

Part 19

Part 19 of *Blood Meridian* opens with a doctor unexpectedly acquiring a ferry while making his way to California. He begins to build wealth by mining gold, silver, and jewelry, with the help of two men who assist him in managing the ferry operation. These men, residing on the west bank of a river, have set up a rudimentary fortification to secure their territory. Despite claiming to maintain friendly relations with the local Yumas, the doctor is warned by Glanton, a seasoned individual with a harsh outlook on life, that trusting Native Americans is foolish. Glanton's cynical advice suggests that a man who does so is naive. As tensions rise in this lawless land, the doctor permits Glanton and his men to fortify their position, further arming themselves with a mountain howitzer to prepare for any threats.

A surprise attack occurs just two days later when the Yumas ambush the ferry during a cargo operation. In response, Brown and Long Webster fire the howitzer, causing massive damage and wreaking havoc on the attacking force. As the Yumas are decimated, Glanton and his men methodically go about killing the wounded survivors, an act witnessed by ferry travelers. These events, combined with the gruesome act of scalping, leave the witnesses in shock, forever marking them with the trauma of the violence they've seen. The doctor, horrified by the brutality unfolding before him, retreats to the privacy of his quarters, withdrawing from the grisly spectacle. Meanwhile, Glanton exploits the situation, raising fares for the ferry and robbing the travelers of their belongings, further cementing his role as a ruthless figure in this chaotic environment.

The situation grows even darker when a Kentucky company arrives but decides against engaging with Glanton and his men. Instead, they journey downstream, where they meet a grim fate at the hands of the Yumas, further illustrating the peril of this lawless world. As time passes, the group participates in an Easter celebration where they witness a disturbing ritual. A straw effigy representing Judas is brutally slaughtered by the Sonorans, a harsh reflection of the violence that permeates their lives. This act of ritualized violence becomes another reminder of the brutal and unforgiving world that the characters inhabit. In the meantime, Glanton, ever focused on accumulating wealth, enslaves Sonorans to help him fortify his position, exploiting them for labor. Meanwhile, David Brown, Long Webster, and Toadvine are sent to San Diego to procure supplies for the group.

Their journey through the desert is grueling, but they eventually arrive at their destination, drenched in sweat and eager to trade their hard-earned coins for whiskey. After a night of drinking and recklessness, Brown wakes up alone in a small hut, struggling to recall the events of the previous night. As he attempts to locate his companions, he finds himself caught in a power struggle with a local farrier over a fine shotgun, which he wants modified. The tension escalates into a physical confrontation, and Brown takes matters into his own hands, showing the characteristic brutality of life in this time and place. His ability to resolve the situation with force highlights the brutal dynamics of their existence. Following the altercation, he successfully has his shotgun modified, displaying his resolve in the face of adversity.

Brown eventually reunites with Toadvine and Webster, and together they experience the excitement of finally seeing the ocean. Their exhaustion from the journey is evident, yet they are filled with a sense of accomplishment and excitement for the new frontier that lies ahead. The chapter concludes with a series of violent events that showcase the reckless indulgence of the characters, demonstrating the chaotic and lawless nature of their world. Their journey is one of survival, but it also encapsulates the violence and cruelty that defines the lawless frontier, underscoring the harsh realities they face as they continue their brutal, unchecked existence. The narrative highlights the tension between the characters' desires for wealth and power and the ever-present danger of the hostile, unregulated world they inhabit.