

YOUNG RIDERS

"Pawnee Boy"

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(Based on the true story of Whipsaw who traded a knife for a little captive Pawnee boy. The boy could hear horses long before anyone else, but Buck soon learns how much he hates Indians...)

ACT ONE

A) HAYES takes another long swig from the whiskey before passing it back to STILES. They are sitting on the edge of the sidewalk, drowning their frustrations as they watch the commotion down at the General Store. Even though they are homesteaders in Three Crossings, they look a little on the lean and mangy side. In fact, the whole town looks on the lean side.

The STOREKEEPER has plastered a huge closing sign across his window while a crowd gathers around.

STOREKEEPER

Sorry, folks, I can't do it- I just can't do it anymore. If ya got cash you can come in and buy all you want, but I just can't extend anymore credit.

HAYES sees the Three Crossing's EXPRESS RIDER come charging in to stop at the Newspaper. STILES's still watching the store scene and cursing between swigs.

STILES

Damn it all! Prices going up- damn Rebels. I've lost everything. What the hell are we gonna do?...

HAYES doesn't answer. His attention is on the healthy, well fed EXPRESS RIDER. TAYLOR leaves the crowd and shuffles down the street destitute.

STILES calls him over. TAYLOR hesitates- he's not so sure about associating with them- then he relents, but declines the proffered bottle.

STILES

Whattaya gonna do, Taylor?

TAYLOR

Don't know... maybe go west... try to find work.

STILES

(sneering at the family man)
Whatta `bout your wife and kids?

TAYLOR just shrugs lamely.

STILES (CONT'D)

Hah! Mine done packed up the kids and gone back to Momma. Best thing for me!- gettin' tired of her naggin' and whinin' all the time. Sure could use a good meal though.

TAYLOR

Don't know how I'll ever raise enough money to get outta debt.

STILES

To hell with them all! Whatta `bout you, Hayes? You ain't said nothing.

HAYES

I think I've found an answer to our troubles, Gentlemen.

HAYES gestures to the EXPRESS RIDER. STILES's does a double take, but TAYLOR doesn't get it.

TAYLOR

The Pony Express?

HAYES

They ain't hurtin'! Look at `em! Even the horse is fed. They got more then the whole rest of us put together. We pay our taxes, I say the bounty should be shared.

HAYES gets up with determination. STILES is excited that someone is doing something. TAYLOR hesitates again- she wouldn't approve of this at all. On the other hand, she has been whining a lot lately about being poor.

HAYES (CONT'D)

We'll round up the others- go get the Hawkins Brothers- we'll meet at your place. It's time to start living right.

STILES

You comin', Taylor?

TAYLOR

I guess so...

B) BUCK has been riding hard and is relieved to see a waiting RIDER #2 as he approaches Whipsaw's Swing Station. WHIPSAW is there along with the infamous little Pawnee boy, called Little Cayuse. The boy's excited, chanting "Cayuse, cayuse" with his hands out, ready to grab the reigns. Then he gets a good look at BUCK. LITTLE CAYUSE'S face turns sour as he dashes into the cabin.

BUCK reigns in and RIDER #2 takes off. He introduces himself and explains their Rider was too sick for his run, so Buck kept on. BUCK will have to spend

the night, and relay the westbound mail back.

WHIPSAW tells him to make himself at home as he leads Buck's horse to the small, two-horse pen.

BUCK approaches the cabin. Suddenly, the door flies open and LITTLE CAYUSE charges him, brandishing his specially made rifle. BUCK is caught by surprise, but manages to wrestle the rifle from the boy before he can take aim. CAYUSE pounces. WHIPSAW runs up and pulls the boy off. BUCK is shocked; "what did I do?" WHIPSAW apologizes as he scolds CAYUSE before sending him off to take care of the horse.

The cabin is a one room affair with three bunk beds at one end. The big, burly COOK gives BUCK some breakfast while WHIPSAW explains.

WHIPSAW

..an old Sioux warrior came by- an ugly brute.
Used the boy as a slave. The poor thing was half
starved-traded a brand new bowie knife and a
bottle of whiskey for `im and I have come to love
him as a son ever since.

Little Cayuse doesn't talk much, so Whipsaw doesn't know where he came from or how the Sioux got him. The only thing he says is "cayuse", which is Pawnee for "horse". The boy loves horses, but Whipsaw soon discovered the boy's intense hatred of Indians. He'd try to shoot them, stampede their horses or set fire to their things whenever they came around.

C) HAYES, STILES, the two HAWKINS BROTHERS, and one other mangy homesteader, MASON, are rummaging around the supplies and whooping it up at the Three Crossings Station. The dead station people are strewn about. TAYLOR is really shook up.

TAYLOR

This ain't right. You said there wouldn't be no
killin'. You said we would just "be sharin' in
the bounty", but they're dead- we killed `em.

HAYES has heard enough and grabs TAYLOR by the collar.

HAYES

Shut up! It's over with. How's I suppose to know
it'd turn into a gunfight? But we gotta `em now,
so enjoy it all.

TAYLOR

I'm telling you it ain't right. I don't know if
can do this...

HAYES

You damn well better do it. You're in this with
the rest of us- all the way up to your neck. It's
too late to back out now-

HAYES puts his cocked gun under TAYLOR's chin.

HAYES (CONT'D)
-`less'n you want to join them high and mighty
Express people. This is the first square meal
I've had in days- you ain't gonna take it away
from me.

TAYLOR gulps. All he can do is shudder at what this has become.

D) Throughout the day, BUCK helps with the chores around the Station. LITTLE CAYUSE avoids him like the plague. At one point, BUCK hears shots behind the barn. He goes back there and finds CAYUSE target shooting with his special rifle. It looks like it was made for him and BUCK comments so. LITTLE CAYUSE just glares at him, throws the rifle down and runs away.

BUCK picks up the rifle. The pearl stock is etched; "To Cayuse from Russell, Majors and Waddell". The STATION HAND relates how the Owners gave it to the boy as a reward for his bravery. Impressed, BUCK takes it into the cabin and puts it on the mantle.

E) The COOK, the STATION HAND, WHIPSAW and BUCK settle in for the night. CAYUSE points at BUCK's medicine bag. WHIPSAW explains to him how people of different heritages find spiritual meaning in them. BUCK asks when the return rider is due back. Several hours before dawn, is the answer. WHIPSAW tells him to rest easy-Little Cayuse will wake him up in plenty of time. Even though there is still an extra bunk, BUCK watches LITTLE CAYUSE curl up in front of the fire on a straw pallet.

F) In the early dawn, LITTLE CAYUSE wakes WHIPSAW up. Is it the rider? The boy shakes his head, saying "no cayuse, no cayuse".WHIPSAW grabs his watch- the rider was due in two hours ago- something's wrong. LITTLE CAYUSE cocks head to the side and listens. He holds up his fingers to indicate many and then mimics men sneaking up. The men grab their guns and load up.

LITTLE CAYUSE is beside himself. He thinks WHIPSAW had taken his rifle away since he can't see it's up on the mantle- he always kept it by his pallet. BUCK gets the rifle down and solemnly hands it to LITTLE CAYUSE, then turns his back to the boy. Now LITTLE CAYUSE is impressed, understanding the gesture of trust.

WHIPSAW leads them outside to the woods around the cabin. He already set up some barricades long ago for just such an emergency. Shortly, they see a party of six grungy men (HAYES, STILES, TAYLOR, HAWKINS BROTHERS and MASON) come from the trail. They watch as the men file quietly into the cabin for a

surprise attack.

Then the door flies open and MASON dashes out, followed by STILES. Everyone opens fire. MASON shoots back and manages to get away. The melee begins as STILES is hit and falls to the ground.

HAWKINS #1 gets the STATION HAND from the window on the left while there is more sounds of glass breaking. The COOK is hit, but tries to keep fighting. Soon, the shots lessen. WHIPSAW keeps HAWKINS #1 occupied while BUCK sneaks up to the window on the right. Hayes and Taylor are already gone. HAWKINS #2 made it out the back window and hears BUCK get his brother.

Silence. Everyone is tense and waiting. Finally, WHIPSAW figures the others ran off and gets up from his barricade. BUCK comes around the corner, his back to the woods.

LITTLE CAYUSE and WHIPSAW try to help the COOK up when CAYUSE hears something- the cock of a gun behind BUCK. LITTLE CAYUSE screams as he runs out to him with his rifle ready. BUCK hits the ground as CAYUSE shoots first, killing HAWKINS #2. BUCK looks up at the boy who saved his life. LITTLE CAYUSE extends his hand to him. WHIPSAW beams proudly as BUCK takes the small hand to get up.

No one notices STILES watching from where he fell on the ground as his fingers slowly close around his gun.

WHIPSAW gets the COOK up with BUCK's help. They start for the cabin half dragging, half walking him. CAYUSE cocks his head again then yells, "cayuse" as he streaks down the trail. WHIPSAW waves BUCK on after him.

BUCK finds him down the trail leading a horse. LITTLE CAYUSE points to the empty saddle and then down the trail. BUCK puts him up in the saddle and gets on behind him. They soon find the body of the Three Crossings EXPRESS RIDER. The lock has been shot off the mail bag and the contents dumped out.

LITTLE CAYUSE helps BUCK gather the mail. Suddenly, several shots are heard from the direction of the cabin. BUCK grabs LITTLE CAYUSE and bolts on the horse.

They are too late. WHIPSAW and the COOK lay dead by the door of the cabin. STILES is gone. LITTLE CAYUSE slides off the horse and runs to them. The boy hugs WHIPSAW's head.

LITTLE CAYUSE

Whipsaw.

BUCK is touched. Finally, LITTLE CAYUSE gets up and faces BUCK bleakly, hugging his rifle. BUCK won't leave him here alone. He starts to tell him about Sweetwater as he starts to dig the graves.

G) A pair of moccasined feet pass by the EXPRESS RIDER'S body.

ACT TWO

A) LITTLE CAYUSE doesn't care about the reception gathering on the bunkhouse porch as he can't take his eyes off the huge corral of Rachel's Station. He never saw so many cayuses at once since he had never been beyond Whipsaw's place.

CODY knows immediately who the boy is by the special rifle. He helps LITTLE CAYSUE down and asks if he can see it. LITTLE CAYSUE doesn't care- he tosses it to him and bolts for the corral. BUCK'S laughter quickly turns to horror when CAYUSE doesn't stop at the fence. The boy squeezes in between the boards and runs in among tramping feet. Much to everyone's relief, the horses don't stampede. They all watch in wonder as he goes up to each one to pet them on the nose.

RACHEL hollers from the bunkhouse that supper's ready. Cody tells them about the rifle as they go in. LITTLE CAYUSE is still petting the horses. BUCK'S call fall on deaf ears. Finally, he marches up to the corral insistently and unbolts the gate. Reluctantly, LITTLE CAYUSE comes out and follows BUCK, sulking.

BUCK stops by the washstand to clean up a bit and tells LITTLE CAYUSE he has to as well. The boy stubbornly shakes his head no. BUCK tells him if he doesn't, Rachel won't give him any supper. LITTLE CAYUSE is still obstinate and BUCK shrugs his shoulders.

BUCK enters the bunkhouse, followed by the rebellious little Pawnee. RACHEL turns from the stove with a smile that quickly turns to a frown as she looks the grubby little boy over. LITTLE CAYUSE'S eyes bug out- there weren't ever any women around Whipsaw's place either. He darts outside to the washstand and dunks his head in the bowl, scrubbing furiously.

A few minutes later, there's a soft knock on the door. RACHEL opens it up. There stands LITTLE CAYUSE, dripping wet- but clean with his hair slicked back as neat as he can get it. RACHEL bats her big blue eyes with the most beautiful smile he had ever seen and gestures grandly for him to enter. CAYUSE blushes. He scampers to the vacant seat next to BUCK and starts in on supper.

CODY

...and Whipsaw came running out to find this huge, great big grey wolf- twice as big as the boy- shot clean between the eyes. And there's Little Cayuse, standing there not more than four or five feet away. He could barely get his little hands around Whipsaw's pistol.

As they finish up, Little Cayuse cocks his head, then announces, "cayuse". Everyone's puzzled until they hear the sounds of hoof beats. TEASPOON comes in, just in time for supper.

BUCK tells him what happened at Whipsaw's as RACHEL dishes him up a plate.

After awhile, TEASPOON sits back, patting his belly and thanking RACHEL as she starts in on the dishes. HICKOK is gathering up his bedroll at his bunk.

LITTLE CAYUSE slides off his chair with his plate and goes up to her. She doesn't see him, so he pulls on her apron. Startled, RACHEL turns around. He hands her his plate, then puffs out his stomach and pats it like Teaspoon did. RACHEL beams.

RACHEL
Why, you're more than welcome.

LITTLE CAYUSE
Cayuse!

Is "cayuse" used for everything? BUCK just shrugs- he doesn't know. After a beat, LOU hollers from outside, "rider comin' in!". HICKOK'S ready and runs out. TEASPOON remarks how handy LITTLE CAYUSE could be with his hearing.

B) STILES is propped up against his saddle and medicating with a bottle of whiskey as HAYES wraps another strip of cloth around STILES'S middle. MASON is looking on, working on a bottle of his own. They are camping out in the fairly secluded Powder River ravine with all the supplies and horses they could take from Three Crossings.

HAYES
...bullet went clean through, but I guess you gotta stay put for `while till you stop bleedin'.

STILES
Fine by me...

He grabs a biscuit from a sack and takes another swig of whiskey. MASON holds his bottle out to HAYES, who downs a swallow then sees TAYLOR off by himself, looking down the river.

TAYLOR is still distraught. HAYES saunters up and slaps him on the back.

HAYES
Come on, Taylor, relax! Ain't no one gonna find us here.

TAYLOR
You said there weren't gonna be no killin', but they're all dead... them Station people... both Hawkins...

HAYES
Damn, you're still stewin' `bout that?! Forget it! It's over with. Now relax and enjoy what we got! Here...

HAYES offers him the bottle. TAYLOR stares at it, then looks over at STILES and MASON having fun.

HAYES (CONT'D)
Are you with us... or not?

TAYLOR sighs, resigned. He snatches the bottle out of his hands and takes a long pull. HAYES slaps him on the back again, pleased.

C) BUCK is sitting on the porch, putting the finishing touches on an medicine bag while LITTLE CAYUSE watches eagerly. CAYUSE takes it happily and looks inside. It's empty and he pouts. BUCK explains that special and personal things go inside. CAYUSE thinks a minute, then quick-as-lighting yanks some hair from BUCK and stuffs it proudly in the pouch. No, that's not exactly what BUCK meant. The Spirits will guide him in finding personal things, not his hair.

LITTLE CAYUSE still doesn't understand, but he's distracted by the sounds of neighing. IKE, NOAH and CODY are trying to put a saddle on a horse they've been breaking in. The horse is skiddish, and to CAYUSE, it looks like they're hurting the horse.

The saddle is on. IKE and NOAH steady the horse while CODY gets ready with the cinch. When the horse settles down with the saddle, he pulls up the cinch. The horse bolts and bucks.

LITTLE CAYUSE runs over to them, screaming "cayuse! cayuse!". BUCK tries to stop him, but CAYUSE gets into the corral between the boards. The horse bucks even more. CAYUSE tries to get up to it, but CODY snatches him up before the boy is trampled. CODY hauls him to the gate as BUCK comes in and IKE and NOAH settle the horse.

CAYUSE had never seen that before. CODY and BUCK try to explain that they're just breaking the horse in so it can be ridden. Soon, IKE is walking the horse with the lead rope.

BUCK
See? The horse is alright. After he's trained some more, you can ride `im.

But LITTLE CAYUSE has to see for himself. The horse lets him approach. CAYUSE is relieved as he pets him on the nose.

CODY
Well, lookit that...

IKE signs.

CODY (CONT'D)
Sure, we'll call `em Cayuse.

BUCK

Big Cayuse. You know, so we can tell which is which...

D) The moccasined feet stand between the mounds at Whipsaw's where the tops of the heads have been unearthed.

E) BUCK is chopping wood. LITTLE CAYUSE comes up to him with his chest puffed out, proudly displaying the bulging medicine bag. BUCK wonders what he's got in there when there's a shriek from the house. BUCK starts for the house in alarm, then slows as RACHEL comes out brandishing her apron.

RACHEL

Buck!!! Buck Cross! Look at this! Look-at-my-apron! My new apron.

A large corner has been hacked off. Uh, oh.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Now what is going on here?! It was brand new! I-

BUCK lamely responds he doesn't know. Cursing erupts from the barn. NOAH storms out.

NOAH

There is a silver stud missing from my saddle! Do you know anything about that?! You know how much that saddle means to me.

BUCK backs up as RACHEL and NOAH bear down on him.

RACHEL

You know who did it. I'll tell you who did it. Little Cayuse did it-

BUCK

But, I-

NOAH

-And what are you going to do about it?

BUCK

I don't-

RACHEL

You're responsible for him. You should-

NOAH

You should teach him to respect other people's things.

BUCK

But, I-

They back him right into CODY, who is fuming. BUCK can feel him breathing

down his neck. BUCK turns around slowly.

CODY shoves his favorite leather shirt in his face. A big hunk of fringe is missing from a sleeve. The three of them converge on BUCK like vultures as he tries to back away. He trips and falls back on his rump, curls up and cowers from the beating that's sure to come.

LITTLE CAYUSE shuffles up, repent fully holding out his medicine bag to them. CODY snatches it up. Inside is the fringe, the stud, and the apron corner. CAYUSE looks up at them with his big, I'm-so-sorry eyes and they melt.

NOAH

Well, I guess he meant well. I suppose I can pound this back into place.

CODY

Yeah, it's really not the only place where some fringe is missing.

RACHEL

I can sew that back on. I guess there's no harm in a little tear. It's just an apron...

CODY

Can you sew it back on, Rachel?

RACHEL

Sure, come on.

They leave BUCK sitting in the dust.

BUCK

What am I going to do with you? Do you know how much trouble you almost caused?

LITTLE CAYUSE shakes his head no with big innocent eyes. He holds out the empty medicine bag and the innocent eyes turn very sad.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Oh, I guess you didn't know any better. Tomorrow we'll go out and I'll teach you about the different plants and herbs you can put in there. In the meantime-

BUCK yanks out another lock of his hair.

BUCK (CONT'D)

-I think the Spirits will shine upon this lock of hair.

The big smile from LITTLE CAYUSE makes it all worthwhile.

F) The gang is settling in for the night in the bunkhouse. LITTLE CAYUSE is by the fireplace, looking out of sorts. CODY says he can take Hickok's bunk- Rachel has already cleaned the sheets- and offers to boost him up there.

CAYUSE is unsure and a little scared, then BUCK remembers the arrangement at Whipsaw's. He pulls the blanket off his bed, doubles it up and lays it on the floor like a mat in front of the fireplace. The others think it's a little weird, but CAYUSE is ecstatic as he plops down.

IKE wonders if CAYUSE should stay with them. BUCK decides it would be best if he could return the boy to his people. They all watch as CAYUSE shifts around, uncomfortable. Finally, he sits up. KID asks what's wrong? LITTLE CAYUSE points to his rifle by the door with the other guns. Ahhh, that's right, BUCK forgot. He gets up, grabs the rifle and ceremoniously hands it to CAYUSE. The boy puts it down lovingly beside the blanket, then lays back, completely secure.

G) A fire blazes near STILES. HAYES, TAYLOR, and MASON are more or less circled around it on their blankets. They are on the cranky side after being drunk all day. STILES is rummaging through the many bundles strewn around him.

STILES

Hell, what happened to all the jerky- all the biscuits we had? Hell, I'm hungry. Who ate it all?

HAYES

You ate it all, Stupid, so shut up and go to sleep.

TAYLOR is trying desperately to ignore them by going to sleep. MASON is already conked out.

STILES

I can't sleep, I'm hungry. I thought we took all the supplies... where's all the food?

HAYES reaches over to a pile, finds a flour bag and throws it at him.

HAYES

Here ya go! Make 'em yourself.

STILES

That ain't funny. You know I can't cook- we can't cook out here. Now look here, I'm wounded, my side hurts and I'm hungry! Thirsty too- ain't there no more whiskey?

HAYES

I told you to shut up! There ain't no more! You drunk it all.

STILES

Damn it all, Hayes, my side hurts! I need some whiskey. You said we'd be sharing in the bounty- where's the bounty, Hayes? I can't-

TAYLOR

Enough!

TAYLOR explodes, startling them both. He gets up, stomps over to another pile and finds a half empty bottle.

STILES

Why thank you, my man. I knew you'd come around.
Looks like there's enough for the both-

TAYLOR breaks the bottle over STILES'S head, who slumps over unconscious.

TAYLOR

Now I can get some sleep.

HAYES is dumfounded.

ACT THREE

A) The early dawn light reveals a soundly sleeping BUCK. A little hand reaches out and shakes him. BUCK jerks up startled. LITTLE CAYUSE is dressed and ready to go. He holds up his empty medicine bag with one hand and a bundle of biscuits with the other. Everyone else is still sleeping. BUCK points to the blanket and shoos the boy away as he rolls over.

CAYUSE puts the bundle down and tiptoes to the stove. He pours out a cup of coffee and tiptoes back to BUCK. He shakes the Rider some more and BUCK sits up in frustration. CAYUSE offers him the coffee and BUCK sighs- I guess I'm going out now.

B) It's just afternoon and TEASPOON and KID are bellied-up at the fence watching NOAH and IKE train in Big Cayuse. A sand bag has been placed on top of the saddle so the horse can get use to the weight as IKE walks him around with the lead rope. LOU brings the buckboard around in front of the house as RACHEL comes out.

RACHEL
You've got the list, Lou? We'll be back before supper, Teaspoon. Hickok should be coming back from his ride soon.

TEASPOON
I know it- I still have a good sense of what goes on `round here. Have a good time, Ladies.

RACHEL gets up on the buckboard.

RACHEL
...oh I hope that fabric is still there I want you to see. I'm just not sure about the color...

TEASPOON and KID watch them ride off.

KID
Do you think Buck can find Little Cayuse's tribe?

TEASPOON
I think it's admirable for him to try. It would be best for the boy to be with his own people.

KID
What if they don't take- rider coming in.

TEASPOON
It's a mite early for Hickok.

KID
It ain't Hickok- something's wrong.

BOB from Three Crossings reigns in. He looks ragged from riding hard.

BOB

We need help. Three Crossings was ransacked-
everybody's dead.

TEASPOON takes charge.

TEASPOON

Kid-

KID

I'm up next.

TEASPOON

I know it, you stay put. Ike, try to head off
Rachel and Lou- double the supply list, then
bring it all in to Three Crossings- we're gonna
need it. Cody, Noah- saddle up. You're coming
with me. Bob-

BOB is exhausted, but he saddles up.

BOB

I'm fine, Sir, I'll make it.

TEASPOON

Ride careful, son. Let's go!

C) MASON comes riding back into the ravine where everyone's waiting.

MASON

You were right, Hayes. The next station was a
big`ne. You should see the horses! Whole corral
full of `em.

HAYES

Well, Gentleman, there's more for the taking!
Let's go help our-

TAYLOR turns away, shaking his head.

HAYES (CONT'D)

What now, Taylor? I thought you were with us?

TAYLOR

This ain't right. Once was enough. We've already
killed Lord knows how many. We can't just keep
on-

MASON

But there ain't nobody there! I saw `em all ride
off- place is wide open.

HAYES

There, you see? Fortune is smiling upon us! Now
come on.

TAYLOR

No killing. Promise me there won't be anymore
killin'. If someone's there- we leave.

HAYES just smiles and shrugs.

HAYES

What's there is there for the takin'...

D) RACHEL and LOU come into the Station with IKE riding along side.

RACHEL

Just help me unload these few things, then you
two go on.

KID comes out of the barn with Katie already to go as they unload. Soon,
HICKOK can be seen just as IKE and LOU are ready to go again.

KID

Wish I was going with you, but...

LOU

We can take care of Three Crossings.

KID

Just the same- be careful.

KID takes off. HICKOK looks beat.

HICKOK

What's goin' on?

LOU

Plenty! Three Crossings was raided couple days
ago. We're taking them some supplies.

HICKOK

Raided?! By who?

LOU

We don't know. Teaspoon's there with Cody and
Noah. Rough ride?

HICKOK

Yeah, ran into some trouble, just kinda tired-
but I'm goin' with you.

RACHEL

Jimmy, you're more than "just kind of tired". I
think you should rest up a bit. Everyone's taking
care of things now, but they could probably use
your help later when they're tired.

HICKOK gratefully agrees and heads into the bunkhouse.

LOU and IKE take off.

E) Meanwhile, TEASPOON, CODY and NOAH are surveying the scene at Three Crossings. Other WORKERS have started in on the place to get it fixed up.

NOAH
Looks like whiskey was high on the shopping list.

CODY
It could've been Indians...

NOAH
Or bandits.

TEASPOON
Hmmm...now where did you say the bodies were?

BOB
Here, here and here. A few managed to get out of bed to get to their guns, but...

CODY
So the plan was to surprise them in their sleep.

TEASPOON
Sure looks that way. It'll take a day or two to get this place in shape. Cody, why don't you see what we're missin'. I wonder if the Sheriff here's got any notion...

NOAH'S still thinking.

NOAH
Teaspoon, didn't Buck say those men tried to sneak in on them during the night?

CODY
Say, that's right. You don't think...

NOAH
Three Crossings, Whipsaw's...

TEASPOON
Oh, my Lord...

They dash for their horses.

F) RACHEL is in the midst of reorganizing the pantry.

RACHEL
Let's see... we really don't need this... they could probably use this... I wonder...

A shadow appears on the wall.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
Jimmy? That wasn't much of a rest. I can manage here-

Just as RACHEL turns around, a bottle comes down on head, knocking her out cold.

In the bunkhouse, moccasined feet stand by HICKOK'S bunk. There's a broken bottle on the floor. Glass fragments dot HICKOK'S pillow- he's out cold.

ACT FOUR

A) TEASPOON, CODY and NOAH are riding hard. They come across IKE and LOU on the buckboard. They slow, but they don't stop.

LOU

What's wrong?!

CODY

Rachel might be in trouble...

TEASPOON

Get those supplies to Three Crossings, then come back as fast as you can!

They take off as IKE whips the reigns to go faster.

B) BUCK can't believe his eyes as he and LITTLE CAYUSE ride in. Rachel's Station has been ransacked. The house and the barn are wide open. BUCK slides off with CAYUSE and draws his gun.

BUCK

You stay here.

BUCK runs for the house, but CAYUSE doesn't stay put. He cocks his rifle and runs for the barn, yelling "cayuse? cayuse?". BUCK comes back out of the house as CAYUSE comes running up to him from the barn distressed.

LITTLE CAYUSE

No cayuse! No cayuse!

BUCK

House is empty too... where are they?! What happened!?

Then BUCK sees the bunkhouse door is closed. He crouches down as he cocks his gun.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Stay behind me, Cayuse. Get ready to run...

Cautiously, they creep up, when the door opens slowly. BUCK gets ready to shoot; HICKOK stumbles out holding his head.

BUCK (CONT'D)

Jimmy! What happened!?! Is everyone gone? Are they...?

HICKOK

Don't know... guess I was clouted on the head. Damn, it hurts like hell!

LITTLE CAYUSE cocks his head, then runs off.

HICKOK (CONT'D)

First time in my entire life... I was sleeping so soundly...

BUCK

But where's-?

HICKOK

Teaspoon and them went to Three Crossings to help there. It was just Rachel and me...

BUCK

Rachel's gone!

HICKOK

Oh, my God. We've got to-

LITTLE CAYUSE comes running back, hollering "cayuse! cayuse!". He grabs BUCK'S arm and tries to pull him along. Just then, Big Cayuse comes wandering in.

BUCK

Okay, okay, we see him, we see him.

HICKOK

But no Rachel...

LITTLE CAYUSE is still tugging on BUCK and pointing beyond the barn saying, "cayuse!". BUCK gives in and they follow CAYUSE to the edge of the grounds. He points to the distance where they can just barely see a cloud of dust.

BUCK

It looks like our herd.

HICKOK

The looters! Let's go!

HICKOK dashes back to the bunkhouse, his head forgotten.

BUCK

We've only got my horse...

HICKOK

Take it! Take the boy- don't loose the trail. I'll follow you- damn! They took my guns.

BUCK

You can't! Big Cayuse ain't been rode yet.

HICKOK

He will be now. Get goin'! Wait, give me your gun- you've got the boy's rifle.

BUCK unstraps his gun and tosses it to HICKOK, who heads for the barn. BUCK jumps on his horse with LITTLE CAYUSE and they take off.

C) The sounds of hoof beats and neighing wakes STILES, who's still propped up against his saddle. HAYES brings up a bound and gagged RACHEL and shoves her down beside him.

HAYES

Lookit what we brung you. You wanted a cook, we got you one- and a mighty pretty one at that.

RACHEL struggles against the ropes, but they're secure. TAYLOR and MASON finish securing the horses.

MASON

...just one person- one lousy fellow sacked out on his bunk. Never had it so easy!

STILES

Did you kill `im?

HAYES

Nahhh. Taylor said no killin', so no killin'.

MASON

So he snuck up on `im and smashed a bottle on his head- just like he did you!

STILES

Speakin' of bottles, I'm-

TAYLOR

There weren't much whiskey- lots of food, though.

STILES

Damn! I want whiskey! What good is all this food without somethin' to wash it down with?

HAYES

Now don't worry, Gentleman. I do believe these fine, well fed horses will get us all the whiskey you want.

MASON pulls out the few bottle they got and passes them around.

TAYLOR

What about her?

HAYES'S eyes start to undress her as he takes a swig.

HAYES

I'm sure we'll do just fine by her...

D) As the sun sets, TEASPOON and the others ride into the Station.

NOAH

Oh my God... we're too late.

All TEASPOON can do is curse. Just then BUCK rides in with LITTLE CAYUSE.

BUCK

We trailed them- they're holed up in Powder River Ravine. Hickok is watching them.

TEASPOON

Alright, boys, let's go. We'll teach them a thing or two `bout lootin' the Express.

BUCK dismounts with LITTLE CAYUSE.

BUCK

You can't come with us. You've got to stay here now.

LITTLE CAYUSE frowns- he wants to save the cayuses.

BUCK

We need you to guard this place.

CODY

Ike and Lou'll be `long any minute.

BUCK

Can you do that? Can you guard this place till the others come?

LITTLE CAYUSE stands with his rifle ready and puffs out his chest proudly.

TEASPOON

Okay, boys, let's go bring back our cay-u-ses!

E) HICKOK is hunched down behind some rocks watching the looters whoop it up.

HICKOK

Come on, Buck, come on...

Some of the ropes have been loosened off of RACHEL, but she's still gagged and her hands are tied.

HAYES

Well, little lady! Let's see what you can do. Come on, honey, get up and dance with us.

HAYES jerks her to her feet and starts swinging her around. He tosses her to MASON, who spins her around. TAYLOR just watches in disgust.

HICKOK tries to size up the situation- 4 to 1 and they've got more guns. He quietly cocks his.

HICKOK

Damn it... come on, Buck...

MASON tosses her to HAYES and she falls into his arms. He rips the gag off and tries to kiss her. RACHEL screams and tries to pull away.

HAYES

Come on, honey, lessee what your made of. I bet you can really cook! Huh, fellas, don't you think so?

HICKOK levels his gun on HAYES.

HAYES (CONT'D)

I say we find out, fellas! I bet she's real good...

HAYES rips her blouse open and throws her to the ground. He stands over her and starts to undo his pants. MASON and STILES cheer him on. RACHEL tries to squirm away.

HAYES

Where you goin' little lady? We're just gittin' started!

HICKOK

Damn it!

HICKOK fires just as HAYES comes down on her. He nicks HAYES in the arm. The others scramble for cover and their guns and return the fire as HAYES drags RACHEL away. The horses start tramping.

STILES

I think there's just one of them. Taylor- go take care of the horses. Mason- circle `round.

STILES keeps up the fire while TAYLOR slips over to the horses. MASON darts up to HICKOK under cover. HICKOK is running out of ammo as he tries for MASON.

After a few more shots, HICKOK'S gun makes that awful clicking noise of an empty barrel. MASON is right there, his gun pointing at HICKOK'S head. He cocks his gun. Just then a shot rings out. MASON falls dead. HICKOK turns around.

CODY'S Hawkins is smoking. NOAH and IKE rush on STILES, who drops his gun in surrender and holds up his hands. KID and TEASPOON come up to HICKOK.

TEASPOON

Where's Rachel?

No one sees TAYLOR slink away from behind the horses.

HAYES

Right here.

HAYES comes out from behind a rock with a gun at RACHEL'S head.

HAYES (CONT'D)

Now drop `em. Drop your guns, or this little lady's head gets blown off. Won't be so pretty then.

They glance at each other. TEASPOON nods. The boys drop their guns.

HAYES (CONT'D)

Stiles, grab those guns. Now you all just come forward with your hands up, nice and slow. Come over-

Another shot rings out. HAYES'S eyes bulge before he falls over dead. TAYLOR is behind him shaking his head, his gun smoking.

TAYLOR

It just wasn't right... all this killin'.

NOAH and IKE pounce on him. Everyone breathes a sigh of relief as TEASPOON unties RACHEL.

HICKOK goes up to TAYLOR and takes the gun. It's his. He looks back at HAYES body.

HICKOK

Now ain't that somethin'...

F) It's a bright sunny day. Everyone's arranged around the corral full of horses. LITTLE CAYUSE is sitting on the rail with BUCK.

The moccasined feet come around the bunkhouse.

HICKOK is telling them how he got on Big Cayuse when they hear a strange voice.

PAWNEE

Cayuse!

They all turn around to see the PAWNEE WARRIOR standing there. LITTLE CAYUSE squints at him, then he gasps and jumps down. He runs into the PAWNEE'S arms as everyone gathers around.

RACHEL comes out of the bunkhouse, wiping her hands on her repaired apron.

RACHEL

What's going on?

TEASPOON

I think this here's a relative of Little Cayuse. I'm Teaspoon Hunter. And your...?

The PAWNEE signs. BUCK comes forward.

BUCK

He's Little Cayuse's brother. He's been searching for him ever since he was snatched away in a raid.

PAWNEE puts LITTLE CAYUSE down and signs some more. BUCK signs back. CODY sprints into the bunkhouse.

BUCK (CONT'D)

He knows there was trouble at Whipsaw's. He's grateful we kept Cayuse safe. Cayuse is his name.

BUCK squats down and CAYUSE hugs him.

CODY comes back out with his special rifle and gives it to him.

CODY

Now don't forget, son. You once worked for the Pony Express. Do yourself proud!

IKE comes around with Big Cayuse all saddled and ready to go. He hands the reigns to the PAWNEE. PAWNEE is grateful to have such a fine horse. BUCK gives CAYUSE another hug.

BUCK

Take care of yourself, Cayuse.

LITTLE CAYUSE

Buck.

LITTLE CAYUSE yanks a lock of his hair out and hands it to him, then turns and runs off to his brother. LITTLE CAYUSE and the PAWNEE ride off as BUCK stuffs the lock in his medicine bag.

THE END.