

NO LESS HONOR

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EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

The sun glares white-hot in a big blue Montana sky.

TITLE: MONTANA 1878

On top of a wind-swept ridge, six horses graze around an empty calvary wagon. Six calvary soldiers watch them.

Midway down the slope, Captain (CPT) EDWARD GODFREY, a uniformed calvary officer, and JURUSHA STURGIS, an older woman in a dress, stand before a small rocky grave from which a four-foot-tall white cross stands.

The cross reads: STURGIS.

Jurusha Sturgis examines the cross. Then, her eyes dart to CPT Godfrey, the man who will not make eye contact with her.

JURUSHA STURGIS
This is not Jack's is it?

CPT EDWARD GODFREY
I'm sorry, Ma'am?

MRS STURGIS
No, this is not Jack's.

CPT EDWARD GODFREY
As best as we know it to be, Ma'am.
We really can't be certain about
any of them.

JURUSHA STURGIS
Why is it so different?

She motions to the other markers further up the slope.

JURUSHA STURGIS (CONT'D)
See those? They're smaller, weather-
beaten.
(looks back)
This one is new. Bigger than the
rest. Jack was a Lieutenant. Why
would his cross be bigger than
General Custer's cross?

No answer from Godfrey.

JURUSHA STURGIS (CONT'D)
You put this here as much for you
as for me, didn't you? To spare me
my feelings.

Awkward silence.

JURUSHA STURGIS (CONT'D)

The truth is you never found Jack's body. Isn't that what you are not saying so loudly?

(sighs.)

My husband, General Sturgis, and I do thank you for all you've done for our boy. But I'm not here to have my feelings spared. And mark me Captain Godfrey, I'm not here to be deceived. I'm here to ...

(a pause.)

I'm here to find out what really happened to Jack.

She walks toward the crosses higher on the hill.

JURUSHA STURGIS (CONT'D)

(stares at the valley)

Such a beautiful place. What went wrong? How did this happen?

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

TITLE: OKLAHOMA 1868

A sweeping western landscape of the Great Plains. Many Tepees of an Indian village rise out of the mist.

Two Indians, the venerable BLACK KETTLE and the younger LAME-WHITE-MAN, move through the village toward a herd of ponies kept inside a log-railed corral.

LAME-WHITE-MAN

The horses are restless.

Black Kettle and Lame-White-Man take two ponies out of the corral and prepare them for travel.

They ride out of the village.

It is cold. Black Kettle has, draped around his shoulders, a thick buffalo hide, worthy of his higher position. He wears two feathers in his long braids. Lame-White-Man pulls a wool blanket over his head as they ride on.

The snow is deep in the drifts. They make their way across an ascending ridge and goes down the other side. They come to a shallow stream. They cross over in icy splashes against the horse's legs.

They stop at an outcropping of rocks to shield them against the wind. They prepare a small meal of eggs in an iron skillet over a small fire. Once they eat, they continue on against the backdrop of purple mountains.

It gets dark.

At sunrise, looming ahead of them, smoke rises from the U.S. Army fort.

INT. FORT LARNED - DAY

TITLE: FORT LARNED 1868

Major (MAJ) JOEL ELLIOT and Captain (CPT) FREDERICK BENTEEN welcomes them inside.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
(barely audible)
Black Kettle. You remember Major
Elliot?

BLACK KETTLE
(barely audible)
Benteen, Elliot, good to see you
again, my brothers. My son, Lame-
White-Man.

Lame-White-Man dutifully accepts his father's buffalo skin and stands off to the side. Both officers sit at a table across from Black Kettle.

Cut to the hardened face of Black Kettle.

BLACK KETTLE (CONT'D)
I come here today as a Peace Chief.
The Southern Cheyenne are a
peaceful people. We want to live in
harmony with the Wasi'chu (white
men), in harmony with all things,
together in peace - in peace.
(takes a beat)
Long before the Great White Chiefs
came to this land, the Arapaho
Cheyenne, Hunkpapa Lakota, Oglala
Sioux, waged war upon each other
generation after generation. South
of the river Arkansas, we have
given up the old ways. But North of
the river, those tribes still wage
war and the Dog Soldiers are so
filled with hate they want to kill
everyone. Their hearts are bad.

EXT. WHITE SETTLERS HOMESTEAD- NIGHT

As Black Kettle speaks, we see Dog Soldiers creep into the settler's village with tomahawks and knives. Their faces painted in white war paint. Shortly after entering a house, muffled screams are heard.

BLACK KETTLE (V.O.)

Dog Soldier war parties set out to spill blood of their old enemies. Finding none, they turned against the Wasi'chu village. There, they spilled the blood of many Wasi'chu.

INT / EXT. WHITE SETTLERS HOMESTEAD- DAY

The scene cuts to the next day as the discovery is made. US Army Soldiers swing the door open to a white settler's home. They are quickly driven back, repulsed, gagging at the smell of death and the sound of flies. Several dead bodies of mutilated and naked corpses of men, women, and children litter on the floor.

Cut back to the face of Black Kettle.

BLACK KETTLE

They come to us without shame. Openly boasting about what they did. We know who they are and we do not want them among us. If you allow it, our people will come here. We will bring these men to you. Turn them over. So that they may get what they deserve. The soldier's justice.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (WASHITA)- DAY

Elsewhere, as the discovery continues, Crow Scouts, their faces painted in red and black, track the path of the Dog Soldiers in the snow. The trail leads to a village with a large corral of ponies. Black Kettle's village.

INT. FORT LARNED- DAY

MAJ JOEL ELLIOT

Back here? To Fort Larned? No, I'm sorry, you don't understand. You can't do that. We don't have the room, the provisions, to keep you here, not until the snow melts.

(MORE)

MAJ JOEL ELLIOT (CONT'D)

We wouldn't be able to feed you.

(beat)

The army will send some soldiers to your village to collect the men who did this. Stay there by the Washita river. You will be safe there.

(beat)

Best to stay put.

Benteen's face is indifferent. His blue eyes stare coldly, hiding something.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (WASHITA) - DAY

Black Kettle and Lame-White-Man return to their village.

Black Kettle find his wife, MEDICINE WOMAN, pacing outside the tepee, carrying on about something. As Black Kettle dismounts his horse, Medicine Woman runs to him in a desperate panic, speaking fast.

MEDICINE WOMAN

We should have gone! We need to leave! Give the word! We can break camp tonight! Let's leave the Washita behind us Black Kettle! We need to go before it's too late! We need to get out of this place!

BLACK KETTLE

What's wrong with you, Medicine Woman? Why are you talking like this? What has happened?

As Medicine Woman talks we see a black dog nursing her puppies. In the distance a pack of bigger dogs come toward the mother.

MEDICINE WOMAN (V.O.)

I had a vision. In the vision, I saw a black dog guarding her pups. Then, bigger dogs came and surrounded her. They attacked the mother, the big dogs...bit her and...

Back to the worried face of Medicine Woman.

MEDICINE WOMAN

(chokes)

They ripped off half her face! Just tore it right off.

(MORE)

MEDICINE WOMAN (CONT'D)

And when she couldn't fight
anymore, the big dogs killed all
her pups, killed her babies! If we
stay here, we will be like them. We
will die here!

Black Kettle tries to calm her.

BLACK KETTLE

No, no. I just came from talking to
the soldiers at the fort. They say
we are safe here.

MEDICINE WOMAN

You do not believe me?

She looks at Black Kettle and Lame-White-Man alternatively.

MEDICINE WOMAN (CONT'D)

Can I not make you see? Don't you
understand? We are not safe
anywhere anymore.

Black Kettle is concerned but unmoved. Medicine Woman is
suddenly filled with a strange calmness. It is resignation.
She turns to go, her hand over her mouth.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (WASHITA)- DAY

Title: Washita River, November 7, 1868.

Horses numbering in the hundreds gallop toward Black Kettle's
village. They leap into the Washita River to climb up the far
bank.

The trumpeter blows out a charge. Then, warms his mouth with
the back of his sleeve. He manages a round of Garryowen.

Major Elliot leads the charge. He rides beside his guidon
bearer. The guidon is a red and white banner-like flag of the
US Army 7th Calvary.

MAJ JOEL ELLIOT

Come on! We caught them sleeping!

The calvary attack Black Kettle's village. Shots ring out.
Black Kettle comes out of his tepee surprised. Indians run.

Black Kettle helps Medicine Woman on a pony. He grabs a
handful of the horse's mane, swings his legs around her, then
gallops away.

Lame-White-Man runs to reach the tree line.

Several soldiers dismount, take a knee, and level their rifles to take aim. Shots ring out.

Black Kettle is hit in the back. He falls off the pony.

Medicine Woman leaps down and runs toward Black Kettle. She is shot through the forehead.

Lame-White-Man is hit. He stumbles and scurries behind a tree. We see blood on his face. He turns to watch.

Bullets riddle Black Kettle. He does not move again.

The soldiers boast. They congratulate each other on their fine marksmanship. They pat each other on the back with smiles.

Lame-White-Man watches them in anger. Then he runs away.

Major Elliot observes four Indians, white-faced Dog Soldiers, flee on horseback. They ride away over a hill.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Dog Soldiers! The killers we want.

MAJ JOEL ELLIOT
Look at them run Benteen! Glory is
on the other side of that hill. To
a Brevet or an early grave!

Captain Benteen watches Major Elliot ride out. Benteen hears the click of a rifle. He turns to see a young Indian boy with a heavy rifle. He points the rifle at Benteen.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
(shows his hands)
No! Hold on there! Don't shoot!

The boy cocks the hammer and fires the rifle. The round whizzes harmlessly past the head of Benteen's horse. Benteen dismounts.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
(draws his sidearm)
Now wait! I don't want to shoot
you!

The boy cocks the rifle again. He raises it toward Benteen again.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Drop that gun!

The boy points the rifle at him again. He cocks the hammer. Benteen stares straight down its dark barrel.

Just as the boy fires the rifle, Benteen drops to a knee and fires his gun.

The boy is on his back. Smoke rises from his chest. Likewise, Benteen's sidearm smokes. Benteen rises unhurt. He stares sadly at the dead boy.

Then a voice rings out.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (O.S.)

Benteen!

Enter Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) GEORGE Armstrong CUSTER, a flamboyant cavalry officer. He wears a custom-made buckskin uniform. Long amber hair tumbles in curls from under his floppy hat (the right side of his hat is pinned so as to not get in the way while aiming a rifle). A blush of freckles grace his low-brow face. With cold steel blue eyes he searches his junior officer, CPT Benteen, with a look of cold command mixed with disdain.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Benteen! Collect what weapons you can find and round up the women and children. We can use them as shields in case of a counter-attack.

CPT Benteen is slow to respond. He can't take his eyes off the dead boy.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Benteen!

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Major Elliot...

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Captain! Do as I have instructed you! Inventory the weapons, the women and children. I want a full report on Indian casualties as soon as possible. I scouted the area and this is only one of three connected villages. Two bigger ones are situated to the East, just over there.

Benteen turns his attention the way Custer points.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Get that report ready to send to
Colonel Gibbon.

Custer starts to ride away then stops.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
I know I can count on you to do
your duty as admirably as you
always do. Now carry on, CPT
Benteen.

Benteen slowly turns and looks behind him. Men of the 7th
Cavalry pick through the spoils of the Indian camp, taking
for themselves anything useful. They set fire to the rest.

Later, Custer directs a wagon full of Indian women and
children. Benteen waits for the wagon to pass, then
approaches Custer.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
General? Major Elliot is still out
there. Shouldn't we look for him?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Major Elliot is a fine officer and
a friend of mine. A fierce Indian
fighter. With seventeen armed
troopers of the 7th he can handle
anything that's out there. No doubt
he'll enthral us with a marvelous
story around the campfire tonight.
You'll see. Now move out.
(To the trumpeter)
Sound Retreat!

The bugle sounds the order for retreat.

Meanwhile, Major Elliot and seventeen soldiers are in pursuit
of the four Dog Soldiers. A chase on horseback ensues. The
riders go up and over a ridge that funnels down through a
coulee on the other side.

Fifty Indians wait in ambush. The soldiers are met with a
volley of arrows. The arrows pepper through them in a deadly
flurry. Men and horses alike fall.

MAJ JOEL ELLIOT
Too many of them! Fall back to the
river!

No sooner is the order given, then an arrow glides through
Major Elliot's open mouth.

The arrow's feathered fletching protrudes out of his mouth while the arrowhead protrudes through the back of his neck. He cannot close his mouth and chokes. As he does, the feathers flutter inside his throat. Major Elliot is still alive, upright on his horse, but his eyes fill with unspeakable terror.

The soldiers panic. In fear, they shoot up in the air. They wildly miss their targets.

The soldiers toss their rifles down in favor of sidearms. Another volley of arrows devastate them. The detachment is quickly surrounded and overwhelmed.

Major Elliot falls off his horse. One by one the soldiers drop to the ground.

The attack upon the soldiers is brutal. The Dog Soldiers rush in and hack the survivors with hatchets, stabbing with long knives. The soldiers kick against their captors. They are scalped alive.

The effect on the soldiers is to abandon hope. A soldier shoots a nearby comrade in the head who cannot do it for himself, the last full measure of devotion.

CALVARY SOLDIER
Save the last bullet for
yourselves, boys!

Then he takes his own life. Others follow and do the same, until there are no more soldiers left alive.

The Dog Soldiers whoop in victory. They round up the Army ponies and strip the bodies. The bodies are mutilated.

A Dog Soldier stands over Major Elliot. Elliot is still alive, shaking his head for mercy, but cannot speak, the arrow's fletching still wedged in his mouth. The Dog Soldier snaps an arrow in two sharp pieces. With the back of his bloody tomahawk, he hammers the arrows deep into Elliot's ears.

DOG SOLDIER
You would not listen. You had no
ears.

He scalps Major Elliot.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (CORRAL) - DAY

Cut to the horse corral. There are 800 ponies crowded within. The nervous ponies run from the fire in the village.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

The day is drawing to a close and a great deal remains to be done. That which cannot be taken away must be destroyed. Eight hundred ponies are to be put to death.

The ponies are terrified, surrounded, and shot by the soldiers. General Custer lifts his rifle, takes aim, then fires. A pony drops with a scream.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

Our Chief exhibits his close sharp-shooting ability and terrifies the crowd of frightened, captured squaws and papooses by dropping the stragglers in death near them. Ah! He is a clever marksman. Not even do the poor dogs of the Indians escape his eye and aim as they drop dead or limp howling away.

Hundreds of Indian warriors suddenly appear on top of the ridge around the village. A worried expression forms on Custer's face.

First Lieutenant (1LT) WILLIAM COOKE, Custer's Adjutant, an officer with pointed side whiskers, is called.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

LT Cooke!

1LT WILLIAM COOKE

Yes, I see them sir.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

The Indians are considering a counter-attack.

First Lieutenant (1LT) EDWARD GODFREY an officer with a long mustache, rides to confer with Benteen.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY

(whispers to Benteen)

Where's Major Elliot?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Hasn't returned. He's out there somewhere.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 (to Cooke)
 Bring up the wagons. Let them see
 their women and children.

The wagons come forward full of women and children. The hostages call out to the Indians on the ridge. The warriors hesitate.

In the tension of that moment, Custer takes notice of a beautiful Indian girl held captive in the wagon. He rides up.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 What's your name?

The interpreter speaks to the girl then turns back.

INTERPRETER
 She says, Monahseta.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Monahseta.

The girl is as frightened as she is beautiful. Custer smiles.

This does not go unnoticed by the other officers. Mostly upset is Benteen who watches Custer incredulously.

Back on the ridge the warriors are turn from the fight. Slowly, they retreat over the hills and out of sight.

As soon as they are gone, Custer reverses the column and heads out the way they came in.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)
 We slowly pick our way across the
 creek over which we charged so
 gallantly in the early morn.

The column passes burning tepees. Dead Indians and the dead horses litter the ground everywhere. The sorrowful sound of crying in the background.

As Benteen rides near the bodies of Black Kettle and his wife he looks down at them.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)
 Take care! Do not trample on the
 dead bodies of that woman and child
 lying there!

The black smoke of the village fades behind them. After they cross the icy waters of the Washita river, they return to Fort Larned.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

In a short time we shall be far from the scene of our daring dash, and night will have thrown her dark mantle over the scene. But surely some search will be made for our missing comrades. No, they are forgotten. Who shall write their eulogy?

(Beat)

The next day the Indians were gone.

Cut to Major Elliot and his detachment of seventeen soldiers, dead and mutilated, moldering in the sun and snow.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

Two weeks later, they were found in a small circle, stripped as naked as when born, and frozen stiff. Their heads had been battered in, and some of them had been entirely chopped off; some of them had had the Adam's apple cut out of their throats; some had their hands and feet cut off, and nearly all had been horribly mangled in a way delicacy forbids me to mention. They lay scarcely two miles from the scene of the fight.

INT. FORT LINCOLN- DAY

TITLE: Fort Lincoln, Four Months Later

The officers of the 7th cavalry are assembled. General Custer, clearly agitated, reads from a St. Louis newspaper.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(repeat from earlier)

But surely some search will be made for our missing comrades? No, they are forgotten. Who shall write their eulogy?

After a brief pause, the General slams the newspaper on a table.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

I'm going to see that whoever wrote that is horsewhipped! Who was it?

No immediate answer comes from any of the assembled officers.

Slowly but deliberately, Captain Benteen reaches into his pocket and pulls out a long white handkerchief. Benteen gives the handkerchief a flip, then withdraws his fully loaded Colt .45 out of its holster. He begins to wipe it clean.

Benteen takes a step forward. He returns the sidearm to the holster and the handkerchief goes back into his pocket. He rests his palm upon the revolver's handle. Then he speaks.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

I did it. I wrote the letter.

The cold blue eyes of General Custer burn at Benteen.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(seethes)

Captain Benteen. I will see you again sir.

Custer storms out. Benteen stands alone.

INT/EXT. WASHINGTON DC - DAY

TITLE: Washington DC. 1875. Eight Years Later.

LIBBIE Custer, A lovely lady, walks down the hallway of a stately home with a dish of pastries.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

When orders came for the 7th Cavalry to go into the field again, General Custer was delighted. From the first days of our marriage, General Custer celebrated every order to move with wild demonstrations of joy.

Libbie looks through the screen door to see her husband, General Custer, asleep under the shade of a tree. Libbie exits the house via the screen door, and discovers a book in the grass near her husband. As she picks up the book, a photograph falls out. She bends to pick it up. It is a picture of Monahseta, the beautiful young Indian woman.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

I begged so hard not to be left behind until I finally prevailed. It is infinitely worse to be left behind, and be prey to all the horrors of imagining what may be happening to the ones we love.

Libbie stares at Monahseta for moment, then returns the photograph back inside the pages of the book. She holds the book and kneels next to her husband.

LIBBIE

Taking one of your famous Custer naps? Autie? Come on now General. I know you can hear me. Don't want to be late for your congressional hearing.

Custer opens an eye.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Mustn't keep the executioner waiting.

(looks at the pastry)

Are you trying to fatten me? Like a lamb before slaughter?

He takes a bite.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

(chews)

I'll be glad to get this over with and get back to my command. We have a military campaign to plan for.

LIBBIE

Autie? Do you remember that psychic you saw a few years ago?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(laughs)

The one in New York City? How can I forget? She said we would have eight children and live fifty more years. Or was it fifty children and eight more years?

LIBBIE

She was wrong about everything wasn't she?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(Custer notices the book, knows what's inside)

No, Libbie, she wasn't wrong. Not about everything. We still have time.

Libbie hands the book over to him and looks away.

LIBBIE

(sighs)

I wonder what ever happened to her,
Monahseta I mean, and that lovely,
little dark-skinned baby of hers?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Monahseta? I wish to see her face
again. Don't you?

Custer opens the pages to find the photograph.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

The last time I saw her, she was
teary-eyed and crying. As I
remember you were teary-eyed too.

Custer rises to his feet then lifts Libbie to her feet.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

She was as renowned in that part of
the world as Pocahontas was in this
one.

LIBBIE

And you, her dashing John Smith.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

She was the best diplomat and
interpreter the Indians ever had.

He looks at the photograph.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

The best I ever had.

Libbie slips the photograph out of his hands. She puts her
arms around his neck and stares into his eyes. His arms go
around her waist.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Libbie...I

She shakes her head and searches his face.

LIBBIE

Go set those politicians straight
today, Autie. We are counting on
you.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(grins)

I would hate to be in the shoes of
those Republicans today.

LIBBIE

Wherever you lead General. I will follow.

INT. US CAPITOL - DAY

TITLE: Washington DC, 1876

The US Capitol is decorated in Red, White, and Blue bunting celebrating the country's 100th Centennial.

Inside the Capitol rotunda, a crowd has formed and men run down the hallway.

MEN RUNNING

Here they come! Here they come!

The crowd stands to stare at a larger-than-life American couple. The civil war hero and Indian-fighter, General George Armstrong Custer, and his beautiful wife, Libbie Custer, arm-in-arm.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

The result was that I found myself suddenly plunged into a life of danger. I hardly remember a time when I was not in fear of some immediate peril, or in dread of some danger that threatened.

The Custer's are all smiles. They enter the crowded chamber of the U.S. House of Representatives with graceful confidence. They walk through to the front where a table waits for them.

Captain (CPT) THOMAS WEIR, a military officer in Custer's command greets them with a smile.

CPT THOMAS WEIR

General Custer. Miss Libbie.

CPT Weir is dashing, as dashing as Custer. Weir extends his elbow to assist Libbie to her seat, in the first row of chairs behind him.

Libbie takes her seat. She smiles at CPT Weir, then back at Custer, obviously enjoying her flirtations with CPT Weir. Custer gives them a dubious look. How close together they sit, the little glances, the arm touching.

Custer guffaws before settling into his chair.

The gavel calls the chamber to order.

Once seated, General Custer turns to look at Libbie once again. She smiles. Custer turns back and a wild fire flashes behind his eyes.

LIBBIE
 (Whispers to Weir)
 Now he is ready. Ready for battle.

INT. THE WHITE HOUSE (OVAL OFFICE) - DAY
 Present is:
 General (GEN) WILLIAM Tecumseh SHERMAN,
 General (GEN) PHILLIP SHERIDAN,
 General (GEN) ALFRED TERRY.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES S.(U.S.) GRANT lights a cigar.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
 He said THAT did he?

GEN WILLIAM SHERMAN
 He testified for over two hours.
 Didn't say anything about you
 directly...but,

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
 Sherman, it's bad enough that man
 indicted the Secretary of War, but
 my God! My brother, Orvil? Is it
 not enough that Belnap resigned two
 weeks ago? Do the Democrats have to
 continue this persecution of him?
 Hasn't the man suffered enough?

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
 General Custer's testimony
 confirmed what Belnap already
 admitted. His license scheme at
 Fort Sill channeled eighty percent
 of the costs of goods and materials
 back to him. But any information
 Custer had about subsequent
 kickbacks to the administration
 that led to the sale of arms to the
 Indians is just unfounded. Purely
 hearsay.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
 My God! Belnap sold rifles to the
 Indians?

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
 I'm afraid so sir.

GEN WILLIAM SHERMAN
He also diverted food intended for
the reservations...

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
My God! I had no idea.

The others look at each other.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)
(Points with his cigar)
General Sheridan, if Custer tries
to leave Washington, I want him
locked up.

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
On what charge?

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
Failure to report to his Commander-
in-Chief!

GEN ALFRED TERRY
Shall I send for him, sir?

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
Send for him?
(grunts)
Heavens no! No! I never want to see
that jackass ever again.

Grant stalks about the oval office.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)
I don't want that man to ever have
another command. No chance for
glory ever again.
(humph!)
Glory. The stuff that makes him
tick. Let him die in obscurity like
the rest of us.

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
His testimony today has already
ruined his reputation in many
circles.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
(Looks at Sherman)
Did you hear he took credit for
saving the Union at Gettysburg?
(looks at Sheridan)
Do you think he has political
aspirations, Phil?

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
He still has a lot of friends.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
Sherman, you always liked him. You still think the world of him Sheridan, obviously, or you wouldn't have called him up from his court martial, when he couldn't stay away from that little wife of his.

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
The Democrats have already settled on nominating Samuel Tilden as their candidate. Nothing short of a miracle is going to change that.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
Nothing short of a miracle, huh? That's what I'm afraid of. Custer luck.

Grant turns from the window, smoking and chomping his cigar.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)
We have what? 2,000 troops patrolling 1.2 million square miles of territory searching for 200,000 hostile Indians?

GEN WILLIAM SHERMAN
The Indians, sir, are quite adept at moving rapidly. Even Hancock had his hands full.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
Once we get a report of where they are, by the time we get there, well...they aren't there anymore.

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN
Our winter campaign purportedly pinched them in somewhere around the Powder River and the Yellowstone.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT
I pledged a peaceful integration of the Indian into our society. I never bargained for all this. Never wanted it. But Indians don't vote. Miners do.

(MORE)

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)

And this discovery of gold in the Black Hills. Well, the country's nearly broke.

Here the President stops to reflect. The General's share some eye contact.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)

I heard you offered command of the 7th Cavalry to Fred Benteen. It would have been a nice little promotion for him.

GEN WILLIAM SHERMAN

Benteen is a real pain-in-the-ass type. Always sniping at his Commanding Officer no matter who it is. Almost like he needs someone to blame for everything that's gone wrong in his life.

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN

Well, there's no love lost there between Benteen and Custer. But when I offered, Benteen refused. Instead...

(chuckles)

He recommended we bring back Custer, to be reinstated from his Court Martial and take command of the 7th.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT

Benteen said that? Well, I do believe they deserve each other then.

(puffs on cigar)

Anyway, Sherman, I can't have Custer here in DC with me sucking up all the oxygen in Washington.

(Turns to Sheridan)

Phil, take him with you, under your command. Think you can handle him?

GEN PHILLIP SHERIDAN

I think so sir. I'll put him under General Terry as part of the Dakota Column. Any objections, Alfred?

GEN ALFRED TERRY

No, none at all.

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT

Make sure to take care of that damned Custer luck too, Terry. We don't need any miracles. Keep driving him farther and farther out west with you. Get him out of the political arena. God knows he's done enough damage already, we don't need him doing any more.

A secretary opens the door and reminds the President of his appointment.

Grant nods to his secretary

PRESIDENT ULYSSES GRANT (CONT'D)

Thank you, Vivian.

(turns back to the
Generals)

Next month I'm getting out of DC for awhile. Going to Philadelphia for the Holiday. They are bringing out the Liberty Bell to ring it thirteen times for the Centennial. The 100th birthday of our union. Hope the damned thing doesn't break again.

Grant raises his eyebrows and shakes his head. They leave the Oval Office. Back on the President's desk, a pamphlet reads: CENTENNIAL. AMERICA'S 100TH BIRTHDAY. JULY 4, 1776-JULY 4, 1876. PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA.

On the pamphlet, the crack in the Liberty Bell looms large.

INT. SITTING BULL'S TEPEE - NIGHT

Title: Dakota Territory

The Hunkpapa Chief, SITTING BULL, lays on his back to sleep between his two wives, LIGHT-HAIR and SNOW-ON-HER.

Light-Hair pushes the hand of Snow-On-Her away from Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull rolls onto his side.

Snow-On-Her pulls him over in her direction.

Light-Hair rolls him back over to her.

The back-and-forth continues until the great chief, has no choice but to roll onto his back. Now his eyes are wide open. He wearily watches black smoke vent through the top of the tepee.

Frustrated, Sitting Bull stands and walks out into the night. His wives follow him, arguing, pushing, jockeying for his attention.

SITTING BULL
 (wraps himself in a warm
 blanket)
 You are driving me crazy.

LIGHT-HAIR
 We used to sleep until Snow-On-Her
 came along.

SNOW-ON-HER
 Maybe sleep is not what the Great
 Chief needed Light-Hair. Maybe he
 wants something else you cannot
 give him.

The two fight again.

SNOW-ON-HER (CONT'D)
 (after Sitting Bull)
 Where are you going?

SITTING BULL
 Away from you.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

Sitting Bull's tepee sets in the center of several rings of tepees that stretch out vast before him, as far as the eye can see. Sitting Bull, wrapped in his blanket, walks through the village, past the fires, past the ponies, and past a young warrior, his nephew, ONE BULL.

ONE BULL
 Uncle, where are you going?

SITTING BULL
 Somewhere I can get some sleep.

ONE BULL
 I will come with you.

SITTING BULL
 I just want to be left alone, One
 Bull.

But One Bull follows anyway. Yet, he keeps his distance.

Sitting Bull and One Bull walk until the village is well behind them. They walk to a field on the Great Plains.

The wind blows cool through Sitting Bull's hair. He breathes deeply and easy now.

The two continue until they come to a steep hill. Sitting Bull drops his blanket, and begins to climb. The young warrior picks up his blanket and follows. Sitting Bull ascends to the top where the hill flattens. They sit on the ground.

The hill overlooks the entire village. The village is a mile wide and stretches out before them for about three miles. The camp is dotted with embers from small campfires. Everything is at peace, the dark sky, the stars.

Seemingly out of nowhere, Sitting Bull produces a long flat wooden pipe. One Bull looks amazed at its sudden appearance. The venerable chief loads it with tobacco.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

When I was but a young man, Ptesan-Wi, the Great White Calf Buffalo Woman came to me in a vision, the most beautiful women I've ever seen.

EXT. A DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

SITTING BULL (V.O.)

Ptesan-Wi told me to craft a scared pipe, and said I would be immortal when I smoked from it.

Cut to Sitting Bull's vision: the image of Ptesan-Wi, the Great White Calf Buffalo Woman, a beautiful Indian woman, dressed in white deer skins. She comes out of the clouds to approach Sitting Bull in his vision. Sitting Bull reaches out to her. They come together in a great flash of white light.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

Cut back to Sitting Bull on the hill with One Bull.

SITTING BULL

This is the pipe.

Sitting bull lights the pipe with a steel flint.

ONE BULL

Did it make you immortal, Uncle?

SITTING BULL

A long time ago, my mother also had a vision. She saw me as the one to unite and lead the nations. But I was very brave and took too many chances in battle, she told me. She worried I might be killed and the nation left without a leader. She said I should stay in the rear and let the younger warriors do the fighting. There was wisdom in her words, so I agreed, and did as she told me to do.

(puffs some more)

But some of the younger warriors saw this, and began to say, I was a coward.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

Cut to a field of battle. Sitting Bull leaves his warriors to walk along toward the enemy soldiers. Halfway to the soldiers, he sits in the grass, well within the range of the army rifles. He pulls out his pipe and loads it with tobacco as the soldiers shoot at him, trying to kill him.

Sitting Bull puffs away at his pipe. He looks directly into the eyes of each of the soldiers. As they shoot at him, dirt sprays in front of his legs and bullets whistle close to his head. Yet he remains uninjured. No matter how hard the soldiers try, they cannot harm him. He calmly puffs his pipe until the tobacco is gone. Then he rises. They still cannot hit him. He cleans out the bowl of the pipe with a stick as bullets continue to zing all around him but never hit him. Once satisfied, he turns and calmly walks back to his line.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - NIGHT

Sitting Bull exhales a long vaporous cloud of bluish smoke.

SITTING BULL

There was no more talk of my
bravery after that.

Back on the hill, One Bull looks upon his uncle amazed.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

(looks at One Bull)

One Bull, my adopted son, join me.
Come and smoke from the sacred
pipe. Be immortal with me. At least
until this night is over.

Sitting Bull offers the pipe

One Bull takes the pipe solemnly. He turns it and smokes while Sitting Bull watches him. Sitting Bull is like cold steel, without any expression at all, impossible to read.

They pass the pipe between them. They smoke under the stars and the moonlight. Eventually dawn finds them fast asleep on top of the hill.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - NIGHT

A train sits idle on the track in the western wilderness. On both sides of the train, a camp is struck of US Army tents and makeshift stables for the soldiers and horses alike.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

The regiment was never up to its maximum of men, there may have been eight hundred soldiers and as many horses and with saddles, equipment, arms, and ammunition, together with the personal luggage of the officers, made the trains very heavy, and we travelled slowly. Our days were varied by long stops necessary to water the horses, and occasionally to take them out for exercise. This was always a day of frolic and fun until the train was ready to start.

The Custer Clan sits around a campfire with a wrought-iron pot on an open flame.

Present are:

LIBBIE - Libbie Custer - Custer's wife
 CPT THOMAS CUSTER - Custer's younger brother
 BOSTON - Boston Custer - Custer's youngest brother
 AUTIE REED - Harry Reed - Custer's young nephew

BOSTON

(To Libbie)

It's cold.

LIBBIE

More stew?

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

I'll take a bit more.

LIBBIE

Autie Reed?

AUTIE REED

(extends his bowl)

I've never camped like this before.
Do you think we'll see any buffalo?

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

I'm not used to having so many
ladies in the camp and having to
watch what I say so carefully.

LIBBIE

The cold weather better suites the
General than the heat of Texas.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

Good stew, Libbie. Not used to this
kind of food in camp either.

Autie Reed gets up and leaves.

BOSTON

Where are you going, Autie Reed?

Autie Reed is embarrassed. He points with his chin to the
bush line, obviously to relieve himself.

After Autie Reed leaves, Custer rides up with Marcus
(MARK)Henry KELLOGG, a reporter. Custer dismounts in an
athletic flourish.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

I've just been showing, Mr. Kellogg
here, our friend from the Bismarck
Tribune, around.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

Glad to have you along Mr. Kellogg.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Libbie, did you know Mr. Kellogg is
cousin to our illustrious Captain
Benteen?

LIBBIE

Well, Mr. Kellogg, CPT. Benteen is
one of the General's most trusted
advisors.

MARK KELLOGG

I'm glad to be with all of you on
this adventure.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 You're just happy for the
 exclusive, Mark.
 (Looks around)
 Where's Autie Reed?

BOSTON
 Autie went to go take a ...
 (Looks at Libbie)
 ...to relieve himself.

Libbie shakes her head. She stirs the pot.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 (grins to Thomas)
 Come on.

Custer, Kellogg, Thomas, and Boston track poor Autie Reed and find him. He squats in the tall grass just over the hill. Custer takes out his rifle and aims it.

MARK KELLOGG
 What are you going to do?

Custer pulls the trigger and squeezes off a shot. Then he cups his hand around his mouth for additional volume.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Indian attack! Quick! Run!

The round flies well-over Autie Reed's head. Autie Reed reacts in a panic. Giggling, the others retreat back to the fire and pretend nothing has happened.

Breathlessly, Autie Reed returns. He looks at their faces. Why aren't they in a panic? Then, the older men break out in laughter.

BOSTON
 Your nearly shit yourself, Autie!

AUTIE REED
 You shouldn't do that!

BOSTON
 Come on, Autie, don't be mad.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Just having a little fun.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
 I really didn't know you were going
 to shoot at him though.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 I said I was only having some fun!
 (somewhat angry)
 Just let it go.

EXT. FT LINCOLN - DAY

The next day, a train chugs along in the background belching black smoke. They have reached their destination, FT. LINCOLN on the banks of the Missouri River.

LIBBIE (V.O.)
 Fort Lincoln was built with quarters for six companies. The barracks for the soldiers were on the side of the parade-ground nearest the river. Outside the garrison proper, near the river, were the stables for six hundred horses.

INT. FT LINCOLN (CUSTER'S QUARTERS) - DAY

A sign reads: POST COMMANDER'S QUARTERS. Strikers, black porters, carry large trunks inside their officers quarters, a large Victorian house with white pillars and a generous porch.

LIBBIE (V.O.)
 Farther beyond were laundresses, and their swinging clothes-lines in front, dubbed for this reason 'Suds Row'. Some distance on from Suds Row there were the log-huts of the Indian scouts, a barber-shop, and a little cabin of cotton-wood, with canvas roof for a photographer's establishment.

First Lieutenant (1LT) JAMES CALHOUN is there watches the strikers carry in a small wooden table.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Does this table look familiar to you James? This is the very table General Robert E. Lee signed the Army of Northern Virginia's surrender upon. I was there. From Bull Run to Appomattox. I was there.

LIBBIE

A gift from the honorable General Philip Sheridan to my Autie.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN

(touches it)

The Civil War ended right here on this very table.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Maybe someday it will grace your home, James. You marrying my sister and all. You're blood now. A full member of the Custer Clan.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

And blood is thicker than water, Calhoun.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(Points to his brother)

Listen to that. That comes from Thomas Custer, a two-time Medal of Honor recipient. He should've been the General, not me.

Libbie takes special interest in a bird cage with two live birds in it. She whispers lovingly to the birds.

EXT. INDIAN TEPEE - NIGHT

An Indian comes on his horse and stops in front of a tepee. NO WATER, an Indian, dismounts and approaches the tepee. He pulls a gun.

NO WATER

(Drunk)

Crazy Horse! Crazy Horse! I know you are in there! I know she's in there with you.

The flap of the tepee opens. CRAZY HORSE looks out.

CRAZY HORSE

What are you doing here No Water?

NO WATER

I want my wife.

CRAZY HORSE

You're drunk. Go home before you get hurt. Go away!

NO WATER
(yells inside the tepee)
Black Buffalo Woman! Come out here!

INT. INDIAN TEPEE - NIGHT

The flap of the tepee closes. Crazy Horse looks inside at BLACK-BUFFALO-WOMAN, a beautiful Indian woman. She does not want to come out. She rushes to Crazy Horse and wraps her arms around him. Crazy Horse reassures her, then turns to open the tepee.

Suddenly the flap opens. No Water rushes in with a gun. There is a loud bang, a bright flash of light and the tent fills with carbon smoke. Crazy Horse falls back, shot in the face. Black-Buffalo-Woman screams. The deed done, No Water turns quickly and mounts his horse.

LITTLE HAWK, Crazy Horse's half-brother, heard the shot, and has come running.

No Water rides away.

Little Hawk looks inside the tepee flap. Crazy Horse is on his back holding his face. Black-Buffalo-Woman attends to him. Little Hawk mounts a horse and gallops in pursuit of No Water.

A chase ensues. But No Water cannot be caught. Little Hawk pulls up and shouts after him.

LITTLE HAWK
You dirty half-breed!

Little Hawk watches No Water ride farther away.

LITTLE HAWK (CONT'D)
Go back to your Arikara mother! If
the Hunkpapa ever see you again we
will kill you.
(listens)
You hear me? No Water!

Little Hawk goes back and enters the tepee. Crazy Horse has been shot in the face, in the cheek. He is still alive. Crazy Horse holds a bandage to his face.

LITTLE HAWK (CONT'D)
How are you brother?

CRAZY HORSE
I'm missing a tooth.

Crazy Horse spits. He holds his tooth. Holds it out to show. Little Hawk looks at it. Then, cannot help himself. Little Hawk's laughter begins to build. Soon Crazy Horse is laughing too, wincing as he does.

BLACK-BUFFALO-WOMAN

(looks at both of them)

This is not funny. He could have been killed.

LITTLE HAWK

Crazy Horse has seen visions. He cannot be killed by a bullet while in battle.

(laughs for a beat)

But that does not include stealing another man's wife.

Not amused, Black-Buffalo-Woman storms out of the tepee. Both of the warriors laugh even harder.

INT - THE FAR WEST - DAY

Inside the Far West a map of the Yellowstone river hangs in the dining room. General Terry stands in front of it. General Custer. Colonel (COL) JOHN GIBBON and riverboat Captain GRANT MARSH sit before General Terry.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

As of January all Indians not reporting to the reservation will be considered hostile to the United States. Our job is to confront them and bring them in. Because of food shortages and foul-ups in supply lines, thousands of Indians are leaving the reservation and both the Cheyenne and Sioux are converging in force to resist. Now, we think the Indians are hold up somewhere between the Powder and the Bighorn rivers. Probably close to the Little Bighorn valley or perhaps closer to the Rosebud. I will place my flag here on the Far West and will navigate up and down the Yellowstone River and her tributaries.

(turns to Marsh)

Go ahead Captain Marsh.

GRANT MARSH

The confluence of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers are about 100 miles west of FT Lincoln. From this point of the Yellowstone, the Fast West will navigate along all four of its tributaries: the Powder, the Tongue, the Rosebud, and the Bighorn rivers. The Far West will be positioned for material support of both the Montana Column consisting of Colonel Gibbon in the West at Fort Ellis, and all along the way for the Dakota Column for General Terry and Colonel Custer's command.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

Now, our plan is infallible. Thank you Captain Marsh. I will provide Command and Control of both columns from here on the Far West. General Custer will take twelve companies from Fort Lincoln and move across land the 100 miles to the Powder River, in a fishhook, from the south to the Rosebud, or wherever the Indians can be found. Somewhere around the Little Bighorn we will combine our three columns. Sometime around 27th of June. Then, we'll have them!

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

The Lakota have no heart to fight. And the Cheyenne? We're on good terms with the Cheyenne.

COL JOHN GIBBON

Since you pledged your life to them never to attack again, right?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Now, that was an misunderstanding. Nevertheless it worked.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

Our biggest worry, George, is if your movements are detected by the Lakota. If they see you before an attack, they'll run and disappear into the Montana prairie. Now, we don't want that.

COL JOHN GIBBON
We will never be able to find them.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
That's where you figure into the plan, Col. Gibbon. You will proceed North of the Yellowstone river to cut-off all avenues of escape.

COL JOHN GIBBON
And If they turn South, they'll hit Crook.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Where is General Crook? Shouldn't he be hearing this too?

GEN ALFRED TERRY
General Crook does not report to me. He reports to General Sheridan. Now any questions?

Custer shrugs and turns to Gibbon.

COL JOHN GIBBON
We'll have them caught in a vice. There is no escape.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
My compliments General Terry for this superior plan. With twelve companies under my command, there are not enough Indians in the world to defeat the 7th Calvary. We'll find them and we'll whip 'em.

COL JOHN GIBBON
If you do find them George, leave some for the rest of us.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
No, I don't think I will.

Gibbon smiles and turns to go.

COL JOHN GIBBON
Good luck Custer. I'll see you in the Valley of the Little Bighorn on the 27th of June, if not before.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
George, can you stay a moment? I've got somebody I'd like you to meet.

COL Gibbon smiles and leaves. General Terry opens a door and a fresh faced young officer, Second Lieutenant (2LT) JAMES STURGIS, tall and straight, thin-waisted, with thick dark curly hair, walks into the room.

GEN ALFRED TERRY (CONT'D)

General Custer, I'd like you to meet Second Lieutenant James Sturgis. Sturgis, meet your new Commanding Officer, General George Armstrong Custer. I'm assigning Jack to your Dakota column, George.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

General, sir, I have so looked forward to meeting you, it is a real honor sir.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

You must be Sam Sturgis boy? You strike a fetching resemblance to your most excellent father, General Sturgis.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

Thank you sir. Father sends his compliments to you General Custer, along with his explicit instructions for me to be your obedient servant, of which I am only too happy to comply, sir.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

I have been expecting you. I heard you did very well at West Point. You must know. I did not. Very last of my class.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

That only means you were meant for the action of command, sir. Not to read about it text books.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

I like him, General Terry. I think we are going to get along famously.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

Take good care of him George.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Lt. Sturgis, I was wondering, won't you join us for dinner tonight?

2LT JAMES STURGIS
Delighted, sir.

EXT. FT. LINCOLN - NIGHT

That night, General Custer leads 2LT Sturgis to the far side of Ft. Lincoln, where an open door emits a warm orange glow from within.

LIBBIE (V.O.)
I wish that I could recall more about the curious characters among us. Most of them had strange histories, the cause of their seeking the wild life of the frontier.

The sign over the door reads: The Boarding House.

2LT JAMES STURGIS
Is this where we are having dinner?

Around a campfire sit soldiers and Indian scouts:
1LT CHARLES VARNUM - Custer's Chief of Scouts.
MITCH BOYER - a Canadian/Indian mixed scout
ISIAH DORMAN - A former slave turned scout
BLOODY KNIFE - A half breed Hunkpapa Scout
Six Crow Scouts.

Custer and Lt. Sturgis walk into the boarding house. At the sight of the Indians, Lt. Sturgis hesitates.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
What's the matter Lieutenant Sturgis? Never seen an Indian before?

2LT JAMES STURGIS
Actually, sir, I have not. What are they doing here?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Tell him, why are you here Bloody Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE
It takes an Indian to catch an Indian.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
That's right.

Custer washes his hands in a water bucket.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

Would that not be harmful to the Indian cause?

1LT CHARLES VARNUM

It would be, if these were Teton Sioux. But these here are Crow. And Crows hate the Lakota. The Lakota Been encroaching on their lands for decades.

Custer walks behind Lt. Varum and pats his back like an old friend.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Lt. Varnum is the head of Indian scouts. Varnum, this is Jack Sturgis.

1LT CHARLES VARNUM

Welcome to Indian country, Sturgis.
(nods)
You see, the Crows believe if your enemy is their enemy, that makes you friends.

MITCH BOYER

Friends? Just like the Army was with the Lakota, until Long Hair found gold in the Black Hills.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

Long Hair? Is that an Indian Chief?

MITCH BOYER

Long Hair is what the Lakota call General Custer.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

(smiles, washes hands again)

I can out-Indian any Indian. What are we eating tonight, Bloody Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE

Same as last night. Buffalo stew.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Lt. Sturgis. You'll never eat stew as hearty as made from buffalo meat. Gives you strength. Makes you strong. Isn't that right Bloody Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE
If you say it is so, Long Hair,
then it is so.

Custer winks at the others.

ISIAH DORMAN, a black former slave turned scout speaks.

ISIAH DORMAN
If you like, I'm taking the
General's nephew out on a hunt for
buffalo this week. Maybe with the
General's permission, you can come
with us, Lt. Sturgis.

Lt. Sturgis looks at General Custer, who is busy washing his
hands over and over. He shrugs.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
You up for it Jack?

2LT JAMES STURGIS
Yes, I'd like that very much, thank
you.

ISIAH DORMAN
Isiah Dorman
(Reaches to shake hands)
Call me Dorman.

Jack smiles at Dorman, then to all of them.

2LT JAMES STURGIS
I'm think I'm going to like it
here.

INT. LODGE TEPEE - NIGHT

Several Indian Chiefs sit and smoke in a large, lodge-style
tepee, a moderate bonfire before them.

SITTING BULL
The Hunkpapa welcomes you. I am
glad you all came to this Alliance.
This circle of friends.
(looks at the faces)
Many know our War Chief, GALL.

Gall nods to them. He has braided hair, a short gray eagle
feather behind his head. His face is hardened with a down-
turned frown.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

We welcome back our brother RAIN-IN-FACE who recently escaped the white man's prison.

Rain-in-Face nods. His eagle feather is longer than Gall's, taller, and white with a black tip.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

We welcome all the main tribes. Our brothers, the Sans-Arcs, the Blackfeet, and the Brule.

More Indians nod in acknowledgement of their tribe.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

The Miniconjou's, WHITE BULL and BLACK-WHITE-MAN.

White Bull nods. He has three eagle feathers, two upright, one slightly askew.

Black-White-Man smokes the pipe. He wears five small feathers and has a scar from a previous war wound around his eye.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

The Oglala, the War Chief LOW DOG and Crazy Horse, who beat the white soldiers at Ft. Fetterman.

Low Dog is the epitome of intensity. His brow is permanently downward furled. It makes him look angry all the time. He wears a single black feather and bone armor on his chest and neck. He looks ready for fight.

Crazy Horse is the youngest. He wears no shirt. There is a scar on his cheek, a remnant from his encounter with No Water. He is quiet and calm. His is the only hair not braided. He wears no feathers and has grass woven into his hair. He does not nod, nor does he speak to anyone.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

The Northern Cheyenne, War Chief, TWO MOONS.

Two Moons sits with a smile. His headdress is full of eagle feathers, a highly respected War Chief.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

Our brother, the Southern Cheyenne Chief Lame-White-Man, son of Black Kettle, murdered at the Washita. Lame-White-Man has been shamed.

(MORE)

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

His wish is to avenge the death of his Peace Chief in the way of his fathers. He has come to fight.

Lame-White-Man wears no feathers at all and makes no eye contact.

LOW DOG

Sitting Bull, why do you call us together like this? I have already heard your call. You call yourself the leader of the Indian Nations. You are no chief. You are only a holy man. Sitting Bull, you are old and wise, but whenever we get into a fight, you are always in the back. Why should we listen to you?

TWO MOONS

Low Dog speaks out of turn. When my people, the Northern Cheyenne, came here we did not know what to expect from our old enemies. But they welcomed us in their village. When we were cold your children gave us warm blankets. When we were hungry, your women fed us.

SITTING BULL

Chief Low Dog,
(Puts a hand up)
The debate is whether it is better to be hunted by the Wasi'chu separately or stand and fight in freedom together.

BLACK WHITE MAN

If the Wasi'chu would only stay where they are and leave us where we are, we might have peace with them.

LAME-WHITE-MAN

But we have to protect our families, our women and children.

WHITE BULL

Sitting Bull, our women and children go hungry. What are we to do then? Report to the reservation?

GALL

How many Lakota have already gone to the reservation? And how many leave starving?

TWO MOONS

Only a fool gives up their way of life for a pound of bacon fat and a bag full of sugar.

SITTING BULL

When all the buffalo are gone. When all the grass is dried up, when all the rivers are empty, when there is nothing left to eat or drink, only then will the Wasi'chu learn. Gold will not fill their bellies.

GALL

Sitting Bull, when you tell us to fight we will fight. When you tell us to make peace we will make peace.

RAIN-IN-FACE

But if it is not peace the Wasi'chu want, and they attack, then we must kill them all.

TWO MOONS

We will fight. Like the soldiers fight. We must fight together and to the death if needed.

CRAZY HORSE

Sitting Bull, what did you see in your Sundance?

Many of the Alliance turn to look at Crazy Horse.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - NIGHT

Cut to the Sundance:

Sitting Bull has his shirt off. He is suspended in the air in great pain. Wooden skewers pierce through his skin and flesh of his chest. The wooden skewers are tied to thongs connected to a central pole of the lodge. Sitting Bull dances around the pole, stopping in intervals to lean back and allow the thongs to stretch his pierced flesh absurdly away from his body, until it gives way and the thongs snap against the pole empty. Sitting Bull is delirious on the ground.

EXT. DREAMSCAPE - NIGHT

We see his vision:

Sitting Bull turns to face the morning sun while walking through his village. A floating soldier slowly falls head first into the ground before him. Sitting Bull is surprised to see another dead soldier fall. Then another comes, then another. They are all floating. They fall upside down. Slowly they hit the ground, coming to a stop as dead men. Two hundred bodies are now stacked before him in piles. Sitting Bull wonders at the sight. Then it starts to rain. The rain creates a strong torrent of water that comes and washes away the dead men from the land, until it is free and clean of them once again. When the rain stops only a wet and exhilarated Sitting Bull remains.

INT. LODGE TEPEE - NIGHT

The Tribal Alliance sit and stare silently at Sitting Bull now. Their faces up-lit from the bonfire.

SITTING BULL

We will defeat these Wasi'chu. But before I woke, I heard a voice, a warning, take nothing from the soldiers. If you do not listen to Wakhan Thanka our people will be vanquished from this land forever.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

The next day, Dorman, Sturgis, and Autie Reed leave Ft. Lincoln on horseback to go hunting. They ride for miles in pristine country of hills and valleys, creeks and coulees, When they ride over the crest of a hill they stop. There, they see a single but impressive large buffalo bull.

ISIAH DORMAN

That's the biggest bull I've ever seen.

2LT JAMES STURGIS

What raw power and grace!

AUTIE REED

He's so big he's not even afraid of us.

ISIAH DORMAN

Come on! I'll show you.

Dorman kicks his horse and the three of them follow in the charge toward the big bull. The buffalo see's the horses, and with a sudden jerk, the big buffalo is off and running.

Dorman rides up beside the beast. Dorman reaches down with his hand and touches the buffalo. While in full gallop, he starts to pet the bull's curly fur.

ISIAH DORMAN (CONT'D)
Come on, Autie Reed!

Dorman calls for Autie Reed, but its Boston that rides up first. With Dorman on the other side to keep the buffalo straight, Boston touches the big bull.

Autie comes next. He rides up and touches the buffalo. A big smile lights Autie Reed's face. He laughs in delight as he backs away.

Finally, Jack comes riding up close. He reaches down and runs his fingers through the buffalo's thick hair while the beast is on the dead run.

ISIAH DORMAN (CONT'D)
(yells)
The Indians call this Counting
Coup! A great feat of bravery!

Dorman pulls his rifle

The others slow down. They lay back to give Dorman room to drop the beast. Dorman raises his rifle. But at that moment, the buffalo unexpectedly rams Dorman's horse and Dorman's rifle goes off. The bullet goes straight through the head of Dorman's horse.

Dorman's horse falls and spills Dorman painfully to a dusty roll, but without serious injury.

The bull runs on to live another day.

Once Dorman is found not to be seriously hurt, the boys cannot stop laughing.

Dorman rides back to Ft. Lincoln on the back of Autie Reed's horse.

The first person they encounter is Mitch Boyer outside the fort.

MITCH BOYER
What happened to your horse Dorman?

Dorman only shakes his head. The boys are laugh as they ride past Boyer.

INT. FT. LINCOLN - NIGHT

Custer sits in the dark at his desk with only one oil lamp's flame illuminating a book he is reading. He turns the page and looks at a painted picture in vivid colors.

The picture is of Napoleon before his mounted calvary.

Custer's eyes flash at Napoleon. He admires the French Emperor, wants to be him. Napoleon. Custer's face shows it.

He takes out a fresh paper and begins to write.

EXT. FT. LINCOLN - NEXT DAY

The officers of the 7th Cavalry come together to stand at attention in the Parade Grounds.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

The men spent hours grooming their horses in a sort of motherly love. The name of each horse was lovingly printed in home-made letters over their stall. Whenever a fault was discovered in their horse, it was really laughable to hear the ingenious excuses why it should not be exchanged for another from the fresh supply.

Custer stands in front of the men.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Men. We are going to organize our mounts by color. It is going to look splendid.

Benteen and McIntosh shift their eyes toward each other.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Napoleon used this same tactic with his Imperial Guard.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Shouldn't the horses be organized by battle temperament, sir?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
By color, Captain Benteen.
(posts the list)
Here are your assignments.

Custer walks to a pole and jabs his paper through a nail already there. The officers start to wander over to look.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
But I already have a horse, a black one.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Capt. Weir has been assigned the Black horses.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
I'll trade with Weir.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
You'll ride a horse of a different color now, sir. Any more questions?

Some of the officers complain.

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH
Why do I get all mixed?

CPT THOMAS WIER
Because you're the worst horseman in the unit, McIntosh.

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH
That's not funny Weir.

CPT THOMAS WIER
I'm not kidding either.

CPT THOMAS MCDUGALL
What about B Company, sir? I don't see my Company listed here.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Oh yes, McDougall, B Company. You get the mules. I'm putting you in charge of the pack trains. You'll have all supplies and haul the packs.

The other officers either laugh or grimace at McDougall's bad luck, relieved they are not in charge of the mule packs.

CPT THOMAS MCDUGALL
The mules. Yes sir.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
Have fun with Barnum.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Did General Terry approve this?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
General Terry is a desk General!
Not a field commander! He commands
from the rear!

You can hear a pin drop. Almost immediately there is instant regret on Custer's face. Custer takes a beat.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
You all have your assignments. Now,
fall out and get your mounts ready.
We leave in three days.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
(to Reno)
Did color of horse matter to
Napoleon at Waterloo?

Custer heard that.

INT. FT. LINCOLN (GENERAL'S QUARTERS)- DAY

The next day there is a knock at the door of the Custer's residence. Libbie paints a cabinet when she hears the knock. She stops, wipes her hands, and goes to the door.

LIBBIE (V.O.)
As the wife of the commanding
officer, I belonged to every one,
and I remained hospitable even to
the General's enemies. But I do not
like to think now of having
welcomed any one into our house
whom I inwardly recoiled.

Libbie swings the door open to reveal General Terry.

LIBBIE
Why, General Terry! We didn't know
you were coming.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
M'mam. (Tips his hat) Please excuse
my intrusion. Is the General in?
I'd like a moment to speak with
him, please.

LIBBIE

General Terry. Why, so nice to see you again, of course, yes. I am sorry sir, we weren't expecting you. I would've had...

TERRY

No need, Ma'am. I'll just be a minute.

Custer approaches.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

General Terry, please, do come in won't you.

General Terry walks into their house and looks around. The thick rugs, the curio cabinets, tables filled with fine plates, the bird cages.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

My compliments M'am. You have truly turned this house into a home. It's splendid.

LIBBIE

You are too kind, General Terry.

They walk into the parlor.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

Please make yourself comfortable General. I'll put on some coffee.

Libbie turns and gives her husband a worried look.

GEN ALFRED TERRY

None for me M'am. Thank you just the same. I won't be long.

LIBBIE

Well, I'll leave you gentleman to it then. (starts to leave)

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

No, Libbie, please stay. Please take a seat.

General Terry thanks him and, after Libbie sits, he takes a seat. General Custer rests on the arm of Libbie's chair.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 General, when a man asks his wife
 to stay, you can rest assured what
 he's about to say is something he
 means.

Terry looks at Custer inquisitively.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
 I'm intrigued, please go on
 General.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 It has come to my attention, you
 may have heard some things.

Custer glances at Libbie then back to General Terry

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 The truth is, sir, I believe in you
 as an officer of the highest
 caliber. I also believe in you as a
 man. And I am proud to serve under
 you, without complaint, with
 unwavering faith in your plan to
 find these Lakota and return them
 to the reservation. In this, I have
 no doubt of your capabilities.

Sincere clouds form in General Custer's eyes as he speaks.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
 Glad to hear that, George. But I'm
 afraid your confession is
 misplaced. I've not heard anything
 like that at all.

Custer slowly nods and looks at Libbie once again.

GEN ALFRED TERRY (CONT'D)
 No. Actually the reason I'm here is
 to inform you I'm putting Major
 Reno in charge of the first foray
 down the Rosebud in search of the
 Lakota.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Reno?

GEN ALFRED TERRY
 It is less risky to your personal
 situation, George.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 General, I am a field commander.
 There are no Lakota Sioux here at
 Fort Lincoln.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
 I'm quite aware of that, but it's
 for the best.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 General? Sir, with all due respect,
 Major Reno has no experience in
 Indian fighting. Chances are they
 are going to find Lakota around the
 Rosebud and a lot of them.

GEN ALFRED TERRY
 I knew you wouldn't approve,
 George. That's why I came down to
 tell you personally. But, that's my
 decision.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 General Terry. I do thank you for
 your time in coming here and
 telling me personally.
 (Slowly exhales)
 It confirms the level of respect I
 have for you, sir.

General Terry rises to leave. Libbie and Custer graciously bid him adieu. As soon as the door closes, Custer turns and fumes. He looks fiercely at Libbie. Libbie doesn't know what to do. He grabs a nearby riding crop and whips his own left leg with it- hard.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 I'm going out for a ride!

Once outside the door General Terry smiles.

GENERAL ALFRED TERRY
 Desk General, huh?

INT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

TITLE: General Crook Headquarters, June 15 1876

CPT GUY HENRY, a tired-looking stately man worn thin from duty and sporting a wide moustache enters General (GEN) GEORGE CROOK's tent. Crook is a man with groomed hair but a mess of a beard. He is in his tent reading a book.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
 (without looking up)
 What is it, CPT Henry?

CPT GUY HENRY
 What news of the Shoshone, sir?

Frank Grouard walks in, a scout of pacific birth, barrel chested, sporting impeccably combed hair and moderately thick moustache for the times.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
 (still not looking up)
 Frank Grouard should be bringing us news about the Shoshone any day now, Captain Henry.

CPT GUY HENRY
 Do you trust him? Sitting Bull couldn't.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
 I don't trust anyone, Captain Henry.

Just then, FRANK GROUARD enters the tent. He gives Captain Henry a dubious look.

FRANK GROUARD
 They're in, General. They're here.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
 (looks up surprised)
 They're here? You brought them?

Frank smiles and nods.

GEN GEORGE CROOK (CONT'D)
 Good work Grouard. How many?

FRANK GROUARD
 Over a hundred.

EXT. THE ROSEBUD (SOUTH) - DAY

Crook exits his headquarters. Once outside, he is surprised to see over a hundred Shoshone Indians cross-legged on the ground.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
 Marvelous, Grouard. Do they know where the Indian village is?

FRANK GROUARD

About 15 miles from here up the
Rosebud.

GEN GEORGE CROOK

If it's there, we'll find it. Capt.
Henry, give the order.

Captain Henry passes Frank Grouard and they share a look of
distrust for the other.

EXT. THE ROSEBUD (NORTH) - DAY

From below the ridge of distant hills, Crazy horse spies on
the large US Cavalry unit. Behind him are hundreds of Indian
warriors, Lakota and Cheyenne, adorned in bone armor, faces
painted, with many weapons. They sit motionless on horses
poised to strike.

CRAZY HORSE

The whole Earth is black with
soldiers. The Shoshone celebrate,
with smiles, and the passing of
buffalo meat.

Crazy Horse turns to look at Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull nods.

Crazy Horse goes back to watch them more.

EXT. THE ROSEBUD AREA - DAY

Back at the Rosebud, Crook lowers his binoculars. Frozen, he
blinks a time or two.

Like herds of buffalo, more Indians than he has ever seen, at
least fifteen hundred of them, riding hard, rapidly
approaching his positions along the Rosebud River.

CPT ANSON MILLS

(calmly)

The Indians are attacking us, sir.

GEN GEORGE CROOK

Those are Cheyenne, but we haven't
attacked them.

CPT ANSON MILLS

Well, they're attacking us, sir.

Crook looks pale. He brings the binoculars back up to assess
the situation.

GEN GEORGE CROOK

They have to be protecting the main
village. It must be close!

Crazy Horse and his warriors burst into the ranks of the soldiers and the Shoshone Indians. The soldiers fight back. Hand to hand combat ensues. The Indians hack and stab the soldiers. A one-sided battle in favor of the Cheyenne ensues.

Capt. Guy Henry takes a bullet through the face, in through the left cheek and out the right. In a daze, Capt. Henry awkwardly dismounts and lays down on the ground. He is quickly protected by a friendly Shoshone Indian. Capt. Henry is carried off the field by his troops.

Crazy Horse attacks. The soldiers defensive line collapses under attack from the Indian warrior's gun fire.

CPT ANSON MILLS

Charge! Forward! Drive 'em back!

First Sargent (1SG) JOHN HENRY SHINGLE refuses to retreat. He stands his ground he yells defiantly at the Indians and his own troops.

1SG JOHN SHINGLE

Face them men! Damn them! Face him!

Cut to the opposite end of the battlefield to a deep valley where Indians and Soldiers on the either side shoot at each other across the chasm.

In the middle of the valley, a wounded Indian warrior has been left behind. The soldiers pour fire down on him.

OLD CROW

I think I know that brave down
there.

Just then, a girl on a horseback races through the valley.

OLD CROW (CONT'D)

That girl is riding after him!

Under a hail of bullets the girl rides like thunder toward her fallen brother, who appears as just a mere speck in the valley. She reaches and rushes past him at full speed. The speck, which was her brother, is gone.

OLD CROW (CONT'D)

She missed him.

Miraculously, both the brother and the sister sit upright together on the horse. They ride farther out of harm's way.

At this sight, the Indians and Soldier's both give a cheer for the daring feat they just witnessed.

OLD CROW (CONT'D)
Today, they are the best Calvary riders in the world.

EXT. THE ROSEBUD AREA - DAY

GEN Crook is looks the situation over at the Rosebud through the binoculars when a messenger hands a message to LTC WILLIAM B ROYALL.

LTC WILLIAM B ROYALL
From Mills and Noyes, sir.
The message reads: No village.
Repeat. No Indian village on the Rosebud.

GEN Crook pulls the binoculars away.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
We are too spread out.
(sighs)
Heavy casualties.
(to LTC Royall)
Call off the attack! Recall all forces back to form a defensive perimeter.

LTC WILLIAM B ROYALL
We can still whip them, sir.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
No, no, Colonel Royall, It's more serious than I thought. Hate to admit it. We just got whipped.

INT. MEDICAL TENT - DAY

Elsewhere, Capt. Mills visits the medical tent. A soldier named ELMER SNOW is screams as they saw off both his arms.

CPT ANSON MILLS
Hang in there, Elmer.

Seeing Elmer Snow's arm being sawed off causes Mills to throw up.

Mills eventually comes to Capt. Guy Henry who is still alive after having been shot in the face.

CPT ANSON MILLS (CONT'D)
Are you badly hurt, Henry?

CPT GUY HENRY
(speaks in slurps)
The doctor's ...have just told
me... that I must die...but I will
not.

CPT ANSON MILLS
Good. That's good.

CPT GUY HENRY
Did...we...win?

CPT ANSON MILLS
Crazy Horse is gone. The battle is
over.

Capt. Guy Henry nods and turns away.

INT. MILITARY TENT - DAY

Elsewhere, Frank Grouard and LTC Royall assess the situation
with General Crook.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
This has been a bad day for us.

FRANK GROUARD
General, the full strength of the
Lakota village is much bigger than
what we first thought. Estimates of
600 warriors, must be adjusted,
more like 5,000 warriors.

LTC WILLIAM B ROYALL
Aren't you over-estimating them,
Grouard?

FRANK GROUARD
Colonel Royall, I'm telling you we
got lucky. That was only about half
the village. If the entire village
would have attacked, not one of us
would be alive now.

GEN GEORGE CROOK
Where is this main village,
Grouard?

FRANK GROUARD

The trail leads about 14 miles west of the Rosebud to the Little Big Horn.

LTC WILLIAM B ROYALL

Sir, Custer is expected to be in that area in only a matter of days. We need to get word to General Terry.

GEN GEORGE CROOK

You don't know where the Hell Custer going. Hell, Custer doesn't even know where Custer is going. Even if you did, do you think this is news that would stop him, or just spur him on?

(Takes a beat)

Be that as it may. I'll send a telegraph to Sheridan. Let him relay it to Terry. I'm going to have a hard enough time trying to explain what happened today on the Rosebud.

Crook looks at them with an intensity in his eyes. He starts to walk out, then stops and turns.

GEN GEORGE CROOK (CONT'D)

Prepare to fall back to Fort Fetterman, Gentlemen. We'll await reinforcements and orders from General Sheridan. The northward push of the Department of the Platte is officially over. We will not be linking up with General Terry or Colonel Gibbon.

INT. FT. LINCOLN (OFFICER'S CLUB)- NIGHT

Later that night, MAJ Reno sits in the Officers Club alone until CPT Benteen comes in.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

(drunk)

Benteen! Come here, have a drink. Did you hear? I'm leaving for Indian Territory tomorrow.

Reno grabs a shot glass and fills it from his bottle. Slides the glass to Benteen. Benteen sits, takes the shot glass, and downs the contents. Reno pours another for him, then one for himself.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
Here's to the Girl I Left Behind
Me.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
What girl would that be, Reno?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
I dunno. Can't be my wife. She's
dead. Died last year. Now get this,
when I put in for leave to go to
her funeral, General Terry, he
denied it.

(throws back a shot)
Yep, couldn't be there with her
when she died. Then missed her
funeral too. The Army said they
needed me more.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Oh, I didnt' know. I'm sorry, Reno.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
The Girl I Left Behind Me, I guess
I'm talking about your girl,
Benteen.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
What do you mean by that, Reno?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
I dunno, maybe.
(with a wink)
Maybe you'll loan me yours. She's
still alive ain't she?

Benteen stands and slaps Reno across the face. Reno is a
little less drunk now. Benteen holds his gaze for a moment.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
You son of a bitch! Don't you ever
say anything like that to me again.

Without another word, Benteen leaves the Officer's Club.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - DAY

The next day, the sun is hot and cloudless, a vivid blue. Major Reno leads 200 men. Indian scouts Mitch Boyer and Bloody Knife ride on either side of him. Major Reno wears a wide-billed straw hat. His lips are dry. He takes a pint of whiskey from his jacket and takes a slug.

His men in front search a few empty tepees. Then, they set them on fire. They continue.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Mitch, I've heard the Sioux consider you the best tracker, Indian or white, in these parts.

MITCH BOYER

They put a \$200 reward on the half of me that is Sioux. But if they ever try to collect it, I'll be sure to pop a few of them over first.

They crest a hill. Ahead, advance scouts are in the valley below. Reno lifts his hand and the company halts.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Troops dismount!
(at Boyer and Bloody Knife)
You two come with me.

They walk down to meet the crow scouts

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)

Find something?

MITCH BOYER

Travois. The Indians use their collapsed tepees as travois to drag their supplies and people. These marks go west, away from the Rosebud.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

How many?

MITCH BOYER

Thousand, maybe more.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Toward the Little Bighorn?

The Crow Scout says something else. But Boyer does not translate.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
What did he say?

BLOODY KNIFE
Superstitions.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
What did he say?

BLOODY KNIFE
He said, 'If these Dakota see us,
the sun will not move far before we
are all killed'.

Reno walks ahead and looks over the vast and beautiful scenery. He licks his dry lips and takes out the bottle.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Over this terrain, they could be
anywhere, behind any ridge.

He takes off his straw hat and wipes the sweat off his brow.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
A thousand, you say, Mitch?

MITCH BOYER
More, probably more.

BLOODY KNIFE
More.

Reno looks at his unit.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Two hundred of us, over a thousand
of them.

BLOODY KNIFE
These are not women and children,
but a thousand Lakota and Cheyenne
warriors.

Reno empties his bottle. He tosses it in the weeds. From his coat pocket, he pulls out another, opens it, and passes the bottle to Bloody Knife.

Bloody Knife takes a long slug. Passes the bottle to Mitch Boyer who likewise drinks. The bottle comes back around to Reno who takes another swig before screwing on the lid.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
 (looks at the bottle)
 Rations are running low. Horses are
 tired. Our orders were to find the
 Lakota village. We have done that.

Major Reno puts the bottle away.

BLOODY KNIFE
 We're not going after them?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
 You look disappointed.

BLOODY KNIFE
 If you want a fight, I'll fight.

MITCH BOYER
 Revenge is a cold mistress, Bloody
 Knife.

Bloody Knife looks away.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
 Mount up! We're heading back home!

INT. FT. LINCOLN (GENERAL'S QUARTERS) - DAY

General Custer is paces the floors in the parlor of his
 residence. His brother, Capt. Thomas Custer sits in a
 overstuffed chair.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 No timid action ever won a lady's
 heart or a captured an Indian
 village. Why, the man's a coward!
 AND he missed a glorious
 opportunity. One I would not have,
 had I been in command.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
 General Terry was not pleased at
 him either.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Even that paper pushing Terry
 thought Reno missed his
 opportunity.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
 Did you tell Terry that?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
I did better than that, Tom. I
wrote the Bismarck papers.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
Through Mark Kellogg?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Why do you think he's here, Tom?

Custer gets closer to his brother now.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
(whispers)
Tom, before we left for Ft.
Lincoln, Libbie found a photograph
of Monahseta. Seeing it again, made
her ask about the baby.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
YELLOW BIRD? He would be about
seven years old now.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
(Nods)
She must never know about Yellow
Bird, Tom. Never.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
She won't.

Tom motions that Libbie approaches.

LIBBIE
General! A have a letter for you.

Libbie hands it to Custer then leans on Thomas.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)
It's from General Terry.

Custer quickly opens it, reads it, then smiles.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
General Terry it seems has had a
change of heart. He's mobilizing
the entire Montana Wing. 7th
calvary, 31 officers, 600 men and
40 scouts. I will be in command. We
are to link up with General Crook
and Colonel Gibbon. Sitting Bull is
stuck in a vice. Gibbon and Crook
are the anvil. I am the hammer.

LIBBIE
That's wonderful news!

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
He has also indicated, if evidence
of hostiles presents itself. Then I
am to take the best course of
action I deem fit.
(smacks the paper)

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
Reno's failure has been your
windfall.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
As it should be!

LIBBIE
Oh, Autie! That old Custer luck has
struck again!

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Measure the drapes inside the White
House, Libbie!

LIBBIE
Oh, it's all so exciting!

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
This is what I need. A stunning
victory printed in every newspaper
around the country. An opportunity
to re-capture my true generalship.
Why, the name of Custer will be on
every tongue and in every mind.

Libbie jubilantly wraps her arms around him. She peppers him
with kisses and admiration. During her embrace, Custer
glances up at Tom.

INT. FT. LINCOLN (CHAPEL)- NIGHT

Benteen enters the base chapel at Ft. Lincoln, a small room
with rows of pews divided by a center aisle that leads to an
elevated platform, upon which sits a lectern. On the wall
behind the lectern a large wooden cross is nailed to the wall
made from simple flat boards. The knotholes in the wood look
like eyes.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

News came through Indian scouts that the summer might be full of danger, and my heart was almost broken at finding that the general did not dare to take me with him. Whatever peril might be awaiting me on the expedition, nothing could be equal to the suffering of suspense at home.

CPT Myles Keogh sits in prayer in the second row on the right. When Benteen enters, out of respect, he takes a seat in the back, away from Keogh.

After hearing someone come in, CPT Keogh turns to see Benteen. After a pause, CPT Keogh stands and walks over.

CPT KEOGH

May I join you?

Benteen doesn't answer, just scoots over, and Keogh takes a seat beside him. Benteen looks straight ahead.

CPT KEOGH (CONT'D)

(a long pause)

I'm afraid of dying.

Benteen stares ahead with no acknowledgement.

CPT KEOGH (CONT'D)

I'm not afraid of being dead. I believe in God, in Heaven... but just the act of dying.

BENTEEN

It's only human. Even Jesus was afraid.

Keogh takes a deep breath. He looks at Benteen who will not return his gaze.

KEOGH

I've written a will. Can I give you a copy? For safe keeping. Just in case, I don't make it back.

BENTEEN

(looks at him)

That's bad luck, Keogh.

KEOGH

Will you take it?

BENTEEN

If it makes you feel better.

CPT Keogh hands Benteen a single piece of paper.

Keogh looks at Benteen again.

KEOGH

I didn't know you were a religious man, CPT Benteen.

BENTEEN

I'm not really afraid of dying. I'm afraid of death itself.

INT. FT. LINCOLN (OFFICERS QUARTERS) - NIGHT

The Sign on the Door reads: Officer's Quarters - CPT Thomas Weir, Company Commander, D Company.

In the middle of the night CPT Weir rises from his bed, fully clothed in a wrinkled uniform.

He picks at the food on the plate on the nightstand, then pushes it away without eating.

Under his pillow he keeps a bottle, he pulls it out and takes a drink of whiskey.

On the bed knob hangs his leather pistol belt. He looks at the pistol. Then pulls it out, turns it this way and that. Then releases the chamber to see that the gun is not loaded. He licks his lips. Then puts the pistol to his temple. He pulls the trigger. The gun clicks.

He loads the gun. Then puts it in back into the holster.

He gets up and walks across the dark room. He opens the door and takes in a breath of fresh outdoor air. The courtyard takes on a bluish tint in the night.

Weir squints. He senses movement. He can see a dark shape. Far ahead in the distance there is a black dog roaming the parade grounds. As Weir watches the dog starts to come to him. Then the dog starts to run. It runs toward Weir. Weir's body stiffens. The black dog looms larger, running faster now, getting closer. When the black dog is almost to the door, Weir takes a step back into his quarters and slams the door.

The black dog bangs upon his door, tries to get in. Weir backs farther into his room.

The dog barks, snarls, feverishly scratching on the door. It claws under the threshold, louder and more vicious. The door shakes.

Weir takes the pistol out of the holster again. He approaches the door with the pistol pointing straight ahead. He cocks the hammer. Then he flings the door open.

Nothing but the night air. The black dog is gone.

Weir walks out into the night. But he is alone.

INT. FT LINCOLN (CALHOUN'S QUARTERS) - DAY

The next morning, Maggie Calhoun comes into the den where her husband's uniform hangs. She runs her hand across the uniform, and discovers a small tear. She scurries for thread and needle, she cannot find either.

MAGGIE

Now, where did I put it?

Calhoun enters.

MAGGIE (CONT'D)

You can't go! Not yet! There's a tear in your uniform.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN

(Examines the hole)

It's nothing, Maggie.

MAGGIE

No, no, it is. It's something. I can't have you leave until I sew it.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN

(stops her)

I told you it's nothing. Maggie.

(takes her in his arms)

It's nothing.

He looks into his eyes. She starts to cry. Her head goes into his chest.

MAGGIE

I'm so sorry. I'm not sure what's gotten into me. It's not like me to be so emotional.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN
 You'll be fine. (kisses her
 forehead) Five minutes after we're
 gone, you'll forget all about me.

MAGGIE
 Never. I'll always wait for you.
 Come back home as quick as you can.

INT. FT LINCOLN (CUSTER QUARTERS) - DAY

Libbie Custer passes her bird cage and pulls up to see one of
 the birds dead. She opens the cage and sweeps the dead bird
 into a rag. A worried expression crosses her face.

LIBBIE
 Oh no! Not today of all days.

Inexplicitly she is overwhelmed. Her hand covers her face,
 she starts to cry.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 What's that all about?

LIBBIE
 One of the birds.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Let me see. What happened?

LIBBIE
 It's dead.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Dead? Are you sure?

Libbie shows him.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 Dead all right.

LIBBIE
 Autie...

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Now Libbie, it's just a bird. Means
 nothing more than that. Just a
 bird.

EXT. FT. LINCOLN - DAY

That morning, the sky is overcast after a early shower. A crowd gathers. The band plays.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

When I walked outside, my heart nearly failed me. The wives and children of the soldiers lined the road. With streaming eyes they held their little ones out at arm's-length for one last look at their departing father. Unfettered by conventional restrictions, and indifferent to the opinion of others, the grief of these women was audible, and was accompanied by desponding gestures, dictated by their bursting hearts and expressions of their abandoned grief.

Mothers hold their babies out. They cry as they say farewell to their fathers.

The men form up by companies. The wagons are loaded. The mules are heavy-ladened with heavy supplies on their backs.

CPT. McIntosh's wife gives him a button. He pins it on his uniform, manages a hopeful smile, then turns to ride to the front of G company.

Along the way, he passes Yates.

CPT GEORGE YATES

The faces are rather down-turned aren't they?

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH

Not the send off I expected.

CPT GEORGE YATES

Dour. More like a funeral dirge.

On the other side of the formation:

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

Hard to get used to not having our sabers.

MARK KELLOGG

And no Gatlin's either?

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
Damn things only slow us down.

Custer rides to Libbie. They don't say a word. The stoic General Custer possess an intensity of purpose, strength, and bravery. He knows he is under close scrutiny. As does Libbie. He turns and rides to the front.

After a salute, the order is given to forward march. The column starts to move out at a slow crawl.

The band strikes up Garryowen.

MAGGIE
The band is not going?

LIBBIE
Only slows them down.

CPT MCDOUGALL turns around to look at the mule packs.

CPT THOMAS MCDOUGALL
Please don't let any of the
ammunition packs fall off. Not
until we are out of sight. Would be
embarrassing to have to stop and
tie them back on now.

The crowd watches the column go.

Then, a strange occurrence happens. A natural optical illusion. As the cooler air is replaced by warmer, through the clouds, for a moment the column marches both on the land and in the sky at the same time.

MAGGIE
They are marching in heaven.

The bands starts to play, *The Girl I Left Behind Me*.

SINGER
The hope of final victory
Within my bosom burning
Is mingling with sweet thoughts of
thee
And of my fond returning
But should I n'eer return again
Still with thy love i'll bind me
Dishonors breath shall never stain
The name I leave behind me

The column continues to the west. The image of them still marches in the sky.

MAGGIE
 (turns to the singer)
 Thank you. It was perfect.

The crowd returns inside of Ft. Lincoln.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - DAY

The Dakota Column advances across the great plains. General Custer is in the lead of 600 mounted troops behind him, all color coated by company.

Custer spies an object in the ground in front of him. He order's a halt and dismounts. Custer finds a skull partially buried in the dirt. He picks up the skull and dusts it off. He can see hatchet marks scratched upon it.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Rest the horses!

The men dismount. Bloody Knife, CPT Myles Moylan of A Company, along with LT Charles Varnum, come to Custer's side. Bloody Knife discovers a piece of blue fabric partially buried not too far away.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 A Federal US Calvary uniform. This was an Army man.

1LT CHARLES VARNUM
 Kidnapped and tortured by the Sioux.

BLOODY KNIFE
 Better to put a bullet in your head than to fall into the hands of the Lakota Sioux.

Custer drops the skull and dusts his hands off.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Disgusting animals. I'm sick of them desecrating our dead! We need to send them a message.

When the march continues, each man rides by the display of skull and uniform. Some look down in sadness, disgust, or anger. But they all know what it means.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (INDIAN BURIAL SITE) - DAY

Later that day, and a little farther on, they ride into an Indian burial ground. Wooden platforms, four-pillared structures, rise off the ground, each has a wrapped corpse on its platform.

BLOODY KNIFE

They elevate the dead so the
coyotes and wolves will not get
them.

The tallest one in the center is painted black and red.

BLOODY KNIFE (CONT'D)

That one is a holy man.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Is that right? We'll just see about
that.

Custer dismounts and approaches the tall structure. After a brief examination, he proceeds to kick it. After a few swift kicks, the platform leans. The body of the holy man stubbornly remains aloft on the platform.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Thomas, Boston, come help me.

Eventually the entire structure is collapsed.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Knock all these down. Let Sitting
Bull know, you desecrate our dead,
we desecrate yours.

They destroy the platforms. MAJ Keogh is disturbed.

CPT MYLES KEOGH

We should not be doing this. We are
defiling the dead.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE

That was his orders.

CPT MYLES KEOGH

Doesn't make it right though.

Custer calls out to his men.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

Pillage anything useful.

Autie Reed finds a pouch on the Holy Man's corpse. The pouch contains a hunting bow and some leather moccasins.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 Perfect! Take them with you, Autie Reed. You can send them home as a souvenir.

Isiah Dorman unwraps the Holy Man. The corpse falls out dark brown and oily.

1LT ALGERNON SMITH
 Jesus Dorman. Get that thing out of here.

Dorman roughly drags the body to the edge of a creek. He sits and baits a fishing hook with the dead man's flesh. There, he sits and fishes with the dead man beside him.

LIBBIE (V.O.)
 One day after our men left Ft. Lincoln, some Indian scouts came riding in with the utmost speed. We women knew that some eventful news had come. But it was held secret for awhile, until the scouts rode back out again. After their departure, when there was no longer any need for secrecy, we were told General Crook had encountered hostile Indians on the head-waters of the Rosebud and had been compelled to retreat. That meant there would be no support coming from Crook as planned.

Eventually, the dead body of the Holy Man floats down the river and rolls under the surface. Dorman returns with a small bluegill and a smile on his face.

INT/EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (THE LONE TEPEE) - DAY

The next day, the column comes to a lone tepee on a high ridge. Lt. Smith and Cpt Yates approach with weapons drawn.

They open the tepee flap. The strong stench of death and sound of flies come to greet them. Inside the lone tepee there is a dead Indian, eyes open. Dried blood stained black upon his chest. A hatchet lay ceremoniously across him.

1LT ALGERNON SMITH
 That's a good Indian.

CPT GEORGE YATES
Burn it down.

They leave with the lone tepee burns behind them.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS (THE CROWS NEST)- DAY

On top of the ridge at its highest point they stop to look out over the land for any sign of Indians. Bloody Knife and Mitch Boyer look through spyglasses.

BLOODY KNIFE
The big village.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Let me see.

Takes the spyglass.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
I don't see anything.

MITCH BOYER
It's big. Bigger than any I've seen.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
How can you tell? All I see is dust.

BLOODY KNIFE
The dust is from their ponies. There are thousands of them.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
How many warriors? Over 600?

BLOODY KNIFE
Not sure. But if they are not on a buffalo run, they are down there. Thousands of them.

Custer puts the spyglass down and squints with his naked eye.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
But if they see us...(looks back at the smoke of the burning tepee)

Custer hands the spyglass to Bloody Knife and takes off his buckskin jacket and ties it to his saddle.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Benteen!

Benteen walks up.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Take your companies along the ridge
South. If you find Lakota down
there, engage them.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Engage them? Sir, if the Cheyenne
and the Sioux are down there
converged, shouldn't we keep our
unit together?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
You will close off their avenue of
escape when they run.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
But General...

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Our orders are to round up the
Indian and drive them to the
reservation. This is precisely what
I intend to do. Now, you have your
orders Benteen. Head out.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Yes sir.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Major Reno! I want you on my left
flank.

Reno looks at Custer with one eye closed to the sun.

After Custer rides on, LTC William Cooke talks to Reno.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
Watch out for Crook in the South.
Gibbon will be coming in from the
West. You...

Cooke watches him take a drink.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE (CONT'D)
And for God's sake, man. Don't
drink too much. We're bound to run
into Indians soon.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Yeah, that's why I'm drinking.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (THE PACK TRAIN) - DAY

CPT McDougall rides with the pack train along some high coulees. Barnum, the worst of the stubborn mules, steps too close to the edge and falls down a steep cliff.

SOLDIER

Barnum fell over the side of a cliff, Capt. McDougall.

CPT THOMAS MCDUGALL

(turns to look)

No need to stop. Keep going.

The column continues on.

SOLDIER

CPT McDougall! He's back again!
Barnum's back.

McDougall turns to look. Barnum has casually walked out of the canyon. He strides up with his brother mules and takes his place with the pack train.

CPT THOMAS MCDUGALL

The mighty Barnum. Just like nothing happened.

He turns back to the front. Behind him, Barnum takes his place and carries on as usual.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

Elsewhere, Capt. Benteen looks at his surroundings, a vast stretch of broken land. He lights his pipe.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Take this message to Custer.

(puffs his pipe)

Nothing here. No sign of Indians.

Benteen sits stationary and watches the messenger gallop away in a trail of dust.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (NORTH)- DAY

Three Indian boys are in the corral when two ponies push through the gate and run away. BLACK-WHITE-MAN is nearby. He looks up and see's the escape.

HUNKPAPA BOY 1
Come back! They're running away.

HUNKPAPA BOY 2
We'll have to get them back!

BLACK-WHITE-MAN
You are good boys!
(smiles)
Don't come back without them.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST)- DAY

Gall goes into his tepee. His wife and children are asleep until he lets the sunlight in through the open flap of the tepee.

GALL
I did not want to wake you.

GALL'S WIFE
I am awake now. I think I'll take
the little ones to the river.

GALL
I think you should. It is a good
day for it.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

Meanwhile, the three Hunkpapa boys are in pursuit of the two ponies. They catch one pony on the high ridge and the other one follows on his own. Two boys climb onto one of the ponies. While the third jumps on the single pony.

In the west the boys notice the rear guard of LT Smith's, E company, who have just passed.

HUNKPAPA BOY 3
Soldiers!

At the same time the boys see the soldiers, the soldiers see them.

Puffs of distant smoke indicate the soldier rifles shoot at them. Bullets hit the ground before the boys. The dark and distant shape of the Calvary's horses peel off the main column, heading the boys way.

HUNKPAPA BOY 1
We've got to get back to the
village! Warn the others!

A chase ensues. The soldier's close the gap quickly. Then the boys start to pull away.

A shot brings down the pony and spills the two boys. They roll on the ground.

The third boy cannot stop his pony and turns back to watch the horseman surround his two friends. They soldiers point rifles at them. Pop! Pop! Pop! Rifles discharge.

The boy turns back with tears in his eyes.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

A rider hands Cooke a message.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE

(To Custer)

General, from Benteen. He has reached the point you indicated and see's no sign of Indians. Should I order him back to the main column, sir?

LTC GEORGE CUSTER

No, tell him to go to the next one.

Cooke scribbles down the order, hands it off to the messenger, who rides off in a hurry. Custer looks at Cooke.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)

Keeps him out of my way.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

Gall walks with his wife and two young children toward the river.

GALLS CHILD

Look what I found. It's an animal skull.

GALL

Probably a cougar.

GALLS WIFE

A mighty hunter.
(smiles at Gall)
Like your father.

Gall's wife drops off her deer skins. Naked, she turns and backs into the water. Her eyes on Gall the entire time.

The children are naked too and splash into the water with their newly found cougar skull. Gall remains on the shore.

GALLS WIFE (CONT'D)
 (looks seductively)
 Aren't you coming?

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

Another messenger comes to Cooke.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
 General, from LT Smith, three
 Indians were spotted on our trail
 to our rear. One is thought to have
 gotten away.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 (smacks his leg)
 We have been discovered! We've lost
 the element of surprise. Time is of
 the essence now.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
 Before the village is put on alert.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Oh, they'll run for certain now.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
 Then we'll have a real mess on our
 hands.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Major Reno!

Major Reno and CPT French ride up.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 The big Indian village is on the
 other side of the Little Bighorn.
 Take your wing across the river
 into the valley. We'll drive
 parallel into the village. Your men
 will setup a diversion - I will
 support with a flanking action to
 the rear.

Custer then narrowed his eyes.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Think you can handle that Major
Reno?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Think so. Yes, sir.

Reno turns and waves his hand.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
Moylan! McIntosh! French!
Come on, follow me! We're riding
into the valley opposite side of
the river.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
Sir, we rode all night. The horses
are getting mighty tired.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
We'll rest the horses soon CPT.
French. After our attack they'll
have plenty of time to rest. Right
now, we do not have that kind of
time.

Reno and his men depart down the coulee to the left. Reno
pulls out a bottle.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Hard Ass.

He drinks.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Low Dog sits in the village. He smokes his pipe. The squaw
brings him a plate of food. He exhales smoke and nods at her.
He eats with his fingers.

Rain-in-Face joins. He takes the pipe from Low Dog. He sits
and begins to puff away.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (NORTH) - DAY

Black-White-Man looks up from his work. He can hear the
distant pops of gunfire in the direction the boys. He looks
worried.

BLACK-WHITE-MAN
Shots? The boys didn't have guns.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (RENO HILL) - DAY

Reno fidgets in the saddle. His knee repeatedly knock into the rifle attachment on his saddle. He turns to DR JAMES DEWOLF rides beside him. Reno holds out his rifle.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Want this, Doctor?

DeWolf will not accept.

DR JAMES DEWOLF
Your rifle? Won't you need it,
Major Reno?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Go ahead, Doctor DeWolf, can't
shoot natives without one.

Reno takes another drink.

DR JAMES DEWOLF
I treat injuries, sir, I don't
cause them.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Have it your way DeWolf.

Down to the ford they go, in between the steep cliff walls of the coulee. Soon they come out of the coulee and cross the river. Beyond a grove a trees, the tepees of the village are situated about 300 yards away.

An Indian woman and two children bath in the river up ahead.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
Bloody Knife, check them out.

Bloody Knife rides a bit that way then stops.

BLOODY KNIFE
That is the wife of Gall, my enemy.
Those are his children.

The bathers look up at Bloody Knife in surprise. Bloody Knife takes out his rifle.

Lt. Varnum shouts out.

1LT CHARLES VARNUM
A day's furlough for the first
scalp!

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Wait...

Bloody Knife raises his rifle and takes aim.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)

No, wait...Damn it LT. Varnum!

Bloody Knife shoots repeatedly. Gall's wife and two children drop.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)

Dismount! Everybody dismount! Form a skirmish line. Just like we drilled. Every forth hold horses.

The men dismount and form a skirmish line.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)

Well? Go ahead! Commence firing!

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

The lone Hunkpapa boy runs into Sitting Bull's tent.

HUNKPAPA BOY 2

Soldiers are here! They are attacking the village!

Nearby Low Dog hears the boy's report and the gunfire.

LOW DOG

What is that? Are we under attack? Would they dare attack us here, in our strength?

Sitting Bull hears gunshots and looks in that direction. He walks to Gall's tepee. But Gall pops out of the tepee before Sitting Bull can get there.

GALL

Sitting Bull! My wife and children are down there by the river.

Gall wastes no time. He grabs his feathered spear and mounts his horse. Other warriors come out of their tepees now. They are armed with hatchets, tomahawks, bows, spears, and rifles. They mount ponies.

In the distance the blue clad soldiers kneel. Puffs of smoke from their rifles are followed by the sounds of bullets. The rounds hit the ground before him.

SITTING BULL

This is what I saw in my vision.

Sitting Bull starts to sing. His voice is heard throughout the village.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

Come out to fight! Come out all you warriors! Have no fear!

Rain-in-Face and Low Dog round up a force of warriors.

RAIN-IN-FACE

The soldiers attack us while we sleep? While our children and women sleep?

LOW DOG

I will kill ten of them before any of you!

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (WEST) - DAY

Crazy Horse is naked. He bathes upstream in the river when he hears the gunfire. He wraps a small cloth around his waist and walks to where his rifle leans. He picks it up and cocks it. He reaches down and picks up a small stone and ties it behind his ear with blades of grass.

CRAZY HORSE

Oh, Mother Earth! I hear your crying.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

Sitting Bull's horse takes a bullet and falls.

SITTING BULL

That was my favorite horse.

Sitting Bull continues to sing as warriors rush around him.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

Listen to me! Make a brave fight! A bird, when it is on its nest, spreads its wings to cover the nest and eggs and protect them. It cannot use its wings for defense, but it can cackle and try to drive away the enemy.

(MORE)

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

We are here to protect our wives
and children, and we must not let
the soldiers get them!

Sitting Bull's song is heard throughout the village. The warriors from the tribes awaken to action.

Black-White-Man rides past Sitting Bull and joins Rain-in-Face.

SITTING BULL (CONT'D)

That's it! Stir up the dust from
the Earth. Let our mother blind
their eyes!

The Indians mount ponies and ride in circles. They kick up dust in great quantities. A smoke screen forms around the village.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (RENO'S LINE) - DAY

Reno and his men continue with their attack. CPT French and CPT Moylan walks behind the lines to encourage their men. McIntosh stays mounted on a restless horse.

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH

We can't see em, Major Reno. We are
only wasting our ammunition.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Keep firing. We've got more ammo in
the packs. Use it all up.

From out of the dust cloud comes Gall and his forces. He attacks toward the river, while Low Dog and Rain-in-Face split to the other side.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH

Get ready! Here they come!

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Pour on that fire!

CPT THOMAS FRENCH

They are not running away like
before!

The sky around the soldiers darkens with arrows. The ground bristles with arrows as they fall short.

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH

They're getting range on us! Keep
shooting!

The Springfield rifles begin to jam. The soldiers react nervously. They start to panic.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (WEST) - DAY

Across the village Two Moons hears the gunfire. He bursts into Lame-White-Man's tepee.

TWO MOONS

The Wasi'chu are here! I think it's Long Hair.

LAME-WHITE-MAN

Many Wasi'chu will die today.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

Low Dog rides perpendicular to Reno's line. He aims his rifle and shoots. A puff of smoke bursts into the chest of one of the soldiers.

LOW DOG

Today is a good day to die! Follow me!

Low Dog dismounts and rushes in a squat toward the soldier's line. When he comes to the first trooper, he viciously stabs the man.

Rain-In-Face notches an arrow in his bow and lets it fly. The arrow buries itself deeply into a soldier's belly.

Black-White-Man runs up with a hatchet. He cleaves a soldier in the neck and nearly cuts off his head.

Behind them, Sitting Bull approaches with more warriors. Women come with buffalo carving knives.

Major Reno reels in his saddle.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN

The Indians are in our lines!

1LT DONALD MCINTOSH

We're sitting ducks out here in the open like this. Where's Custer?

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Fall back! Fall back to the trees of the timber!

In the retreat to the tree line, they leave their wounded and dead. The wounded plead not to be left behind. Before he leaves, one soldier shoots his wounded friend in the head.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (RENO'S LINE) - DAY

Gall discovers his wife's body. She has been shot, murdered, along with his three children. One of his boys cling to the cougar skull.

Gall can not cry. Instead his body tenses and shakes. He looks up at the fierce battle ahead of him. Through the chaos, he can only see one person: Bloody Knife.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (THE TIMBER) - DAY

Rain-in-Face wades through the soldiers. He fires arrows in their face as he advances.

Black White Man scalps a soldier.

Low Dog decapitates another.

1LT CHARLES VARNUM
(to Bloody Knife.)
This is falling apart.

A shot rings out and Bloody Knife's head explodes. Blood, brain matter, and skull fragments, splatters onto Lt. Varnum and Major Reno.

In the near distance, Gall lowers his rifle.

Major Reno stares wide-eyed with blood in his face. Bloody Knife slumps off his horse. Reno panics. He nervously jumps down from his horse. He walks in circles unsure what to do.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Form a line! Mount! Dismount!

His men dismounts as Reno mounts. The men are confused.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
If any one of you want to remain
alive, follow me!

Reno kicks his horse and rides out of the timber alone as fast as his horse can run.

CPT McIntosh loses control of his horse. It starts to buck and bolts toward the Indians.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
McIntosh! What are you doing?

CPT. McIntosh cannot stop or turn the frightened animal. In a full gallop his horse runs between Low Dog and Rain-In-Face.

A dozen Indians rush around McIntosh's horse and stop the animal. McIntosh is pulled down from the horse.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN (CONT'D)
McIntosh! Run!

McIntosh screams. The flesh of his head is peeled back to reveal the ivory of his skull underneath. Within this violence, we see the button his wife gave him, pop off and roll into the grass. In the background McIntosh is brutally beaten to death.

EXT. SKIRMISH LINE - DAY

Isiah Dorman's has had his horse shot and it fell with dead weight upon his legs. The black man is trapped underneath.

As PVT. ROMAN RUTTEN, rides past Dorman. He notices his friend's predicament. Dorman looks sad as PVT Rutten rides past.

ISIAH DORMAN
Goodbye, Rutten!

PVT RUTTEN
Goodbye Dorman!

Shortly after, a group of four Indian women creep toward Dorman with their carving knives. Dorman raises his rifle. Trapped under his dead horse, he resigns to his fate and lowers it. Soon Dorman is surrounded by the squaws who begin to slash at him.

Then Sitting Bull rides up.

SITTING BULL
Wait! Do not kill that man. I know him. That is Isiah Dorman.

The women stop and stare at Sitting Bull. The Holy Man dismounts and comes to Dorman's side.

ISIAH DORMAN
I'm so thirsty.

Sitting Bull walks back to his horse. Reaches into a pouch and produces a little black bone cup. He goes to the water and returns to give Dorman a drink.

ISIAH DORMAN (CONT'D)
Thank you, you have shown me a
great kindness.

Then, Sitting Bull stands.

SITTING BULL
May you have a good journey,
Dorman.

Sitting Bull rides away in the direction of the shots. After Sitting Bull leaves, the women stab Isiah Dorman to death.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (RENO HILL) - DAY

Major Reno, and the troops who can keep up, splash into the Little Bighorn River. Reno loses his hat but does not care to stop for it. On the other side of the river, Captain French pulls up and turns his horse to face the Indians as they cross.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
Stand and fight them, men! Return
fire!

The bullets whiz dangerously by Capt. French as he calmly aims and shoots his revolver.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST)- DAY

In the Timber, Black-White-Man is in pursuit of Mitch Boyer.

BLACK-WHITE-MAN
There you are Boyer!

But Mitch Boyer turns and fires. Black-White-Man is hit in the stomach. He falls over, out of the fight.

Just then, Mitch Boyer is shot several times in the chest by Gall. Boyer falls.

Gall comes to the aid of Black-White-Man.

GALL
Can I do anything for you, my
brother?

BLACK-WHITE-MAN

Today is a good day to die. I am ready.

GALL

I will grant you good journey.

Gall takes out a knife and slits Black White Man's throat. He stays with him until he bleeds out and a look of peace washes over Black-White-Man. Then Gall strides toward the sounds of battle.

EXT. THE INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

On the other side of the river, CPT French takes a moment to observe to his left:

TRUMPETER HENRY FISHER rides through the river with many Indians in pursuit. A wounded soldier has collapsed in the water, Lieutenant (LT.) BENNY HODGSON. Hodgson reaches out to Fisher.

1LT BENNY HODGSON

Fisher please, don't leave me!

TRUMPETER FISHER

Lieutenant Hodgson! Here, grab ahold!

Fisher extends his stirrup to LT. Hodgson. The wounded Hodgson holds the stirrup and the horse tows him through the water to the far side. Fisher gains the opposite bank, Hodgson at the end of his stirrup.

Rain-In-Face splashes into the water in pursuit of them. He stops, aims, then fires his bow.

Hodgson is hit and lets go of the stirrup and drops. Fisher has no choice but to leave him behind.

TRUMPETER FISHER (CONT'D)

(with tears in his eyes)

He's dead already, dead. I couldn't have saved him!

Captain French looks in the other direction, to his right:

Doctor James DeWolf has ridden too close to Low Dog and is pulled down off his horse. He is dragged back through the water to the far side of the river by half a dozen more Indians. He is surrounded and stabbed to death.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
 (to Reno)
 They got LT Hodgson and Doctor
 DeWolf too!

MAJ MARCUS RENO
 My God! This is a disaster!

Gall crosses the river with his multitude of his warriors.
 Major Reno looks over what is left of his command.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 It's turning into a route!

MAJ MARCUS RENO
 Where is the support? What is he
 waiting for?

Reno kicks his horse and continues up the coulee.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
 Where the Christ is Custer? I plan
 to report this to General Sheridan.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 You mean if we live through the
 remainder of this day?

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
 That is precisely what I intend to
 do Lieutenant.

EXT. THE HIGH PLAINS - DAY

Elsewhere, CPT Benteen overlooks a vast empty, largely
 boring, wilderness. He is too far to hear any of the battle.
 A dusty messenger comes up.

BUGLER MARTIN hands Benteen a note.

BUGLER MARTIN
 (Italian accent)
 From the General.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 Martin? Where is Custer?

BUGLER MARTIN
 From General Custer.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 Give it to me.

Benteen squints and reads it.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Custer wrote this?

BUGLER MARTIN
LTC Cooke write.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Benteen come quick! Large Village.
Bring packs. P.S. Bring packs.

Benteen furrows his brow.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Now which is it? Come quick or
bring packs? I cannot do both. I
guess the almighty Custer forgot he
put McDougall in charge of the
packs, not me.

Benteen looks at Bugler Martin.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Martin, did you see any Indians?

BUGLER MARTIN
Few tepees. Nothing much else.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
McDougall is three miles behind us,
that way. Stay with him Martin.
Help bring up the packs.
(To Weir and Godfrey)
Come on, let's see what Custer has
got us into.

Martin salutes and gallops away. Benteen, Weir, and Godfrey
turn their column northwest. After a few paces they urge
their horses faster.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (WEST) - DAY

Crazy Horse is in his tepee. He applies mud to his face as
warpaint in the shape of a lightning bolt.

Two Moons and Lame-White-Man burst in his tepee.

TWO MOONS
Attackers! Soldiers from the other
side of the river. We must go
fight!

Crazy Horse stops what he is doing and looks at them calmly.

CRAZY HORSE

Take your time.

(continues to paint)

There will be plenty of death
today.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE (EAST) - DAY

Gall pulls up his horse. His warriors slaughter Reno's
abandoned soldiers.

LOW DOG

Our warriors are killing them like
a buffalo herd.

Gall observes two crow scouts. They run up a hill in the
opposite direction from the fight.

GALL

Low Dog. Rain-in-Face. This is not
the main attack.

RAIN-IN-FACE

Long Hair must be coming from up
there, from where those Crows are
running.

LOW DOG

We should call off the pursuit of
these soldiers. They might be
leading us into a trap.

GALL

Those scouts will lead us to the
main body of soldiers.

LOW DOG

Then we'll kill them all!

RAIN-IN-FACE

If Long Hair's brother is up there,
today I will eat his heart.

LOW DOG

(calls to his men)

Let's do it! I am ready for
whatever comes! Today is a good day
to day! Follow me!

Gall spurs on his horse. Low Dog and Rain-in-Face follow him
with a large force.

Low Dog slaps the rump of the horse next to him. The warriors slaps the rumps of the horses next to them to spur each other on.

EXT. RENO HILL - DAY

Major Reno watches the Indians ride away.

Benteen comes over the top of a ridge.

Major Reno gallops out to meet him.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Benteen! For God's sake, stop and help me!

Reno has lost his straw hat and has tied a bandanna around his head.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY

You've lost your hat.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

I've lost half my men.

A bullet whizzes by Reno's head. He reacts by ducking. The others are calm.

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)

CPT McIntosh, LT. Hodgson, Doctor DeWolf, Dorman, Mitch, Bloody Knife. All dead.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Dead? Where? Where is Custer?

MAJ MARCUS RENO

I don't know.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH

I heard him say he would support our flanks, promised to, but he never came.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

He abandoned us?

CPT THOMAS WEIR

I hear a lot of gunfire. That might be him. Can't you hear it?

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
Where's it coming from? Custer or
the Indians?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
I can't hear anything.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
Well, I can, and I'm partially
deaf.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
You've got to help me Benteen.
We've got to put up a defensive
perimeter.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
What about Custer's orders?

MAJ MARCUS RENO
They're no good anymore. He's
either left us, or abandoned us, or
he's dead.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Dead? He said come quick, but
didn't say where to come quick too.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Probably went off to link up with
Terry and Gibbon. And left us here.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
This is just like how he abandoned
Major Elliot at the Washita.

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Major Reno, maybe he didn't offer
you any flanking support because he
couldn't. Maybe he needs our help.
Why else send the note?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Reno, when was the last time you
saw him?

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Come on, we've got to go! We're
wasting time!

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Last time I saw him he was watching
from the high ridge.

(MORE)

MAJ MARCUS RENO (CONT'D)
You know how much he wanted me to fail. He's doing this on purpose!

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Come on, Benteen, he's drunk.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Not anymore I'm not Weir. But I'm going to be, before this day's over.

Reno takes a long slug from his bottle.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
The packs are an hour away. We'll wait for them before going any further out.

CPT THOMAS WEIR
We haven't got that kind of time!

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
Do you really think he needs us?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Custer needs nothing, only Custer. Weir, take Delta Company with you. Do a reconnaissance in force. The others stay here and wait for the packs.

Weir heads out.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Stay on high ground Weir!

Benteen quickly looks over the situation and makes a decision.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
We will form a defensive perimeter.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Benteen, I've got wounded still down by the river.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Your men, Reno, you go get them. We'll stay here and organize a rally point. Bring us your wounded, put them in the center.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Doctor DeWolf is dead.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
I know, right, well, we've still
got Doctor Porter. We'll circle the
mules once the packs come up.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
You know all of this will be for
naught, once Weir can tell us where
Custer is.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Let's hope so.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (WEIR POINT) - DAY

Capt. Weir rides to a high ridge. He looks through his
binoculars. A massive cloud of dust about three miles away.

Within the cloud he makes out the forms of Indians. POP! POP!
POP! The distant sound of gunfire.

His eyes widen.

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Oh my God!

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
What do you see?

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Hundreds of Indian warriors coming
our way. Dismount! Take up firing
positions.

Capt. Weir's D Company tenses, ready to fight back. Gall and
Low Dog lead the attack. A fight ensues. Weir holds the first
charge. The Indians circle around to try another.

CPT THOMAS WEIR (CONT'D)
Here they come again!

Gall and Low Dog's attack nearly breaks through Weir's line.
Before a third attack, Weir gives the command.

CPT THOMAS WEIR (CONT'D)
Fallback! Back to the defensive
perimeter!

Gall and Low Dog pursue Wier.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (RENO HILL) - DAY

Major Reno and Capt. Moylan return to the defensive perimeter with a some wounded men. He shouts to Benteen.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Murderous fire down there!

Reno dismounts, jumps behind some crates for cover. He pulls out the bottle and drinks.

CPT French is in the middle of the defensive perimeter clearing jammed rifles. Once cleared, he passes them up to the frontline.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Here comes Weir! Don't shoot!

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
The Indians are hot on his tail!

Weir and his company make it back inside the perimeter. A volley from the Springfield rifles make Gall and Low Dog veer off. The warriors trade intense gunfire with the soldiers.

Warriors crawl in the grass, along the coulees, the bluffs, and rocks. They rise occasionally to crack off rifle shots and fire arrows at the defensive perimeter.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Custer ain't coming to save us.
He's probably already dead.

CPT THOMAS WEIR
Reno, I won't have you ...

MAJ MARCUS RENO
He's not coming Weir! Face it!

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Stop it! Custer got us into this.
We've got to get ourselves out.

The sky seems to be smeared with blood as the sun sets over the Little Bighorn valley. The darkness does not stop the gunfire. It continues on through the night.

INT / EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - NIGHT

Images in montage of various people.

Libbie sews with Maggie and some of the other wives in Custer's parlor.

General Terry has a cigar and a brandy. His feet up on his desk, tie undone. He stares continually at the map on the wall. His focus: the Little Bighorn.

Sitting Bull smokes with his nephew One Bull. He passes it to Crazy Horse and Two Moons- they are covered in blood.

A door opens and allows in a beam of light to shine upon the Liberty Bell. President Grant is there. He appears in a halo of cigar smoke. The light lands on the bell's crack and the date: July 4, 1776.

EXT. RENO HILL - DAY

The next day, Benteen wakes when a gunshot blows the heel of his boot off. He is waking up to a hot battle. A piece of dirt lands on his face and neck. He looks at Reno.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

They've been hitting us with clods
of dirt. Letting us know, that is
how close they are.

Benteen rises and a bullet ricochets around him.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY

Careful, sharpshooters in the hills
overlooking us.

Benteen looks over to see a soldier behind a crate. Every time the soldier peeks out, a bullet hits and kicks sawdust up around his face.

Another nearby soldier laughs. Finding it funny. Until he is struck between the eyes with a bullet and is killed dead.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

We've kicked up a hornet's nest
here Reno.

CPT Benteen crawls to the line and looks the situation over. His men shoot their rifles without aiming. They cower behind the cover of boxes and crates. They look scared.

Benteen rises until he comes to a full stand. As far as the eye can see, he can make out hundreds of Indians. They crawl across the land like living snakes.

A soldier looks up at Benteen like he's crazy.

SOLDIER

You'd better get down sir.

Gall recognizes Benteen's bravery. The Chief stands in the field. The two men face each other.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 (to the private)
 You're missing an opportunity of a lifetime. Something to tell your grandchildren. Something you'll never see again.

Benteen lifts his rifle over his head in a salute. Gall likewise lifts his.

The private grabs Benteen and pulls him down, just before a flurry of gunshots ricochet around them.

SOLDIER
 If I can speak freely sir, please don't do that again. That's just plain death-wish crazy.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 (laughs)
 No need to worry, the wife sewed some powerful medicine in my uniform before I left home.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (RENO HILL)- DAY

Barnum the mule wanders out and away from the defensive perimeter. He lumbers toward the Indians.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 Oh no! Barnum! Get back here!

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
 He's loaded with ammunition. He's going to get himself blown up.

CPT THOMAS FRENCH
 No Barnum! Come back here, Barnum!

The entire unit calls for his return.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
 He's a goner for sure.

After a ways, Barnum turns and walks back on his own under fire. The soldiers cheer for him. They pour on covering fire. The soldiers can hear the Indians laughing. Barnum finally makes it back to the perimeter's line, not just alive, but unhurt.

The whole Barnum affair gets Benteen thinking. He slides next to Reno and tells him of his plan.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Reno, we're sitting ducks here if
we don't do something.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
(takes a drink)
What do you want to do, Benteen?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
We need to attack.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
Attack? You're crazy. But if you
have a death wish, I won't stop
you.

Benteen stands again and walks up and down the line. Bullets
buzz around him.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
Load up them Springfield rifles
boys! We're going to attack this
rabble. Get our ground back. Make
ready.

The soldiers make the preparations.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Prepare to charge, gentlemen! On
the Ready! Charge!

The soldiers rush out with a shout.

The Indians are driven back from their positions.

The company returns back to the perimeter.

Benteen tries to convince Reno to do the same on his side.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
Ok Major, we've cleared out the
Indians from our immediate front.
Now it's your turn.

MAJ MARCUS RENO
CPT French and LT Moylan! Attack if
you want.

French and Moylan have similar success.

The Indians are cleared out around the defensive perimeter.

We see the exodus of the village. The Indians move out on foot. The tepee's collapse into travois and are loaded with supplies. Including the elderly and the wounded.

The sun goes down.

EXT. RENO HILL - NIGHT

That night, the wounded drink from canteen's which leak from bullet holes. The firing continues sporadically, slows, then stops altogether.

EXT. RENO HILL - DAY

The next morning, the gunfire has stopped completely, and the soldiers see it's safe to come out of their holes.

Reno looks through his field glasses.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Up there on that ridge. Hard to tell. Looks like soldiers.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN

Sometimes they wear the clothing they stripped from our dead.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

No, not this time. I think that's Gibbon's column coming!

From a distance they can see that it is in fact Gibbon.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY

Our relief has finally arrived.

They watch as Gibbon's long column moves like a dark snake along its way toward them over the vast and broken terrain.

Finally, Gibbon arrives. He pulls up in front of them and dismounts.

COL JOHN GIBBON

(shakily)

Custer is back there.

MAJ MARCUS RENO

Back where? Where did he go?

COL JOHN GIBBON
 No, back there. About three miles.
 No one survived. The entire unit.
 Wiped out. They're all gone.

Gibbon unexpectedly breaks down. He starts to cry unabashed in front of all the men.

EXT. FT. LINCOLN - DAY

The next day, the Far West steams into Fort Lincoln.

All of Ft. Lincoln heard the whistle. A crowd is gathered anxiously waiting. Libbie is there. All the other wives. The band. The strikers. Indian Scouts. Some reporters. Everybody. All of them.

As the Far West gets tied off to the dock, CPT Marsh opens the window of his pilot house and shouts out.

GRANT MARSH
 Wounded! We have wounded here! We
 need doctors!

MAGGIE
 Oh no! Oh my God!

LIBBIE
 Courage Maggie. We don't know what
 that means.

CPT Weir steps off the dock and looks for Libbie.

Libbie and Maggie rush to him.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)
 We've been hearing reports. Are
 they true? What of the General's
 command?

CPT THOMAS WEIR
 I'm sorry, Libbie.

MAGGIE
 What does he mean, Libbie? What
 about James?

LIBBIE
 Thomas? Boston? Autie Reed?

CPT THOMAS WEIR
 (shakes his head)
 Gone,

(MORE)

CPT THOMAS WEIR (CONT'D)
 (chokes.)
 They are all gone.

Maggie falls to her knees and covers her face. Weir cannot bear to watch. He breaks down and sobs. Libbie painfully shuts her eyes, rests her head upon his shoulder.

LIBBIE
 Oh, my sweet General! Oh, My love!
 What have they done to you?

LIBBIE (V.O.)
 It was then I had to accept the awful and permanent truth, that I will never again hear the echo of the voice who for so many years has been my one and only inspiration. He must have gone down gallantly, fighting to the very end, like the true hero I have come to expect.

EXT. BATTLE RIDGE - DAY

TITLE: The Little Bighorn. June 25, 1876

General Custer stands with his scouts on the high ridge. He looks at the progress of Major's Reno's attack on the Indian village.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Major Reno has entered the village.
 Good. Now for a double envelopment
 from the rear.

Custer puts on his buck skin jacket. As he buttons it, he talks to Mark Kellogg the reporter from the Bismarck newspaper.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 You'd better stay in the rear,
 Mark.

Custer looks over the faces. On his left:

His brother Thomas, wears the same buck skin jacket, confidently nods.

LT Algernon (AJ) Smith looks straight ahead, a fire of intensity in the man's eyes.

CPT George Yates grimaces.

CPT GEORGE YATES
Let's get on with it shall we?

Custer looks to his right:

CPT. Myles Keogh kisses his catholic Lamb of God medallion and tucks it back into his uniform.

LT James Calhoun, straight and tall in the saddle. He glances at Custer from the corner of his eye then back again.

Behind him is over 200 mounted troops. His brother Boston looks excited. Autie Reed looks nervous.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Steady Autie Reed. You'll be
alright.

Custer looks at Mark Kellogg, the Bismarck reporter.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
(to Kellogg.)
Best seat in the house, Kellogg.

Kellogg nods.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Remember men, hostages. Get as many
as you can. Woman and children
only. Shoot the warriors. Kill the
ponies.

Custer adjusts his hat tighter.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
Gentlemen! Prepare for battle!
On my lead! Ready!
(pauses a beat)
Forward!
Charge!

The column start to thunder down Medicine Tail Coulee. Custer smiles. He has never been happier.

As Custer and his men gallop down the coulee, the view expands to reveal the village is not hundreds, but thousands of tepees, much, much, bigger than anticipated.

Unknown to Custer, they ride not into the rear of the Indian Village but into its center, the very heart of it.

Meanwhile, White Bull and several other Indian's, armed with Sharp's repeating rifles.

They climb into position in the bluffs above Medicine Tail Coulee. They steady the barrels of their rifles in notches within the rocks.

Custer and the column turn down the coulee.

White Bull closes his top eye and takes careful aim. Skillfully, smoothly he leads his target.

White Bull's target: We look down the barrel with him to see it is the company's guidon bearer.

White Bull's finger slightly moves the trigger. He takes a deep breath, parts his lips, then exhales. He squeezes the trigger. When the rifle goes off it surprises him.

Following the track and trajectory of the bullet, it barely whizzes by the guidon bearer's chest. White Bull has missed. But beyond the intended target we see the bullet head for another unintended target.

Custer luck. The General comes around the guidon bearer after turning down the coulee, only to catch the bullet perfectly in his chest. A hole explodes from his buck skin jacket. His smile turns to anguish.

The bullet punches the wind out of him and he tries to catch his breath but can't. Custer instinctively reigns in his horse.

The column slows to crawl, then comes to a stop. The charge has ended before it can get started. All the riders behind Custer are crowded and crunched together, accordion-style. The lines of formation are lost.

Thomas Custer is the first to notice his brother's been hit. He pulls his horse to the side of Custer's in an attempt to keep the General upright in the saddle.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
Cooke help me! The General's been
hit!

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
What'd you say? He got hit?

Cooke maneuvers his horse to the other side of Custer. Together they squeeze Custer in. He slumps in the saddle, clutches his chest. Custer turns pale.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE (CONT'D)
Let's get him down.

More shots ring out from the bluffs. Both horses and men are hit and fall. The wounded scream for help. Horses bolt and buck wildly with bloody wounds.

On the ground, Thomas and Cooke lower General Custer to the soft grass. Lt. Algernon Smith rides up. He looks down at Custer.

CPT MYLES KEOGH
Is he dead or still alive, Cooke?

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
He's still breathing.

MAJ Keogh takes action.

CPT MYLES KEOGH
I Company! Dismount! Every forth
hold horses! Form a skirmish line!

Company I forms the skirmish line in perfect military precision.

CPT MYLES KEOGH (CONT'D)
Up there in those bluffs! Return
fire! Pin em down!

Keogh's I Company starts the covering fire.

Word spreads quickly: the General's been hit.

Company commanders rush up to the front. Smith, Yates, and Calhoun all rush up on foot to check on the condition of Custer.

Leaderless, The bewildered troops don't know what to do.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN
Are we supposed to continue the
attack? What are we supposed to do?

Boston and Autie Reed run up from the rear. Reporter Mark Kellogg backs away nervously.

AUTIE REED
Oh my God, Thomas! Is it serious?

THOMAS
Fraid so, Harry
(the red stain on Custer's
chest grows.)
I think Mortal.

AUTIE REED
No! It can't be!

Autie Reed starts to cry.

CPT MYLES KEOGH
Good! Good work boys! They're up in
those bluffs. Lay down the covering
fire!

Yates returns further up the hill and takes charge of his
company. He orders a dismount.

CPT GEORGE YATES
Company! Dismount! Every forth hold
the horses. Setup a defensive
perimeter.
(looks at Smith's and
Calhoun's men)
You men there, dismount. Start the
fight right here!

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
Let's drag him up the hill, Thomas.

Custer blows out bubbles of blood from his mouth.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE (CONT'D)
The bullet punctured his lung.

AUTIE REED
General! General! Wake up! Can you
hear me? Can you hear me?

BOSTON
He's unresponsive, Thomas.
(looks down the coulee)
Oh no! Here they come again.

A number of Indians advance on foot from the bottom of the
Coulee. The soldiers are exposed. They are peppered by
arrows. The men and horses scream. Some already dead or
dying.

LTC WILLIAM COOKE
We're in a bad way here, Tom.

Yates stands and directs the action of the men further up the
hill.

CPT GEORGE YATES
Stay together now! Keep that
covering fire going.

An arrow goes through Yate's arm. He grimaces.

CPT GEORGE YATES (CONT'D)
Stand and fight! Keep shooting!

The men with Yates effectively put up a defense.

By Custer's side, Cooke is bleeding from the head - unknown cause.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
Come on, Calhoun, take him back up.
Up the hill.

1LT JAMES CALHOUN
I've got him! Watch out! We're
falling back!

They drag Custer up the hill.

Capt. Keogh and I company maintain their lines.

CPT MYLES KEOGH
Keep up that fire! Keep firing!

An audible gasp rings out across the battlefield. Gall's Hunkpapa warriors, over two hundred strong, suddenly charge into I Companies' left flank. Keogh's men are rocked by a steady stream of warriors. A great cloud of carbon smoke billows up with the crackle of many guns. The dead fall. The wounded scream. I companies' line collapses. Keogh is shot through the knee. The bullet carries through his knee to Comanche, his horse. Man and horse fall over together. Keogh climbs behind Comanche using the horse as cover.

The soldier's retreat up the hill.

Yates turns his line to return fire at the Hunkpapa warriors on the left flank, when suddenly from behind them, hundreds of Cheyenne arrive led by Crazy Horse and Two Moons. They smash into Yate's formation. All around is the sound of a hundred bloody clashes and screams of hand to hand combat.

Thomas and Cooke drop Custer to return fire. Arrows strike them. Calhoun, Boston, and Autie Reed continue to drag the General.

The Indians whoop in war cries. Terrified, the soldiers shoot without aiming. They hit nothing. Their rifles jam. They are thrown on the field.

Crazy Horse smashes into the line once more and fires at point blank range. LT Smith is shot in the neck.

He turns and falls. But despite his wounds, LT Smith continues to help drag Custer up the steep slope.

BOSTON

LT Smith are you hit bad?

1LT ALGERNON SMITH

I'm killed for sure Boston.

Yates raises his Colt to fire. A tomahawk blow from Low Dog decapitates his hand from his wrist. Yates screams in pain.

Two Moons shoots an arrow into Calhoun's leg at the knee.

Crazy Horse rides through I Company's line and shoots Keogh through his torso. Crazy Horse circles back to make another run and spies Mark Kellogg. Kellogg and Crazy Horse make eye contact. The reporter starts to run away. Crazy Horse lifts his rifle and shoots him. Mark Kellogg falls dead.

An Indian positions himself over Yates, then scalps him as he screams.

AUTIE REED

Oh God! Hurry! Hurry!

Yates is left behind for dead. Soldier's drop their rifles and run. Among them is 2LT James Sturgis. He runs for his life.

Gall directs his warriors for another attack. Gall divides his forces and flanks Keogh in a double envelopment.

GALL

Half of you that way, half this way.

Keogh shouts.

CPT MYLES KEOGH

I Company! Maintain your lines!
Keep firing.

An arrow punctures Keogh's torso. Then Two Moon dismounts and rushes ahead in a charge. Two Moons shouts at Keogh and shoots him in the chest. Keogh rolls backward and does not move again.

Thomas, Cooke, Calhoun, the injured Smith, with Boston and Autie Reed, carry General Custer to the high ground on top of the ridge in an attempt to protect their fallen Commanding Officer. They surround him.

Custer opens his eyes.

BOSTON

I think the General is waking up.

1LT ALGERNON SMITH

Cooke, we've lost command and control.

(holds his bloody neck)

We ain't going to be able to explain this!

Thomas and Cooke look at Smith for a moment. Dead soldiers and dead horses are strewn everywhere. Those still alive are panicked, without plan or purpose they run in chaos.

Thomas reins in a horse and shoots it in the head. The horse falls. He shouts to Boston and Cooke.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER

Bring the General over here!

Boston and Cooke drag General Custer over dead bodies and prop him behind the dead horse as cover.

Rain-in-Face gallops to the top of the ridge. He cuts off their retreat and pounds down on the soldiers with arrows.

Crazy Horse observes a small gap and Keogh's line, exploits the gap, and charges through. The result is the companies are isolated. Separated, they are decimated.

Sitting Bull sings as he walks up the Medicine Tail coulee.

SITTING BULL

The vision is fulfilled!

No bullet may harm him!

Crazy Horse cannot be defeated in battle!

There is chaos and fear in the soldiers. They run wildly without direction. They are struck down.

Two Moons fires into the soldiers.

Just then, a fast horse starts to get away with a soldier upon it. The Indian warriors pursue him. The soldier pulls away.

TWO MOONS

That man is gone.

Then, inexplicably, the man pulls his revolver, puts it to his head and pulls the trigger. He slumps off the horse.

TWO MOONS (CONT'D)
 Fear will make men do terrible
 things.

Calhoun tries to mount a defense.

Crazy Horse crashes through the soldiers. His horse knocks them to the ground.

Two Moons rides around the line and shoots at soldiers with his rifle.

Rain-in-Face is deadly at this range with his arrows.

Low Dog screams and thrust himself upon Calhoun with his tomahawk. Calhoun is chopped in the head and spins and drops and does not move anymore.

Lame-White-Man runs up and hacks at Cooke's face with a hatchet. Cooke is hit and falls to his knees. Boston turns and fires. He shoots Lame-White-Man, who falls upon the ground and does not move. Cooke turns to reveal his jaw and chin are gone, cloven right off by Lame-White-Man. Cooke lays down and does not move.

Boston is hit by an arrow through his neck. He reels and falls. Boston rolls his body and fires back. Custer smiles at the boy.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Good boy, Boston...let 'em have it.

AUTIE REED
 Boston! Watch out!

Two Moon rushes in and clubs Boston violently in the head with the butt of his rifle. Boston falls face down.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
 Good night, brother.

Two Moon turns and raises his rifle to Autie Reed. He is shot several times in the torso. Autie Reed lays back to die.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER (CONT'D)
 Oh, Autie Reed...don't be...

Thomas fights like mad. Arrows protrude from his hip. Gunshots in his shoulder. As he fires, another arrow finds his thigh. He continues to fire until his revolvers click empty. Then he throws them at Two Moons and turns and picks up another rifle found on a dead man.

Rain-in-Face rides in on Thomas.

Thomas is surrounded by hundreds of Lakota, and hundreds more come. They press in. As they run toward him, Thomas looks up to see a twirling hatchet coming at him. It buries itself in his shoulder. He falls to one knee.

Thomas scans the scene. Boston and Autie Reed are dead. Yates, Smith, and Keogh are dead. Calhoun and Cooke are dead.

Custer eyes are open and staring at him. Thomas reaches over and pulls Custer's pistol from his belt.

CPT THOMAS CUSTER
I'm sorry about this George.

LTC GEORGE CUSTER
Do it.

Rain-in-Face lifts his pistol. Thomas lifts his pistol.

RAIN-IN-FACE
You, my enemy!

Custer smiles.

There is a violent impact, gunshots ring out.

Custer's head whips to the side and comes to rest upon the dead horse behind him.

Rain-in-Face gallops past Thomas.

The guns of both Thomas Custer and Rain-in-Face trail away in smoke.

Custer is dead.

Thomas drops to the ground by his brother's side. He moves no more.

EXT. DEEP RAVINE - DAY

2nd Lt. James Sturgis scrambles for cover. He looks for a place to hide. Jack and the other survivors run into a deep ravine. From there it is a turkey shoot. The Indians line the sides of ravine and shoot down into them. Before he is shot, Jack throws his hands in the air and surrenders. With no means to fight back, several Indians jump down into the deep ravine and take him alive. 2nd Lt James Sturgis is led away.

The battle is over. The warriors are gleeful in victory.

Rain-in-Face rides back to Thomas Custer. He raises his rifle butt with intent to smash his face. But then he hears a voice behind him.

MONAHSETA

Wait! This man is a part of the family.

RAIN-IN-FACE

Monahseta? What family?

Monahseta moves to the side to reveal a young fresh-faced Indian boy, about ten years old, who approaches and looks down at the face of Thomas Custer.

RAIN-IN-FACE (CONT'D)

Yellow Bird? I thought Long Hair?

MONAHSETA

(Nods)

The brother.

RAIN-IN-FACE

(grows stern)

This man is my enemy. Take a good long look at the face of your father Yellow Bird. Then go back to your tepee in the village and stay there.

Rain-in-Face backs off.

Monahseta and Yellow Bird kneel and looks upon Thomas Custer. He touches the dead man's face. Looks at his wounds. The gunshots. The arrows. The hatchet. See's the blood running out of him in rivulets. Yellow Bird reaches down and pulls a bronze button off of Thomas Custer's jacket. As he does this, he gets blood on his palm. He stares at his bloody hand. Monahseta is there to comfort Yellow Bird.

In the background, squaws strip and mutilate other soldiers.

The women strip CPT Keogh' of his clothes. But then, as Keogh's shirt opens his Agnus Dei pendent, a pendant of the Lamb of God, is revealed. Gall orders them to stop. He warns against further mutilation of Keogh.

GALL

Wait! Strong medicine on this one. Leave him alone.

Monahseta and Yellow Bird stand. After a last look upon Thomas Custer, they turn to go.

Rain-In-Face addresses Yellow Bird.

RAIN-IN-FACE
Yellow Bird. He was a brave
warrior. He fought without fear.

Yellow Bird nods his head. They turn to go.

After they are gone, Rain-in-Face raises his rifle butt and finishes what he started. He brings it down on Thomas's head repeatedly. At last he takes out a knife and lowers himself on top of Thomas Custer, out of view, it cannot be seen what he does.

Other Indians help their wounded brothers off the field, and carry the bodies of Lame-White-Man and Black-White-Man away.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS (CUSTER HILL) - DAY

The next day, the Indians, their tepees, the entire village is gone, and there are an abundance of calvary troops in the area. Benteen and his detail of Godfrey and Moylan ride the Battle Ridge where the 7th Calvary fell. They dismount. The hot sun shines on the steep grassy slope. In the hot summer sun, the dead bodies stink.

The ground is strewn with naked bodies, horribly mangled and disfigured. Heads, arms and legs are gone. Deep wounds. Red bloody cuts in the torsos and private areas. Black bullet holes. Arrows protrude in faces, necks, eyes, genitals, arms and legs. But more than the human bodies are the dead horses, piled upon each other where they fell.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
Oh the smell! The Indians must have
cleared out their dead from the
battlefield overnight. Then again,
maybe there weren't too many of
them killed in the first place.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
They look so white.

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
A most grisly task, most grisly. I
shall never forget it. Not as long
as I live.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
(shouts)
Hello? Anyone alive here?
(no answer)
(MORE)

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (CONT'D)
 If you can hear me, do you need
 help?

Still nothing.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 Hard to tell, but I think I found
 Thomas. I recognize the tattoo.
 Definitely his arm. His face and
 head has been destroyed. Look, his
 heart's been cut out.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 His heart's been cut out?

1LT EDWARD GODFREY
 I found General Custer!

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 That's him alright. They didn't
 scalp him.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 Out of respect for being War Chief.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 Look at his face. He's smiling.

A long slow reveal of Custer's face expands to show the
 entire battlefield. All the soldiers are dead with brutal
 injuries, stripped and naked.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)
 June 25, 1876. The Little Bighorn.
 Custer lost all of his 210 men.
 Reno and I lost 48 more in the
 first attack and the perimeter
 defense through the night. 258
 souls. They will all need a proper
 Christian burial.

Soldiers with bandannas wrapped around their faces chuck the
 bodies of the dead into a mass grave.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN(V.O.)
 We put stakes in the ground to mark
 where they fell and where we found
 them. There were no survivors. Yet
 there was one...

Keogh's gravely injured horse calls out from the ground.

CPT THOMAS WEIR
 Is that Comanche? Major Keogh's
 horse? Is he still alive?

With help, the injured horse stands, wobbly at first, but then starts to eat. Weir unbuckles the saddle and it falls to the ground.

CPT MYLES MOYLAN
 He's wounded. Should we put him
 down?

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN
 No. He's eating. That's a good
 sign. There has been enough blood
 spilt today.
 (petting the horse)
 If Comanche could talk.

Benteen and Moylan lead Comanche from the battlefield while Weir stands and cries. In the background, the detail of soldiers unceremoniously throw more bodies into the hole. The large mass grave on top of the hill.

Time lapse the view of the mass grave two years.

EXT. THE GREAT PLAINS - DAY

TITLE: Two Years Later.

From the wind swept crest of a gentle grassy slope, the entire valley below stretches out as far as the eye can see. It is a bright summer day and the sun glares large in a big blue Montana sky.

Jurusha Sturgis stands on the high ridge with cavalry officer Captain Edward Godfrey. He starts to tell the story.

CPT EDWARD GODFREY
 Later, after the Indians left, we
 went into their abandoned village.
 We found evidence of some of the
 survivors. We found some torn
 clothing nearby, we think it might
 have been Jack's. The rank on the
 uniform was consistent with the
 rank of 2nd Lieutenant.

JURUSHA STURGIS
 There's more. Something you're not
 telling me.

CPT EDWARD GODFREY
 In a campfire. We found ...a head.
 We think it was Jack's.

Jurusha's face tightens.

CPT EDWARD GODFREY (CONT'D)
 Jack was probably taken to the
 village, where he...where he was
 most certainly tortured. He must
 have been very scared, no doubt. He
 would have suffered a great deal.
 The Lakota have a way with that.
 They can make it last...well, a
 long time.

She finally breaks. Her sobs are uncontrollable.

JURUSHA STURGIS
 Oh how senseless it is. I'm ready
 to go back now. Thank you Captain
 Godfrey.
 (she touches his arm)
 Thank you.

Jurusha Sturgis takes her seat in the calvary wagon. She
 takes a long last look down the steep slope at the white
 cross stands out of the rocky mound.

The cross reads: STURGIS.

The calvary wagon slowly rolls out of sight.

Down in the valley below, a dark storm drenches the Great
 Plains in the shadow of an cloudburst of rain.

EXT. VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY

A montage of final images and titles.

IMAGE 1: A sweeping view of the military cemetery at West
 Point

LIBBIE (V.O.)
 General Custer's remains were
 reinterred at West Point with full
 military honors.

IMAGE 2: The writing on Custer's tombstone is clear now.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Captain Thomas Weir suffered from symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress and Depression. He drank himself to death six months after the battle. Thomas Weir died December 9, 1876 in New York City

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Keogh's horse, Comanche, was never saddled or burdened again. Comanche died in 1891, his body was preserved and mounted. Comanche is on display today at the University of Kansas.

IMAGE 3: Rise to the surrounding view of West Point in the Fall.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Two years after the incident at the Little Bighorn, Major Reno requested a court of inquiry to clear his name and the claim of cowardice. After twenty-eight days of testimony, Reno was exonerated of all charges.

IMAGE 4: A sweeping view of the Black Hills, the sacred land of the Teton Sioux.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Crazy Horse surrendered to General George Crook at the Red Cloud Indian Reservation in Nebraska and was imprisoned at Ft. Robinson. In a conflict there with US Troops he was stabbed through the chest with a bayonet. Crazy Horse was killed September 5, 1877.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Becoming a farmer, Gall converted to Christianity. He died peacefully in his home in Wakpala, South Dakota. Gall died December 5, 1894.

IMAGE 5: The majesty and beauty of the scenic black hills.

LIBBIE (V.O.)

Sitting Bull went on to star in Buffalo Bill Cody's Wild West Show. Later he finally reported to the Reservation.

(MORE)

LIBBIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In later years, Sitting Bull supported the forbidden Ghost Dance. After a brief struggle in which his son was killed, Sitting Bull was shot by Indian police, just like he saw in a vision of his death. Sitting Bull died December 15, 1890

IMAGE 6: From scenes of the Black Hills, Mount Rushmore.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

Seeking revenge for the Little Bighorn, the US Federal Government accelerated plans to eradicate the sovereignty of Native Americans to only the reservations.

IMAGE 7: Show views from the Little Bighorn Battlefield showing a pan of some of the markers. Sturgis, Custer, and others.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

The 7th Calvary took their revenge out On December 29, 1890, at Wounded Knee killing nearly 300 old men, women, and children of the Hunkpapa Sioux. By 1891 the Indian Wars were officially over.

IMAGE 6: Show the Spirit Warrior Memorial at the Little Bighorn Battlefield today.

CPT FREDERICK BENTEEN (V.O.)

Libbie Custer remained faithful to her husband even after his death and wrote extensively about his glorious deeds. Libbie Custer died April 4, 1933 in New York City.

IMAGE 7: End with a painting of *Custer's Last Stand*, by Edgar S. Paxson, (1899)

Show cast of characters.

NO LESS HONOR.

THE END