scientifically proven that they are inferior to us, and that they're more evil in every way. It's true! I can explain all about it but it's probably quite complicated for your young little heads-"

He cuts himself off, looking at his children's faces, they are shocked and confused. They don't understand, he thinks. They could never understand until they grow up, they are much too young to understand the true reality of the situation. Right? It is them who don't understand! They will grow up! Surely!

“Father... You... Burned a village?” Sukie asked after a long pause.

“A SATANIC village, young lady! They are all evil!” he yells.

“But they-” She speaks up.

“YOU WILL NOT SPEAK THAT WAY.” he shouts as he slaps her across the cheek. “Know your place in life, child. That goes for all of you! Don’t speak back to me.” he gets up. “You haven’t seen the devil, you cannot speak of him as though his minions are similar to us in any way. Lest you join his army.” He storms out of the house, and locks his children in. He goes to the bar to grab a drink before then heading to his militia friends, as they gather around discussing something in the tavern.

“Ah! Bryant! Come join us! We are discussing our next campaign!” Micheal invites him.

“Oh really? What’s happening?”

“Well, we have found out that they’s got another village not too far off from ‘ere. I reckon it’d take only ‘bout a day or two to get there. We were just discussing when the best time would be.” So they begin to talk, the conversation eventually turns into something else as they get more drinks and forget all about the original purpose of gathering there, starting to speak of their families and complaining about their wives and children as though they were literally the worst and not their loved ones. They go on talking into the night again. Suddenly, Ellie rushes into the bar and pulls Bryant away.

“The children are missing.” Is all she tells him and he starts running to their house. He sees one of the windows was broken from the inside, probably where the children escaped from. But why? Where? So many questions. But he is too tired to answer them, and despite trying to stay awake as much as he can, the man collapses on the floor and falls asleep.

The next morning the militia sets out again to search for the missing children. This time Joseph, the farmer, also joins them, and they set out on their new horses to search for the children.

Chapter 8

They weren't anywhere to be found. They scanned the horizon everywhere they could. Nowhere. The only places they could possibly be in are Apache villages. What could possibly be happening in there? Bryant is filled with a rage he has scarcely felt before in his life. A primal anger, a bloodlust that could never be satisfied.

"It was those Indian bastards! They had done this! They have taken my children in the night! We must kill them! All of them! Not a single one can be left alive!" He proclaims to the militia, as they all yell in agreement, raising their fists in the air as they ride up to the nearest Apache village. The sun begins to set below the horizon, streaks of orange stretch across the sky as the men ready their rifles, axes and pistols. The red sun begins to dip below the infinite plains and the orange too turns to a darkened red as the sky turns dark blue, slowly transitioning into black. The militia surround the village, like they did the previous one. BANG! They rode in. More gunshots ring out. The smell of powder fills the air as screams begin emerging from the village. People rush out onto the street to try and escape but are met with revolvers and hatchets swinging into them. Children rush out to escape but are gunned down by the men surrounding them from all sides, and those who make it out are chased down on horse-back. Those who stay inside once again don't fare well either. As the men light fires and throw them onto the straw huts. While others enter and personally cut down and kill those inside. The town is soon filled with screams and gore as the men methodically murder every man, woman and child in it. Some of them grab powder-filled boxes with fuses attached which they light and throw into huts, causing an explosion, then emptying their revolvers into the straw structure to finish off anyone inside. The killings went on and on, the smell of blood, smoke and powder permeating the air as the screams slowly began to get quieter and quieter, as less and less people were left alive to scream. Then they went completely silent, with only the final struggles of a few people left. But something was wrong... one of the voices... Bryant recognised it...

He rushed to the source of the sound, to find his children. Slowly bleeding out, Jessy lay dead in front of them, her back riddled with bullets. Thomas and Sukie were huddled with a couple of native children, shivering, scared, and fatally wounded with too many bullets to count. Empty, spilled bowls of food in front of them with the food mixing in with the bits of flesh and blood flowing down to the location where Bryant stood. Staring, his eyes barely holding back tears. He simply stood there, watching his children bleed out huddled with the children of Satan. He raised his pistol.

BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!

Then, silence. Somehow, of all gunshots fired today, those seemed to be the loudest. Bryant climbed back on his horse. Leaving the lifeless bodies behind. And rode off to the rest of his group.

As they rode back to the town, he thought. He thought about his children. They were dead. He would never see them again. He had killed them. And for what? Why? What is this all for? They will all get money and praise for it later, and they'll go out and kill again to-morrow. The men are being rewarded for this.

Bryant thinks as they ride back into town, and as he tries to sleep, without the children by his side. They're dead. Those Indians weren't harming them. They looked fine, besides all the bullet holes that HE and his friends put into them. He didn't sleep that night. He couldn't sleep that night. He couldn't explain to Ellie what happened. How. Why? Why did this happen to him and his family? Why were his children so foolish as to fall for the devil? Were they right? Did anything he had believed all his life make any sense whatsoever? They seemed human. They screamed like humans, they had organs like humans, they cared like humans, they felt emotions like humans, they spoke like humans. This is all wrong. What is wrong with his head? He thought. He began to realise how everything is set up to encourage this. This town is built on stolen land. He shouldn't be here.

Chapter 9

Suddenly, a knock on the door. A persistent knock. Bryant gets up to open the door.

“Who’s there!?” He asks

“It’s Heinrich.” The man says from behind the door. Bryant opens the door to see the man towering over him, his mouth curled into a sinister smile. He was dressed as he always was, finely, with his shiny top hat on and his suit and jacket draped on him.

“We are to ride on for another village today.” His smile widened as Bryant stared at him. The pause lasted for what felt like minutes.

“Very well. I will go with you.” Bryant finally said. He goes to the back to grab his guns. And comes out, following Heinrich. He is led to Milton’s store where he purchases ammunition, noting how Milton is now dressed much fancier than he was when they first set off. He goes back to the rest of the militia waiting for him after making his purchase. They all get on their horses and set off once again. They rode on through the fields, the dead grass grew taller as they rode in a direction they hadn’t ridden in before. They ride into the night, unable to make a fire in fear of setting the grass alight and killing themselves, so they sleep in the cold of the night, only to wake to the unbearable heat of the morning. They get back on their horses and continue through the path of tramped grass. As they approached the last landmark before the village, the grass was getting slightly greener and there were bushes around them now, though still nothing to survive with. The village was now in sight. The men got excited as the sun began to roll closer to the horizon and the shadows grew longer. They spoke of all they’d do to the wretched Apache for all that has happened. But before they knew it. BANG!

A horse fell dead, crushing the leg of the man riding on top of it, Micheal screamed in pain as a loud crunching sound emerged from his bones. Smoke emerged from a bush near him before suddenly about a dozen more gunshots sounded out, men began falling everywhere as their horses panicked and rose upwards, throwing their riders on the floor. A walloping yell emerged from the bushes all around them and a party of a dozen or so Apache warriors jumped out of the greenery and charged the militiamen. Completely dazed, the men began firing their guns in random directions.

“AAAAGH-” Thornton screamed as an axe struck him in the thigh, knocking him off his horse as he hits the ground head first and the horse, in a panic begins to run, dragging him along with it, sending him off screaming towards the village where a warrior fires an antique pistol directly into his face as the horse passes by.

Meanwhile, Micheal was now long executed by a tomahawk to the throat, cutting his head half off, with blood spilling all over the place. The smell of powder and blood quickly permeates the air once again as the white men begin being slaughtered like animals, axes and bullets fly through the air. Hector was knocked off his horse by a rock being thrown at his head, as the Apache swarmed around him and cut him to pieces, as Ivan, behind Hector, was simply shot in the back by another warrior and fell off his horse, only to be trampled by it. A shot hits Bryant in the shoulder and he too falls off his horse, but then the horse gets shot too and falls opposite him, allowing him to escape the fate of being crushed by his own horse, he scrambles to get up, but is instead met by a club swinging into his face, slamming into his nose and jaw as pain fills his entire face. All he can hear is screams and cries all around him once again, but this time they're the screams of military white men, and not innocent native villagers.

He reaches for his gun, he can hardly see, or feel anything in his face, as an Indian runs up to him before he fires his gun at the man, causing him to fall on top of him. Joseph, who had joined them on this journey too, ran up to Bryant in that moment, offering his hand and screaming at him to get up and run. But then, as Bryant shakily reaches for his hand, he feels a warm, mushy, and wet object slam into his face, opening his eyes. Joseph lay face down on the ground as an Apache warrior stands behind him. Bryant backs away as the man grabs his axe. All around them is carnage, men being dragged off their horses to be hacked up, people being shot, blood flowing like a river, horses scream and fall like titans. Bryant tries to beg, he pleads with the Apache, but it is to no avail, no amount of repentance will allow the man to forgive him for what he did. The warrior holds his hatchet over his head, and swings it down.

It makes a squelchy and crunchy sound. And Bryant lay limp. Blood oozes out of his forehead. Parts of his brain lay scattered all about and stick to the axe. The warrior cleans them off as the sounds of slaughter around him slowly quiet down. There were practically no survivors among the militia. No one will even remember their names.

The End.