

CUSTERS' RIDE

Written by

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"CROW INDIAN RESERVATION, MONTANA, 1916"

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Rather messy office, Henderson, a small youngest man with dark hair and mustache works at desk. Another man files in the background.

HERNDERSON

(tired)

Receipt of foodstuffs agree for this month, Major.

MAJOR ROBERTS

I expected they would, file them would you.

HENDERSON

Yes sir.

The two men continue their tasks with an almost formal report. Maj. Roberts stops, pauses and looks over his clerk.

MAJOR ROBERTS

Do you know what today is, Tom?  
(pause)  
My birthday.

HENDERSON  
(Pausing, slight smile) Well, happy  
birthday, Major.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(reflective)  
Thank you. Emma is making a cake  
with some of those sweet flowers we  
bought back East. It will be nice,  
very nice.

EXT. AGENCY OFFICE - DAY

Three crow Indians ride quickly up to a Ford parked outside  
of the office. They are dressed in soiled and worn clothes  
Indian in lead is older and has several feathers tied loosely  
in his hair. They are very excited and one of them fires  
several shots into the air.

EXT. AGENCY DOOR, INDIAN'S POSITION - DAY

John Strong Bear, swings from his horse and strides quickly to  
the Agency Office door.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Henderson rushes to window and Roberts gets quickly up,  
alarmed, knocks over a stack of papers and stumbles towards  
the door.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(angry and surprised )  
What is this? Henderson, is that  
Strong Bear again? Has he been  
drinking?

HENDERSON  
(amused)  
Let's see. Yes sir, Old Bear, Benny  
Grass, and Hawk. Maybe a birthday  
celebration?

Major Roberts is not happy as he reaches the door.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
Not likely, John Bear is probably  
drunk.

EXT. AGENCY OFFICE - DAY

Maj. Roberts swings the office door open and almost collides with an exited John Bear. The two back away from each other. Henderson moves directly behind his superior. The two mounted Indians gesture away behind them.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(agitated)  
Bear, what the devil is this?

STRONG BEAR  
(still nervous)  
Shadow woman come again, she here.

Roberts and Henderson move out of the building; they realize the Crows are not drunk but very worried about something. The Indians keep pointing towards plains.

BENJAMIN GRASS  
Shadow woman, this is not nice.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(soothing)  
Again you say. They're upset,  
Henderson ,but it's not cheap post  
whisky. It's nerves fear, real  
fear.

Strong Bear moves protectively towards his horse and friends.

STRONG BEAR  
(nervous)  
Major Roberts ask to see. Strong  
Bear say go see. Crows go home.

HENDERSON  
John Hawk, put that gun away.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
It's something, Tom. Think I'll  
give chase to this, track the  
Shadow Lady down. Give the auto a  
crank will you?

EXT. IN CAR - DAY

Maj. Roberts is in the Ford, fumbling with his goggles, a faded khaki dust jacket comes down to his ankles. He shifts the car as Henderson half runs beside him and Crows struggle to keep their horses under control

MAJOR ROBERTS

Keep them out of the building, Tom,  
watch that they don't take the lead  
pencils.

HENDERSON  
(slightly winded)  
Okay.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
Drop by the house for some cake  
will you and tell Emma I'm off to  
search out this thing, and don't  
you have any of those candy flowers  
before I get there.

The Ford pops and backfires and Roberts is off down a narrow  
dirt road.

MAJOR ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
I'll head down to the monument.

Henderson stops running and waves.

EXT. WIDE OPEN PLAINS - DAY

Maj. Roberts is driving over endless grassy plants, looking  
around as he motors. The wind sweeps through his hair and  
clothing.

EXT. OPEN PLAINS -BASE OF RIDGE -DAY (ROBERT'S P.O.V)

Roberts looks at a small grouping of white markers and then  
up the hill at many more markers. At top of the hill is a  
tall stone monument overlooking a cluster of white markers.  
Suddenly a figure of a woman completely in black dress,  
bonnet and veil walks slowly from behind the monument and  
down the gentle slope of the ridge.

EXT. IN FORD - DAY

Her appearance startles Roberts, he stalls the Ford and sits  
heavily back in his seat.

MAJOR ROBERTS

MAJOR ROBERTS

(surprised)  
Damn, what the devil?

The forward roll slightly backward until he pulls hard on the break. He pushes the goggles back and watches the dark figure.

MAJOR ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
Hello, I'm the Indian agent.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

The dark figure stops and stands completely still. The wind blows through the dark clothing, fanning it out in an almost ghost like fashion.

EXT. AT FORD - DAY

Robert slowly takes off his goggles and opens the car door. He steps cautiously out of the Ford and on snaps his duster. He peers at the figure before walking towards it.

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Roberts trudges across and up the small incline, stopping in front of the Shadow Woman the wind is wrestling over them.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(very hesitant)  
Eh, (pause) good afternoon, madam.  
I'm Lyman Roberts. I'm the Indian  
agent.

The Shadow Woman just stands there, she says nothing. She is looking out and across the vast open plains.

MAJOR ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
You've given my Indians a real  
scare. They are superstitious  
people.  
(pause)  
Can I help you?

Shadow Woman turns slowly towards him. The wind picks up.

MAJOR ROBERTS (CONT'D)  
Madame, can I be of any service?

SHADOW WOMAN

He always wanted to lead. To lead his soldiers.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
(attempting to hear)  
Madam?

SHADOW WOMAN  
I understand why he led them to this place. It was very beautiful. He was such a child, a glorious child, my boy general. He is still up here, resting finally. Such a wonderful adventure it was. A wonderful adventure that I remember so well.

(pause)  
Major, please take these, they should be up here with him.

There is a ruffling of wind through her flowing dark garments as she reaches out to him. The shadow woman's hand is old, thin but somewhat elegant. There is Ornate Victorian bracelet on her wrist as well as a small leather bracelet decorated with multi-colored beads. Her hand opens when it meets his and she places to small toys Calvary figures in his hands. He stares at the toys.

MAJOR ROBERTS  
I don't think I understand?

The wind and dust picks up, swirls around then, blowing very hard. When it clears she is gone.

"WEST POINT 1861"

INT. LARGE OFFICE - DAY

The assistant commandant of the United States military Academy at West Point, New York has a small package of papers on the desk at which she sets. The young cadet, George Custer in gray uniform, stands at parade rest in front of the desk. Custer look so easy, Col.Johnson looks slightly angry.

COL.JOHNSON  
I don't think I understand, Mr. Custer, for much of your time here we have watched you break up most of the noncriminal regulations concerning conduct an academic behavior. What do you say to that?

CUSTER  
(slight smirk)  
Yes, Assistant Commandant Johnson,  
I have 700 skins to prove it.

COL. JOHNSON  
(more perturbed)  
You have exactly 726 such demerits  
at this time, Mr. Custer. Must I  
remind you sir that's such an  
accomplishment is not a reason for  
joy (pause) whatsoever.

CUSTER  
Yes sir. And all respect, sir, my  
abilities in saber drill and  
horsemanship were very encouraging.

Col. Johnson pauses for a moment it looks hard at young  
customer before gathering up papers in continuing.

COL. JOHNSON  
Mr. Custer, these are difficult  
times for the nation with all these  
acts of rebellion and disunion .  
(pause)  
And if it comes to all that, you'll  
need more than a sword and control  
of a fast horse.

CUSTER  
You are probably right, sir.

COL. JOHNSON  
(looking sour)  
Of course I am correct, men from  
this school may be called upon to  
act as responsible officers of the  
government at any time now. And I  
question just how responsible you  
may truly be graduating last out of  
your class of 34 cadets.

CUSTER  
I want to lead, sir and besides I  
have always been lucky in such  
ventures.

COL. JOHNSON  
Well, Mr. Custer, it will take much  
more than luck to lead as you say  
you wish. But you will graduate and

I certainly hope your career takes the proper terms.

CUSTER

Thank you very much, Assistant Commandant.

COL. JOHNSON

Very well, and about that lack of yours. It may have suffered a setback.

CUSTER

(questioning)  
Sir?

COL. JOHNSON

You will be officer of the guard directly after graduation, and until completion of the out processing of your class. See Mr. Hazan, he will be officer of the day.

CUSTER

Yes sir.

COL. JOHNSON

That will be all, Mr. Custer.

Custer comes to attention and snaps off a salute. Col. Johnson looks him over one more time, squints his eyes a bit, and returns the salute.

CUSTER

Cadet Custer, requesting permission to withdraw.

COL. JOHNSON

Yes, granted, Mr. Custer. You may leave.

Custer takes the traditional one step back, does a smart about face and heads for the office door.

INT. ACADEMY HALLWAY - DAY

There are several young cadets outside waiting for Custer. Pennington a tall, lanky boy, Lea and Rosser who are both dressed in civilian clothes. They fall into loose formation with him and march quickly out onto the parade ground.



PENNINGTON

You've done it, Armstrong, haven't you?

CUSTER

(giggling)

Passed the final exams and made it through old Brass Buttons pass in review.

LEA

No, there is a generous dose of the old luck.

Custer stops and put his arms around the shoulders of Lea and Pennington then turns to Rosser. He takes his arms down and walk towards Rosser who is from Texas and has all the mannerisms benefiting the Old south.

CUSTER

(somewhat sad)

Hello, Texas Tom.

ROSSER

(forcing a smile)

Hello, Armstrong.

Both men shake hands warmly.

CUSTER

I trust you are packed and still leaving?

ROSSER

(sad)

Regretfully yes I am. Young Gimlet Lea and I will be departing promptly.

LEA

But, sir, we just could not force ourselves away until we truly learned the fate of one soon to be Lieutenant George Armstrong Custer.

ROSSER

We had to know just who the enemy might someday be.

They all laugh over this. Pennington and Custer will be getting their commissions in the US Army, while Southerners Lea and Rosser will resign from the Academy to take commissions in the confederate army.

LEA

You realize, Armstrong, there are positions for men of your character in our army?

CUSTER

(sincere)

No, I have thought about it but my feelings are with the Union. My friendship is with both of you. Tom, I will miss the times we had here.

ROSSER

Yes sir, all the fine ladies and all the fine spirits.

(Pause)

Well, Armstrong, I guess it will be no more tenting on the plain for us.

CUSTER

They'll have to be other places and times for that, Tom.

ROSSER

(very sad)

Perhaps my dear Sir there will be but a soldier, an officer, must follow his conscience and Texas is my home.

(pause)

It would have been an honor to have served with you, Armstrong, and I trust even more an honor to fight you.

The two young soldiers stare at each other.

CUSTER

It will be a relief to know that I have a friend I can trust on the other side. If it comes to that.

(Pause)

Hell, to the glories of war, Tom.

ROSSER

To the glories of war. Well, Lea  
and I have a train to catch.  
Goodbye gentleman.

LEA  
(trying to sound happy)  
Yes, Alex and Armstrong, be careful  
and it's off to adventure for all  
of us.

Rosser gives them a slight, dignified bow, swings his bag up  
and turns smartly away.

INT. ACADEMY HALLWAY - DAY

Custer and Pennington watch their two friends walk away,  
across the open green parade ground.

CUSTER  
(silently)  
The glories of war.

EXT. ACADEMY PLAIN - NIGHT

Long rows of white tents stretch out across the green area of  
West Point's Academy plain. It is just four days after Custer  
has graduated and received his commission as a Second  
lieutenant. He is smartly dressed in his dress gray uniform  
and walking his tours as one of the officers of the guard.

There is a sudden sound of fighting and loud voices. Custer  
responds, quickly running behind a row of tents.

BEHIND THE TENT AREA - NIGHT

Custer pushes his way through a crowd of cadets watching a  
fight between two cadets.

CUSTER  
(exited)  
Stand back you animals and let's  
have a fair fight. Get back there.

The two underclassmen continue to slug it out as Custer gives  
them a clear space to fight in.

CADET SPECTATOR  
(surprised)  
Watch out, gentlemen, Officer of  
the Day.

The cadets and fighters scatter and Custer quickly dodges through them to resume his patrol trying to look as normal and uninvolved as possible. Lieutenant Hazan moves up to him.

HAZEN  
(angry)  
Stop, Mister Custer.

Custer obeys, coming to attention as he does.

HAZEN (CONT'D)  
Mister Custer, are you not officer  
of the guard?

CUSTER  
That is correct, Mister Hazan.

Hazen moves up close and almost in a threatening manner confronts Custer. They are joined by Merritt, another member of the Guard Mount.

HAZEN  
If that is so, why did you not put  
an end to that skirmish just now?

CUSTER  
(getting angry)  
Just what skirmish are you  
referring to, Mister Hazen?

HAZEN  
Come on, Mister Custer you were  
close enough to act as a referee  
for that fist fight.  
(Pause)  
Mister, Custer, you are under  
arrest. Mister Merritt, secure  
Mister Custer accommodations in the  
Guard tent. This incident will be  
reported to the Commandant.

HAZEN (CONT'D)  
Merritt take care of your duty,  
good evening gentlemen.

Hazan does a stiff but smart about face and moves away from the other two. Custer is speechless and angry. Merritt is somewhat amused at the turn of events. They start walking towards the guard tent.

MERRITT

Good Lord, Custer, this is not the time to be collecting angry looks from Colonel Reynolds.

CUSTER

(dejected)

Hazen has always treated me like that. He is a stiff necked fool.

MERRITT

Perhaps so, but the class leaves within the week for Washington and postings to our regiments.

Custer looks quickly over at Merritt and puts his head down as they continue to walk.

MERRITT (CONT'D)

They say the Rebels are in Virginia, maybe a days march at best from the capital.

(pause)

There's going to be a big battle for certain.

CUSTER

I'll be out of the scrape and be there. I promise you that much.

EXT. GUARD TENT - DAY

Custer is outside the "Doghouse Tent" late the next day as all 33 of his classmates file by to wish him good luck. He tries to force a "devil may care" look but seems a little sad and preoccupied.

FIRST CADET

Good luck, Armstrong.

SECOND CADET

(shaking hands)

What's the recent word, Custer?

CUSTER

(forcing a smile)

I'll have to face a court-martial.

PENNINGTON

(sad)

Bad luck, Armstrong, you'll miss  
all the fun.

CUSTER

I'll be there Alex, and if not send  
him run 'me running for me.

The other cadets laugh as they filed by.

INT. GUARD TENT - DAY

Custer watches his fellow cadets walk away. He looks and  
thinks for a moment before sitting in the chair in his  
restriction area. He looks totally dejected. One of the  
cadets of the guard comes up with a small package.

CADET OF THE GUARD

Come along, (pause) things are that  
bad, Mr. Custer.

(pause )

Here is a package, just arrive for  
you. I should probably check it,  
but here.

Custer looks up and reaches for the package the other man  
hands it to him. He opens it up in silence. The other men  
watch from a respectable distance.

CUSTER

(surprised ,happy)

Well ,how about this.

CADET OF THE GUARD

Ahhmmm, what do you have there ,Mr.  
Custer?

Custer holds up to a small metal toy cavalry figures.

CUSTER

These. I had them when I was a  
child and my sister fished them out  
of God knows where and sent them  
down to me.

(pause)

Says the family is proud that I  
graduated. Said they want to remind  
me that I have always commanded  
soldiers, even if they were just  
toys in front of the fireplace back  
home.

CADET OF THE GUARD

You know, Mr. Custer, there are instructors here that don't give a hen's chance in a foxes den for your career.

CUSTER

I know that. But there is war coming on and nobody is going to stop me from leading soldiers in it. Nobody.

He turns the little toy figurines around in his hand.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

I will be leading the real thing soon enough.

INT. COMMANDANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Almost two weeks later Custer is standing at rigid attention in front of Col. John F. Reynolds, West Point Commandant. The court martial board has convened and Reynolds will allow them to read the charges. The members of the court martial board, including Hazen, look at him.

REYNOLDS

(solemn)

Mister Custer, I have been informed by the board that a complete review has been made of the changes in this case.

(pause)

(MORE)

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

Before the proceedings continue, let me make my feelings clear on your conduct of June 29th last. Once again, Mister Custer, as you have so often done in your stay at West Point you have shown disregard for the regulations of this institution. How do you get away with this I don't understand.

Custer remains at attention.

REYNOLDS (CONT'D)

In light of the seriousness of the charge, letting your instincts of good sportsmanship prevail over the responsibility you had as Officer of the Guard is, to date, your most

serious breech of rules. I trust you are fully aware of the possible repercussions of such conduct?

CUSTER  
(sweating)  
Sir, I am aware.

Reynolds stops and shuffles papers around on his desk. He stares at young Custer for a long time, there is absolute silence in the room.

REYNOLDS  
(slightly amused)  
Mister Custer, why is it that I have my reservations about you?

CUSTER  
Sir?

REYNOLDS  
(pause)  
No, no don't bother trying to answer that. Mister Bennett, are you prepared to read the charges of this court martial board?

Lt. Bennett is a smallish young officer, rather sad eyed with a dark mustache and short hair. He becomes somewhat animated when called upon for the verdict.

BENNETT  
Yes sir.

REYNOLDS  
Please carry on Lieutenant.

BENNETT  
That on the evening of June 29th Cadet Custer did fail to surpass a disturbance in the vicinity of the guard tent.

(pause)  
That on the contrary did demand of those viewing said disturbance that a fair fight should be allowed to take place fully contrary to the rules on peace at the Academy.

Bennett stops and looks around the room and at Custer.

BENET



Are you guilty or not guilty, Cadet Custer?

CUSTER

Guilty.

BENET

Very well, let it be recorded that Cadet George Armstrong Custer admits to his own guilt on the charges brought against him.

Reynolds looks around stiffly at the members of the board. Bennett registers almost no surprise.

BENET (CONT'D)

As is the requirement in such a case the members of the court martial board will now convene to determine verdict, based on our review of this case and the admission of guilt by Mister Custer.

They pull their chairs together at the far end of the big room. Reynolds is not part of the court martial board so spends his time taking his own notes on the proceedings. Custer continues to stand at attention. After about 5 minutes Benet returns to his position.

BENET (CONT'D)

(clearing his throat)

Mister Custer, it is the decision of the court to reprimand you for conduct unbecoming of an officer and a gentleman.

(pause)

(MORE)

BENET (CONT'D)

The court is truly lenient in it's sentence largely due to the circumstances of his defense. The prisoner is released from custody.

REYNOLDS

(raising his voice)

And one thing Lieutenant Custer, war does not always tolerate good sportsmanship, remember that.

Customer simply stairs in relief at rentals as members of the court-martial word file out.

CUT TO:

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT - DAY

Custer has been sitting in one of the many exterior offices of the Adjutant General's office. The office is it crowded with a host of uniformed men and civilians. Custer is just dazing off when an Orderly Officer calls out his name.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
Lieutenant George Custer.

CUSTER  
I'm Custer.

The orderly officer approaches him; he is a major, and all business.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
(smiling)  
So this is the man we've been hearing about.

CUSTER  
(surprised)  
That just depends on what you have been hearing and whose ears have been hearing it.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
  
Some important people have taken an interest in you, lieutenant, follow me.

They move through a large oak door and into a quieter room full of officers at work.

INT. GENERAL SCOTT'S OFFICE AREA - DAY

Custer is looking around as the Orderly Officer looks over a long row of envelopes on one of the huge oak tables that border the room. He picks one up, and files through the pages inside.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
Lieutenant Custer, you are assigned to Company G with the 2nd Calvary

other major Palmer. In Centreville at this time.

CUSTER  
(relieved)  
Well, this took four years to get to.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
And that court-martial almost kept you from it, Custer.

CUSTER  
(amused)  
Eh... luck guided me safely through.

Orderly Officer leans against the table while Custer pages through his packet with a great deal of curiosity.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
How far will one have to ride to find the Rebels from Centeville?

ORDERLY OFFICER  
I'll tell you what lieutenant. Why don't you ask General Scott for the troop positions?

CUSTER  
(very surprised)  
I don't know what to say, I've heard so much about him.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
(amused)  
Well he has heard about you, too.  
(MORE)

ORDERLY OFFICER (CONT'D)  
It's about time you two met, besides he might have to be carried to Centreville.  
(pause)  
Come along.

INT. GENERAL SCOTT'S PRIVATE OFFICE - DAY

Scott is chief general of the United States Army. His huge frame is covered in a tight generals uniform, the front covered in braid and metals. He is addressing several members

of Congress over a desk spread with maps. One of his aides respond to the gentle knock on the door.

PALMER

Greetings, Higgins. I have Custer with me.

SCOTT'S AIDE

Yes, sir, I do believe General Scott requested to see Mister Custer when he arrived.

(pause)

Let me check with General Scott.

SCOTT

Damned all this nonsense is that the young fellow named... oh what's his name?

SCOTT'S AIDE

Lieutenant Custer, just down from West Point, sir.

Scott moves away from the desk motioning one of the Congressmen to follow him.

SCOTT

(feisty)

Well if it wasn't for Mr. Bingham, young Custer might still be in jail at this point.

(pause)

Send him in here, Higgins.

Scott's Aide ushers Custer and the Orderly Officer into the main office. Custer does look bewildered and the Orderly Officer does a slight bow in the direction of Scott.

ORDERLY OFFICER

(very proper)

General Scott, might I have the pleasure of introducing Lieutenant Custer? And I believe Lieutenants Custer knows Representative Bingham.

Custer delivers a very snappy salute to Scott and a courteous nod to the Congressman.

CUSTER

(very formal)

Sir, lieutenant Custer reporting.

SCOTT  
Yes, lieutenant Custer.

Scott returns the salute with a slightly amused look on his face. The huge, old General seems to welcome this break from routine. He eyes the young officer up and down as Representative Bingham stands beside him. Then he extends his hand; a smile breaking over his face.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Relax, lieutenant, there are no rebels here. As far as I can determine anyway.

The other men who have been watching the introductions let out some muffled laughs.

CUSTER  
(relieved)  
Thank you, sir. It is an honor to meet you.

Scott continues to smile and walks back toward the big, map covered desk. He loosens several more of the restraining buttons of his uniform.

SCOTT  
Well, young sir, had you met me several days ago when the news of your instituting of a fair fight policy at West Point was made known to me, I do believe you would have been happier meeting the entire Army of the Confederacy than Old Fuss and Feathers Winfield Scott.  
(pause)

Scott moves over to his chair which an aid quickly pulls away from the desk. The old man sits heavily into it. He unbuttons another tunic button.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
Goodness, if it isn't the damned heat, it's the rebels, or the Republicans or Lincoln.  
(pause)  
Or Lieutenant Custer starting the war up on the Hudson, good a place as any I guess.

General Scott tends to ramble and the Orderly Officer tries to bring him back to the subject.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
(tactfully)  
Lieutenant Custer will be serving  
and company G, 2nd Calvary.

SCOTT  
So I'm told. And for the past week,  
representative Bingham has been  
telling me of your qualities,  
largely to offset the  
unpleasantness of your arrest and  
court-martial, I suspect.

SCOTT (CONT'D)  
(pause)  
You have a true friend of him.

CUSTER  
Yes, representative Bingham secured  
my appointment to the Academy. I  
will try my best to live up to his  
expectations.

SCOTT  
I am also told that you are very  
good with a saber and a master at  
horsemanship.

CUSTER  
That is true, General Scott.

SCOTT  
(pause)  
I am also told that you are a lucky  
man, Mr. Custer?

CUSTER  
I consider myself often very lucky,  
sir.

Scott shuffle papers on his desk coming up with a small  
package tied up and official looking. He looks it over before  
handing it towards Custer.

SCOTT  
(serious)  
Well, sir, you have most of the  
makings of a Calvary Officer  
wouldn't you say, Higgins?  
(pause)  
I trust you are anxious to see your  
unit, out of Centreville if my  
information is correct.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
Yes general, as of this morning.

SCOTT  
You'll find Army headquarters on your route and General McDowell, these must go to him, it will take a night ride to accomplish that. Another young officer is bringing a remount down to Centreville from the Government Stables at the Treasury Building. Thomas will explain the details.

CUSTER  
(saluting)  
Thank you, sir.

Scott again shakes Custer's hand. Representative Bingham extends his hand to Custer also.

BINGHAM  
Good luck, Lieutenant. I know you'll make us proud.

CUSTER  
Thank you, sir.

SCOTT  
This is important service, Mr. Custer, do it well.  
(pause)  
Whatever happens, take care.

EXT. GOVERNMENT STABLE - DAY

Custer and Orderly Officer stand amid the hustle and activity of a busy stable. Men in dirty uniforms and civilian clothing move around behind them. Orderly Officer checks his timepiece and anxiously scans the riders and civilian traffic moving up the busy street.

ORDERLY OFFICER  
Yes, here's our men. The fellow on the Chestnut.

Custer turned his attention in the direction noted, a look of recognition sweeps over his face. A tall lady officer ride smartly out, leading another horse behind him.

CUSTER  
Hello, Pennington.

PENNINGTON

Lieutenant Armstrong Custer, hello  
to you.

ORDERLY OFFICER

I trust you know one another?

CUSTER

(smiling)

Old hazers from the Point sir. Nice  
mount, Alex.

PENNINGTON

We had given you up for a certain  
discharge, Armstrong. Now you show  
up practically on general Scott's  
staff.

Custer moves towards the extra mount and offers his hand to  
the Officer Orderly. They shake and Custer swings  
effortlessly into the saddle adjusting the stirrups as  
Paddington looks on.

CUSTER

Appreciate your kindness, Major.

OFFICER ORDERLY

(business-like)

Never mind all that, you have a 25  
mile ride to Centreville and  
important dispatches to deliver  
when you arrive. Pennington.

PENNINGTON

Major?

ORDERLY OFFICER

I'm sure Lieutenant Custer will  
give you a full account of his  
court-martial, but before then  
depart town over long bridge and  
down Fairfax Courthouse Road.  
Move quickly now gentleman.

He steps back, they salute, he returns it and they give their  
mounts some rein and are off. Custer turns to Pennington.

CUSTER

(very happy)

Custer's luck, Alex,  
(pause)Custer's luck.



The two young officers move into the horse traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue bound for Virginia.

EXT. UNION ARMY HQ. - NIGHT

Pennington and Custer rein in their mounts on a well worn dirt road. They are surrounded by rows of tents, with very small fires of soldiers standing around. A larger tent grouping is just to their front. There are regimental flags, horses and orderlies out front.

PENNINGTON

Over there Armstrong is army headquarters.

(pause)

I'm off to Captain Griffins battery just down the road a piece.

Custer reins his horse tightly pulling it up to Pennington's. The two men shake hands.

PENNINGTON (CONT'D)

Someone there will be able to tell you where the 2nd is.

CUSTER

Good evening, Alex and good luck.

PENNINGTON

Goodbye to you, Armstrong.

CUSTER

To the glories of war, Alex.

Custer laughs and canters off towards the headquarters tent as Pennington moves off down the road.

EXT. GENERAL'S TENT - NIGHT

A great deal of discussion is going on inside, several horses are being cared to in the dark by enlisted orderlies. Two sentries, with rifles over their shoulders pace in front of the tent flap. Custer rides slowly up, and a Union Army Major peaks from the tent and comes out to greet him.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Yes, Lieutenant, whom are you here to see?

Custer slides off his mount and salutes.

CUSTER

Lieutenant Custer, sir, with  
dispatches for General McDowell  
from General Scott.

Wadsworth doesn't seem impressed.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Let me get this to General  
McDowell. Can I offer you some  
coffee and a little army beef  
steak?

CUSTER

Thank you sir, but I should be  
getting on to Major Palmer's  
command.

Wadsworth is walking towards the meeting in General  
McDowell's tent, almost talking over his shoulder to Custer.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

You're in luck, Lieutenant, Major  
Palmer is in the staff briefing.  
You can get your breakfast, meet  
your new commander, and get an  
escort directly to 2nd Calvary  
headquarters.

CUSTER

Well, major, if those are the  
circumstances then I'll except your  
offer.

EXT. CAMP FIRE - NIGHT

Custer is sitting by the fire eating his meal, his cap is  
resting on his knee and the mass of golden curls cover his  
head. Wadsworth is sitting on a camp stool near him.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Almost two, the meeting should be  
just about over. Then it's just  
over three hours until first light.

CUSTER

(curious)

And General McDowall will attack?

MAJOR WADSWORTH

(thoughtful)

He will do just that. Hunter's  
Division and General Heintzelman's

Division have already gotten their marching orders. The 2nd Calvary makes up part of the Second Division under General Hunter. He's a real old army scrapper.

CUSTER  
(enthusiastic)  
That should be the ticket then.

MAJOR WADSWORTH  
(somewhat amused)  
Well now, Custer, seems like the army has a hard charger on it's hands.

CUSTER  
Perhaps.  
(pause)  
But I just remembered I don't have a horse; that was a remount for the staff that I rode in on.

MAJOR WADSWORTH  
(very amused)  
Oh yes, don't worry lieutenant. General McDowell instructed me to issue you that animal.  
(pause)  
Evidently the commander realizes that we can't have our most Promising cavalry officer sitting out the battle due to lack of proper transportation. Here we go, staff meetings over.

The sound of voices in jingle of sabers and boots come closer as officers depart the final general staff meeting before the pending battle. A trim officer, Major Palmer, commander of the 2nd Calvary, walks over with a youngish first lieutenant, Thomas Drummond.

MAJOR PALMER  
There you are Nelson. Is this my new officer?

MAJOR WADSWORTH  
Indeed it is, Lieutenant Custer may I introduce Major Innis Palmer, Commander second US Calvary and G Company commander Lieutenant Thomas Drummond.

Custer is up on his feet and saluting his senior officers.

MAJOR PALMER

Very good to see that you've arrived, Mr. Custer. Thought that we might have to start the picnic without you.

CUSTER

Nothing could have kept me away from this, Major Palmer.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Young Custer intends to finish the day in Richmond I believe.

MAJOR PALMER

(snickering)

Do you Custer? Good with a sword are you?

CUSTER

Very accomplished at West Point, sir.

DRUMMOND

We are a long way from West Point down here, Lieutenant.

MAJOR PALMER

(joking)

Now, I think Mr. Custer wants to see some of what he has spent the past four years studying about.

The little collection of officers are in good humor at Custer's expense. But he seems to be enjoying the attention.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Can't blame a young officer for a bit of fire and fury.

MAJOR PALMER

Of course, let us get to horse and to our headquarters. No sleep for us tonight.

(pause)

Custer in Drummond move with him.

MAJOR PALMER (CONT'D)

Coming on Custer.

(pause)

Drummond, you were wise to step out of tonight's staff meeting. Tyler and Heintzelman never stop talking. And General McDowell, bless him, never stops explaining.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Any developments, Innis?

Maj. Palmer mounts up as do Custer and Drummond. Drummond seems to be watching Custer closely.

MAJOR PALMER

It is all as planned. We'll cross Bull Run creek early and hit the rebels' left. Be rolling them up before noon meal.

(pause)

I am sure that meets with young Mr. Custer's expectations?

Custer is all smiles as he reins his horse up by the other men.

CUSTER

I will be happy with that. And, Major Wadsworth my regards to the General for the horse.

MAJOR WADSWORTH

Direct him to Richmond, Mr. Custer, and don't let those damned rebels interfere. Good night, Innis.

The three riders spur their horses on, through the gathering lines of soldiers, into the darkness and down the road.

CUT TO:

EXT. CENTREVILLE PIKE - EARLY MORNING

Squadrons of Union cavalry canter in columns of twos along the pike. Wide green fields broken by trees and fences spread out from the road and there are several dozen wagons and civilian buggies full of distinguished looking gentlemen and some very lovely ladies either riding in or eating from picnic baskets set up on the grass. Long lines of infantry units at shoulder arms move through the fields parallel to the pike.

EXT. CENTREVILLE PIKE, 2ND CAVALRY POSITION - MORNING

Maj. Palmer and his staff have stopped to talk with an infantry officer while Drummond takes his G Company past. Custer rides by with them.

MAJOR PALMER  
(anxious)  
Lieutenant Drummond, take your company down and across Cub Run bridge.

EXT. DRUMMOND'S COMPANY - MORNING

Drummond reins his horse in and turns to his company.

DRUMMOND  
Company, (pause) columns of two, at the canter, forward.

EXT. FIELD NEAR ROAD, PICNIC AREA - MORNING

The bombing of distant cannons picks up and several of the well-dressed civilians take notice. An attractive young woman climbs up on a buggy seat for a better look. She turns and smiles at Custer as G. Company canters past.

LADY  
Hello over there to the soldiers!

Custer canters past, reins up his mount.

CUSTER  
Ma'am?

She waves to Custer, several other civilians together around to listen.

LADY  
Do you know if it will be possible to get accommodations in Richmond this evening, or will the army get for selections?

Custer sweeps his kepi off his head and bows gallantly towards the lady much to the humor of the troopers.

CUSTER  
Ma'am, I will ask President Davis this evening when I see him.

Many of the tough looking regular cavalry soldiers break into laughs over Custer's response.

EXT. PALMER AND DRUMMOND'S AREA ON TURNPIKE - MORNING

Drummond is still listening to Maj. Palmer's instructions but aware of the conversation Custer is having.

MAJOR PALMER

About one quarter of a mile down Sudley Road bring them into that field. Do you understand Lieutenant? You will support our artillery if need be.

DRUMMOND

Very well sir.

(pause)

Come along, Custer , we're not booking agents for the civilians.

G. Company, 2nd US Calvary, trots off down the road, young Custer smiles back at the lady.

EXT. PICNIC AREA,BUGGY - MORNING

An older man and fashionable clothes approaches the lady and squeezes her hand.

OLDER MAN

Now I believe President Davis will have to do some serious explaining to young men like that.

CUT TO:

EXT. LARGE FIELD NEAR SUDLEY'S FORD - DAY

G Company moves across the road into the field. Several horse artillery pieces pass them off of the road. Custer wears his Kepi at a rakish angle over his curls.

DRUMMOND

By fours; troop ford at the walk, ho.

EXT. G. COMPANY, FIELD - DAY

The Calvary move into the field as a cannon round lands only

100 yards away with a hissing boom. The horses spook slightly.

EXT. CUSTER'S PLATOON - DAY

Custer controls his horse as quads of dirt and spoke cascade over the soldiers.

CUSTER  
(nervous)  
Whooo there you go, guide to your left.

TROOPER  
Better keep your head down, lieutenant.

EXT. G. COMPANY, DRUMMOND'S POSITION - DAY

Drummond is having trouble controlling his horse, as a Union artillery go into action.

BULL RUN BATTLE - MONTAGE

Union artillery getting guns ready to fire.

Lines of gray clad soldiers a big baskets, the stars and bars of the Confederacy flutter about them.

G. company of the 2nd US Calvary riding across the field.

Custer urging his horse on, kepi pushed back, hair wind swept.

Groups of civilian observers gathered on the buggies, some with the binoculars or telescopes.

Union artillery officer yelling fire, line of guns spit flame and shot.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD NEAR SUDLEY'S POND, G COMPANY - DAY

Drummond is out front of the line of moving riders, the

battle is heating up and everyone looks nervous. The sound of musket fire is increasing in the distance.

DRUMMOND



Column of troopers; left into line,  
at the walk ho.

EXT. G. COMPANY IN FIELD - DAY

In near perfection in the entire company turns into a solid  
line of mountain troopers.

EXT. CUSTER AT HEAD OF HIS PLATOON - DAY

CUSTER

Left into line . Gentlemen, dress  
on me, keep those lines now.

EXT. DRUMMOND AT HEAD OF G. COMPANY - DAY

Drummond is concerned about getting command in position.

DRUMMOND

Company, halt. Prepare to dismount,  
(pause) dismount. Officers to the  
front. Sergeants supervise watering  
by squads.

EXT. G. COMPANY IN FIELD - DAY

Squad leaders Custer, Walker, Hazelwood and Harris leave  
their horses over to Drummond.

EXT. FIELD, G. COMPANY AREA - DAY

The battle continues as Drummond addresses his squad  
officers. Custer looks calm, while Walker and Hazelwood can  
barely control their nervousness. Harris looks thoughtful.

DRUMMOND

(upbeat)

This is a very fine Sunday ,  
gentlemen. Our Commander will soon  
be joining us I trust with the rest  
of the regiment and our operations  
orders.

WALKER

Lieutenant drop it, would it be  
prudent to take the company it to a  
place of more protection. I mean...

As if to support Walker's theory a volley of canon shot hiss directly over that.

EXT. FIELD, G COMPANY - DAY

Some troopers move towards their mounts, others just glance up.

FIRST SERGEANT  
Lordy that will be close.

Shells explode very near the line, splashing pieces of grass, dust and noise in all directions. Several cavalry horses spook and bolt out of control. Soldiers are screaming and cursing.

EXT. FIELD, OFFICER'S CONFERENCE - DAY

Walker, Hazelwood and Harris are all on the ground, Drummond is just recovering from a half crouch but Custer remains standing straight quickly recovers. Custer pulled his pistol out of his holster and blows the dust off the hammer.

DRUMMOND  
Troop Sergeant Howard, maintain  
that line.  
(pause)  
(MORE)

DRUMMOND (CONT'D)  
No, Lieutenant Walker, we are in  
support of Griffin's battery, we  
can't protect it several miles to  
the rear.

HAZELWOOD  
Damn, Drummond we can't help them  
if we are blowed all over this  
field either.

Custer moves a little bit away from the others, dusting himself off.

CUSTER  
Mr. Walker, perhaps you should be  
more concerned with the possibility  
that we may never get any closer to  
a real fight today that what you  
have already seen.  
(pause)

And, Lieutenant Drummond , we can't protect it with officers dodging and bobbing in front of their men.

DRUMMOND

(angry)

That will be enough from both of you. You will hold on line until further orders. Now return to your platoons!

EXT. FIELD, G. COMPANY LINE - DAY

All the platoon leaders are mounted and sitting out in front of their men. Drummond is viewing the action through his telescope while Custer sits somewhat relaxed in front of his troopers. His cap is pushed back, one hand on his waist and another loosely holding the horse bridle. Walker and the others look a bit nervous.

WALKER

Custer, what weapon did will you use if we charge?

CUSTER

The saber, draw saber.

The entire line, plus platoon leaders, do the same. Custer rests the weapon against his shoulder.

DRUMMOND

We are hitting their middle now.

CUSTER

It is a beautiful weapon, but only of use in close quarters.

He looks over at Walker.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

So, your enemy might cut you down well before you could ever use it.

Custer quickly slips his saber back into its scabbard. He unsnaps his colt revolver and yanks the weapon out of its holster. All the officers and troopers are watching him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

The revolver, draw revolver.

The entire load of soldiers copies have a good. Customer is a joy this exercise in command greatly.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(looking his weapon over)  
It has a great advantage over the  
saber it that you can deal with  
your edit be at a distance.

WALKER  
Yes, that is true.

Drummond has put his field glasses up it is cantering his  
horse nervously in front of the command.

DRUMMOND  
Well, Mr. Custer, it seems like we  
have taken their batteries and  
beaten them at all points. Perhaps  
we will see who dodges and bobs  
shortly.

In the distance the sound of rifle and cannon fire accents  
his words.

CUSTER  
Delighted, Lieutenant Drummond.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, UNION LINES - DAY

Long lines of Union soldiers fire across fields at fleeing  
Confederate forces. American flags and different regimental  
colors fly in the air over Union forces. Slowly the line of  
dusty blue soldiers moves forward.

EXT. FIELD, G. COMPANY LINE - DAY

Troopers of G company remain on line and in support. Custer,  
Walker, Harris, and all the officers are out front.

CUSTER  
(with a sly smile)  
The revolver, Mr. Walker, gives you  
six chances to finish off your  
enemy. Miss once, twice eh, still  
have three more shots.

Walker looks down at his revolver, which she holds loosely in  
his right hand. He seems uncomfortable with the weapon.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

But, on second consideration, it's damned hard to get anything near an aim in the charge. So you'd be out of ammunition by the time you reached your enemy.

WALKER  
(unsure)  
A good possibility, I suspect.

CUSTER  
Then you'd be in the middle of things with an empty colt and certainly no time to reload.

Custer with an exaggerated ceremony drops the revolver back into its holster. Walker and the entire line of soldiers does the same.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
So there are the points of considerations concerning the weapon of choice for today's action.

Custer takes out his pocket watch, opens it up for a moment.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Gentlemen it is almost two now, I trust the battle and perhaps the war may be over well before any of us in G. Company has to actually pick a weapon to use today.

The line of soldiers breaks into subdued laughs and grins.

EXT. SUDLEY ROAD, FIELD IN G. COMPANY AREA - LATE AFTERNOON

Major Palmer, his staff and the other companies of the second US Calvary are cantering down the road and into the field. Palmer signals the command to halt. He rides ahead with several other officers and his color sergeant. The wind whips through the flag as they rein in their mounts near Drummond who salutes Palmer.

PALMER  
(very excited)  
Drummond , Drummond, we've forced the enemies left. They are being broken, damn them.

The command starts to cheer and Custer lets out a boyish yell sweeping his hat off and waving it above him.

PALMER (CONT'D)

We've got Warrenton Pike and are breaking through their center line.

WALKER

How about that, Custer, the war will be over this evening.

CUSTER

And so far without a shot at anybody, damn those weak kneed rebels.

PALMER

We move in support of Griffin's artillery. By the way, General Hunter has been injured. Fall back into line.

DRUMMOND

Very well, sir.

He quickly brings his horse about, the rumble of cannon fire still in the background. Palmer and staff ride quickly back to the rest of the command.

DRUMMOND (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, we move forward in support of our artillery. Guide to the center, columns of platoons, forward at the gallop.

#### 1. - LATE AFTERNOON

Major Palmer leaves the 2nd US Calvary at a gallop along a dirt road. Small groups of soldiers, many injured, are resting in the grassy areas beside the road. Smoke and noise blanket the area.

PALMER

(confused)

Damn it, where is Griffin's unit?

AIDE

Sir, he has moved up here to cover our advance.

To the right flake they see a regiment of Zouave in their colorful red trousers, dark blue jackets and red topped

kepis . Palmer and his aid canter quickly over to one of the officers.

PALMER

What unit is this and where the  
deuce is Captain Griffin's battery?

The Zouave officer snaps off an awkward salute.

ZOUAVE CAPTAIN

Major, this is the 14th New York  
volunteers and we are to support  
artillery on Henry house Hill, to  
your direct front, sir.

PALMER

My thanks Captain, good luck to  
you. This is a Fox and goose affair  
if I ever saw one, Anderson.

AIDE

Seems such, sir.

Palmer reins in his horse, returns the salute and canters  
back to his command.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR HENRY HORSE HILL - DAY

Union artillery batteries are in place and fire across open  
fields. Lieutenant Pennington is there, sweat stained and  
dirty. Palmer brings the 2nd US Calvary up well behind the  
firing line.

1. - DAY

Lines of Confederate soldiers stand with their heads  
over their muskets reloading as canon shots tear holes and  
their ranks.

EXT. FIELD HEADQUARTERS, CONFEDERATE FORCES - DAY

General Thomas Jackson is intently looking over a map on a  
small field table, staffers move quickly about.

MESSENGER

Yes, General, they've extended to  
within 300 yards of our flank ,  
almost on protected by artillery.

GENERAL JACKSON  
(intently looking at  
map)  
You say the rest of the Virginians  
are in place as are Stewart's  
Calvary?

MESSENGER  
Yes sir, and the 8th regiment from  
Georgia. We have their flank sir  
for the taking.

Jackson is very thoughtful for a moment.

GENERAL JACKSON  
Gentlemen, if we do not do  
something here the day is lost.  
Besides, I am tired of this long  
range work, tell Colonel Cummings  
to advance on the union flank.

EXT. FIELD, 2ND US CAVALRY AREA - DAY

Palmer and several other company commanders are clustered on  
their horses watching the artillery attack. The rest of the  
unit is placed it back. Custer shifts in his saddle and  
notices his friend Pennington.

CUSTER  
Leicester, see to my people for a  
moment, would you? I see an old  
classmate earning his pay.

WALKER  
Of coarse.

Custer canters off across the field towards the artillery.  
There is a constant movement of soldiers, wagons and horses,  
he isn't noticed as he rides up beside Pennington.

CUSTER  
(somewhat forced Humor)  
Hello Alex, winning the war?

PENNINGTON  
Good afternoon, Armstrong.

The sound of firing is very loud as the smoke of the battle  
makes everything seem hazy.

CUSTER



A bit different than artillery  
drill at school?

PENNINGTON  
I'll say. I haven't eaten all day.

CUSTER  
I haven't done much else.

Custer looks over the line of guns and soldiers, lost in the  
noise and excitement of the battle.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Still it is splendid work, Alex I  
never want to do anything else. Do  
you think Tom Rosser is over there?

Pennington is listening to Custer but his gaze is off to  
their left.

PENNINGTON  
(seems preoccupied)  
if he is, Griffin is making him  
wish he had stayed loyal to the  
union, hmmm, that must be our  
support.

CUSTER  
(interested)  
Who are they Pennington?

Both soldiers are squinting off towards a field several  
hundred yards away. Custer slowly removes his kepi and wipe  
the sweat off his face with it.

EXT. OPEN FIELD AT TREE LINE - DAY

Officers are urging ranks of soldiers out into the open,  
moving them quickly towards the union artillery positions.  
They wear a mixture of blue and gray uniforms and their flags  
remain limp in the hot July day.

1. - DAY

CONFEDERATE MAJOR  
Move along boys, let's shove them  
Yankees back to the Potomac.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS, UNION POSITIONS - DAY

Several members of union gun crews slack and their frantic pace as they notice the approaching wall of soldiers. Several junior officers and gun crew members are concerned and start to pivot the guns towards the advancing line.

ARTILLERY MAJOR

(frantic)

You there, hold that gun in place!  
What are you doing?

GUN CREW MEMBER

Sir, that is an enemy advance.

ARTILLERY MAJOR

Don't be foolish, that is our  
support.

2ND GUN CREW MEMBER

(standing on gun)

Major, I just don't trust him  
'em... silent for me.

ARTILLERY MAJOR

This battery will not be firing on  
its own soldiers.

The Artillery Major walks his horse around in small circles as he watches the approach with a field telescope.

ARTILLERY MAJOR (CONT'D)

They are wearing union blue, nothing  
to be concerned about.

EXT. BEHIND ARTILLERY POSITIONS - DAY

Custer and Pennington continue to watch the advancing soldiers.

CUSTER

Who the devil are these people,  
Alex?

PENNINGTON

(very worried)

If they get any closer we can ask  
them ourselves.

EXT.FIELD, VERY NEAR UNION POSITIONS - DAY

The Confederates stop about 80 yards from the Union artillery, the battle line quickly levels muskets to the yelling of commands. A gentle breeze stirs through the ranks and the Confederate battle flags unfurl.

EXT. BEHIND ARTILLERY POSITIONS - DAY

Custer sees the flag and grabs Pennington's arm.

CUSTER  
(screaming with anger)  
They're rebels!

PENNINGTON  
Armstrong, they'll flank us for certain.

Custer pulls his colt revolver from its holster in bravely takes a deliberate aim at the Confederates.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS, UNION POSITIONS - DAY

The gun crews are still working there guns, while watching the troops on their flank approach and then go into firing position.

GUN CREW MEMBER  
(surprised)  
My God, don't that beat the blazes out of a good days work.

ARTILLERY MAJOR  
(frantic)  
Turn those guns, damn you, change position, guns to the right!

The Union soldiers try to move their guns around to confront the rebels' attack.

EXT. FIELD CONFEDERATE BATTLE LINE - DAY

Long lines of Confederate infantry aim their rifles, one or two stagger back and fall as Union rifle fire hits their line. There is the sound of drums, commands and suddenly the entire line volley fires at the union positions.

EXT. BEHIND ARTILLERY POSITIONS - DAY

Pennington's horse risers into the air and falls. Custer very coolly fires his revolver controlling his horse with what he had. Pennington stumbles up.

EXT. OPEN FIELDS, UNION POSITIONS - DAY

The Confederate Volley has devastated the union artillery of Captain Griffin. Several gun crew members fall immediately, the horses are shot, still hitched to their gun limbers, and soldiers take cover behind the guns. An American flag posted the other guns topples to the ground, torn by bullets. The Artillery Major gets hit in the chest. He falls toward the wheel of canon propping himself up.

ARTILLERY MAJOR

(gasping)

Turn these guns damn you, Lord, oh  
Lord.

He drops his sword and falls dead beside it. As men start to run away from the union artillery positions.

EXT. BEHIND ARTILLERY POSITIONS - DAY

Pennington is dazed and stumbling towards the destroyed and retreating artillery position. Custer has just stopped firing. He quickly checks his horse, jumps it over Pennington's dead mount and canters after his confused friend.

PENNINGTON

Nothing left, the horses are dead.  
Don't leave the guns.

They were soldiers dashing past them in all directions, many injured, most without equipment or hats. Custer halts a fleeing gun limber, then slips to the side of his horse picking up Pennington by brute force.

CUSTER

You're riding away from here Alex.

PENNINGTON

Where are at my guns?

CUSTER

Soon to be the rebels property,  
Alex, nothing we can do about that  
now.

Custer swings around to the nervous driver and crew of the gun limber. They help Pennington aboard.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
He's injured, take him out of here.

DRIVER  
(anxious)  
Better get yourself out of here  
Lieutenant. The entire line is  
coming apart.

Custer spurs his horse away towards his own unit.

EXT. FIELD, CONFEDERATE BATTLE LINE - DAY

The long lines of Confederate soldiers advance towards the Union line. The famous "rebel yell" can be heard through their ranks as they pick up the pace.

EXT. FIELD, 2ND US CAVALRY AREA - DAY

There is activity in the ranks of the 2nd US Cavalry, Drummond has just taken his orders from Palmer. The squadron moves back toward the road. Custer gallops into his platoon.

CUSTER  
(winded)  
What's the news, Walker?

WALKER  
We are pulling out  
( pause )  
retreating. We can't beat them.

DRUMMOND  
Platoon leaders prepare to bring  
your platoons into columns. And be  
quick about it.

CUSTER  
Lieutenant Drummond, am I to  
believe we are retreating?

Drummond reins his horse, he is perturbed by Custer and nervous about the situation.

DRUMMOND  
G company will post mounted escort  
for the division headquarters.

G company will post mounted escort for the division headquarters. The rest of the squadron will screen the withdrawal. Yes I imagine that means a retreat.

Custer has taken out his colt revolver and opening the cylinder, tapping it gently the spent shells tinkle into the grass.

CUSTER

Am I the only member of the 2nd Calvary to have fired at the rebels today?

DRUMMOND

I guess so, you were also the only member of the 2nd who left his plaque tune to exchange pleasantries with friends.

The two men stare at one another and the sounds of war and retreat are all around them.

CUSTER

(Cooly)

I am paid to fight, Lieutenant Drummond.

DRUMMOND

You also get paid to follow orders, sir. I suggest you remember that.

(MORE)

DRUMMOND (CONT'D)

Now bring your platoon around, into column. The same goes for you, Mr. Walker.

Drummond rides off.

WALKER

I don't think you and Drummond are going to hit it off, Custer .

CUSTER

Drummond is a parade ground soldier. I don't wish to be one of them.

HARRIS

What was it like, shooting at the rebels I mean?

CUSTER

There were so many even Drummond  
couldn't miss. Column of troopers,  
ho.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD, WARRENTON PIKE, UNION RETREAT - DAY

Dust and smoke cover the road as G. Company, 2nd US Calvary  
tries to work as escort to a small collection of wagons,  
fleeing with the defeated Union army. Brig. Gen. Samuel  
Heintzelman, bearded in dust covered with a bloody bandage,  
sits in his wagon watching the crowd in confusion. Fleeing  
soldiers in various uniforms, riderless horses and civilians  
crowd the road. Custer leads his platoon through the  
confusion.

DRUMMOND

(very tired)

Make way for the general and staff.

FLEEING SOLDIER

Why doesn't the general make room  
for us?

INJURED SOLDIER

(angry)

I'll be damned if no officer is  
going to leave me to walk back to  
Washington.

some of the soldiers try to rush the HQ wagons. The drivers  
push at them while trying to control their teams of horses.  
Custer is alert to the problem.

CUSTER

First platoon drive sabers,  
Sergeant Jones have the men close  
up and keep those soldiers off the  
wagons.

SGT. JONES

Yes sir. Bring your sabers to the  
ready and close on the wagon.

EXT. ROAD, UNION RETREAT - DAY

The soldiers of the first platoon move into action and push  
or pull the fleeing troops away. Some stagger in right across

the nearby field which are covered with discarded and broken equipment.

1. - DAY

Customer reviews the entire retreat with disgust.

CUSTER

These are not the man I came here  
to lead, Sergeant Jones, go easy on  
them.

SGT. JONES

Very well, Lieutenant.

The fleeing line of soldiers and wagons continue down the road.

EXT. ROAD NEAR CUB RUN BRIDGE - DAY

Several broken wagons block the soldiers and civilians from crossing the bridge. Everyone seems to be in shock women are standing beside their buggies crying, well soldier stagger off the road into the trees. Custer rides quickly past the crowd. Canon shots explode in the nearby stream ,showering the area with water and mud. Custer swings down from his horse as everyone tries to protect themselves from the artillery.

EXT. ON CUB RUN BRIDGE - DAY

Custer dashes onto the bridge and pushes the broken wagons off. Several more explosions hit very close.

CUSTER

(tired and breathless)  
Come on quickly, move along.

Wagons and the mass of soldiers and civilians start to move over the bridge as Custer walks slowly back to his horse.

EXT. ROAD NEAR BRIDGE, HQ WAGON - DAY

Gen. Heintzelman has been watching the entire episode and motions for Major Palmer, who has been riding with the screening forces to come to his wagon.

HEINTZELMAN

Was that boy one of your people,  
Palmer?



PALMER

Yes, General, that was Lieutenant Custer with G company.

HEINTZELMAN

Eh... damn. I thought this injury was making me see things. Reckless fellow, but one of the best displays of soldiering I've seen all day.

PALMER

He's a promising officer.

HEINTZELMAN

If he lives long enough. Custer you say?

PALMER

Yes, George Armstrong Custer, first platoon, G company.

HEINTZELMAN

Very good. Bradford, get us out of this confounded mess.

The general's driver snaps the web and his little group of wagons pulls into the traffic going over the bridge.

CUT TO:

EXT. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, VIRGINIA, UNION CAMP - EVENING A

very heavy rain is beating down on long lines of

disorganized soldiers. Officers call out commands, men sit on the side of the muddy road. Lt. Custer, tired and wet, rides his horse quietly among the clutter.

EXT. ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ROADSIDE - EVENING

Custer rides up to a large tree and slides from his horse, grounds the reins and slouches under the tree asleep. Soldiers walk by. The rain continues to fall.

EXT. UNION CAMP, CUSTER'S TREE - DAY

It is two days later and Custer remains asleep, his cap pulled down low over his eyes. A G. Company soldier wakes him up.

SOLDIER  
(quietly, timid)  
Lieutenant Custer,  
(pause)  
sir.

Custer stirs a bit and starts to push himself up, rubbing his eyes and looking around. He blinks at the daylight.

SOLDIER (CONT'D)  
Sir. Major Palmer requests your  
presence at headquarters.

CUSTER  
(little groggy)  
What... what time is it, Corporal?

SOLDIER  
Almost 9 sir, on the 23rd. You've  
been sleeping for a couple of days  
here.

CUSTER  
(smiling)  
Devil of a nap. Is the war still  
on?

SOLDIER  
Far as I know it is.

Customer is up and trying to clean off a muddy and wrinkled uniform . He sticks his hat on at a rakish angle.

CUSTER  
See to Wellington, Corporal, let's  
not keep the Major waiting.

INT. UNION CAMP, HQ TENT - DAY

Interior of regiment HQ tent . Chairs and field tables are scattered everywhere, with officers gathered around reviewing maps. The air is heavy with cigar and pipe smoke. Major Palmer and Lieutenant Drummond are there and about half a dozen other officers. Custer enters.

CUSTER  
Lieutenant Custer reporting as  
ordered, sir.

Palmer returns Custer's salute and moves over to his desk, he has a piece of paper to the young lieutenant.

PALMER  
(smiling)  
At ease, Mr. Custer,  
(pause)  
That is a request from General Phil  
Kearney, our new brigadier. General  
Heintzelman and I have recommended  
you to serve on his staff.

CUSTER  
(surprised)  
Thank you, sir.

PALMER  
It is not as much of that advance  
as you might think. It seems like  
he made an impression at Cub Run  
Bridge several days ago. That will  
be all, Lieutenant.

Salutes are exchanged and Custer departs. Palmer turns to  
Drummond.

PALMER (CONT'D)  
Looks like you'll need another  
platoon commander, Drummond.

DRUMMOND  
Suits me well enough, Major, didn't  
like the attitude of that one.

PALMER  
I suspect young Custer is not long  
for this career.

EXT UNION CAMP, PARADE GROUND - DAY

Custer moves his horse with a line of mounted Calvary.

CUSTER  
(bored)  
Gentlemen, guide to the center man,  
guide to the center, that's better.

Another Lieutenant canters up.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Now, column of troopers, ho. Hello,  
Wilson.

ELBERT  
Bad lot?

CUSTER

Keep those people together,  
sergeant. Take them around the  
parade ground twice at a canter,  
then we will do saber drill.

SERGEANT

Yes sir.

Custer slouches down in his saddle watching his soldiers perform. He looks a little tired and disgusted.

CUSTER

(amused)

This group should think about  
becoming infantry. Sergeant  
Kendall, keep those people with  
you or I'll have the entire troop  
doing punishment drills.

EXT. UNION CAMP, EDGE OF PARADE GROUND - DAY

Custer and Elbert ride their horses slowly to the edge of the parade ground. Both men dismount and they lead the animals, stopping briefly to watch a company of blue coated infantry march by in a rather ragged fashion.

CUSTER

(dismayed)

Cavalry can't ride and the infantry  
can't march, and we've been here at  
Arlington Heights trying to teach  
them for almost 3 months.

ELBERT

In the generals won't fight.

Custer continues to watch his troop ride by.

CUSTER

And with soldiers like this I can  
almost understand their fears on  
that matter.

The two officers tie up their horses to a hitching rail.

ELBERT

Any visit from the general staff,  
Armstrong?

CUSTER

Often enough to show their concern.  
Not too often to make them a  
bother. General Kearny comes around  
and talks about training and the re-  
organization of the army.

ELBERT

Still moving over to General  
Stoneman and 5th Calvary staff?

CUSTER

(preoccupied)

Yes, but I guess that will be just  
to help him train his people, order  
supplies and plan long into the  
night.

ELBERT

Whatever happened to on to Richmond  
and all that talk of glorious war?

CUSTER

I will be taking leave next month.

(pause)

Sergeant Kendall, keep those men  
dressed to their right.

The troop of Calvary trots by looking very out of line.

ELBERT

Good for you.

CUSTER

Damn them. I'll have them carrying  
those horses if they don't get it  
right.

(pause)

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Yes, back to Monroe. I'm looking  
forward to it.

CUT TO:

EXT. MONROE MICHIGAN, TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

Custer steps quickly off the passenger car in the crowded  
station. He is greeted by his stepmother and his father, as  
well as a married half sister Lydia Reed and her four-year-  
old son "Autie Reed". Father Custer is burly man, well  
dressed with a full beard.

FATHER CUSTER  
(very happy)  
There's our soldier... ha, ha. Let  
us look at you, Armstrong.

The younger custard stands still, beaming at all the  
attention. His half sister gives him a hug and a kiss.

LYDIA REED  
You look perfect, such a handsome  
soldier.

CUSTER  
(little awkward)  
Thank you, and look at this fellow.

Hehe leans down to great little Autie Reed, his namesake. The  
child smiles and tries to salute his uncle as best he can.  
Custer is amused and returns the salute.

FATHER CUSTER  
What do you think, Armstrong, your  
regiment got a place for him?

CUSTER  
After seeing some of our soldiers  
Autie would be a blessing. Hello  
mother.

He approaches his stepmother and gives her a hug.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Welcome back, Armstrong it is been  
such a long, long time.

INT. CARRIAGE - DAY

The Custers' and Reeds bump along in a nicely maintained  
carriage.

Custer's brother-in-law David Reed is driving the two horse  
team along the Pleasant streets of Monroe, Michigan. Custer  
and his father sit across from one another, the others  
listen. Custer is happy to be home.

FATHER CUSTER  
(teasing)  
Thought you'd be a general, by now,  
or at least a colonel.

CUSTER

I probably would be if the army ever did anything except march around the parade grounds. How is Tom doing?

FATHER CUSTER

Young Thomas is with the 21st Ohio, he's not much of a letter writer like his older brother so we don't hear much from him.

(pause)

Guess he's doing fine.

(pause)

Being on the General's staff must make things easier for you?

LYDIA REED

We are so proud of your new friends and the way you conducted yourself during that horrible battle in July.

Mother Custer is shocked by the mention of war.

MOTHER CUSTER

Must we talk of war, Armstrong? About those Southerners and their guns, we worry about you.

FATHER CUSTER

Now mother...

CUSTER

You needn't be concerned, nothing seems to be happening.

FATHER CUSTER

Yes, and he is a trained soldier.

There is a slight pause as mother Custer gets her composure back. Little Autie Reed can't take his eyes off his uncle and Lydia Reed searches for another topic.

FATHER CUSTER (CONT'D)

(abrupt)

It's politics, Armstrong, all politics, wars and the doings of battles; all of it. And young men like yourself must bear the suffering of it all.

CUSTER

Yes, I imagine some of it is correct, but most soldiers are well out of that, father.

FATHER CUSTER

Perhaps, maybe yes. For the time being maybe you are. But there will come a time when you just might have to take up sides on the political end of the fight.

(pause)

But, here I am talking too much.

LYDIA REED

Folks have been dropping by asking about you, Armstrong. You'll have lots of people to visit in Monroe.

Custer pushes back in his seat as the little town with its neat midwestern streets pass by.

CUSTER

Yes, I suppose I will.

CUT TO:

INT. MONROE TAVERN - NIGHT

Lieutenant customer is in uniform as are several other young men. There are many civilians crowding around him listening to his stories.

CUSTER

(slightly drunk)

...and...just up in front, on Henry House Hill, Griffin's guns were banging away at the Rebel lines...

OLD PATRON

Where was you, George?

CUSTER

Me and Lt. Pennington were on our horses talking about the battle.

YOUNG MAN

(surprised)

Sounds like a cool performance in the middle of a war.

Everyone including Custer laughs loudly at this a evaluation.



CUSTER

It's the strangest thing, but that was it. We were just talking, I tell you.

Custer stops for a moment and lets the suspense build. Someone slides another tall ale in front of him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Then on our right, like ghosts. Thousands of soldiers marching through the smoke towards us.

OLD PATRON

My God, Armstrong, who were they?

CUSTER

(quietly)

We did not know, they were a ways off and there wasn't a breeze in the heavens to show us their colors.

TAVERN KEEPER

Now that would have scared the tar and feathers out of a man, I don't care what you say.

Custer takes another long drink from his stein and waves his hand across his mouth. He is drunk but enjoying the attention.

OLD PATRON

Well, don't leave us in suspense here. What happened?

CUSTER

It was the silence in which they approached that was the most unsettling.

YOUNG MAN

Never trusted them Southerners.

CUSTER

(quietly)

Rank upon rank of soldiers moving in perfect formation upon our flank. The only thing you could hear was the jingle of equipment on their belts.

OLD PATRON

Couldn't you get a look at their uniforms?

CUSTER

Certainly not, Mr. Smalley, there were grays and blues being worn by every side on the field that day.

(pause)

Like silent demons they approached us. And our gunners fell silent watching them.

TAVERN KEEPER

Ain't it enough to scare a man.

CUSTER

In a flash gentlemen, their muskets came down, a sheet of flame and thunder crashed over us. Sweeping Lieutenant Pennington off his horse and Captain Griffin and half his gun crew off also.

OLD PATRON

And what happened to you, Armstrong?

He has been waiting for that. Custer shifts in his seat somewhat.

CUSTER

Custer's luck, John. All the rebel shots missed me clean and I spent the rest of the afternoon trying to keep my people from scampering away with the rest of the army.

The crowd really comes alive at the end to this war story, more ale is poured and glasses are lifting.

OLD PATRON

(excited)

Well gentlemen, this calls for a toast, to Monroe's very own hero of the rebellion.

CUSTER

(pleased)

I am humbled.

TAVERN KEEPER

Nothing to it, Armstrong, drinks  
from the house. To the young hero.

The men crowd around and drink up with a vengeance young  
Custer joins them.

EXT. MONROE, NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS - NIGHT

CUSTER  
Smashing...  
(pause)  
Smashing evening, that was  
smashing. Damn.

LIBBIE  
You're the Custer boy?

The voice from the dark startles Custer. He slaps his hat  
back on his head, loses his balance and topples over the  
fence.

Damn.

CUSTER  
(drunkenly)

(pause)

Who the devil is that?

LIBBIE  
(gentle giggle)  
And you are intoxicated aren't you?

Custer stumbles back up, stare at the young woman, in her  
early 20s, with dark full hair and a beautiful face.

CUSTER  
(amused and embarrassed)  
Good evening.  
(pause)  
I wouldn't call it that.

LIBBIE  
Your hat is backwards.

He quickly turns it properly and gathers up as much of his  
composure as is possible.

CUSTER

I'm George Armstrong Custer, mame,  
aide de camp to General Stoneman  
and a member of the 5th US Calvary.

She moves a little closer to him.

LIBBIE  
(quietly)

My father tells me that. But I did  
not know you were so important.

CUSTER  
And you are?

LIBBIE  
Oh how rude of me. Elizabeth Clift  
Bacon.

CUSTER  
Oh yes, your father would be Judge  
Bacon. Your house, let me see, two  
homes down.

LIBBIE  
Yes. I was visiting the widow  
Roberts, I read to her.

CUSTER  
I remember when you were small I  
think... And...

LIBBIE  
And you and your friends would come  
by here and I would yell out Custer  
boy and tease you so.

CUSTER  
I recall that.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(animated)  
You were the one with the calico  
dress who always wore yellow  
ribbons in her hair.

LIBBIE  
I'm afraid that is so. I was a  
terrible child.

CUSTER  
But you have become a very  
beautiful woman.

She moves back a little, there is a certain attraction between them.

LIBBIE

You are very kind. And you have become a hero?

CUSTER

Not truly a hero, but I do intend to become a General before the war is over.

LIBBIE

And how should I address this hero, soon to be a general, who I was so unkind to as a child?

Custer fold his arms across his chest, he is sobering up a bit and his old self confidence is returning.

CUSTER

(laughing)

You are teasing me still.

LIBBIE

Honestly I'm not. I must go now.

CUSTER

If you let me walk you home I will tell you what you should call me.

Libby thinks about it for a moment, then offers him her arm.

LIBBIE

I should think that a dashing officer would make a fine escort.

CUSTER

Not dashing enough,

(pause)

I have yet to lead a charge in any direction but away from the enemy.

LIBBIE

Perhaps you have time for that. Father fears it will be a long war.

CUSTER

Is soldier is trade for such things and must worry about them.

LIBBIE

(urgent)

Oh there is father, perhaps I will leave you here. He does not tolerate even the smell of drink. I hope you understand.

She pulls gently away from him.

CUSTER

But perhaps I should make my introductions.

Libby opens the gate door and walks quickly away.

LIBBIE

That would not be appropriate, thank you...hmmm Lieutenant Custer. Good night and do be careful should you ever lead that charge.

Customer is somewhat chagrined.

CUSTER

Well then... Good evening to you. Oh, do you ever wear those ribbons?

LIBBIE

Sometimes, not often. Why?

CUSTER

They are the color of the Calvary, good evening.

EXT. BACON HOME, FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Judge Bacon is sitting on the porch swing waiting for his daughter. A heavy set man in formal jacket. He rises as Libbie Bacon comes up the steps to the big front porch. She walks towards him and gives him a little kiss.

LIBBIE

Hello father.

JUDGE BACON

Was that young Custer just now?

LIBBIE

Yes father, he was kind enough to escort me home from the widow's house.

She turns and looks off in the direction of the front gate. Customer has gone into the night.

JUDGE BACON

(guarded)

Interesting young man,  
(pause)

Don't care all that much for the  
family. Too much drinking. Besides,  
they're Methodists.

She turns slightly in his direction, their eyes meet for a  
second. She looks away, and back into the darkness.

LIBBIE

(quietly)

Yes, I know, but he was nice  
looking in his uniform.

CUT TO:

INT. MONROE, CUSTER HOME - DAY

Custer is arranging things in his kit bag while most of the  
family looks on. Father Custer is standing by the big  
fireplace while his wife carries over a handful of ironed  
clothing. Lydia is holding young Armstrong Reed as his  
youngest brother, Boston, fiddles with his military hat.

FATHER CUSTER

So is General McClellan really  
gonna get to Richmond?

MOTHER CUSTER

Father, please. Perhaps Mr.  
Lincoln and Mr. Davis will arrive  
at some type of arrangement.

FATHER CUSTER

What could that be?

MOTHER CUSTER

(frustrated)

I don't know, something so that  
sons like ours won't have to fight.

CUSTER

Perhaps he'll take us there. The  
President has been pushing for a  
campaign south all winter.

LYDIA REED

Whatever, mother, Armstrong will be careful and God will protect him.

Custer continues his packing as the two boys watch him intently.

BOSTON CUSTER

(loudly)

Armstrong, if I was going with you we could watch out for each other like always.

Father Custer laughs loudly at the suggestion and their mothers shakes her head. Custer playfully wrestles with his brother.

CUSTER

Ready for a frolic, fight or feast huh, Boston?

FATHER CUSTER

No there is a pair to win any war aren't they?

Both boys start to tackle their father.

MOTHER CUSTER

Boston's, two sons in military are all this family owes to saving the union. I won't have you talking about joining in this house.

CUSTER

Little Mac will show the rebels a thing or two about fighting and next Christmas everything will be forgotten.

MOTHER CUSTER

I hope so, leave that old man to be.

FATHER CUSTER

Help me mother, these criminals are doing an old man in.

The two Custer boys stop what they're doing, and father Custer gathers himself up and goes back to his place at the mantle. Custer continues the last of his packing and Boston Custer quickly hands him the rest of his stuff.

BOSTON CUSTER

It just isn't fair.



FATHER CUSTER  
Two against one, of course not.

BOSTON CUSTER  
No, that Armstrong is a soldier and  
I'll never get a chance to  
volunteer.

Mother customer is genuinely upset about all the war talk and  
moves across the room, her finger held up as a warning to the  
boy.

MOTHER CUSTER  
(angry)  
Boston Custer, enough I told you.

FATHER CUSTER  
Mind your mother, Bos.

BOSTON CUSTER  
Yes sir.

CUSTER  
Lydia, thanks for the new socks,  
can never get enough of them.

LYDIA REED  
I'll send you more if need be.

Lydia gets up and walks over to her mother, takes her hand in  
a tender fashion realizing that Custer's return to the Union  
Army has made her distraught.

LYDIA REED (CONT'D)  
(soothingly)  
Now, Armstrong you will promise to  
be very careful when you go back to  
your duties with the Army? Won't  
you.

Custer stops parking.

CUSTER  
Father, mother,  
(pause)  
I promise to be really careful.  
Please don't worry about me.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA, UNION HEADQUARTERS - DAY

It is the start of the peninsula campaign and Custer is serving with the headquarters element of 5th US Calvary. The union army is using men and balloons to observe confederate activities. A group of soldiers help raise the balloons. Generals Baldy Smith and Winfield Scott Hancock are standing in front of a large tent watching the operations. A somewhat worried Custer is accompanying the Balloonist on his first acceptance as observer.

GEN. SMITH  
(studious, reflective)  
Who's going up in that thing?

GEN. HANCOCK  
Young Custer. He volunteered; seems to have a knack for that type of thing.

EXT. BALLOON BASKET - DAY

Custer seems a bit nervous. He has let his hair grow longer and adopted a more relaxed and rumpled uniform look. He holds a map and binoculars in his hands and tries to steady himself. His "pilot" scampers around yelling instructions to the ground crew.

PILOT  
(cool and calm)  
Slowly, let it out slowly, very good.

CUSTER  
Just how strong is this thing?  
Seems to be nothing more than a light wood frame.

The pilot nonchalantly jumps up-and-down in the basket, shaking the entire set up. Custer loses his hat and holds on.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(desperately)  
Hold on man, damn you'll crash us.

PILOT  
Don't worry, Mr. Custer, she's a pretty sound bird. Only have those rubble sharpshooters to concern ourselves with and a bad wind from the east.

Custer seems to of gotten his composure encourage back. He gets to work on is Aerial observation assignment, while the pilot continues his work.

CUSTER

Well, well in east wind could make us guests of General Joe Johnson and his rebels.

PILOT

(preoccupied)

Hold on Mr. Custer, going to let out some more rope, watch yourself now, sir.

The little basket wobbles a bit in the breeze.

CUSTER

(exited)

My Lord, man, look at the view.

PILOT

Careful sir, they are firing at us.

Custer continues viewing the scene with his binoculars. A bullet strikes the rope netting directly above him, causing a piece to untangle and fray.

PILOT (CONT'D)

(mocking)

Huh, you couldn't hit a barn from two places on a good day,

(pause)

Damn Rebels.

CUSTER

Magnificent,

(pause)

There's Jamestown, the York and James river and the rebel lines.

(pause)

There are no breakfast fires, Lamont.

PILOT

Too busy firing at us for breakfast perhaps.

CUSTER

(interested)

I think not, this is like a great winged horse being up here.

The pilot moves quickly around the basket, he has a pistol out. Custer is totally absorbed by his work.

PILOT

(concerned)

Good Lord of the sky be careful  
Lieutenant Custer,

(pause)

Winged horse are not a man can get  
killed just as easy up here as he  
can on mother earth.

CUSTER

Custer's luck, Lamont. No fires,  
(pause)

And the roads are filled with  
troops moving away from us.

Custer quickly checks his map and looks back at Confederate positions again.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(very excited)

Horrah, the Rebs are pulling out  
Lamont! Can't be anything but rebel  
skedaddle.

PILOT

The general will love to hear that  
news.

CUSTER

Get us down Lamont, Little Mac  
might be in Richmond by this time  
tomorrow.

INT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, SMITH'S COMMAND - DAY

General "Baldy" Smith and General Hancock are going over maps while several majors and aides listen. The tent is cluttered with maps and desks and equipment hung on pegs on the tent posts.

GEN. SMITH

It is my feeling that Johnston  
intends on holding this line until  
reinforcements come up from the  
Carolinas.

STAFF MAJOR

Sir, if I may add the politicians  
will never stand for an extended  
siege with no results.

Gen. Hancock, a trim, very good-looking man moves over to the map table, listens for a moment before joining the conversation.

GEN.HANCOCK

The administration is clamoring for a decisive strike towards Richmond. Why McClellan keeps us on siege here conference everyone.

GEN. SMITH

(discouraged)

Gentlemen,  
(pause)

I don't know what's on General McClellan's mind or just what his intentions are,

(pause)

But I know what will be on President Lincoln's mind if a move is not taken soon.

A young Captain comes into the tent and waits to be acknowledged.

GEN. SMITH (CONT'D)

He will send Mac home, find a replacement much as I did with McDowell. And I guess we will have merry time of that keeping our own commands as they know stand.

Gen. Hancock turns to the Captain.

GEN.HANCOCK

What is it Trendall?

CPT. TRENDALL

Sir, a Lieutenant Custer with information on enemy movements to report.

GEN. SMITH

(little frustrated)

Lieutenant who?

CPT. TRENDALL

Custer, sir.

GEN.HANCOCK

The boy and the balloon basket, you remember?

General Smith is aggravated by the Union Army stagnant position, the threat to his command. He huffs, unbuttons his tight jacket, and moves across the tent in a rather nervous fashion.

GEN. SMITH

(very impatient)

Oh yes,

(pause)

The young man who asked to be shot while above. What does he want?

CPT. TRENDALL

He says he has information that might be of use.

GEN. SMITH

All right Trendall, go fetch are daring officer. Really Winfield, I am truly concerned with what West Point is graduating these days.

Custer strides in, salutes and gets a lack of luster return from General Smith; Smith motions him to the table as everyone gathers to listen.

GEN. SMITH (CONT'D)

Let me warn you boy I'm in bad spirits for this early in the day. I hope what you have will improve my disposition greatly?

CUSTER

I trust if the General will listen it might just do that.

INT. UNION HQ'S, SMITH'S COMMAND - DAY

The entire staff has listened to Custer's information and it makes sense. General Smith is talking to Hancock and several senior colonels. Custer is watching. General Smith moves his hands over the map, glancing quickly at the notes Custer has made.

GEN. SMITH

Sure is, that's Longstreets' sector and from Fort Magruder his troops will be doing their damn level best cover of the retreat.

GEN.HANCOCK

Hit his flank while it is weak and  
Joe Johnston might just have to run  
back to Richmond.

GEN. SMITH

Mr. Custer, I pray that your notes  
are correct and the information  
true?

CUSTER

It is, sir.

GEN. SMITH

Good lad. Treadwell wire this to  
General McClellan's headquarters.

CPT. TREADELL

Very good sir, anything else?

GEN. SMITH

(very excited)

Yes, tell him with his permission  
we'll strike Old Pete  
Longstreet in the left flank and  
deliver the Rebels to the  
politicians before the month is  
out.

Captain Treadwell leaves as the staff bend low over the maps.

GEN.HANCOCK

Mr. Custer, thank you for your  
information. Why don't you get some  
breakfast.

GEN. SMITH

(preoccupied)

Now Mac is demonstrating against  
the Rebel center as we speak.

Custer is just going out of the tent flap.

GEN. SMITH (CONT'D)

Oh by the way Lieutenant... This has  
made my spirits somewhat improved.  
Remain in the area, we may need you  
again.

CUSTER

Yes sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, SMITH'S COMMAND - DAY Custer

just finished his breakfast when Captain Treadwell

canters his horse quickly over to him. The captain is excited and dust covered.

CPT. TREADELL

Custer all damnation is up. General McClellan has consented to our attack.

Custer is up on his feet and grabbing for the reins of his horse. His jacket is unbuttoned and he quickly slaps on his worn hat.

CUSTER

This is smashing news.

CPT. TREADELL

I will be riding with Hancock in the advance.

Custer pulls his horse around heading for headquarters tent. He gallops in that direction with Treadwell.

CUSTER

I won't let them start the dance without me.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, SMITH'S COMMAND - DAY

The entire staff has emerged from the HQ tent, there are aides everywhere as the brigade officers prepare to depart for the attack. General Smith is giving the final briefing to general Hancock and his staff. Everyone is excited Custer canters up with Treadwell.

GEN. SMITH

(joking)

Well Custer, you helped to stir up a hornets nest this morning.

CUSTER

Happy to have helped the Generals spirits. Sir, I would like to join General Hancock's command if he consents to it?

GEN. HANCOCK



Happy to have General Custer along  
General Smith. Ill have use for him  
in the attack.

Custer falls in with Gen. Hancock's staff.

GEN. SMITH

(in haste)

Winfield, get your brigade to a  
position from which to attack Fort  
Magruder.

(pause)

If the enemy is in great numbers  
hold your position, report and I  
will support you. Winfield, if I am  
unable to come to your aide,  
withdraw in due time.

GEN.HANCOCK

I will see to it.

GEN. SMITH

And Winfield, we need to carry the  
day, I trust you realize that.

GEN.HANCOCK

We will teach Longstreet a lesson.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEGROUND NEAR WILLIAMSBURG -DAY

Hancock's brigade is moving into a wood line not far from the  
Confederate positions. There is a great deal of dust and  
action as a battery of horse drawn artillery rambles into  
place. With the staff are several French officers, honorary  
aides to the Union commander, observers to the pending  
battle. They are dressed in splendor dark blue uniforms, red  
trousers and Kemp's with glossy high black riding boots. A  
marked contrast to the dusty and wrinkled Custer. The  
sporadic sound of gunfire echoes around them.

GEN.HANCOCK

(coolly)

The artillery will clear the enemy  
positions. We will not be able to  
take their fortifications without  
reinforcements from General Smith.

STAFF MAJOR

Will he support us as promised?

GEN.HANCOCK

Rides have been sent to him. The  
battalions must entrench and hold  
this line.

Enemy gunfire increases; the French officers are ducking.  
Hancock tries not to notice his guests concern at being under  
fire. Custer reins his horse up near Hancock. One of the  
French officers loses his hat and Custer swings down to  
retrieve it for him.

PRINCE LEF D'ORLEANS

Thank you sir.

CUSTER

My pleasure.

GEN.HANCOCK

By the way Mr. Custer, may I  
introduce Prince Robert Philippi  
D'Orleans, grandson of King Louis  
Philippi of France and serving on  
General McClellan's staff. Custer  
you've seen the Rebel defenses I  
would be happy to hear your asses-  
ment, is the plan feasible?

Custer is flattered, he makes a bow to the French officer,  
the staff is amused as such protocol under fire.

CUSTER

General, the Confederates are  
vulnerable and probably held to the  
defense by their numbers alone. It  
will hang on who gets reinforced  
first and attacks.

EXT. BATTLEGROUND, HANCOCK'S AREA - DAY

Custer is moving quickly from firing points along the Union  
line offering support and guidance. He slides over to  
Hancock's area, Captain Treadwell has been hit in the arm,  
the French officers huddle down with the rest of his staff.  
Hancock looks very worried as he scans the rear for  
reinforcements.

CUSTER

(winded)

Major Larabee reports the  
Confederates are massing in front  
of the 5th Wisconsin, General, rest  
of the line is holding nicely.

General Hancock snaps his binoculars around to his front.

GEN.HANCOCK

(angry)

I've sent a detachment of runners  
back, but where is General Smith?

A series of artillery shells burst among the union line pelting the staff and General with dirt and dust. Custer is the only person who does not duck.

GEN. HANCOCK

All I need is a brigade, damn them.

Custer crouches down by him.

GEN.HANCOCK

It is a lost situation Custer ,  
we'll have to withdraw. I can't  
jeopardize the entire command.

CUSTER

(enthusiastic)

Sir, but why?

GEN. HANCOCK

Orders, Mr. Custer, they make  
our world go round even when we  
don't agree with them.

CUSTER

General Hancock if I might suggest.

Hancock turn slowly to Custer, stares at him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Sir, your brigade is out on a limb  
here and it looks like nobody truly  
cares. Perhaps insubordination with  
colors in breeze is the ticket.

Hancock things for a minute, more artillery hits. The French officers have been badly shaken by the experience. The sound of rifle fire increases.

GEN. HANCOCK

We'll give Smith several more  
minutes.

CUSTER

Say the word sir, and I will lead  
your advance.

STAFF MAJOR  
(worried)  
Well Custer that won't be  
required, General Hancock the Rebs  
are coming out.

EXT. CONFEDERATE LINES - DAY

The Confederate lines are smoldering and heavily damaged, but threading its way through the smoke are bright colored battle flags. Behind them officers Gallop among their men to the sound of drums. The rebels burst into a long yell and move quickly out of their positions.

STAFF MAJOR  
Orders General?

Hancock is watching the rebel attack through his binoculars.

GEN. HANCOCK  
(dejected, saddened)  
We must abandon this position.

PRINCE LEF D'ORLEANS  
(amazed)  
These men of the Confederacy,  
(pause)  
I feel they are the very  
determined ones?

Custer is up beside General Hancock, he is angry and is just keeping himself from being insubordinate.

CUSTER  
General, we can't let the Rebs with  
us while we run, for God's sake sir  
we have only one choice, attack.

Hancock looks up at Custer then to the worried faces of his staff and does a quick glance at the approaching Confederates. He seems to get the spirit back in him.

GEN. HANCOCK  
OK Mr. Custer perhaps you have a  
point there. It is too late to pull  
back so an attack will suit us  
under the circumstances.

A chorus of cheers goes up with Custer waving his hat, joined by the waving red keppi's of the French officers.

EXT. UNION BATTLE LINES HANCOCK'S AREA - DAY

General Hancock is mounted and trotting quickly through his battle lines. The Union and several regimental colors flutter defiantly around them. Custer and the rest of the staff canter close by. Union soldiers are in the lines with their weapons at post arms. Their bayonets are fixed and bristle out from the ranks.

GEN. HANCOCK

(slow, confident)

Aim low men, aim low. Listen to your officers. Let them come closer.

(pause)

Take your time.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE BATTLE LINE - DAY

Long lines of grey uniformed men are advancing across the field, their flags slightly bent and there is a steady beat of drums.

EXT. UNION BATTLE LINES HANCOCK'S AREA - DAY

Hancock looks very dignified as he canters his horse behind his troops. They look nervous, but steady. Custer is cantering beside his general.

GEN. HANCOCK

Keep steady lads, hold this ground and you save the army. Loose it and we are all lost men.

EXT. CONFEDERATE BATTLE LINE - DAY

The line of Confederates has quickened its pace. They move at almost a run across the field directly in front of the Union forces.

EXT. UNION BATTLE LINE, HANCOCK'S AREA - DAY Custer is

watching the wave of Confederate battle flags

approach, he is fascinated by the spectacle of battle. So are the French princesses behind him.

GEN. HANCOCK  
(very calm)  
Steady gentlemen.  
(pause)  
Mister Custer if you still desire  
it you may lead the charge.

Hancock turns with a slight smile to the younger officer. Custer gives him a long and low bow which the General returns.

CUSTER  
(very happy)  
General Hancock, it would be the  
greatest honor.

GEN. HANCOCK  
Very well, (pause) Gentlemen,  
(yelling)  
Give them a volley then charge with  
bayonets.

EXT. UNION BATTLE LINE - DAY

With almost mechanical precision the rifles of the double ranks of Union soldiers aim and fire to the command of their officers. A great sheet of flame and smoke cover the line.

CUSTER  
That's it lads, give it to them.

Custer spurs his horse out in front of the ranks.

EXT. CONFEDERATE BATTLE LINE -DAY

Complete rows of Confederate soldiers fall, some struggle up, other stand dazed while sections of the battle line continue. Several flag bears move to the front of the line trying to rally the troops.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION BATTLE LINES HANCOCK'S AREA

General Hancock's horse is pawing in the air and he is yelling at his soldiers. The Union line lead by Custer is

sweeping over the entrenchments and charging across the field into the Confederate advance.

GEN. HANCOCK

(wildly)

Use the bayonet, at them men at them.

CUSTER

Come along lads.

Custer gives his horse some rein and bolts well out in front of the charging infantry. He has not drawn any weapons but waves his beat-up hat above his head. Behind him surge a large number of infantry. The yells of men and the crackle of rifle fire punctuate the field.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD - DAY

The Confederate forces have started to pull back. Custer charges up into the fleeing confederates. Confederate officers spot him, Custer quickly draws his saber and the two spur their horses at one another, they collide on a field covered with dead and injured.

CUSTER

(wild, exited)

Surrender.

REBEL OFFICER

Not to a damn Yankee, sir.

There is that clash of steel and impact of horses. The Rebel Officer is good but Custer is better. He blocks several cuts.

REBEL OFFICER (CONT'D)

Well done, sir.

CUSTER

Will you give up?

The Rebel Officer falls from his horse. Custer looks at the first man he has killed in close combat. He spurs his horse back into the battle as Captain Treadwell rides up with the advance.

CAPTAIN TREADWELL

(excited)

Are you well, Custer?

CUSTER

I gave that man a chance to  
surrender. His mistake.

EXT. BATTLE FIELD, CONFEDERATE AND UNION LINES ENGAGES DAY

The Confederate attack has failed. Confederate soldiers and  
flag bearers are trying to flee the field. Custer rides up to  
a confederate soldier carrying a large battle flag.

CUSTER  
(very excited)  
You shan't be needing that.

Custer rears his horse up pulling the flag from the  
Confederate color sergeant. The Confederate tumbles over,  
gets up and surrenders as do several other enemy soldiers  
fleeing beside him. Custer has their flag and accepts their  
surrender gracefully.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(surprised)  
Well, that will do (pause)  
gentlemen, kindly throw down your  
weapons and march to the rear.

Custer herds his prisoners back through the debris of the  
battlefield.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, HANCOCK'S AREA - DAY

General Hancock is sweaty and dirty, but a happy man. The  
French officers are gathered around with several staff  
officers talking to members of the press. Custer rides up  
with the flag.

GEN. HANCOCK  
Ah...young Custer. You survived,  
and with a trophy to prove it.

CUSTER  
Custer's luck, General.

GEN. HANCOCK  
Whatever it was I'm citing you for  
gallantry in my report.

Custer walks his horse over the French officers.

CUSTER  
Sir, I was honored that you gave me  
such an opportunity.



He stops beside the small cluster of staff and newspaper men.  
The French prince moves toward him.

PRINCE LEF D'ORLEANS  
(enthusiastic)  
Welcome back Monsieur Custer.  
Gentlemen here is your story.

CUSTER  
(amused)  
What?

PRINCE LEF D'ORLEANS  
Lieutenant Custer you are very  
brave and a very, very lucky man.  
In France, my family, although as  
brave...  
(smiles)  
...is not as lucky. You are truly,  
if I may say such a thing, a prince  
of swords.

There is a little gathering of staff, Hancock is listening,  
Custer seems a little humbled and the newspaperman are  
writing much of it down.

CUSTER  
Prince D'Orleans, I am honored. And  
if General Hancock agrees, let me  
present this to you on behalf of my  
general, a token of today's  
victory.

Custer hands over the colorful battle flag, the Prince  
D'Orleans accepts it with a gracious bow. Hancock nods his  
approval.

PRINCE LEF D'ORLEANS  
An honor, I will present it to  
General McClellan with General  
Hancock's warmest regards.

The press moves up around Custer.

REPORTER  
Lieutenant Custer, where is your  
home? By the way I represent the  
New York Herald.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, PRESIDENT'S OFFICE - NIGHT Several  
weeks later and Washington is not happy about the

Union activities in Virginia. President Lincoln gathers with Secretary of War Stanton, a snuffy, proper looking man and other staff members to discuss the problems down on the Yorktown peninsula.

STANTON

Mr. President, General McClellan has over 90,000 men at his disposal.

Lincoln seems tired and troubled.

LINCOLN

Yes, Mr. Secretary, I am aware of his troop strength.

STANTON

(seems frustrated)

Mr. President, for weeks he did not move, then he moved badly.

Stanton is enjoying the theatrics. Lincoln and his secretary John Hay and several other cabinet members are being very patient.

STANTON (CONT'D)

Then Mr. President the loss at Fair Oaks and Rebel cavalry riding circles around our army.

LINCOLN

(tired)

Yes Mr. Secretary, I am aware of the history of this campaign as it stands so far.

Stanton stops and the room becomes quiet. The large oak office door is opened and White House historian John G. Nicolay enters holding a large package wrapped in a dark blue cloth. Hay moves silently to meet him. The two young men are well dressed, both in their early 20's.

STANTON

(caustic)

Well, Mr. President?

LINCOLN

Sir (pause) you have described General McClellan in just about every term imaginable that is justified by the situation in Virginia.

(pause)

Every term except one.

Stanton starts moving about again, he seems a little nervous. Nicolay has lain the package down. Lincoln makes a hand motion for him to open it.

STANTON

(confused)

Yes, Mr. President, such circumstances require strong feelings.

Lincoln has a sly smile on his face, but seems more interested in what Nicolay has brought.

LINCOLN

At times Mr. Secretary, and granted he has the "slows" but perhaps the fact that General McClellan is a democrat has darkened his performance all the greater.

(pause)

More than is reasonable at this time.

Stanton is angry and caught off guard.

STANTON

(just under control)

Damn, sir that is not fair, true of the General but not justified about me.

Lincoln directs his attention from the fuming secretary of War to Nicolay.

LINCOLN

(satisfied)

Now, gentlemen I tell you what is not fair.

The move over to Lincoln who has gotten up and stands by Hay and Nicolay.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

When young Mr. Nicolay brings a package into the room and leaves me trying to control my uncontrollable curiosity concerning its contents.

NICOLAY

(amused)

Mr. President, this has just arrived from Headquarters, Union Forces in Virginia. It is from General McClellan.

LINCOLN pulls at the wrapping.

LINCOLN

There Mr. Stanton, our general sends gifts. He can't be that bad.

Most of those present chuckle. STANTON is not amused and turns away.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Well now, look at this.

Slowly LINCOLN removes the wrappings and gently unfolds the huge battle flag. He holds it up, HAY helps him, for the others to see.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

(sincere)

Now look.

NICOLAY

Mr. President, General McClellan sends his sincerest regards and begs that you accept this battle flag taken at the Battle of Williamsburg, this past May by one Lieutenant George Custer, 5th US Cavalry.

LINCOLN

There is much to be said here.

The others move closer for a better look. LINCOLN becomes rather solemn.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

(thoughtful)

Gentlemen, it is hard for any of us to realize that many of our fellow Americans have taken up allegiance to this false banner.

LINCOLN lets it rest on the table before him.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

That so many are willing to give their lives for a symbol strange and threatening to us.

NICOLAY

Mr. President, that is the first such banner of the rebellion taken by our forces.

LINCOLN

Hmmmm, is it. (pause) Bless men like Lieutenant Custer who tear it from the sky over our nation.

He looks at all those gathered.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

We shall claim all those flags before this war is over.

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, VIRGINIA, CUSTER'S TENT - DAY

CUSTER is sitting outside his tent writing a letter. His hair is a bit longish and his uniform as unkempt as ever. An enlisted man approaches.

MESSENGER

Beg your pardon, sir.

CUSTER straightens up and puts down his writing material.

CUSTER

Hello, corporal.

MESSENGER

I have a note for a Lieutenant Custer from a Captain Lea, Confederate forces.

CUSTER

(surprised)

I am he.

Messenger hands it over and waits.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Thank you, my God. Corporal how far is the corp hospital?

MESSENGER

Perhaps three miles from here,  
just west of Williamsburg, sir.

EXT. CORP HOSPITAL, MAIN DOOR - DAY

CUSTER rides up to a very shot-up barn, there are hundreds of wounded men lying about on stretchers, others hobbling along in front.

Many more are in the shade by the few trees. CUSTER swings down from his horse and goes into the building.

INT. CORP HOSPITAL - DAY

CUSTER walks through the barn interior. The sound of cries and suffering are everywhere. Union orderlies and Negro stretcher carriers move around. He passes a pile of limbs, half covered by an old military blanket. CUSTER is looking everywhere. Somebody calls to him.

JOHN LEA  
(in pain)  
Howdy Curly, see you're well.

CUSTER is surprised and happy. He moves quickly to his old West Point school mate.

CUSTER  
Gimlet?

INT. CORP. HOSPITAL, LEA'S BED - DAY

LEA pushes himself painfully up off his cot and CUSTER rushes over and bends over him. The two boys embrace, first LEA then CUSTER start to cry.

JOHN LEA  
I knew you'd come, Armstrong.

CUSTER releases his wounded friend.

CUSTER  
I'd never let you down.  
(pause)  
What happened to you?

LEA is composed now, he wipes his nose on the sleeve of his tattered uniform, happy to see his friend.

JOHN LEA

Heck, you damn Yankees been  
shooting holes in my leg

CUSTER

Takes more than that to stop a  
Mississippian, John.

JOHN LEA

Sure enough.  
(pause)

JOHN LEA (CONT'D)

Hey, how far you been boosted now?

CUSTER

First Lieutenant, you?

JOHN LEA

Jeez man, you all are talking to a  
Cap'n. Me and Tom Rosser said you  
waz going to the wrong Army.

CUSTER

How is Rosser? God I miss him.  
LEA's injuries are acting up, with  
CUSTER's help he lays back.

JOHN LEA

(fatigued)

Thank you Armstrong. There that's  
a far might better, Tom got  
himself wounded at Williamsburg  
but got away from it fine like.  
John Pelham was there also.

CUSTER

Tom's okay then?

JOHN LEA

Far as I know. See you uns  
ain't got no holes in your skin.  
Damn, Curly, you are a lucky one.

CUSTER

When did you eat last?

JOHN LEA

Far as I can reckon, say two days  
ago. But don't you go troubling  
yerself over me, you hear?

CUSTER

Nonsense, I'll get you some food  
and looks like you could use some  
socks.

JOHN LEA

Damn, Curly, I just know'd you'd  
not let an old Point man down.  
Bless you.

EXT. CORP. HOSPITAL, OUTSIDE YARD - DAY

CUSTER has gotten his friend moved outside and both are  
eating and talking about the war.

CUSTER

John at Williamsburg, who led the  
attack on us over by Fort  
Magruder?

JOHN LEA

(amused and proud)

Well sir, that was none other than  
General Jubal Early. God awfulest  
and meanest man in a uniform on  
any side. You all will be hearing  
more about General Early before  
the unpleasantries end.

CUSTER

Well, you'll be paroled soon I'm  
sure. Then I don't have to worry  
about you.

JOHN LEA

Guess that makes me a safe man for  
the rest of the war, don't it  
Armstrong?

CUSTER is thinking about that.

CUSTER

(reflective)

Ever really think about all this?

JOHN LEA

What are you referring to,  
Armstrong?

CUSTER

I guess the war, (pause) and how  
just about a year ago at West  
Point we never thought it would  
come to this.



Both men are quiet for a moment.

JOHN LEA

Darn close to declaring that war is the strangest thing a man can live through.

CUSTER

But you know Gimlet, well, I've always wanted this. I know it's bad and people are suffering but.  
(pause)

JOHN LEA

Sort of gets in your blood, don't it?

CUSTER

Always has been, (pause) I want to lead men Gimlet, lead 'em in great battles, great victories.

JOHN LEA

I know the feeling friend.

CUSTER

I'm born for that. Here look. CUSTER carefully pulls a small leather poke out of his jacket pocket. He spills the contents on the grass beside them. Several metal soldiers lie on the grass.

JOHN LEA

Damn, I got a dozen of these fellows back home.

CUSTER

(proudly)

They were mine when I was a child. My sister sent 'em to me when I was locked up at the Point.

JOHN LEA

I'll never understand how you got out of that scrap.

CUSTER

Carry them with me always. They're getting a little worn.

CUSTER looks at LEA's leg, they both smile at one another.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

But aren't we all. I must be  
getting back to my command.

CUSTER leans over to hug his friend once more, then slowly gets up. LEA reaches into his own pocket and pulls out a scrap of paper.

JOHN LEA

(sad)

Curly, you are a great friend and  
noble enemy. I know'd you come  
here to visit.

CUSTER

You're part of my history Gimlet,  
a nice part that I pray this war  
doesn't destroy. Not for all the  
glory of it.

JOHN LEA

This here is a note signed,  
detailed and dated from me. Show  
it in case you are ever captured.  
I'm hopeful it will get you the  
fine treatment you all have shown  
me.

CUSTER takes the letter and tucks it carefully in his notebook.

CUSTER

Thank you Gimlet. You know how to  
reach me, at least while we're  
still here. I'll try to keep up  
on things.

JOHN LEA

God bless you, Armstrong.

EXT. UNION LINE OF MARCH, MCCLELLAN'S STAFF - DAY

Gen. McCLELLAN leads his numerous staff officers, foreign observers, and aides along the roads near SMITH'S headquarters.

EXT. CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

CUSTER is helping some other officers clean weapons and tack. He is as unkempt as ever. One of McCLELLAN's aides rides toward CUSTER's tent.

AIDE

General McClellan would like to talk with Lieutenant Custer.

CUSTER stops his work, glances over to the moving column.

AIDE (CONT'D)

Would you be Lieutenant Custer?

CUSTER

Why, (pause) yes that is me.

The young officer wheels his horse around.

AIDE

The General would like to meet you. Please follow me.

CUSTER slaps his dark floppy hat down over his loose curls and swings up on his horse. He canters after the aide.

CUSTER

What exactly is this all about?

AIDE

I have no idea, lieutenant.

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, McCLELLAN'S STAFF - DAY

Gen. McCLELLAN, commander of the Union Army of the Potomac rides in front of a large group of senior officers, dressed in neat and trim dark uniforms. McCLELLAN is a smallish man, with intense dark eyes, perfect mustache and goatee. The two men canter up to him; the other officers eye CUSTER with curious amusement.

AIDE

Sir, may I have the pleasure of presenting Lieutenant Custer.

McCLELLAN turns quickly to the men, his face brightens slightly. CUSTER snaps off a sharp salute, McCLELLAN returns the salute and extends his hand to the young CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN

(friendly)

Mister Custer, (pause) I'm pleased to meet you.

CUSTER  
The honor is mine, General.

MCCLELLAN  
Here ride along with me,  
Lieutenant Custer.

CUSTER  
Yes sir.

CUSTER falls in beside McCLELLAN and the two officers lead the column at a walk through the Union positions.

MCCLELLAN  
(quietly)  
Actually I find these inspections rather tedious and more than a little trying.

CUSTER smiles at being taken into the General's confidence. The entire staff of the Union Army rides along.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)  
General Hancock tells me you are an officer who does not mind taking a risk now and then.

CUSTER  
I feel that is part of my duty, General.

MCCLELLAN  
(pause)  
I truly wish all my officers believed that.

A troop of cavalry canters by and the troop commander salutes McCLELLAN who returns his salute.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)  
  
You have also been busy observing Confederate activities from Mr. Lowe's balloon and then leading charges against those positions?

CUSTER  
General Hancock was kind enough to give me the opportunity to participate in the fighting.

McCLELLAN turns in his saddle and looks at CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN

(quietly)

And Mister Custer what did you think of the face of battle?

CUSTER

General, I can honestly say it was the most thrilling experience of my life.

The staff with McCLELLAN and CUSTER in the lead ride on past line of Union artillery pieces.

MCCLELLAN

(slight laugh)

Custer you just might be the young man I'm looking for.

CUSTER

Sir?

MCCLELLAN

You seem feisty enough and I think under that old soldier look of yours is a genuine adventurer.

(pause) )

What did D'Orleans call you, Prince of Sabers. Well that remains to be seen. But I want you on my staff (pause) will you accept?

CUSTER is overwhelmed by the offer.

CUSTER

General McClellan I would be honored to accept your offer.

MCCLELLAN

Very good, then it is done. By the way, report to my tent for dinner this evening and I will have the paperwork completed and brief you myself on what I expect. Good day to you Mister Custer.

CUSTER snaps a salute which McCLELLAN returns. CUSTER rides back as the staff moves on.

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, MCCLELLAN'S COMMAND HQ - EVENING

There are uniformed guards at every tent of the Army of the Potomac. CUSTER rides up, his gear in a satchel over his shoulder; he hasn't changed anything except into darker blue regulation pants. A captain walks out to meet him.

CUSTER

I'm Lieutenant Custer. The General  
is expecting me.

CUSTER slides gracefully off his horse as a small black boy darts up to take the reins.

CAPTAIN

Yes lieutenant.  
(pause)  
Ned, tie up Mister Custer's mount  
beside the others and loosen the  
girth.

NED

Yessum.

NED walks the mount quickly away as CUSTER and the CAPTAIN approach McCLELLAN's huge white tent; they return the salute of the three soldier guard detail and duck into the tent.

INT. MCCLELLAN'S TENT - EVENING

MCCLELLAN, impeccable as always, is sitting in a camp chair beside a desk stacked with reports and maps. He is listening intently to a heavy set man with dark beard, hard face and civilian clothing. Both men seem somber and continue the conversation despite the arrival of CUSTER.

PINKERTON

As I mentioned in my reports  
general, there is 200,000 of em if  
there is one.

MCCLELLAN

(troubled)  
I realize that Mr. Pinkerton.

PINKERTON

And we both knowed whoses back in  
command and up to some very  
serious mischief?

MCCLELLAN

It is not a good combination  
Allan, I'll admit that.

PINKERTON

And sir, with the politicians not  
giving you more men and still  
wanting the Rebel government  
served up to them, well general  
I'll tell you this.

MCCLELLAN

Hmmmm, yes.

PINKERTON

(chuckling)

I wouldn't want to have the  
troubles of your position weighing  
me on the shoulders.

MCCLELLAN notes his guest and perks up. PINKERTON lights up  
a cigar.

MCCLELLAN

Well then, we will just have  
to meet this problem with men like  
my guest, Lieutenant Custer.

MCCLELLAN gets up and walks to greet CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

(happy)

Very good to see you. Have you met  
Mr. Pinkerton, my chief of  
intelligence?

PINKERTON remains seated but nods in a cordial fashion  
towards the young CUSTER. The aide slips quietly out of the  
tent.

CUSTER

General, (pause) Mr. Pinkerton.

MCCLELLAN

Some of your dealings will be with  
Mr. Pinkerton.

PINKERTON

Looking forward to working with you  
Mister Custer.

(pause)

General if you are finished with me  
I'll just collect up my stuff. Got

some reports to complete that just can't wait.

MCCLELLAN

Nothing, fine (pause) thank you and good evening.

PINKERTON gathers up his papers and lumbers to the tent door as McCLELLAN directs CUSTER to several camp chairs and a small table. Both men take their seats.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

As you can probably gather from this conversation these are troubled moments for the command; indeed the Union.

CUSTER

As you can probably gather from this conversation these are troubled moments for the command; indeed the Union.

MCCLELLAN

With our losses at Fair Oaks (pause) the administration is reluctant to send more troops and Jackson has now joined and reinforced Lee. My optimism is ebbing.

CUSTER

I understand.

MCCLELLAN

Keep that all to yourself, what is that they call you, yes Curly

CUSTER

Very good, sir.

MCCLELLAN

That brings us to you. I've been both hearing and reading about you. And I like what has been said.

He picks up a bottle of brandy and several glasses.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

A drink, Curly?



CUSTER

Thank you no, General. I have  
swore off alcohol. The pain is not  
worth the pleasure.

The General pours himself a glass.

MCCLELLAN

Good for you, one of my few vices.  
Curly (pause) you have promise.  
(MORE)

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

I see in you a reckless young man  
who has all the characteristics of  
a great soldier.

CUSTER

Sir, I truly appreciate your  
confidence in me. Thank you.

MCCLELLAN smiles and takes a sip of brandy.

MCCLELLAN

Don't thank me. I had really  
nothing to do with your God given  
attributes.

(pause)

But let me give you some advice,  
then perhaps you will thank me  
someday.

CUSTER is attentive and McCLELLAN is very serious.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

Your profession is that of leading  
men in battle; often times to  
death or grievous wounds.

MCCLELLAN takes another sip of brandy.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

It is dangerous and demanding work  
and takes more than a fast horse  
or good aim with a sword or pistol  
to do it properly.

CUSTER

Yes sir.

MCCLELLAN

Curly, I'm able to lead my  
soldiers to Hell and you know  
what?

CUSTER

What?

MCCLELLAN

They will follow me. That happens because I have given them a reason to believe in themselves. Soldiers who feel that way will follow the officer who gave them that belief anywhere.

MCCLELLAN lets that sink in for a moment.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

A good officer is part actor Mister Custer, and part of that act is to make his soldiers believe that there are none better than them.

The sound of a bugle can be heard, both men listen attentively to the haunting noise.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

Your courage and skill goes without question, Curly. But, boy, it is their courage and willingness to follow you that wins battles.

(pause)

Remember that in the long days that are before us.

CUSTER

(deeply touched)

General, I sure will.

MCCLELLAN leans towards CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN

Now, I need you to help me get my soldiers out of the Hell I have brought them to on this peninsula.

(pause)

Seeing as how Mr. Lincoln has doomed my campaign to failure.

(pause, slight laugh)

Yes Armstrong, failure at the very gates of Richmond.

EXT. NEAR WHITE OAK SWAMP, FOREST AT EDGE OF FIELD -  
MORNING

CUSTER is on horseback with dozens of other Union cavalry quietly watching a Confederate camp 100 yards away.

MCCLELLAN (V.O.)

You will be brevetted as a captain on my staff and command cavalry on extensive scouting patrols of areas near the James River.

CUSTER is motioning silently to several other officers, they watch intently as Confederate soldiers go about their morning chores.

MCCLELLAN (V.O.)

Should everything fail me here we will have to seek the best route of withdrawal. That will be towards Harrison's Landing on the James River.

CUSTER takes out his pistol, his men do the same.

MCCLELLAN (V.O.)

It is Rebel territory down there Mister Custer and I must have information on it. Take prisoners if you can, strike when proper, take some pressure off the rest of the army.

EXT. CONFEDERATE CAMP, NEAR JAMES RIVER - MORNING

Several Confederates are loading supplies, most just lounge around. Suddenly there is a sharp volley from the woods behind them and Union cavalry sweep out. Several Confederates are hit and fall, the rest scatter on foot and horseback.

EXT. UNION CAVALRY - MORNING

Lt. CUSTER with pistol raised is out in front, charging madly into the fleeing Confederates.

CUSTER

Lay down your arms.

CUSTER spots one mounted officers making his escape.

EXT. FIELD WITH FENCES - MORNING

The Confederate jumps the first fence with ease, looking back to see where his pursuer is. CUSTER makes every jump and spurs his horse on as the two riders race across the Virginia field. CUSTER is getting closer all the time, he has his pistol out.

CUSTER  
Surrender, damn you.

The Confederate officer continues to ride. CUSTER takes aim and fires. The shots miss but the Confederate has drawn his saber from the scabbard and CUSTER aims again.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Surrender or I'll shoot you.

The reckless ride continues and CUSTER fires, hitting the man who falls off his horse. CUSTER reins in his panting horse and cautiously rides toward his falling enemy. The dead Confederate is a fair haired young man about his age. The sword rests several feet away as CUSTER dismounts and pick it up as a trophy.

EXT. CAPTURED CONFEDERATE CAMP - MORNING

A sergeant canters over to CUSTER, as other Union soldiers round up and search prisoners.

SERGEANT  
Cap'n Custer (pause) we got ourselves 23 prisoners, couple of dead ones.

CUSTER  
Very good, what are our losses?

SERGEANT  
Three men injured sir; one of em pretty bad.

CUSTER swings his horse around and surveys the scene. He holds up the sword he has just captured.

SERGEANT (CONT'D)  
(impressed)  
That's a handy piece of steel, Cap'n.

CUSTER

It is all of that Jones, all of that. Get these people delivered to Pinkerton back at headquarters.

EXT. HARRISON'S LANDING, UNION ARMY DOCKS - DAY

The Union Army has had to retreat to Harrison's Landing on the James River as McCLELLAN anticipated. He is reviewing troops moving towards waiting boats for the river trip to positions back in Williamsburg. McCLELLAN remains as proper as ever while CUSTER and the group of staff officers watching them move look sad. The General walks his horse over to CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN

You have no cause for regret  
Curly, I am happy with your  
performance; you have served me  
well.

CUSTER

General, no soldier likes to  
retreat in the face of men you  
know you can beat.

MCCLELLAN

(angry)

I know, believe me I know. There  
are many rumors that Secretary  
Stanton is pushing for my removal.

MCCLELLAN slowly removes his kepi, wiping his gloved hand across his forehead.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

God only knows that despite them I  
have tried to save the Union.

(long pause)

I have tried.

CUSTER

General, things will work out  
for the best for the Army and the  
Union.

MCCLELLAN

Perhaps. All we can do is our duty  
as soldiers. And I am happy to see  
that you always do yours. You have  
been very loyal I should like to  
repay that Curly?

CUSTER

Now that the General mentioned it.  
When we get back to Williamsburg  
I would like some leave to attend  
a fellow West Pointers' wedding.  
I'm to be the best man.

MCCLELLAN

Consider it done, when things  
quiet down you shall have seven  
days. I feel you have earned every  
moment of it.

CUSTER

I do appreciate it, sir.

MCCLELLAN

(smiling)

A young officer betrothed in times  
like these. Makes me feel good.  
Curly, what is the man's regiment  
(pause) I will send my regards  
with you.

CUSTER bows his head slightly.

CUSTER

Eh, Captain Lea would be in the  
4th Mississippi Regiment, Sir.  
Currently paroled and recuperating  
from injuries.

MCCLELLAN turns to CUSTER and seems to be studying him for  
a moment. A slow smile is spreads across McCLELLAN's face.

MCCLELLAN

Of the Confederate forces! (pause)  
Curly, you astound me, you'll  
be a general yet, of whose army  
I can't tell.

(laughing)

I will send my regards anyway. And  
if the politicians get wind of a  
gentleman's obligation, to the  
devil with them. We won't always  
have this war and we won't always  
have that administration. Good for  
you.

EXT. WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA - DAY

Captain CUSTER rides a beautiful bay horse through the quiet streets of Williamsburg, his black servant, ISAAC, runaway slave follows him. His pet dog ROSE trails after the two mounted men. CUSTER wears a long, dark blue officer's dress coat with full gold epaulets, single row of gold buttons and wide sash. His dark, wide brimmed hat has a black plume and his long curls hang all over. He dismounts at a huge red brick structure complete with pillars. A black servant moves out from the doorway to take his horse.

CUSTER

Good day, I'm Captain Custer.

SERVANT

Good day sir (pause) I believe  
Captain Lea is waiting on you in  
the garden.

CUSTER

Would you see to Isaac, he is with  
me.

CUSTER slowly pulls off his white gauntlets as he makes his way up the wide expanse of stairs to the front door.

INT. ESTATE, LARGE SITTING ROOM - DAY

Capt. "GIMLET" LEA in full dress uniform stands among several other people, soldiers and civilians, in a large room sipping brandy and mint juleps. LEA looks well rested but moves about with a slight limp. Another servant enters the room.

SECOND SERVANT

Cap'n Lea sir, Cap'n Custer has  
arrived.

JOHN LEA

(exited)

Weeee ah, send old Curly in,  
Thomas.

LEA is limping quickly to the door as CUSTER walks in. Both men stare at each other for a moment before approaching, they hug.

CUSTER

Many congratulations, John.

JOHN LEA

So wonderful that you are here,  
weeee can't have a wedding without  
the best man. I see you are a  
Captain now.

CUSTER

And on McClellan's staff. How is  
your leg?

JOHN LEA

Best thing you Yankees ever did  
for me. It is healing right fine,  
if it wasn't for this here injury.

LEA makes a little motion and dances about using his good  
leg.

JOHN LEA (CONT'D)

I would have never met the lady  
who nursed me back to health,  
captured my heart and tomorrow  
will become Mrs. John Lea.

Several very beautiful young women in flowing gowns have  
moved nearer the groom and his attractive best man. Their  
beauty is not wasted on CUSTER.

JOHN LEA (CONT'D)

(excited)

Man, there has been much going on.  
You'll meet my in laws bout supper  
time. Curly, these here are the  
most wonderful kin a man could  
marry into.

CUSTER

I'm certain of it.

Both men move closer to the crowd.

JOHN LEA

Let me see here (pause) sure as  
the sun's out you'll never  
remember all these here names.

CUSTER glances towards the prettiest girl there, she looks  
at him.

JOHN LEA (CONT'D)

This here is cousin Matt Hood, a  
down home boy up for the  
festivities.



CUSTER  
Captain George Custer, pleased.

JOHN LEA  
My commanding officer, Colonel  
Hunt, sir, meet Cap'n Custer, 5th  
US Cavalry.

COL.HUNT  
Captain Custer (pause) when I saw  
you walk in I didn't know whether  
to arrest you or greet you.

CUSTER, LEA and everyone laugh at his humor.

CUSTER  
Delighted to meet you, sir.

JOHN LEA  
Colonel, I have always felt that  
Cap'n Custer should be in our  
army.

COL.HUNT  
So you've told me.  
(pause)  
And sir, might I have the pleasure  
of introducing my daughter Miss  
Maggie Ann Hunt, Captain Custer.

With cavalier dignity CUSTER takes MAGGIE ANN HUNT's hand,  
kisses it and gives her a bow. She is used to this type of  
attention but has a look of interest in CUSTER.

CUSTER  
I'm honored, Miss Hunt.

INT. ESTATE PARLOR - NEXT DAY

MAGGIE HUNT  
Very pleased Cap'n Custer.  
(paused)  
Daddy, please take him prisoner so  
we can bring him home.

More laughter as CUSTER's eyes and MAGGIE's meet.

Vows are being exchanged by LEA and his lady, the huge  
parlor is full of guests. A four member orchestra is  
sitting at the far end of the room, servants and a banquet

accent the hall. CUSTER is having a difficult time keeping his eyes off MAGGIE HUNT.

JOHN LEA

I do.

MINISTER

You are now man and wife by the powers vested in me and the Commonwealth of Virginia.  
(pause)

The minister looks somewhat uneasy at CUSTER in his blue uniform, before continuing.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

Confederate States of America. You may kiss the bride at this time.

LEA does not hesitate on this, once again CUSTER finds himself glancing at MAGGIE HUNT.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

To all those gathered here for this very happy ceremony, I take great honor in presenting Mr. John Lea and his wife.

The crowd cheers and rice and colorful ribbon is thrown over them as the orchestra strikes up Dixie. Everyone starts to sing and CUSTER joins right in.

INT. PARLOR, WILLIAMSBURG ESTATE - EVENING

Various couples are dancing, others talking and eating. CUSTER is talking to LEA and his new wife.

JOHN LEA

I am looking forward to a very happy marriage with the sweetest woman in the country.

MINISTER

Bless both of you.

COL. HUNT

Captain Custer, did John say you were in the 5th Cavalry, were you with them when they made that charge at Gaines Mill?

CUSTER

Colonel, I regret to say that detached service on General McClellan's staff took me out of their ranks before that battle.

COL.HUNT

I see.

(pause)

What a glorious charge it was. I have never seen such courage, 200 of the bravest men I have ever seen, charging directly into certain death at the hands of our infantry.

His story is getting a great deal of attention from the other guests.

MAGGIE HUNT

Gracious, Cap'n Custer are all your cavalry that brave?

CUSTER

Miss Maggie, there are very brave men on all sides of this war.

CUSTER stops a waiter who is carrying a large tray of drinks, picks one up and prepare to address the gathering. Mr. and Mrs. LEA are beaming beside him as are her parents and MAGGIE HUNT.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(very formal)

Could I have everyone's attention?

People gather and the orchestra stops playing.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

As Captain Lea's best man, please allow me to propose a toast and lead you in the same.

GUEST

A fine idea, sir.

CUSTER

To Captain John Lea and his beautiful wife, may their marriage be blessed with love, children and peace and to brave soldiers of the

Confederacy with whom Captain Lea  
so nobly serves.

The crowd raises their glasses, with some muffled cheers  
and the orchestra strikes up a few bars of Dixie. They  
finish that toast and Captain JOHN LEA raises his glass.

JOHN LEA

And might I also return such an  
honor.

(pause)

To the brave soldiers of the Union  
Army with whom Captain Custer, my  
friend, serves with great honor  
and distinction.

COL. HUNT

(moved)

A braver enemy there could not be.

The guests are just as enthusiastic about that toast and  
CUSTER is very touched by their warmth. MAGGIE HUNT tucks her  
arm around CUSTER's arm. The orchestra plays several lines of  
Yankee Doodle.

INT. ESTATE, BALLROOM FLOOR - EVENING

Wonderfully dressed belles and uniformed men dance. Captain  
CUSTER cuts a dashing figure as he strides the crowded dance  
floor. MAGGIE HUNT looks beautiful as she smiles up at him,  
COL. HUNT notices the young couples' emotions and seems not  
to mind.

MAGGIE HUNT

Cap'n Custer if a lady could be so  
bold to say...

CUSTER's eyes move down to hers; they stare at each other  
for several strides.

MAGGIE HUNT

(CONT'D)

I, sir, am having a wonderful time  
tonight.

CUSTER

Maggie, do you know what?

MAGGIE HUNT

Yes Cap'n Custer?

CUSTER

So am I.

They both laugh and glide with the soft music.

INT. ESTATE BALLROOM, REFRESHMENT TABLE - EVENING

Capt. LEA and the MINISTER are getting punch as CUSTER and MAGGIE HUNT sweep off the dance floor, take each others arm and walk to the table. It is much later in the evening and she is aware of their impending separation.

JOHN LEA

(serious)

Now Cousin Maggie, I know you are having a wonderful time for yourself but do I detect a look of sadness, dear?

CUSTER

Gimlet, the last time I enjoyed myself so was at West Point.

MAGGIE HUNT receives her punch and turns slightly away, CUSTER and LEA are both very caring and attentive.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Maggie, what is the matter?

JOHN LEA

Cousin Maggie, please don't be sad (pause), child what is troubling you?

The MINISTER have moved towards them and MAGGIE HUNT seems to be almost crying, she has brought her little fan up to cover much of her face. CUSTER and LEA are beside her.

MAGGIE HUNT

Please don't fret John, it is nothing, really.

CUSTER

But it is it must be.

JOHN LEA

Cousin Maggie?

She turns to the other men, her dark curls ringing her finely sculptured and aristocratic features.

MAGGIE HUNT

Don't you all be troubling  
yourselves over me now. You hear?

JOHN LEA

We must.

MINISTER

(smiling)

But Miss Hunt, you have these  
young officers more concerned now  
than before they go into battle.

JOHN LEA

The Minister is right.

CUSTER

As an officer it is true.

MAGGIE HUNT

It is just that (pause) everything  
is so beautiful, and then (pause)  
then there is the war and who  
truly knows. And Cap'n Custer you  
are such a charmer.

JOHN LEA

(laughing loudly)

Now I understand (pause) I see the  
first blossoms of genuine  
affection.

CUSTER

Gimlet (pause) I'm flattered  
but... MAGGIE HUNT has gotten her  
composure back and is staring at  
CUSTER. CUSTER seems a bit taken  
aback but also amused by all of  
this.

JOHN LEA

Curly, it is just the most perfect  
timing. Here is Cousin Maggie and  
here is the Minister.

(pause)

We could be married on the same  
day. Sir, nothing could be finer;  
I'll be your best man.

MAGGIE HUNT

You are so very considerate to a  
woman's emotions John Lea. Perhaps  
Cap'n Custer and I should discuss  
such things in private.

She is back together and flattered that LEA broke the ice, she is also giving way to her desire for CUSTER. Cousin MAGGIE holds out her arm for her dashing officer, who accepts it graciously.

MAGGIE HUNT (CONT'D)

Cap'n Custer (pause) I do believe  
I need some air. Gentlemen, thank  
you for your kindness.

The couple leave for the outside verandah.

CUSTER

Yes Gimlet, thanks for leading the  
attack.

They weave their way through the crowded ballroom directly past Col.HUNT who is talking happily with a group of men and women. He sees them, raises his eyebrow slightly knowing the look of his daughter's face. They walk by and greet he Colonel.

MAGGIE HUNT

Hello father.

CUSTER

(very proper)

By your leave, sir.

One of the other uniformed guests notes HUNT's "interest"

CONFEDERATE MAJOR

Sir, Miss Maggie looks  
beautiful as ever and young  
Captain Custer seems to be very  
aware of that.

COL.HUNT

(slightly amused)

Yes. I know what you mean. Appears  
as if that young man is set to  
conquer southern territory on his  
own.

EXT. ESTATE VERANDAH - NIGHT

Large lamps are burning as CUSTER and MAGGIE HUNT walk  
outside and across the courtyard.

CUSTER

(quietly)

Now what is all this about?

MAGGIE HUNT

Cap'n Custer, you know as well as I do just how a woman's feelings go.

CUSTER

Oh?

They move closer, his hands slip gently over her waist, he draws her closer to him.

MAGGIE HUNT

You are the most beautiful man I have ever seen (pause) a real charmer.

CUSTER leans down and kisses her.

CUSTER

And you are a very beautiful woman.

MAGGIE HUNT

Such words, wonderful even if you are a Yankee.

They kiss and embrace again, very long and with great passion.

MAGGIE HUNT (CONT'D)

Cap'n Lea had a very interesting suggestion, sir. You could capture this rebel without firing a shot.

They embrace more seriously, CUSTER kisses her across the face and shoulders.

CUSTER

(quietly)

Maggie, I'm more for the bold cavalry charge.

MAGGIE HUNT

Shhh, (pause) then sir we must go to the garden house for this. Quickly.

CUT TO:

LOVE SCENES - (MONTAGE)



CUSTER and MAGGIE make passionate love in the garden house.  
Walking hand in hand on the estate grounds.  
CUSTER picking a flower and handing it gently to MAGGIE.  
Another passionate love scene.  
Her watching him display sword techniques.  
CUSTER and MAGGIE cantering their horses together.  
MAGGIE in exquisite riding gear playfully trying on his dress hat. COL. HUNT walks by, she smiles slyly, handing it back to him. Her father shakes his head, trying to conceal his amusement.  
The two of them playing with CUSTER's dog ROSE.  
They are lying alone, in one of the estate's many secluded guest houses mostly covered and in each other's arms. MAGGIE has never looked more beautiful.

(MORE)

MAGGIE HUNT (CONT'D)

(softly)

My momma told me never to say  
this, I mean a lady probably  
shouldn't be so bold, but I love  
you, Armstrong.

CUSTER turns and gently kisses her face.

CUSTER

Oh Maggie those are such brave  
words for you to say and even a  
braver way to feel.

MAGGIE HUNT

(pause)

I don't care who knows that, North  
or South, or even if you love me.  
I just know what I feel.

CUSTER

With the war and all Maggie, love  
is a dangerous emotion.

She holds him close, they are quiet for a moment.

MAGGIE HUNT

I know you are a brave soldier.

CUSTER

In battle I'm rarely troubled with any kind of fear.

MAGGIE HUNT

Does the color of the uniform make any difference, I mean could you wear grey and still be as brave?

CUSTER looks at her, he is thinking about the situation.

MAGGIE HUNT (CONT'D)

You could resign your commission, my daddy would take you in his regiment; for me could you do that?

CUSTER

Maggie Hunt (pause) I am flattered but I have chosen my side to fight on. I cannot change it now.

MAGGIE HUNT

I do understand such things, Armstrong.

They lie quietly for another moment, then there is a light knock on the door. CUSTER gets quickly up, puts on a robe and moves over to investigate. Slowly he opens the door. Isaac, his servant, is there.

CUSTER

What is it Isaac?

ISAAC

(hesitant)

Marse Armstrong, Cap'n Lea, he sends his regards (pause) sez there some big problem that needs your presence at the big house.

CUSTER

(concerned)

Did he say what?

ISAAC

No sir, cepting it has something to do with your army, Marse Custer. Thinks they ain't there no more.

MAGGIE gets up and wraps the quilt around her.

CUSTER

Thank you Isaac. Can you bring my horse around?

ISAAC  
Yes sir.

CUSTER turns back to MAGGIE, she moves up to him and they hug.

MAGGIE HUNT  
What is it, Armstrong?

CUSTER  
Can't make it out, Gimlet says it is urgent, Isaac mentioned something about my forces being gone? Well they probably aren't in Richmond. So you need not worry.

She pushes him playfully away and sits back on the bed watching him get dressed.

MAGGIE HUNT  
Always playing, my feelings sir, are still true and the offer still holds.

EXT. ESTATE GROUNDS, MAIN ROAD - SAME DAY

CUSTER is riding his horse quickly towards the main building, ISAAC rides after him and ROSE runs behind.

INT. MAIN ESTATE, SITTING ROOM - DAY

JOHN LEA and CUSTER are standing by the fireplace, CUSTER in his uniform, LEA in civilian clothing.

JOHN LEA  
(very anxious)  
Maggie's father sent the message this morning. Little Mac is back in Washington and the rest of your army is moving quickly out of Yorktown and Fortress Monroe.

CUSTER  
And they never notified me.

JOHN LEA  
Armstrong, (pause) you was just forgotten in the confusion. Happens all the time.

LEA seems distraught at the turn of events, he moves nervously around the big room.

JOHN LEA (CONT'D)

Far as Colonel Hunt knows there is no Yankee rear guard remaining in this city. You are behind our lines and subject to arrest.

CUSTER

Gimlet, don't tell Maggie about this. I don't want to worry her.

JOHN LEA

On my honor, you are a guest here and you will be treated as such, but in the rest of Williamsburg things could get right dangerous.

CUSTER looks out of the big window, thinking about his next move.

CUSTER

Gimlet, Isaac knows the way back to Yorktown, I've a good horse and there won't be a full moon for three more nights.

JOHN LEA

He does.

CUSTER

I'll ride for the Union lines tonight.

(pause)

It is my only chance.

JOHN LEA

Armstrong, the country is back under our control. You'll be shot for sure.

CUSTER

(very serious)

Gimlet, it is the only chance remaining.

EXT. ESTATE, BACK GATE - NIGHT

IN THE DARK OF NIGHT CUSTER, LEA AND SEVERAL SERGEANTS  
HUDDLE BY HORSES AT THE BACK OF THE ESTATE. CUSTER IS  
DRESSED FOR TRAVEL AND SO IS HIS LITTLE SERVANT, ISAAC.  
LEA APPROACHES HIS FRIEND

JOHN LEA

Isaac will get you through my  
friend; there are Union pickets  
directly outside of Yorktown  
(pause)  
Be very careful, it is my regiment  
that patrols the area

CUSTER

Thank you for your friendship and  
the wonderful memories, Gimlet.

MAGGIE HUNT dressed in a hooded dark green coat walks from  
the surrounding trees. She is very sad, both CUSTER and LEA  
see her at the same time.

LEA

Maggie, you shouldn't be here.

MAGGIE HUNT

(sad)  
Yes John, I must, I will miss you,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

And I you Maggie Hunt.  
(pause)  
My brave friend. I will remember  
your courage and beauty wherever I  
go.

He removes his plumed hat and does a low bow from the saddle  
to her.

LEA

Isaac will be able to get you  
safely out of here.

CUSTER

I'll trust to Custer's Luck also.

LEA

As always my friend, ride true.

CUSTER tightens his reins and spurs his horse through the  
gate and into the Virginia night, ISAAC does the same and

ROSE follows. Only the faint sound of the animals hooves can be heard. LEA approaches MAGGIE and holds her.

MAGGIE HUNT

I asked father to reduce the patrols tonight.

LEA

Maggie, I hope that helps.

MAGGIE slips away and walks toward the big gate.

MAGGIE HUNT

(to herself)

Goodbye my bold Yankee officer.

EXT. NEAR YORKTOWN, WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The two men have brought their animals into a dark patch of woods. They sit on the horses carefully watching a Confederate guard.

ISAAC

(low voice)

They be three of em up the road just a piece.

CUSTER draws a pistol and cocks it, listening intently to his friend.

ISAAC

(CONT'D)

This is the last of em, but damn Marse Armstrong they wide awake.

CUSTER

We'll have to ride over them, Isaac, it's our only hope. We make it to Union lines and you're going North with me. Are you game?

ISAAC

Sir, (pause) if it means freedom I sure am.

In the dark of night CUSTER, LEA and several sergeants huddle by horses at the back of the estate. CUSTER is dressed for travel and so is his little servant, ISAAC. LEA approaches his friend.

JOHN LEA

Isaac will get you through my friend; there are Union pickets directly outside of Yorktown.

(pause)

Be very careful, it is my regiment that patrols the area.

CUSTER

Thank you for your friendship and the wonderful memories, Gimlet.

MAGGIE HUNT dressed in a hooded dark green coat walks from the surrounding trees. She is very sad, both CUSTER and LEA see her at the same time.

LEA

Maggie, you shouldn't be here.

MAGGIE HUNT

(sad)

Yes John, I must, I will miss you, Armstrong.

CUSTER

And I you Maggie Hunt.

(pause)

My brave friend. I will remember your courage and beauty wherever I go.

He removes his plumed hat and does a low bow from the saddle to her.

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MAGGIE HUNT

I asked father to reduce the patrols tonight.

LEA  
Maggie, I hope that helps.

MAGGIE slips away and walks toward the big gate.

MAGGIE HUNT  
(to herself)  
Goodbye my bold Yankee officer.

YORKTOWN, WOODED AREA - NIGHT

The two men have brought their animals into a dark patch of woods. They sit on the horses carefully watching a Confederate guard.

ISAAC  
(low voice)  
They be three of em up the road  
just a piece.

CUSTER draws a pistol and cocks it, listening intently to his friend.

ISAAC (CONT'D)  
This is the last of em, but damn  
Marse Armstrong they wide awake.

CUSTER  
We'll have to ride over them,  
Isaac, it's our only hope. We make  
it to Union lines and you're going  
North with me. Are you game?

ISAAC  
Sir, (pause) if it means freedom I  
sure am.

CUSTER  
Very well, ride fast and keep down.

Both men put the spurs to their horses and surge quickly out of the darkness directly towards the Confederate guard post.

EXT. NEAR YORKTOWN, CONFEDERATE GUARD POST - NIGHT



Several Confederate soldiers are startled by the thunder of hooves in the darkness. They scramble around trying to find a target; one of them is just about to hold up a torch when CUSTER gallops out of the darkness and rides the man over. The others draw aim as ISAAC rides through them followed by ROSE.

CONFEDERATE GUARD

What the devil? He gets knocked over.

SECOND CONFEDERATE GUARD

Mercy, stop them.

CUSTER and ISAAC are through the guard post and riding across a small clearing as several shots ring out from behind them.

EXT. NEAR UNION LINES AT YORKTOWN, OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

Several Confederates have left their camp and are running towards CUSTER. CUSTER had decided to engage the Confederates. He steadies his horse and aims his pistol at the running soldiers. He fires slowly and deliberately at them. Two spin around and fall. CUSTER spurs his horse into the darkness. ROSE follows behind him.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION STEAMBOAT HEADING FOR FORT MONROE, DECK - NIGHT

CUSTER is standing in the night with ROSE beside him. An older man in a navy officer's uniform approaches him. The old naval officer leans against the rail.

Both men gaze out into the darkness as the steamer makes its way towards Fort Monroe.

OLD OFFICER

(friendly)

Fine looking dog, Captain.

CUSTER

Huh, (pause) what, excuse me?

OLD OFFICER

I said that's a nice looking dog.

CUSTER

Thank you, my name is George Custer. 5th Calvary but with General McClellan's staff.

They shake hands.

OLD OFFICER

Tom Brooks is the name, heading north also are you?

CUSTER

Yes, but with some regrets.

OLD OFFICER

Suppose so, with McClellan fired and all. Got another assignment or is it out of the Army for you, Captain Custer?

Custer straightens himself up and looks surprised.

CUSTER

What did you say Mr. Brooks?

OLD OFFICER

Why I said General McClellan is just about out of command; having been replaced by the present powers that be by General Pope.

CUSTER

(shocked)

Well sir, that is news to me.

OLD OFFICER

Captain Custer, I am sorry. I thought just about everyone wearing the uniform of the Republic would have been told about now?

CUSTER looks rather shaken, he bends down and gathers his dog close to him.

CUSTER

No, as a matter of fact I had been away from the General's headquarters for a bit.

OLD OFFICER

Yup, sure enough. Seems like Little Mac made too many enemies,

didn't move fast enough for them political types.

CUSTER

(angry)

That is a lie and every soldier who has fought with him knows that.

OLD OFFICER

Yup, General John Pope got himself the brand new Army of Virginia to command and the blessings of Stanton and Lincoln and right now, (pause) last word I heard, was moving down through Fairfax Virginia on his way to take Richmond.

CUSTER

He'll have Bob Lee to deal with.

OLD OFFICER looks at CUSTER with a slight smile and slowly breaks out a pipe and lights it up.

OLD OFFICER

That's right Captain Custer, Bob Lee in front and Mr. Lincoln behind him. Sure seems like a hard way for a man to fight a war.

CUSTER shifts around on the deck, patting ROSE as he stares into the night.

CUSTER

Yes, (pause) it sure does.

OLD OFFICER

Now, one would guess that would put you out of a staff job now wouldn't it?

CUSTER

Yes, it just might.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON D.C., STREET - DAY

CUSTER is dressed in a conventional captain's uniform. He looks concerned as he hurries to report to the Chief of Cavalry's office. There are news boys everywhere as well as

concerned groups of citizens gathered by shop windows reading the news from the war.

NEWS BOY  
(yelling)  
Big fight, our Army vanquished.  
Big fight, get thar' news about the  
big fight. Rebs here soon.

CUSTER picks up on this, quickly pivots toward the lad and takes out money for a paper.

CUSTER  
Hey there.

NEWS BOY  
Big fight, yes sir.

NEWS BOYS hands CUSTER the paper, checking out the sum at the same time.

NEWS BOY (CONT'D)  
Thanks, sir. Watch out for them  
Rebs in that uniform.

CUSTER  
Don't worry about me.

CUSTER walks quickly on reviewing the paper, crowds of people pass him as do several soldiers.

INT. CAVALRY OFFICE, FEDERAL BUILDING, MAIN HALL - DAY

CUSTER  
General Pleasonton, I'm Captain  
Custer.

PLEASONTON  
(curtly)  
So your Custer. Pleased to meet you  
Custer.

CUSTER remains standing in the middle of the room.  
PLEASONTON turns slightly away from the window, he looks a little worried and tired.

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)  
Have a seat, Custer, (pause) I see  
you've gotten the news.

CUSTER

Yes, General, once again it seems bad.

PLEASONTON

I am also told that you take a great many chances and fight hard and, (pause)

The General pours himself a large glass of brandy.

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)

That you take this war thing to be some type of sport.

CUSTER

I would not call it that; but I find it to be thrilling in its own right.

PLEASONTON takes a big gulp of his brandy and continues to move restlessly around the room.

PLEASONTON

Eh, how about that?  
(pause)  
So do I.

CUSTER

And, sir, something that so far I have been both good at and fortunate in.

PLEASONTON

(amused)  
I believe you call it Custer's Luck?

CUSTER

I've always had something of the sort.

PLEASONTON moves back to his desk; he holds up a collection of papers.

PLEASONTON

Young man, seems like you have a hell of a lot more of that than our Army does.  
(pause)  
Perhaps you've got some more coming your way.

CUSTER

Sir?

PLEASONTON shakes the papers.

PLEASONTON

Bobby Lee is tearing up the Maryland countryside right now, (pause) and President Lincoln has decided that only one man can stop him.

CUSTER

And that man, General?

PLEASONTON

General McClellan, (pause) seems like your general is back in favor again. Stanton and Lincoln are giving him what's left of Pope's Army and there is a foot race due north of here with salvation of the Union as the prize Mr. Custer.

CUSTER can barely contain himself at the news.

FADE IN:

"Maryland 1862"

EXT. HAGERSTOWN TURNPIKE, MARYLAND - DAY

Lines of Union soldiers march along the roads. Capt. CUSTER and several West Point classmates, Lieutenants JAMES WILSON and JAMES MARTIN, gallop along as part of the staff of the Army of the Potomac. McCLELLAN looks trim and fit, PLEASONTON is also there.

PLEASONTON (V.O.)

And he asked for you by name, Custer, to be reunited with his staff. Assigned temporarily as my aide.

Soldiers remove their caps and cheer as the staff officers canter by.

PLEASONTON (V.O.)

He is back to save the Union again, (pause) and I truly hope,

Mr. Custer, that some of your luck  
rubs off on your General.

MCCLELLAN responds to the cheers by doffing his cap  
slightly and lowering his head in a dignified bow as they  
canter past. CUSTER is cheering with the rest of them.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, MCCLELLAN'S STAFF - NEXT DAY

MCCLELLAN and his staff are viewing the progress of the  
battle through their binoculars. CUSTER is there as are  
several general officers; Maj. PORTER and Gen. SYKES. There  
is a great deal of distant gun and cannon fire.

MCCLELLAN

(proudly)

Great God what a truly magnificent  
Battle! Thank God for this!

(pause)

Damn, all those who  
criticized my leadership will be  
thanking me for saving this nation  
at last.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, UNION CENTER LINE - DAY

Through the haze of battle smoke, long lines of Union troops  
are running after fleeing rows of gray and brown clad  
Confederates. Battle flags from both sides wave back and  
forth as soldiers fire and reload and men fall in little  
clusters.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, MCCLELLAN'S STAFF - DAY CUSTER

is watching the Union forces success with interest.

CUSTER

General McCLELLAN, (pause) the  
Rebel forces are falling back  
everywhere. Sir, I believe their  
center is starting to break.

MCCLELLAN and the rest of the staff continue to view this  
with renewed interest.

MCCLELLAN

Seems like they are high tailing a  
bit quicker doesn't it?

CUSTER

General, I believe if we throw all  
our reserves in now we'll cut  
Lee's army in half. We can destroy  
them in depth.

PORTER is angry over such input from a mere staff captain.

PORTER

Damn it, sir, remember your  
position. A staff officer does not  
give such advice to his commander.

SYKES reins his horse in somewhat and pushes his wide  
brimmed hat back.

SYKES

Now, Fitz, I believe young Custer  
has a sound tactical point.  
General McClellan, you send your  
reserves in where  
Custer said and Bobby Lee's  
Army will be finished as a fighting  
force.

MCCLELLAN

(doubtful, hesitant)  
Seems possible, but one bad  
move...

PORTER

General McClellan, this is  
rubbish! As commander of your  
reserves I have the last hope of  
saving a situation that could turn  
against us.

MCCLELLAN raises his binoculars to the fighting, he cannot  
make up his mind.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, UNION LINES - DAY

The Union forces are routing much of the Confederate line,  
groups of Union troops are seizing Confederate cannons and  
prisoners.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, MCCLELLAN'S STAFF ON HILL - DAY



McCLELLAN is trying to figure out what to do, he wants a big win but as usual fears and timidity are getting in the way. PORTER is ready to debate against it and CUSTER is looking on with some anger.

MCCLELLAN

It seems that the day is ours gentlemen. (pause) I feel this is the right time...

PORTER

(quickly)

General, if this turns around all you have are my reserves. I fear Captain Custer is just in the mood for another of his reckless charges.

This angers CUSTER greatly who reins up his horse and leans towards PORTER. Both men stare at each other while McCLELLAN notes the problem.

CUSTER

General Porter, in all due respect I am not in the mood for a reckless charge, simply a great victory.

PORTER

Your insubordinance is noted, Captain Custer.

MCCLELLAN

(disturbed)

Gentlemen, I'll have no bickering here. (pause) The reserves will hold while Captain Custer rides to General Pleasonton and tells him to advance several squadrons in support of our flank.

CUSTER

(unhappy)

Very good, sir.

MCCLELLAN

The ride will do you good, Armstrong.

McCLELLAN smiles towards his young aide while PORTER ignores him and CUSTER casts an angry look towards PORTER.

SYKES

(friendly)  
Careful, Curly, (pause) I think  
General Pleasonton is down off the  
Sharpsburg Pike.

CUSTER rides off.

EXT. ANTIETAM BATTLEFIELD, PLEASONTON'S AREA - DAY

CUSTER rides his horse across a field. There are hundreds  
of dead Union and Confederate soldiers lying in the field.  
Many wounded soldiers limp or crawl off the field. He rides  
up to PLEASONTON and some of his men making a scouting  
trip.

PLEASONTON  
Young Custer, hello to you.

CUSTER  
General, General McCLELLAN sends  
his regards and Requests that you  
move several squadrons to support  
our left flank.

PLEASONTON  
(surprised)  
That would be for Burnside. What  
is wrong with that man? That flank  
will hold.

CUSTER  
Sir, I tried to tell Mac that  
myself.

PLEASONTON  
(angry)  
Damn him, damn such decisions!  
We've lost a great many fine men  
today fronting up against Bob Lee  
and now when the Rebs are weak  
McClellan throws it all away.

CUSTER  
General Porter was against my  
suggestion for such an attack. The  
influence was from his part. Cried  
that I only wanted a reckless  
charge to my credit.

PLEASONTON reins up his horse, slapping his whip against his hand.

PLEASONTON

(loudly)

Now there is a man with not a spark of courage to his credit.

CUSTER

I told him I wanted a victory. Now after seeing our dead on this field we deserve nothing less.

PLEASONTON

Good for you, we will see that you get your charge in good time, my boy.

INT. SHARPSBURG, MARYLAND, CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER with his dog ROSE at his feet sits on a camp chair writing a letter home. His equipment is scattered and hanging on the tent poles.

CUSTER (V.O.)

My dearest Lydia, You may perhaps be in doubt as to whether I am among the living. These lines will assure you that I am well. The recent battle here almost defies description. Our dead number well into the thousands and those of the rebels were the same. I am sure that there has not been a fight like it anytime in this nation's history. I had the opportunity to serve directly with General McClellan and feel that much has been said against this man who is responsible for saving the Union from defeat.

INT. MONROE, MICHIGAN, CUSTER HOME - MONTH LATER

LYDIA REED and several CUSTER family members are gathered in the parlor listening to her read the letter from CUSTER. BOSTON CUSTER and DAVID REED listen intently as LYDIA REED reads.

LYDIA REED

There was a great deal of bravery shown by our forces during some of the darkest moments on that battle- field. I am eating well and have received all of your packages. It is rumored that President Lincoln will be visiting camp soon to confer with General McClellan. Should this be true I shall like to see this great man who is responsible for the war. Do not worry about me, all remains quiet here. The food is good and weather is fine. All my love, Armstrong.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, SHARPSBURG - DAY

Long lines of blue coated soldiers come to attention at an officer's command. A military band blares out a march and President LINCOLN gets out of coach. Gen. McCLELLAN greets him, CUSTER is among the many officers gathered around while the President is ushered over for a photograph.

LINCOLN

(happily)

Hello, Mr. Gardner, working your magic again I see.

GARDNER

Yes, Mr. President. The group of officers and their president pose rather stiffly for the photograph. CUSTER poses on the far right.

GARDNER (CONT'D)

Please remain still.

CUSTER

(tired, yawns)

Hmmm.

GARDNER

(disturbed)

Young man, kindly remain still.

Several officers look over at CUSTER; President LINCOLN turns in that direction also. CUSTER nods slightly to his President. LINCOLN smiles in response, it is a kind smile.

LINCOLN  
Now that reminds me of a story.

GARDNER  
Almost ready, Mr. President.

He is under the hood and behind the tripod making adjustments and working the camera. Other officers and enlisted men have gathered behind him. Several members of LINCOLN's staff are there also, including NICOLAY. LINCOLN becomes still.

GARDNER (CONT'D)  
(expectant)  
This is history, gentlemen.

There is a loud, smoky little explosion as the sulfur bar ignites and the glass plate is exposed. McCLELLAN escorts the President into the large white staff tent.

INT. STAFF TENT - DAY

LINCOLN leads the way, McCLELLAN follows. Several aides have made sure tables are set up for the men; they wait near the door of the tent.

MCCLELLAN  
(turns to the door)  
That will be all, Sergeant Croft.

CROFT  
Yes General.

The aides salute and leave. The two men seat themselves, LINCOLN removes his hat. McCLELLAN does the same. The President seems relaxed.

LINCOLN  
Mr. Brady has been kind enough to send me many of his images for inspection, (pause) images of the battlefields that is.

MCCLELLAN  
Yes, Mr. President from time to time I see him or Mr. Gardner working near our camps.

LINCOLN

It is a historical record but one would have hoped that this generation of Americans could have had a better image to offer to the history of the world than what we now must settle for.

MCCLELLAN

I am in total agreement on that.

LINCOLN adjusts himself in his seat, turns more to his host.

LINCOLN

By the way, the young officer outside.

MCCLELLAN

There were many, Mr. President?

LINCOLN

The young man who showed some fatigue.

MCCLELLAN thinks for a moment, then recalls and his face brightens.

MCCLELLAN

Oh yes (pause) Captain Custer, he has been up and about doing a great deal of scouting for us. Energetic and brave soldier.

LINCOLN

I thought the name rang a bell. That was the Custer of the flag, the Confederate banner sent to me from Williamsburg?

MCCLELLAN

Exactly, took it himself while leading a charge against Rebel positions.

LINCOLN settles back a little, you can tell he is thinking about what is to come next.

LINCOLN

(slyly, direct)

And now this brings us to the business at hand and perhaps a proverb.

MCCLELLAN  
(perplexed)  
Mr. President?

LINCOLN  
(slowly)  
General McClellan, (pause) it is my  
hope that you can shake off this  
case of the slows and get on with  
the much needed defeat of Rebel  
forces.

MCCLELLAN  
(defensive)  
But, Mr. President, surely you  
realize this Army is badly in need  
of replacements and supplies.

LINCOLN pauses for a long moment and looks directly at  
McCLELLAN who tries to get control of himself.

LINCOLN  
As does General Lee's Army. I  
understand that we whipped him  
pretty fairly last month.

MCCLELLAN  
That we did, sir.

LINCOLN  
And on the second day it would have  
been both politically and  
tactically sound for you to have  
gone after General Lee again,  
(pause) and destroyed him in  
detail.

MCCLELLAN  
This is unfair, I stopped him On  
this field.

LINCOLN  
General, it is certain you have  
saved the country. But you must  
beat Lee and take Richmond and be  
done with this war.

LINCOLN stops for a moment, he and McCLELLAN continue to  
stare at one another.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Finish the job so that our nation no longer has to look upon those photographs of Mr. Gardner and Brady and see the horror this war has brought upon our nation.

MCCLELLAN

Mr. President, you must realize that my cavalry horses are worn and fresh mounts are needed badly.

LINCOLN

General McClellan, on two occasions Lee has sent cavalry under General Stuart directly around the Army of the Potomac.

MCCLELLAN

This is true.

LINCOLN

Both those occurrences happened this year. Sir, it makes me wonder just what our cavalry have been doing, to be so fatigued that we can't stop Stuart from doing this?

MCCLELLAN

(defensive)

Mr. President, you realize that there have been political forces hampering my army's progress?

LINCOLN

I realize this, and I pledge that I will stand between you and them because I feel that you are the only man we have capable of commanding an Army of this size.

MCCLELLAN

I will need all of that, but I'm afraid Washington will be too powerful even for you.

LINCOLN

(quietly)

General, you have saved the Union but you did not beat the Confederacy.



(pause)  
Only by beating them will it be possible to reunite the nation.

MCCLELLAN  
Mr. President, I will need time to prepare for a campaign.

LINCOLN is quiet for a moment, he picks up his hat and prepares to go.

LINCOLN  
General, you will have as much time as needed. Please move when you are at the ready.

LINCOLN rises as does McCLELLAN, they move towards the door.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
But remember that proverb I mentioned earlier? There is an old children's game, (pause) I used to play it when I was a boy.

MCCLELLAN  
(attentive)  
A children's game, sir?

LINCOLN  
Yes, it was called Three Times Around And Out.

They stop, LINCOLN looks kindly at McCLELLAN.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
General, you must not let General Lee get around your Army again.

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, SHARPSVILLE, PRESIDENTIAL COACH- DAY

LINCOLN and his presidential party are entering the coach, NICOLAY is walking beside the President. Rows of soldiers come to attention as the President gets into his coach.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
John, I just can't tell about our General.

NICOLAY

Perhaps Stanton is correct.

LINCOLN

I don't know. Do you remember the officer, Captain I believe now, who yawned before the photograph?

NICOLAY

Yes, I do recall him, sort of curly golden haired fellow.

LINCOLN

That was him. It was also the man who sent us the Rebel flag earlier this year.

NICOLAY

Took it in a charge in May at Williamsburg, I believe.

LINCOLN

Yes, at Williamsburg.

NICOLAY

I'm surprised that he is still alive.

The carriage rocks along, soldiers line part of the road away from the Union camp, a cavalry detail escorts the presidential party back to the port. LINCOLN sits quietly and thinks.

LINCOLN

Yes, John, so am I.

WASHINGTON, WHITE HOUSE, EXECUTIVE AREA - DAY Secretary of

the Treasury, SALMON CHASE walks with Secretary

of War, STANTON. STANTON carries several pieces of paper with him and seems to be very angry.

CHASE

The man is a fool and a political liability!

They move quickly through a series of smaller rooms, clerks and staff are sitting at big wooden desks working.

STANTON

He, my dear Mr. Secretary, is an imbecile and one with mutinous tendencies.

They stop at the Presidential office, STANTON knocks and enters with CHASE right behind him.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, LINCOLN'S OFFICE - DAY

LINCOLN is at his desk, he raises his head, removes his glasses and puts down a pen as the men enter. He seems a bit tired.

STANTON  
Good morning, Mr. President.

CHASE  
Good morning, sir.

LINCOLN  
(friendly)  
Good morning, gentlemen. Why do I feel that these early morning visits bode ominous tidings?

STANTON and CHASE move quickly into the room, STANTON holds up his paperwork.

STANTON  
(mildly excited)  
Well, I was correct, Mr. President.  
(pause)  
All our suspicions about McClellan seem justified.

LINCOLN gets up from his desk and walks over to his two cabinet members.

CHASE  
Mr. Stanton informs me that this information just came into...

STANTON  
(interrupting)  
Yes, yes Major Eckert just received this.

LINCOLN reaches out and takes the message from STANTON who is very happy about the news. LINCOLN glances over the contents.

LINCOLN  
Hmmm, yes, can this be verified,  
Mr. Secretary?

STANTON  
Most definitely, Mr. President,  
Eckert is working on it now.

LINCOLN turns and walks over to the large window. For a long  
time he just looks out.

LINCOLN  
Seems like General McClellan is  
still suffering from the slows and  
Mr. Lee has taken full advantage of  
it.

STANTON and CHASE are both happy about developments.

CHASE  
Seems that way, Mr. President. And  
there is every reason to believe  
that the Democrats are courting him  
as their candidate in the  
elections.

LINCOLN is thinking.

LINCOLN  
Hm, what, yes I have heard that.  
Well Three Times Around And Out for  
General McClellan.

STANTON  
Sir, what was that?

LINCOLN  
Just an old children's game that  
the General and I once discussed.  
(pause)

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
Mr. Stanton, would you send for  
General Buckingham?

INT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, CAMP WARRENTON, VA. McCLELLAN'S AREA  
- NIGHT NOVEMBER 1862

It is early November and there is a slight bit of snow falling on the camp of the Army of Potomac. Inside Gen. McCLELLAN's tent, there are several of his staff officers including Capt. CUSTER. The men are talking, a pile of captured Confederate flags in the far corner of the tent.

STAFF MAJOR

(jokingly)

Well, when the rivers freeze we'll be able to march right up them.

The others are laughing when the tent flap is pushed open and two high ranking officers come in. The first is Gen. BURNSIDE, one of McCLELLAN's commanders and Gen. CATHERINUS BUCKINGHAM. CUSTER is nearest the door and greets them first.

CUSTER

Evening, General Burnside, Sir.

BURNSIDE

(sad)

Good evening, Custer.

The two generals move across the tent towards McCLELLAN's field table. McCLELLAN gets up.

BURNSIDE (CONT'D)

General McClellan, may I introduce

General Buckingham, (pause) Secretary Stanton's Adjutant General.

BUCKINGHAM steps towards McCLELLAN; he is a distinguished older man, with fine white flowing beard and dark blue immaculate uniform. Very proper and very serious. BURNSIDE seems a little awkward. CUSTER and the other officers watch.

BUCKINGHAM

General McClellan.

Shaking McCLELLAN's hand.

MCCLELLAN

General Buckingham, welcome to Camp Warrenton.

BUCKINGHAM

(very serious)  
Thank you, General.

MCCLELLAN  
(pause)  
What can I do for you gentlemen?

BUCKINGHAM casts a little looks towards BURNSIDE, BURNSIDE casts his eyes down.

BUCKINGHAM  
(quietly)  
General McClellan, if I may convey to you this message and present a copy of the same to you.

The tent is very quiet as BUCKINGHAM opens the envelope and prepares to read the text. BURNSIDE turns away.

BUCKINGHAM (CONT'D)  
From the Executive Mansion,  
November fifth, 1862. By direction  
of the President, it is ordered  
that Major General McClellan be  
relieved from the command of the  
Army of the Potomac, and,  
(pause) and that Major General  
Burnside take command of that army.  
Signed, A. Lincoln.  
(pause)  
That is the end of the letter.

CUSTER slams his fist into his hand. MCCLELLAN is completely unmoved. There is some murmuring among the staff. BUCKINGHAM folds up the letter and hands it to MCCLELLAN.

MCCLELLAN  
(smiling slightly)  
Take it easy. Well, (pause)  
then, General Burnside, the Army  
is now at your command.

BURNSIDE  
I'm sorry, Mac.

MCCLELLAN  
With General Buckingham's leave, I shall remain a day or so to assist you in every way possible.

BURNSIDE

That would be appreciated.

EXT. CAMP WARRENTON, McCLELLAN'S TENT AREA - NIGHT

The Union camp is ablaze with camp fires and activities. CUSTER; his cap off and golden curls in wild disarray, is addressing a large gathering of officers and men.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, it is treachery and deception at the highest level that takes General McClellan from command!

The crowd is getting worked up, several officers have their pistols out and bottles of liquor are being raised in the air.

STAFF LIEUTENANT

Republican tricks and deception.

CUSTER

I say let's march on Washington, we have the troops and know how to use them.

STAFF MAJOR

Throw Lincoln out, hang Stanton.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

That's the spirit, and make Mac our president.

The crowd is getting very angry, and getting larger.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

We have risked our lives for this man and the Army he leads. Shall we except this slap in the face and deception is our reward?

STAFF LIEUTENANT

McClellan for president, Mac for president!

CUSTER

(excited)

That's the spirit boys, with Mac in the White House we'll beat the Rebs for sure.

The crowd goes wild. CUSTER has taken out his sword and is waving it around.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Let's have three cheers for  
General McClellan!

The collection of officers and enlisted men yell out three resounding cheers. Behind CUSTER, out of the darkness steps McCLELLAN, alone. He looks at them and they become quiet. CUSTER lowers his sword.

MCCLELLAN

(sadly)

I am somewhat honored and surprised  
by this talk tonight.

CUSTER

General, lead us on to Washington  
and we will follow you.

MCCLELLAN

Well, Armstrong, for over a year  
now you have been charging towards  
Richmond with me. Let's not change  
directions now.

MCCLELLAN pauses, then walks a little closer to the group of officers.

MCCLELLAN

You are my boys, (pause) and nobody  
feels more bitterly about this than  
I do. But let me remind you, all of  
us here are soldiers, and with that  
profession comes both duty and  
honor.

The crowd listens.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

And, as soldiers we are bound to  
serve that government. Gentlemen,  
there is enough rebellion in this  
nation without our Army adding to



it. Now my conscience is clear and my honor intact. I have done my best to serve this Nation. I fully except that from you. From my staff, that so much has been asked, you will not fail to maintain your pledge to continue to protect and defend your nation. Well boys, thank you for listening.

McCLELLAN turns slowly to walk back to his tent, then looks over again at the gathering soldiers.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)  
(quietly)

And good night, and may God protect us all.

CUSTER  
Good night, General.

EXT. CAMP WARRENTON, UNION ARMY - DAY

It is a bright November day as McCLELLAN, in full general's dress uniform, troops the line of soldiers for the last time. His Staff, including CUSTER, canter after him. Rows of soldiers present arms while others cheer and wave their hats. The little group of officers finish the review and farewell and ride a short distance off, the sound of drums and marching can be heard as McCLELLAN turns to CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN  
Well, I don't really know if this can be considered Custer's Luck for you.

CUSTER  
(very somber)  
General, I'll manage, but the honor of serving you will be with me always.

MCCLELLAN  
I've made arrangements for you to get another command, you'll be fine and must watch out for your own career.

CUSTER  
Thank you General, I will.

MCCLELLAN  
(emotional)  
You must not worry about me, I'll  
be leaving for Trenton directly.  
Back home thankfully.

CUSTER  
I trust it will be good to see your  
wife and child again.

MCCLELLAN reins his horse closer to CUSTER, he is thoughtful.

MCCLELLAN  
My God, lad, it will be. You have  
earned a long leave of absence boy,  
I've authorized it.

CUSTER  
Thank you again, General.

MCCLELLAN  
Now take it and go home to Monroe,  
(pause) all will be well, just go  
home.

MCCLELLAN extends his hand and CUSTER clasps it. He then  
reins back as CUSTER snaps off a smart salute, MCCLELLAN  
returns it and turns his horse and rides away. CUSTER sits  
his horse and watches him go.

INT. TRAIN, PASSENGER CAR - DAY

A train speeds across the Midwestern countryside in November  
1862. An early winter grips the area not far from Monroe,  
Michigan. Capt. CUSTER sits pensively in his seat.

Several passengers huddle around the small stove in the  
center of the car while two very pretty young women try to  
flirt, unsuccessfully, with the thoughtful CUSTER.

MCCLELLAN (V.O.)  
You have served me well,  
Armstrong.

(pause)

My honor is intact, my conscience  
is clear.

(pause)

Continue to protect and defend this  
nation.

(pause)

All we can do is our duty as  
soldiers.

(pause)

Give your soldiers a reason to  
believe in themselves.

The train is slowing, rocking the passengers slightly. CUSTER continues to stare out the window and think. He holds the two toy cavalry soldiers in his hand, looks at them and slowly tucks them back in his coat pocket.

MCCLELLAN (V.O)

And they will follow you to hell.

(pause)

Don't worry about me, going home to  
Trenton, you have served me  
extremely well.

(pause)

Extremely well. Go home, Armstrong,  
go home, you have served me, go  
home.

The train stops as a conductor moves through the car, the passengers move about, CUSTER continues to sit and stare.

CONDUCTOR

(softly)

Captain, eh, captain, I believe  
this is your stop?

MCCLELLAN (V.O)

(fading gently)

They will follow you, go home,  
home.

CUSTER looks and blinks at the conductor in surprise.

CUSTER

What, eh, what. Yes, was I  
sleeping?

CONDUCTOR

(Thinking )

Monroe, Captain.

CUSTER  
Thank you very much.

CUSTER is gathering up his belongings and moves towards the door.

INT. CUSTER HOME, MONROE - EVENING

Father CUSTER, CUSTER and Mother CUSTER are in the parlor of the spacious family home. A fire is burning in the fireplace and there is a touch of holiday spirit. CUSTER is in uniform and melancholy, his father more animated in their conversation.

FATHER CUSTER  
Politics, Armstrong, a soldier has  
got to stay out of it.

CUSTER looks at his father, thinking that over.

CUSTER  
Probably so.

FATHER CUSTER  
Sure as can be. And it was  
politics, Republican politics,  
that took down your friend General  
George McClellan.

There is a pause as Father CUSTER pauses by the fireplace to light his pipe.

FATHER CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I rest my argument.

MOTHER CUSTER  
The boys will be happy to see you.

CUSTER  
How is Nevin?

MOTHER CUSTER  
We all worry about him this time of  
season, but Boston is well and Tom  
has taken to soldiering just fine.

Father CUSTER moves back over to his son.

CUSTER  
Be good to see them.

FATHER CUSTER

Darn, Armstrong it's you I'm worried about.

(pause)

Don't take it all so hard, boy.

CUSTER

It's difficult not to. Mac is out, God knows where I'll end up without him.

Mother CUSTER is folding some laundry and watching her son.

MOTHER CUSTER

Armstrong.

CUSTER

Yes mother?

MOTHER CUSTER

You do look tired. How long is your leave for?

CUSTER gets up and runs his fingers through his hair, then moves over near the little family library.

CUSTER

It is an open affair. I probably won't be needed back until things pick up in the Spring.

FATHER CUSTER

You have no faith in this new man, what was his name?

CUSTER pulls a worn book from the shelf and turns to his father.

CUSTER

Not a bit Father, General Burnside is not capable enough to command a regiment, let alone the Army of the Potomac.

FATHER CUSTER

Politics Armstrong, it's all politics.

CUSTER

Yes, (pause) much of it is. Here is the book on the 14th Light Dragons that I read as a child.

FATHER CUSTER

Yes, guess you're still a long way from being a general.

CUSTER leans against the book shelf and pages happily through the old book.

MOTHER CUSTER

Yes, those are such happy memories. Seems like this war has taken much happiness away.

FATHER CUSTER

Understandable, people say hundreds of families are in mourning since the fight at Antietam. Numerous dead boys from Toledo, east and west.

CUSTER

Yes, it was bad business.

MOTHER CUSTER

How dreadful.

(pause)

On happier topics, enough of all this war talk Emanuel, there is a holiday dance at Boyd's Seminary for girls next Thursday.

CUSTER

Yes.

FATHER CUSTER

Well, might do you some good to go over.

MOTHER CUSTER

Yes, Armstrong, it will give you a chance to forget about the war.

CUSTER slowly closes the book, looks at it for a moment, before sliding it back.

CUSTER

Perhaps it would be a nice thing to attend. I'll think about it.

INT. BOYD'S SEMINARY FOR GIRLS, MAIN HALL - EVENING

Captain CUSTER walks toward a small collection of people gathering around the punch bowl and refreshment table in the large reception area. Many well dressed young men and women are present. CUSTER is overdressed in white ducks and boots, with dark blue jacket and sword.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(cordial)

Hello, Sam.

SAM

Nice to see you again Armstrong. I trust you are surviving the war?

CUSTER

I am certainly doing my best.

He continues to move toward the punch and cookies.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Good evening Captain Custer. How is your father?

CUSTER

Very well, thank you, sir.

OLD GENTLEMAN

And you?

CUSTER

Also very well. I will tell my father you asked about him.

OLD GENTLEMAN

Thank you, enjoy the evening.

CUSTER pours himself some punch, just behind him is an attractive woman with dark brown hair, grayish eyes and fashionable spit curls. Their eyes meet, he is astonished at her beauty.

CUSTER

Why, hello, Miss Bacon I do believe.

LIBBIE

Why hello, Mr. Custer. I thought that might have been you.

She offers him her hand and he kisses it.

CUSTER

I am honored that you remembered me.

LIBBIE

(humoring)

Actually, I was surprised that you remembered me (pause) considering your condition at that moment.

CUSTER

Yes, that was a time of some celebration on my part.

LIBBIE

Had I known you were to be here tonight I would have worn a yellow ribbon.

CUSTER

You honor me.

LIBBIE

Tell me, are you a general yet, Mr. Custer?

CUSTER shows some regret about this, he moves a bit closer to LIBBIE.

CUSTER

No Miss Bacon, (pause) that has not happened yet. But I did serve directly with General McClellan. In fact I know him quite well.

LIBBIE

How exciting. And did I hear that you managed to charge at the enemy finally?

CUSTER

You are teasing me again. Yes, I have charged at the enemy.

LIBBIE



I just knew you would not be a  
happy soldier if that did not  
happen to you.

There is an awkward silence. CUSTER is very impressed at the  
beautiful Miss BACON.

CUSTER  
Eh, well, would you care to dance?

She looks at him for a moment.

LIBBIE  
Yes, thank you, that would be nice.

CUSTER offers her his arm, she accepts, and he escorts her  
out onto the dance floor.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - EVENING

Captain CUSTER dances with Miss BACON. She acts very aloof  
but enjoys his company a great deal. CUSTER has a very  
difficult time not looking at her. The music ends and he  
escorts her off the floor.

INT. REFRESHMENT TABLE - EVENING They  
stand back at the refreshment table.

CUSTER  
Thank you for the dance.

LIBBIE  
Thank you, do all cavalry officers  
dance as well?

CUSTER  
Actually (pause) if they went to  
West Point they probably do. We had  
a dance instructor who is also  
serving with the Union.

He hands her a glass of punch.

LIBBIE  
Well it is a terrible war when  
dance instructors must go off and  
fight.

(MORE)

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
(pause)

Oh I'm being silly; it is terrible altogether.

CUSTER  
Yes, it is all of that.

LIBBIE  
And I trust you have seen quite enough of it?

CUSTER  
Yes, and probably far too much of the political side to make me very happy. I even saw President Lincoln when he visited McClellan's camp at Warrenton.

LIBBIE  
Now that is truly exciting. What was it like?

CUSTER sips his punch, content with the way the conversation is going.

CUSTER  
It seemed cordial enough outside, when Mr. Gardner took the photographs.

LIBBIE  
(interested)  
You had photographs, how wonderful.

CUSTER  
But I'm afraid that the President and General McClellan did not get on too well in conference. General McClellan told me he would send for me to come to his home in Trenton early next year.

LIBBIE  
Why?

CUSTER  
Probably to help with his report on the Army.  
(pause)  
Your father was correct, it will probably be a very long war.

LIBBIE

Yes, father feels very strongly about maintaining the Union.

CUSTER

Well, so do I. Perhaps I can call on you this weekend and discuss the condition of the Union with Judge Bacon?

LIBBIE is a little surprised, her father is very concerned about all of her suitors, especially the military ones.

LIBBIE

Well, (pause) that does seem a bit sudden.

CUSTER

(smiling)

We in the cavalry are taught to be sudden, Miss Bacon.

EXT. MONROE, MICHICAN, BACON HOUSEHOLD - DAY

CUSTER, dressed very much as he was at the dance, strides up to the picket fence, swings it open, and whistles as he walks up the long walkway to the large front door. He knocks and sweeps his kepi off his head. Slowly the door opens and Judge BACON is standing there. He is a rather fat man with mutton chops and whiskers, and a very cold and hard look.

JUDGE BACON

(coldly)

I trust you are Captain Custer?

CUSTER is somewhat shaken by this imposing figure.

CUSTER

Ah, hmm, yes sir.

JUDGE BACON

I believe you are calling on my Libbie?

CUSTER

(shaken)

Yes, your Honor.

JUDGE BACON

Well then.

(pause)

Captain Custer you are welcome to come in.

CUSTER  
Thank you, sir.

Judge BACON simply stands in the doorway looking at CUSTER, then turns slowly and moves into the house. CUSTER follows.

INT. BACON HOME, PARLOR - DAY

Judge BACON leads into the parlor. CUSTER grips his cap tightly and looks around the large, neat but rather austere room.

JUDGE BACON  
As you probably know, Captain  
Custer, Libbie has many suitors.  
Many of them of the basic brass  
button style that her mother and I  
do not find all that interested or  
promising.

CUSTER  
Yes sir.

JUDGE BACON  
Simply because there is a war on is  
no excuse why parents can not want  
the very best for their daughters.

CUSTER  
I agree with you, your Honor.

Judge BACON gives him a slow once over, his cold stare does not change.

JUDGE BACON  
The very best is expected even for  
fanciful girls like Libbie.  
(pause)

I'll see if my daughter is disposed  
to see you.

CUSTER  
Thank you.

He turns and walks off; leaving CUSTER looking alone and small in that big room.

EXT. CUSTER FAMILY SLEIGH, LAKE ERIE SHORE - DAY

Bright snow covers the area near the shores of Lake Erie. Captain CUSTER drives his sleigh rapidly along.

A smiling and very beautiful LIBBIE BACON in dark winter coat, scarf and hat sits beside him, a blanket covers both of them.

LIBBIE

(laughing)

I should like to know just how I should address you? Is captain proper?

CUSTER

Armstrong would be nice, Captain would not.

LIBBIE

Good, then it will be Armstrong. And I would be happy if you would call me Libbie. Miss Bacon will just not do for a woman of only 20.

CUSTER

Yes, it just sounds too old.

EXT. FIELD NEAR LAKE ERIE, CUSTER SLEIGH - DAY CUSTER

pulls the sleigh up to where they can look out over

the vast expanse of the frozen lake. He turns to LIBBIE who is snuggled into the blanket.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

I don't think your father likes me?

LIBBIE

Father, Armstrong, does not care for any of my suitors; especially those in uniform.

CUSTER

Well, I'm sure this uniform has not been as much help as I expected.

LIBBIE

He suspects them all to be drunkards and shiftless types.

CUSTER finds this amusing, and swings down from the sleigh, helping LIBBIE step out also.

CUSTER

I trust that you will take this opportunity to tell your father that I don't drink and am a

respected member of the Army's staff.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(pause)

Or was, anyway.

LIBBIE

Yes I will do that.

The two are walking along the shores of the lake, the wind is blowing their hair about.

CUSTER

And that I have a goal to become a bloody general before this war is over.

LIBBIE

I shall do that; he is just very protective of me and rather old fashioned in his feelings.

They walk a little further in silence.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

I rather envy you and your war and those bold charges that you talk about.

CUSTER

Oh, well that's interesting.

LIBBIE

I really do. And the generals and powerful men that you meet. It does seem so exciting, far from life here in little Monroe.

CUSTER is listening and stops with her to look out across the wind swept lake.

CUSTER

It doesn't seem that bad here, I mean living in Monroe.

LIBBIE

No, (pause) father isn't all that bad. He lets me laugh and play a bit, but he has warned me against fast horse rides.

CUSTER turns to her.

CUSTER  
And no cavalry captains.

LIBBIE  
Not yet.  
(pause)  
And I should be careful of fast men  
who do not have property.

CUSTER  
Nothing wrong with fast sleigh  
rides?

CUSTER moves very close to LIBBIE and slowly bends down and  
kisses her gently. She lets him and responds.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
And nothing about kissing I hope.

LIBBIE  
(quietly)  
Father is a Presbyterian, he would  
never bridge that subject.

CUSTER  
Now about that sleigh ride.

He takes her hand and they run over to the sleigh, get in and  
CUSTER cracks the whip. They are off across the huge white  
field.

EXT. OPEN FIELD, SLEIGH RIDE - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE are laughing as the sleigh speeds down and  
across the vast white field, snow spraying up and the two  
horse team charging lightly along.

EXT. MONROE STREET, NEAR BACON HOME - DAY

CUSTER is driving the sleigh slowly along the streets. LIBBIE  
is smiling.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
You never told me about your goals?

LIBBIE  
Armstrong, I am very glad you asked  
that question.

He looks at her and smiles, as they pull up to her house.

CUSTER  
So, please continue?

LIBBIE  
My goal, Captain Armstrong Custer,  
is you.

She slips quickly out of the sleigh, giggling in a girlish manner.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Ssshhh, I trust we are being  
watched. I will give you my hand  
and see myself to the door.

She reaches across and he kisses her hand, then winks at her.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
Thank you Captain Custer, it was a  
delightful ride.

CUSTER  
I had a wonderful time. I would  
like to see you again.

LIBBIE  
In time and at the right time,  
Captain Custer.

CUSTER  
I must see you again.

LIBBIE  
And I you.

LIBBIE starts to slowly walk away.

CUSTER  
By the way, I will be trying to get  
command of one of the newly formed  
Michigan cavalry regiments so will  
be out of town for several days.

LIBBIE  
Well, I certainly wish you the very  
best.

CUSTER  
I will call on you when I get back.

She is at her door and about to go in.



LIBBIE

Hmmmmm, that would be nice. As you wish. Good day.

CUSTER

Good day.

INT. LANSING, MICHIGAN, MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT BUILDING- DAY

CUSTER has visited Judge Isaac Christiancy, member of the Michigan Supreme Court, to persuade Governor Blair to give him command of a newly formed regiment. He is sitting in the Judge's office just after the conversation between the judge and the governor.

CHRISTIANCY

Captain Custer, even though the Governor has authorized the creation of another regiment of Michigan cavalry, I'm afraid he has nothing for you in the way of immediate command.

CUSTER

Judge Christiancy, I have both the military education and experience for such a command.

CHRISTIANCY

(soothingly)

I know that and so does Governor Blair but these positions are usually (pause) well they are very political, you understand?

CUSTER slowly gets up, looks at the Judge.

CUSTER

So, it is a case of patronage?

CHRISTIANCY

In many ways yes. Besides the Custers, your family, yourself are Democrats. Goodness Armstrong, everyone knows you're a McClellan man.

CUSTER

Your honor (pause) I am also the most qualified officer in this

state to command any new regiment  
being sent to serve the Union.

CHRISTIANCY

(flustered)

I don't doubt....

CUSTER

The best your Honor, the best.

The Judge moves away from the angry CUSTER, goes over towards  
his desk; keeping that between him and CUSTER.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

And for politics, incompetent  
officers will lead patriotic young  
men to God knows what?

CHRISTIANCY

I'm sorry Armstrong, but the  
Governor has made his decision.

Now if you'll excuse me.

CUSTER

Yes, of course. Thank you for your  
time and effort.

(pause)

If there are other opportunities  
please keep my request in mind.  
Thank you again.

CUSTER walks quietly through the door. JUDGE CHRISTIANCY  
shakes his head and watches him go.

EXT. MONROE CITY NEWSPAPER, FRONT WINDOW - DAY

CUSTER stands with his half sister LYDIA REED, her child  
ARMSTRONG REED in her arms and FATHER CUSTER along with about  
a dozen other citizens, reading from the "War News" posted on  
the front window. Big Defeat At Fredericksburg is pasted to  
the glass. People are mumbling about this recent Union  
disaster.

FATHER CUSTER

(sad)

Seems worse than Antietam.

CUSTER

At least we beat the Confederacy in  
that one.

LYDIA REED

God (pause) when will it end  
father?

FATHER CUSTER

Lydia, if I only knew. What type of  
man is this Fighting Joe Hooker  
character, Armstrong?

The little CUSTER family has turned slowly, walking away from  
the crowd on the sidewalk.

CUSTER

I don't really know him, A corp  
commander from New Jersey I  
believe.

FATHER CUSTER

But can he really fight and win?

CUSTER

Well Father, one thing I know is  
that General Hooker has a  
reputation throughout the army for  
whiskey and women.

INT. CUSTER HOME, PARLOR - DAY

CUSTER, Father CUSTER, LYDIA REED and ARMSTRONG REED walk in  
to the front room, shaking off the cold and chill. Young  
BOSTON CUSTER runs up to his brother with an envelope.

BOSTON CUSTER

Armstrong this came for you an we  
also got a letter from Tom.

CUSTER

What's this, Boston, bring us the  
letter from Tom also.

FATHER CUSTER

How is Tom? Thank God he wasn't at  
Fredericksburg.

CUSTER sits heavily down on the big overstuffed couch, his  
uniform coat half unbuttoned. He quickly tears open the  
letter as BOSTON CUSTER scampers back with the letter from  
TOM CUSTER.

LYDIA REED

(impatiently)  
Well, what is it?

FATHER CUSTER

Now that looks rather official to  
this old man.

CUSTER continues to read the letter, ignoring everyone around  
him.

CUSTER

It is from General McClellan. He  
wants me to go to New York City, he  
has a new home there, and assist in  
composing and writing his final  
reports.

Father CUSTER runs his hand through his beard as little  
ARMSTRONG REED totters over to his uncle.

FATHER CUSTER

Thankfully it's not back to the  
fighting. Mother would have taken  
ill right about now.

CUSTER slowly folds up his letter and thinks.

LYDIA REED

Will you go see General McClellan?

CUSTER

Oh yes, I think I must (pause) but  
I will have to tell Libbie Bacon  
first.

FATHER CUSTER

Yes I do believe Judge Bacon's  
little girl has taken quite a fancy  
to you.

LYDIA REED

I trust she'll be hurt.

CUSTER is up and moving across the room.

CUSTER

Father, please tell Mother that I  
will not be home for supper this  
evening.

INT. MONROE RESTAURANT, DINING ROOM - EVENING CUSTER

and LIBBIE are seated at a small table. He seems

tense, she is enjoying the moment. His hand slowly reaches  
out for hers.

LIBBIE  
(giggling)  
You do realize that this town is  
starting to talk about us?

CUSTER  
I hope they do.

LIBBIE  
So, now we both have news but who  
is to tell theirs' first?

CUSTER laughs at her.

CUSTER  
Please, you go first.

LIBBIE  
I was hoping you would let me.  
(pause)  
As you realize Armstrong, father,  
I'm afraid, takes a rather harsh  
look at soldiers paying me a call.

CUSTER  
How could I not notice.

LIBBIE  
Well, several nights ago I managed  
to find enough courage to talk to  
him. About us I mean.

CUSTER  
And?

LIBBIE is a bit uncomfortable but decides she is going to go  
For the point blank truth anyway.

LIBBIE  
I explained to him that Captain  
Custer did not drink and that  
Captain Custer was a respected  
member of General McClellan's  
staff. And that also Captain Custer  
would someday be General Custer.  
(pause)  
And, and,

CUSTER  
And what else, I'm enjoying this.

LIBBIE

And that Captain Custer was a very brave soldier who had captured both soldiers and Confederate flags in the Rebellion. And that he was doing a very fair job of (pause) of, of,

CUSTER

Yes?

LIBBIE

Of capturing my heart also. There it is said.

CUSTER

Libbie Bacon (pause) I love you. And that's said as well.

The two gaze at one another, CUSTER reaches out and lets his finger run softly down the side of LIBBIE's face.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

You realize that the town will talk?

LIBBIE

Oh who cares. Father really understood my feelings, I was so surprised.

(pause)

He can be such an understanding man when he wants to be.

CUSTER

Truthfully I was very worried about his feelings towards me.

LIBBIE

'Your Captain Custer is that important, he rumbled.' 'Well I didn't know. Well, we will have to have that young man over to dinner very soon.'

LIBBIE and CUSTER laugh.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

These past weeks have been so wonderful.

CUSTER

I'm glad.

LIBBIE

Oh yes you had news, I'm dreadfully  
sorry all this talk about me. What  
is it?

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, DOWNTOWN STREET - DAY

CUSTER is getting out of a horse drawn coach in his blue uniform, his cape blows in the winter breeze. There are many people walking quickly across the street and along the sidewalk. CUSTER moves into the crowd looking for an address.

CUSTER (V.O)

General McClellan has sent for me.  
He wants me to come to New York and  
help him write his report on the  
Army of the Potomac.

LIBBIE (V.O)

Oh, I see.

CUSTER (V.O)

I have very mixed emotions about  
going; mainly about leaving you.

LIBBIE (V.O)

Will you have to return to the  
fighting?

CUSTER (V.O)

No, (pause) not for a while yet.

LIBBIE (V.O)

I will miss you Armstrong

CUSTER (V.O)

And I you.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEW YORK CITY, STREET OPENING TO ESTATES - DAY

CUSTER is carrying his bag on his way to the McCLELLAN estate. He sees several disabled veterans hobbling along the street and several other men in bits and pieces of uniforms who can only be deserters from the Union army. CUSTER stares at them, people and horse drawn wagons move by. One of the soldiers snaps a rather mocking salute at CUSTER.

INT. McCLELLAN ESTATE, FRONT FOYER - DAY

A butler is walking away from CUSTER who waits in the entry room of an elegant estate. There are chandeliers and expensive furnishings everywhere. McCLELLAN walks into the room wearing a finely tailored gray suit.

MCCLELLAN

(happy)

Custer, how excellent of you to answer an old soldier's appeal for help.

CUSTER

(excited)

It is good to see you again, general.

They move towards each other, clasping hands as McCLELLAN slaps his aide on the back. They walk into the parlor.

MCCLELLAN

Here, Stokes please take Captain Custer's baggage.

McCLELLAN leads CUSTER through the grand home to the opulent parlor where an attractive, dark haired woman is waiting for them.

MCCLELLAN (CONT'D)

(eloquently)

Captain Custer, I would like to introduce you to my wife.

The attractive woman reaches out her hand to CUSTER, who sweeps it up and kisses it.

MRS. MCCLELLAN

George has talked a great deal about you Captain Custer.

CUSTER

I am honored, Mrs. McClellan.

MRS. MCCLELLAN

I hope your trip was pleasant?

MCCLELLAN

Oh, this is an old war horse dear. More used to riding horseback 50 miles a day than riding coach.

Everyone laughs at this.



CUSTER

Very pleasant, thank you. You have a beautiful home here.

MCCLELLAN

Yes, it is. Gift from people who appreciated what we did for the nation, Armstrong.

(pause)

Let me show you around. We have much work to do but there will most certainly be time to see the sights I expect.

EXT. NEW YORK VISIT - MONTAGE

CUSTER and McCLELLAN leading over desk of papers.

CUSTER and the McCLELLANS walking in Central Park.

CUSTER and McCLELLAN both in shirt sleeves writing report.

CUSTER being eyed on New York street by several pretty girls.

CUSTER going through stacks of records and books.

CUSTER looking up the buildings of New York as McCLELLAN smiles behind him.

Disabled soldiers staring at the dashing Captain CUSTER as he walks with General McCLELLAN out of popular restaurant.

INT. MCCLELLAN ESTATE, GENERAL'S OFFICE - DAY

CUSTER is writing at the desk while McCLELLAN is reviewing papers, he stands by the window.

MCCLELLAN

We've done well on this, two more days and the final rewrite will be complete.

CUSTER puts the pen down and sits back in the chair; listening to his chief.

CUSTER

It has brought back a great many memories from Virginia, sir.

MCCLELLAN

Yes I know exactly how you feel.

CUSTER

Sometimes I can close my eyes and see it all clearly.

(pause)

It always intrigues me.

MCCLELLAN turns and walks from the window towards the desk, he gently stacks the papers.

MCCLELLAN

Once again Armstrong, you have not let me down.

CUSTER

That will never happen, General.

MCCLELLAN

(thoughtful)

Hooker will be taking the Army on the spring campaign soon.

(pause)

You'll be called back and the entire cycle of destruction will start again.

CUSTER

Yes sir, I imagine it will.

MCCLELLAN

Still looking for that star are you?

CUSTER

It's my goal, comes with this profession, and the war.

MCCLELLAN lets the papers drop on the desk, and looks intently at his friend.

MCCLELLAN

It most certainly is an accomplishment.

(pause)

I could not find a young officer better qualified for such a command than you.

CUSTER

Evidently Governor Blair didn't think so; he would not give me command of a Michigan regiment.

MCCLELLAN

What a fool he was. But that's politics in its worst form and I'm sorry that I can't help you.

(pause)

At least not in this capacity.

CUSTER

I certainly appreciate the sentiments.

MCCLELLAN sits down and rubs his hands across his face.

MCCLELLAN

Armstrong, the Democrats have been in close but confidential contact with me concerning representing them against the present administration in next year's election.

CUSTER

(surprised)

I believe you are the right man for the White House.

MCCLELLAN

(laughing)

Like that night down at Camp Warrenton when we almost had the mutiny?

CUSTER

(laughing)

I remember that.

MCCLELLAN

Damn, the Army of the Potomac just about changed front that evening. I realize how important soldiering is to you; and I don't know of many

men who have as much promise as you do.

(pause)

So, that good soldiers like yourself will not be wasted by political generals, I will accept their nomination.

CUSTER

Well, General, the Republicans are making a fine mess of things now.

McCLELLAN gets up quickly, he is excited.

MCCLELLAN

Precisely, the war effort is failing and it is time for a change in the government. And, perhaps you should start preparing for a time when Rebels will not be firing at you. There will be a great deal of money to be made out there.

CUSTER

I haven't known peace since I put on this uniform.

MCCLELLAN

Peace will be at hand (pause) it will be at hand. And when that happens men such as us, soldiers, should be in government.

INT. MCCLELLAN ESTATE, DINING ROOM - DAY

CUSTER and McCLELLAN are just finishing a late lunch when the butler brings in the afternoon mail.

BUTLER

Sir, telegram for Captain Custer.

Both men stop, look at one another, and CUSTER takes the telegram.

CUSTER

Thank you, it's from Army Headquarters.

McCLELLAN leans slightly back in his chair and takes out a cigar.

MCCLELLAN

I suspect that means only one thing; Hooker will be starting his spring campaign soon.

CUSTER

And it looks like I'll be part of that.

MCCLELLAN

(pause)

Orders?

CUSTER

Yes, I'm being relieved of staff duties here and must report to my regiment.

MCCLELLAN

Well, we are done here. Once again I owe you a great deal.

CUSTER

The pleasure was all mine, General, you and Mrs. McClellan have been very kind.

MCCLELLAN

Nothing my boy, enjoyed it. Now it's back to action. Be careful, son.

CUSTER

I will, sir.

MCCLELLAN

I fear this will be a difficult year for the Army and the Republic. And Armstrong, one thing is certain, the more campaigning the Army does the closer you may come to that elusive star.

CUSTER thoughtfully puts down the letter.

CUSTER

Yes sir, a star or six feet of good Virginia soil.

MCCLELLAN lights up his cigar, and leans towards his friend in a thoughtful manner.

MCCLELLAN

(sadly)

Eh, I trust Joe Hooker even less  
than I did General Burnside. I wish  
I could help you my boy.

EXT. BACON HOME, FRONT WALK - DAY

LIBBIE BACON has a letter from CUSTER, she is reading it as  
she walks up the walk.

CUSTER (V.O)

My Dearest Libbie, My time with  
General McClellan in New York was a  
great success. Much hard work was  
accomplished and the General and  
his wife proved very gracious.

LIBBIE BACON continues to read the letter intently, pushing  
her bonnet off and running her hand through her tight curls.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

New York was a charming city but  
last April found me called back to  
service.

CUT TO:

EXT. VIRGINIA, UNION FORCES - APRIL 1863 DAY CUSTER is

riding with several other officers as part of

General PLEASANTON's staff. They ride past hundreds of Union  
soldiers, many of them injured, trudging along a rural  
Virginia road.

CUSTER (V.O)

I must admit that I had many  
misgivings about the spring  
campaign, but was pleased to be  
assigned again to the staff of my  
old friend, General Pleasanton.

EXT. VIRGINIA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

PLEASANTON and his staff including CUSTER ride past the tired  
Union troops and they stop on the edge of a large field  
covered with Union dead, burial parties work as Matthew  
Brady's photography wagon sets up for a photograph.

CUSTER (V.O)

As you have probably heard there was much accuracy in my feelings, General Bobby Lee outfoxed and completely beat Fighting Joe Hooker at the town of Chancellorsville. If it wasn't for General Pleasonton's quick thinking, the Union Army would have ceased to exist.

CUSTER, PLEASONTON and assorted staff members are looking with horror and disgust across the battlefield littered with death and destruction.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

At a place called Hazel Grove, Pleasonton was able to stop a massive attack by the Rebels under General Jackson, and save the Union army.

PLEASONTON has turned to CUSTER with a sad look on his face.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Several days later General Hooker gave the entire Union Cavalry Corps to Pleasonton. He quickly made me his aide.

The photographers take their photograph, while PLEASONTON motions for his staff to follow him back to camp.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

This will bring me one step closer to my own star. I miss you more than words can tell. Don't worry about me, life in camp tolerable, although morale remains low. All my love, Armstrong.

VIRGINIA, UNION HEADQUARTERS, HOOKER'S AREA - DAY

PLEASONTON and his staff enter the headquarters area and pass a dark haired, attractive young woman, riding a rather worn horse and dressed in a mismatch of uniform. She has a pistol on her hip and a cavalry saber slung over her back. GEN. PLEASONTON greets her while the others try to stifle their amusement. The woman is young ANNIE JONES, camp follower.

PLEASONTON  
(mock politeness)

Good day, Miss Annie Jones.

ANNIE JONES

Good morning to you general and a special hello to that pretty Captain Custer.

Several of the staff chuckle as CUSTER removes his hat and bows in the saddle.

CUSTER

Your compliments are most appreciated, Miss Jones.

ANNIE JONES

You are by far the handsomest man in either army, Captain Custer.

PLEASONTON

(chagrined)

I think young Captain Custer feels the same way, Miss Jones.

(pause)

Well if you'll excuse us.

ANNIE JONES

Sure will general, believe General Hooker and his people are waiting on you.

EXT. STAFF - DAY

She spurs her horse to one side and gives PLEASONTON and his staff a little salute. PLEASONTON half recognizes the courtesy, CUSTER salutes her and several others do as well. They move out towards HOOKER's tent. ANNIE JONES winks at CUSTER as he rides past.

PLEASONTON

(amazed)

You know Custer, that girl knows too much. I'd have her arrested if I was sure my superiors were not overly fond of her.

CUSTER

She is a character but honest in her observations sir.

CUSTER smiles at PLEASONTON, the General tries to ignore him.



PLEASONTON

Damn, where did she get that uniform? Where does she get her information?

INT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, HOOKER'S TENT - DAY

Gen. HOOKER, Commander of the Army of the Potomac, is holding a planning session with his key staff. A tall, fair haired and good looking man, he is somewhat intoxicated. PLEASONTON and CUSTER are among those gathered in the large tent.

HOOKER

(loud)

Gentlemen, gentlemen, gentlemen.

(pause)

HOOKER leans over a large map spread out on the table.

HOOKER (CONT'D)

Our agents tell me that General

Stuart and some 10,000 of his "Invincibles" are camped out on the outskirts of a little village called Brandy Station down in Culpepper County.

PLEASONTON is busy looking for the location on the map.

PLEASONTON

Hmmmmm, now where?

CUSTER

There General, not far from Beverly Ford.

HOOKER

Right, Do you see it, Al?

PLEASONTON

Yes, interesting. Bobby Lee's country.

HOOKER

Until now perhaps it was, gentlemen. I want to change things for Mr. Lee.

(pause)

We are going in there and shake up General Stuart a little, so that distinguished leader of rebel horsemen can see just what Union cavalry is capable of doing.

The tent erupts in some genuine anxious conversation.

PLEASONTON

Glory be. Wouldn't that be nice.

HOOKER

Damn, gentlemen, after last month's fiasco down at Chancellorsville what army needs is to bring a little northern hospitality down to General Jeb Stuart.

(pause)

(MORE)

HOOKER (CONT'D)

General Pleasonton, this is largely a mounted attack. Judging from the enemies position, as we understand them, how do you propose to handle this?

PLEASONTON hunkers down to the map and studies it for a moment.

PLEASONTON

Well, General Hooker, I'm mighty happy you asked.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION CAVALRY, BRANDY STATION - MORNING

Lines of Union horsemen are riding slowly in battle formation across a wide expanse of green field. A Col. DAVIS and Capt. CUSTER are out in front.

PLEASONTON (V.O)

It will be wise to divide my corps and cross the Rappahannock at both Beverly and Kelly Fords. This will bring us out above and below the Rebel forces.

The Union cavalry carry their sabers at rest on their shoulders, battle flags carried in the center of the lines. CUSTER wears a battered pair of white pants, tattered straw slouch hat and a blue officer's jacket.

PLEASONTON (V.O) (CONT'D)

Curly, I will send you to accompany Colonel Davis and his 8th New York cavalry regiment. The 3rd Indiana

and 8th Illinois will be part of  
your Brigade.

(pause)

Captain Custer will act as a  
liaison with my command post during  
the attack.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, JEB STUART'S HEADQUARTERS -  
MORNING

A huge Confederate battle flag swings quietly in the morning  
breeze as several Confederate officers move around outside  
Gen. Stuart's tent. A fine looking officer emerges from the  
tent, he has long hair and flowing beard and carries a  
plumed, wide brimmed hat. His gray coat is covered with gold  
braid and a saber hangs from his belt.

ORDERLY MAJOR

Mornin thar, General.

STUART

Seems to be all of that Major  
Barton.

ORDERLY MAJOR

We got breakfast coming up sir,  
just a minute or two.

STUART moves over to a group of officers. Several get up and  
salute him.

STUART

Any reports from the pickets?

COLONEL

Nothing, General. Not a Yankee  
brave enough to show his head in  
these parts anymore.

EXT. UNION BATTLINE - MORNING

CUSTER is cantering beside Col. DAVIS, the lines of Union  
cavalry move across the field.

PLEASANTON (V.O)

Move quickly at Stuart's base camp, sweep his pickets out of action and you can cut him to pieces.

(pause)

We can certainly give Bob Lee something to remember us by.

The entire Union line is cantering quickly across the field. CUSTER and DAVIS riding out front, buglers and flag bearers directly behind them.

DAVIS

Buglers, sound the charge!

CUSTER

Colonel, we've caught them still in slumber.

CUSTER pulls out his saber and spurs his horse into the charge, the sound of bugles, horses and men screaming surge across the open ground.

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, JEB STUART'S HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

Gen. STUART is eating his breakfast and talking to several of his officers. The distant sound of firing catches his attention.

STUART

There must have been a dozen but...  
(pause) Now what is that?  
Several soldiers have gotten up.

STUART (CONT'D)

No, can't be, Major Barton see to that noise.

EXT. BRANDY STATION BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Union Cavalry plunge across stone wall and wooden fences directly into and over sleeping Confederates. The Confederate's horses are spooked and Rebels run in every direction.

REBEL SOLDIER

Yankees, to horse, to horse.

EXT. JEB STUART'S HEADQUARTERS - MORNING

STUART and his staff are gathering, looking over their positions. A Confederate officer rides quickly up to them, salutes.

MESSENGER

General, hate to tell you, but our whole line just been struck hard by Yankee cavalry.

(pause)

Both our flanks is folding up something bad.

STUART drops his breakfast.

STUART

Barton, Col. Stack, get our people on horse sir.

EXT. UNION FORCES, BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

CUSTER and Colonel DAVIS lead a line of charging Union cavalry through the camp tents and storage areas of the Confederate cavalry.

CUSTER

(yelling, excited)

Drive them in men, drive them in.

A mounted Confederate officer charges his horse directly into CUSTER's. CUSTER almost goes down as he stops the sword blows. The Confederate officer misses a swipe and CUSTER cuts him down. A cluster of Confederate and Union horsemen crash together all around him. Colonel Davis is hit and falls among the fighting.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PLEASONTON'S AREA - MORNING General

PLEASONTON is riding with his staff, following the

battle closely. He reins his horse and studies the action through his binoculars as cannon shells start to explode around him.

PLEASONTON

That's Stuart's horse drawn  
artillery, have Davis and his  
Brigade charge those guns. Damn it.

AIDE  
Colonel Davis is dead, sir.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PLEASONTON'S STAFF - MORNING

Several more artillery rounds land near PLEASONTON and his  
staff, horses kick wildly in the confusion. General  
PLEASONTON has lost his hat but remains cool and in control  
of the situation.

AIDE  
Orders, General?

PLEASONTON  
Have Captain Pennington come  
provide us with counter battery  
fire. Tell Custer to take Davis's  
Brigade and take those Rebel guns  
or we'll all die here.

The AIDE puts his spurs to the horse and takes off for  
CUSTER's position.

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS, JEB STUART'S STAFF - MORNING

Confederate General JEB STUART is cantering among his fleeing  
cavalry trying to get them to rally. He waves his hat  
frantically with little response from his men; sees Union  
troopers charging his position and deliberately takes his  
pistol out and fires at them, shooting two Yankees quickly  
from the saddle.

STUART

Boys, boys, stand fast and beat  
these Yankees.

REB TROOPER

Darnation General get out of here.

Several Confederate soldiers ride quickly past him.

STUART

Come on lads and rally on me, we  
can stop them. Gen. STUART, seeing  
how dangerous it is to remain in  
the face of attacking Union  
cavalry, joins his men in retreat.

STUART (CONT'D)

Damn them!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CUSTER'S POSITION - MORNING

CUSTER is riding wildly among his cavalrymen. Numerous Union  
cavalry have dismounted and are shooting from more secure  
spots, the thunder of Confederate guns is increasing as their  
artillery gets into action.

CUSTER

Aim low lads, damn it, aim low. God  
we've got them on the run.

(pause)

Lieutenant Buckley, get your  
company over to cover our right  
flank.

CUSTER is cantering through the ranks of firing soldiers.  
Gen. PLEASANTON's aide gallops into their position and  
salutes CUSTER.

AIDE

Sir, General Pleasonton sends his  
regards and requests that you  
charge the Rebel gun positions and  
seize them at all cost.

CUSTER

Very well, please inform the  
General I shall present several of  
those very guns to him momentarily.

(pause)

Buglers sound the assembly by company.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CUSTER'S AREA - MORNING

The sound of bugles echoes around CUSTER. Cavalrymen instantly respond and swing up onto their horses. A ragged line of soldiers, with company flags stretches across the field and CUSTER rides slowly past them.

CUSTER

Okay boys, you've made me proud of you. This Brigade has sent Mr. Stuart's Invincibles scurrying for the high timber.

A round of cheers rises from the Union cavalrymen, as CUSTER rides slowly across their front.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Now, gentlemen, we are going to take Mr. Stuart's guns back home with us.

A wild round of cheers thunders from the ranks and CUSTER rears his horse into the air. Rifle and cannon shot punctuate the air. A man in civilian attire rides behind the ranks of Union cavalry, watching and making notes.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

First Brigade, to death or glory.  
(pause)  
Buglers sound the advance, draw sabers, trot ho!

EXT. UNION POSITION - MORNING (CONFEDERATE P.O.V)

Dirty and tired Confederate gunners are busy on their field guns. Several officers have their binoculars up watching the Union forces, directly to their front and out of the haze, a long line of CUSTER's cavalry are riding quickly toward them.

ARTILLERY OFFICER

Damn, them Yankees is almost here.  
Double shot them guns men, let's make it warm for em.



EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - MORNING

CUSTER sweeps off his straw hat and brings his sword out directly to his front. The troopers do the same and the canter picks up as artillery rounds start to burst around them.

CUSTER

Come on lads, let's give them the  
saber. Charge!

The entire Union lines burst forwards with Capt. CUSTER in the lead.

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, ARTILLERY POSITIONS - MORNING

The entire line of Confederate guns erupts and the gunners scramble to reload but the Union line is upon them.

CUSTER, followed closely by several troopers, jump their horses over the guns and into a wild melee. Groups of Rebel horsemen try to escape. CUSTER pursues them.

CUSTER

Follow me, we've got them on the  
run now.

EXT. CONFEDERATE RETREAT - MORNING

Little groups of Confederates dash across the field, the Union troops are busy taking prisoners. CUSTER has outdistanced his men and rides up behind a fleeing soldier, running him through with a quick saber thrust. He spurs his horse across a field in mad pursuit of fleeing Rebels.

EXT. CONFEDERATE REINFORCEMENTS - MORNING

Gen. STUART has managed to link up with the rest of his cavalry division and is cautiously leading them back towards the Union attack. CUSTER finds himself well into the fleeing Rebels, but due to his somewhat unorthodox uniform the Confederates mistake him for one of their own officers.

CUSTER  
Whooo, that a girl.

CUSTER reins in his horse, and notices STUART and his staff trotting past about 30 yards away. He looks around waiting to be recognized. CUSTER salutes.

CUSTER  
Good morning, general.

STUART  
Morning Captain.  
(pause)  
Can we turn this around?

CUSTER has his sword out and tries to appear as comfortable as he can considering the circumstances.

CUSTER  
Sir, I would most certainly like to give it a try.

He spurs his mount and canters back toward where he charged in from.

STUART  
Gentlemen, that is the spirit that will win this war for the Confederacy.

One of STUART's staff officers suspects something. He quickly canters up to his General, watching CUSTER ride away.

STAFF MAJOR  
(suspicious)  
Sir, with your permission I suspect that officer may be in the service of the Union.

STUART  
What!  
(pause)  
Preposterous, well get him back, here, sir.

STAFF MAJOR

Captain Wells, give me three of  
your men on good mounts. Let's go!

The four Confederates gallop after the fleeing CUSTER.

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS, OPEN FIELD - MORNING

CUSTER is cantering through groups of fleeing Confederates, his uniform and especially straw hat looks very much like those worn by the Rebels. He looks back and notices the four riders approaching.

CUSTER  
Good day to you fellows.

CUSTER spurs his horse into a quick gallop, running deliberately through a group of southern soldiers carrying Confederate battle flags. He grabs one away and the Rebels take this as a good sign.

FLAG BEARER  
Hello sir, that's the spirit, drive  
them Yankees back.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

Capt. CUSTER is riding quickly across the battlefield with four Confederates following and firing at him. Only the Confederate major seems to be gaining on CUSTER who is holding onto the Rebel battle flag.

CUSTER  
Yah, yah, yah...

CUSTER is whipping his horse to get maximum speed.

EXT. UNION LINES, ARTILLERY POSITIONS - MORNING Capt.

PENNINGTON is supervising the positioning of Union artillery; soldiers stop to watch the five riders approach. Several take up their muskets to fire on them. PENNINGTON squints at the approaching riders.

SERGEANT

Looks like the Rebs is coming at us  
sir.

GUNNER  
This will fix em.

GUNNER aims his rifle at them.

PENNINGTON  
Damn small counter attack.  
(pause)  
But they seem determined, wait that  
lead man is Armstrong Custer.

SERGEANT  
What?

PENNINGTON  
Hold your fire on the line. Damn,  
what is Armstrong doing out there?

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - MORNING

The MAJOR is almost up on CUSTER and has his saber over his  
head for a swift stab, CUSTER tries to pull his horse away  
but the determined officer sticks with him.

STAFF MAJOR  
Yankee fool, I'll run you through.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, NEAR UNION LINES - MORNING

Both men see a small broken fence, CUSTER's horse jumps it  
with no problem, the MAJOR negotiates the jump right behind  
him. The Confederate regains his control and raises the saber  
again; CUSTER turns in the saddle and swings the flag staff  
square into the Confederate officer's chest knocking him off  
his horse.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
I believe you want this, sir.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(yelling)

Don't fire, it's Captain Custer. Hold your fire.

EXT. UNION ARTILLERY POSITION - MORNING

CUSTER comes crashing through into the Union artillery. He is tired and dirty. PENNINGTON walks over to him; the men cheer the dashing exploits of the young captain.

PENNINGTON

Greetings Armstrong, souvenir  
hunting I see.

CUSTER

Hello Alex, afraid I had to return  
the flag to the Rebel major. He was  
very persuasive and persistent  
about it.

(pause)

Thanks for not shooting me.

PENNINGTON

I would hate to have been the man  
who ended "Custer's Luck". Besides,  
(pause) when you get that star  
you'll remember your old friend in  
the artillery.

UNION SOLDIER

That was some fancy riding  
there Cap'n Custer. Reb thought  
he had you.

CUSTER

(smiling)

Never thought I'd be thankful over  
the old Stars and Bars.

The men break out into chuckles and laughs over this and  
CUSTER slides off his horse.

PENNINGTON

The fight went very well,  
Armstrong. We've got half of old  
Jeb's artillery, a bunch of  
prisoners.

CUSTER

Pleasanton knows how to attack when they let him.

PENNINGTON

And withdraw when needed. My guns are screening our withdrawal from the field, better make sure the staff knows that you survived both your charge in and the one going out.

CUSTER mounts up on his horse, takes his hat off to dust it a bit.

CUSTER

By the way (pause) I promised old whip lash several guns, whose got control of the captured field pieces now?

PENNINGTON

Still First Brigade prizes. Back towards the rear.

CUSTER

Well Alex, to death or promotion, my friend.

PENNINGTON is smiling as he moves out of the way.

PENNINGTON

My regards to the General, Armstrong.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PLEASANTON'S AREA - DAY

Gen. PLEASANTON is looking over maps spread across the grass. Brig. Gen. JUDSON KILPATRICK is there as Capt. ELON FARNSWORTH. WESLEY MERRITT stands nearby talking to ALLEN WAUD. CUSTER leads a splendid black horse with captured Confederate field pieces driven up by smiling Union soldiers. The attention of PLEASANTON and his staff is caught up by CUSTER's antics.

PLEASANTON

Well, well, hello, Armstrong.

PLEASANTON stands up and walks toward CUSTER and his little convoy.

CUSTER

Good afternoon, General. Here are the guns I promised and the horse is a little something I picked up for you along the way.

PLEASONTON lets out a loud laugh. Several of the staff officers especially KILPATRICK and MERRITT exchange glances among themselves. They don't seem happy about this event.

PLEASONTON

By the way, Lee is heading north,  
(pause) only reason old Jeb and his troopers would be screening in mass like this.

(pause)

But thanks to you and the first Brigade, Stuart will be taking a bit longer to untangle his forces.

CUSTER

Well, we all did what we could.

PLEASONTON is admiring the horse.

PLEASONTON

Nonsense, boy.

(pause)

When Colonel Davis was killed you took right over.

(MORE)

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)

You didn't fail me and I cited you in my report for gallantry.

CUSTER slides off his horse, hands the reins to an enlisted soldier. PLEASONTON is looking the horse over.

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)

This is a blooded beast. I tell you. Kilpatrick what do you think of this fine charger?

CUSTER

General, I appreciate your kindness, you've shown a great deal of acceptance to me. I trust this horse will serve you well.

PLEASONTON

Damn, I can't accept such a gift.  
The saddle alone is more than  
either of us make in a month of  
government service.

(pause)

By the way, Mr. Waud I will like a  
sketch of me and this fine animal  
to send home.

Artist Waud walks slowly up, he carries his sketching  
material.

WAUD

Would be pleased to sketch both of  
you.

(pause)

Ah eh, and here is the young man  
who would run the Rebels back to  
Richmond alone if he could.

PLEASONTON realizes that his words are directed toward  
CUSTER.

PLEASONTON

Oh yes, Captain Custer, may I  
introduce Mr. Waud from Harper's  
Weekly. He is recording the war in  
these parts.

CUSTER

Pleased, sir.

WAUD

Captain, these should interest you.

He pulls several sketches out of his notebook, each showing a  
rendition of CUSTER with upturned saber leading rows of  
mounted soldiers across the battlefield.

CUSTER

These are excellent!

WAUD

(laughing)

Thank you, after today's fighting I  
think Harper's will run them,  
perhaps front page.



PLEASONTON

No doubt, this horse is worth a Sunday full of favors. What does Harper's Weekly think, Mr. Waud?

PLEASONTON swings himself up into the saddle.

WAUD

It's a general's horse without a doubt. General Pleasonton.

CUSTER slouches against one of the captured guns and pushes his hat back, he squints at PLEASONTON.

CUSTER

Well, General, might be a couple of issues that interest me.

PLEASONTON

Name it, my friend.

CUSTER

There is a lieutenant over in the 4th Michigan by the name of George Yates. He's a friend from Monroe and it would be nice to have a hometown face here on your staff.

(pause)

You'll find him a good and brave soldier also.

PLEASONTON

Consider that done. Merritt, handle the paperwork on that.

MERRITT

Fine, sir.

CUSTER

And, sir, (pause) I would truly like a command that gives me the chance to lead men like young Yates into battle for the Union.

PLEASONTON straightens up on that request, he looks at CUSTER.

PLEASONTON

(pause)

God know Armstrong, you are most capable. I'll see what I can do about that.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CAMP FREDERICK, MARYLAND JUNE 1863

CUSTER is sitting on his horse, it is raining out and he has his military slicker pulled up around him. He is writing a letter, columns of soldiers and cannons are moving past him in the rain.

CUSTER (V.O)

My Dearest Libbie, We have been very busy of late chasing General Lee and his troops. I trust you have read some accounts in the Michigan papers about me. I have led a charge here and again but it is never completely as the newspapers would have you believe.

CUSTER pauses in his writing to look over the advancing soldiers as another officer rides up, also in rain gear, and waves a greeting to him.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

Great news, George Yates from Monroe has been transferred to General Pleasonton's staff. He is good company and a fine officer.

(pause)

I continue to attempt to secure command of one of the newly established Michigan regiments. General Pleasonton has agreed to endorse my efforts again with Governor Blair, but I have few expectations on this matter. The Army of the Potomac has but another commander, Hooker is out and General Meade is in and I have two new puppies.

(MORE)

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

I miss you a great deal,  
(pause) don't worry about me, Love, Armstrong. P. S. I have had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of a Mr. A. Waud, an artist for Harper's Weekly. I have enclosed one of his drawings for you, the same which has run in his

publication. His work takes him to both armies and he shares the friendship of Thomas Rosser as well. Mr. Waud tells me Rosser is now a General with the Rebels.

CUSTER folds the letter up and sticks it into his pocket, as GEORGE YATES leans over to talk to him.

YATES

Armstrong, Kilpatrick has just been given command of the 3rd Division. There is a gathering at his headquarters this evening, we are invited.

(pause)

We should really attend.

CUSTER

(sad)

Good for Old Kil. Any word from Governor Blair?

YATES

Nothing, I surely wouldn't put my betting money on news, Armstrong.

CUSTER looks dejectedly at the ground, the rain streams down his locks, plastering them to his forehead.

CUSTER

Probably not; I am happy for Kilpatrick, he will be a good division commander.

EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, NEAR KILPATRICK'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER and YATES ride their rain soaked horses slowly up to the hitching bar in front of the tent. Both men slide off their mounts and walk across puddles to the tent.

CUSTER

(tired)

In this rain Lee could swim north.

YATES

He probably is.

INT. KILPATRICK'S TENT - NIGHT

Smoky tent with numerous officers; KILPATRICK, MERRITT, PLEASANTON. The conversation lets up slightly when CUSTER and YATES walk in. They shake off the moisture from their rain gear.

STAFF OFFICER  
(humorous)  
Well, hello general.

SECOND OFFICER  
Evening, General Custer

CUSTER looks quickly at YATES, there is a certain anger building up. Both men walk to the refreshment table.

CUSTER  
(awkward)  
Hmmm, evening.

THIRD OFFICER  
You are looking well, General  
Custer.

CUSTER whirls around his face glaring with anger, hair still wet and confronts his fellow officers.

CUSTER  
What kind of joke is this? I can  
take banter as well as the next  
man.

YATES  
(soothing)  
Take it easy, Armstrong.

CUSTER  
I'm as capable an officer as any of  
you and don't appreciate having my  
goals made the ammunition of your  
bad taste in humor.

KILPATRICK walks slowly up to the angry CUSTER; he has an envelope in his hand.

KILPATRICK

Take it easy Curly. Of course you are and others seem to realize it also.

(pause)

Here you go, read this.

CUSTER takes and opens the envelope, slowly reading its content. PLEASONTON has walked up behind him, YATES and everyone is smiling.

CUSTER

(very surprised)

My God, I've been appointed a  
Brigadier General of Volunteers.

CUSTER slowly sinks into a camp chair while the others laugh good naturedly. CUSTER has gotten very emotional.

YATES

Congratulations, Armstrong, er  
General Custer.

CUSTER

(emotional)

Thank you, George.

PLEASONTON

Custer, you've earned this.  
Merritt and Farnsworth have gotten  
their stars also.

CUSTER

Well, (pause) congratulations to  
them.

PLEASONTON

This should win the war for the  
Union, don't you think?

CUSTER

I'll do my best, what unit?

PLEASONTON

Eh, yes. Second Brigade of  
Kilpatrick's division.

CUSTER

(laughing)  
Those are all Michigan regiments?

PLEASONTON  
Exactly, one of the commands you  
sought through Governor Blair.  
(pause)  
Now, General, you command them all.  
But let's make this official.

PLEASONTON stands up, tall, handsome in his dark blue  
uniform. He raises his glass.

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)  
Gentlemen of the officer's mess, a  
toast to General George Armstrong  
Custer.

VOICES  
(loudly)  
Here, here.

CUSTER can barely control his emotions as he looks around the  
tent at his friends and fellow officers.

PLEASONTON  
You've made us all proud Armstrong,  
very proud.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CAMP FREDERICK, MARYLAND - EVENING

CUSTER has saddled up his horse, his pet dogs scamper nearby,  
while Lieutenant YATES brings out some needed items.

YATES  
I managed to forage out several  
stars for the jacket; they're sewed  
on.

YATES holds up a velvet jumper, with gold braid on the  
sleeves. The two silver stars are sewn on the points of each  
collar.

YATES (CONT'D)  
What do you think?

CUSTER  
Excellent, that'll do, thanks,  
George.

He puts the folded coat in his saddle bags and mounts up.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I'll change before I get there.

YATES  
You realize they're almost 40 miles  
from here?

CUSTER  
Ride will be good for me, need to  
think about things. They'll be some  
resentments about a 23 year old  
general taking command.

YATES  
Don't know who will we be tougher  
to fight with, General. Jealous  
Union officers or Bobby Lee.

YATES steps back, and snaps a salute, CUSTER returns the  
same.

CUSTER  
I'll beat them both, George.

YATES  
Good luck, General.

CUSTER  
Thank you, George, Good evening.

EXT. UNION FORCES, 2ND BRIGADE CAMP - MORNING CUSTER

canters into the camp of the Third Division's, 2nd

Cavalry Brigade. He has changed into the velvet jacket, tied  
a bright red scarf around his neck, his wide brimmed hat is  
pushed rakishly back and his faded blue pants tucked into a  
pair of high but muddy cavalry boots. Three hounds follow at  
his horses heels. He rides past several tired looking  
sentries who don't salute. At the headquarters tent he  
dismounts and walks inside.

CUSTER  
Where is the executive officer?

Several tired looking, older colonels stare at the young Gen.  
CUSTER.

WAINWRIGHT  
(slowly raising)  
Attention.

All those present snap to attention.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)  
That would be me, (pause) General  
Custer.

CUSTER moves across the tent.

CUSTER  
At ease, gentlemen, Colonel,  
pleased to meet you.

WAINWRIGHT  
The name's Robert Wainwright,  
General. We've been expecting you.

CUSTER stops and shakes hands with the colonel.

CUSTER  
  
By the appearance of the pickets  
and stables here you could very  
well be expecting the Rebels also.

WAINWRIGHT  
I don't understand, sir?

CUSTER sits down in a camp chair and motions for Col.  
WAINWRIGHT to do the same.

CUSTER  
From now on Colonel Wainwright,  
there will be an officer on stable  
call each morning. The enlisted men  
will salute officers, you will  
double the number of pickets and  
guarantee that first sergeants have  
an enlisted escort at reveille.

(pause)

(MORE)

Is that understood, Colonel  
Wainwright?

WAINWRIGHT



Yes, General, it is. This is a fighting brigade of cavalry from the state of Michigan, the Wolverine state. They shall be prepared to be just as ferocious as wolverines.

WAINWRIGHT (CONT'D)

I understand, sir. Is there anything else?

CUSTER

Have the staff officers and colonels from each regiment report to me this morning. I will inspect the units at noon and we move north after inspection.

CUSTER is very cold and matter of fact.

WAINWRIGHT

I will see that the information gets out, General.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER puts down several reports he has been looking over, slips his saber off his belt and places it on the field desk beside his bed. Slowly he takes the two metal cavalry toys from his pockets and places them gently down beside the saber. CUSTER lays down and falls asleep.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PARADE GROUND - DAY

CUSTER with his pet dogs and staff are riding across the front of the regiments that make up his command. He is followed by his own flag and an escort. He reins in his horse and addresses the soldiers.

CUSTER

I have every reason to believe that this is the best cavalry brigade in the Army of the Potomac.

(pause)

(MORE)

Of course it is from the great state of Michigan, it must be the best.

Isolated cheering is heard in the ranks.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

I fully expect to lead you to great victories in the days ahead. Whatever we must confront, one thing is certain I will not fail you, (pause) and you will not fail me.

CUSTER reaches down into his pocket and pulls out a red scarf like the one he is wearing.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

I have authorized that the members of this brigade wear the red scarf you see here.  
(pause)

Let it always stand for courage and determination, let it always be worn in victory.

Wild applause breaks out along the ranks. CUSTER turns to Col. WAINWRIGHT.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Colonel, have the brigade pass in review.

GETTYSBURG APPROACH - MONTGAGE

Lines of mounted troopers.

Horse drawn artillery.

Brigade color guard with flags.

Custer with his hat over his head.

Lines of cavalry on road.

Pretty ladies waving at the soldiers.

A signpost, Gettysburg 5 miles.

EXT. GETTYSBURG, CUSTER'S BRIGADE AT CRESS RIDGE - JULY 1863  
MORNING

CUSTER, Col. WAINWRIGHT and a dozen other Union officers are scanning the countryside with the binoculars. There is the steady rumble of artillery. Capt. ALEX PENNINGTON, in charge of CUSTER's artillery, looks nervous.

PENNINGTON

Got to be him, Armstrong. 210.

(long pause)

If it is old Jeb Stuart, he's got Hampton's Division with him and that's serious odds.

WAINWRIGHT

Fitzhugh Lee and his people could very well be coming up.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, that will make it an interesting afternoon for us.

PENNINGTON

General Pleasonton can't be aware of this.

(pause)

He can't want us to ride and support the center.

Gen. CUSTER puts down his binoculars and turns to his staff.

CUSTER

If we depart this area Stuart will sweep around our flank. He'll cut off our supplies and communications.

WAINWRIGHT

Damn Pleasonton's foolishness!

CUSTER

Stuart will then defeat us in detail.

CUSTER turns to one of his orderlies.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Sergeant Churchill.

CHURCHHILL

Sir?

CUSTER

Any information of General Gregg's  
Second Division?

CHURCHILL

He is supposed to be in place here  
any time.

CUSTER returns to studying the Confederate positions.

CUSTER

Colonel Wainwright, I'm going to  
disobey General Pleasonton's  
orders. I will not have the defeat  
of our Army be brought upon by this  
Brigade's failure to deter Jeb  
Stuart's attack.

WAINWRIGHT

I agree, General.

CUSTER moves to his horse and prepares to mount up. The staff  
does the same.

CUSTER

I'm going to risk pulling Stuart  
into the open.

(pause)

Alex, load grape and canister and  
prepare your guns, Wainwright take  
an escort and meet up with General  
Gregg and request that he gets his  
division on line to back us up.

(pause)

With his people we can send the  
eyes of Lee's Army running back to  
Virginia.

WAINWRIGHT

(worried)

Good God, Custer, there's over ten  
thousand sabers out there!

CUSTER

I'm going to pretend a withdrawal,  
Stuart and his lads are waiting for  
that. Then I'll reverse movement  
and charge them.

WAINWRIGHT

You'll die on that field, sir.

CUSTER is spurring his horse.

CUSTER

Not if you get General Gregg up here. Alex hold your fire until the Rebs come out of the woods and start their move. Now gentlemen please carry out my orders.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

Soldiers are mounted and in line, the men seem tense and quiet. CUSTER is also mounted and watching the Rebel forces, his Brigade is well hidden in a wooded area. Several staff officers are gathered around him.

CUSTER

Major Smith, anything?

SMITH

They have some scouts coming down on the right flank sir. No major troop movements.

A young enlisted soldier rides up to CUSTER.

MESSENGER

Sir, Captain Pennington sends his regards, his guns are ready.

CUSTER

Damn fine, now we truly need cooperation from General Stuart.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, GENERAL GREGG'S DIVISION - DAY

Gen. DAVID GREGG, Commander of the 2nd Cavalry Division, leads long lines of troopers along the dusty farm roads of southern Pennsylvania. He wears a beat up kepi, a salt and pepper beard and is smoking a pipe as he rides. Col. Wainwright and six soldiers gallop up to him.

WAINWRIGHT

(breathless)

General Gregg, General Custer sends his regards and requests your immediate support at Cress Ridge.

GREGG

Damn if he does. Pleasonton wants  
him in the center of our line.

WAINWRIGHT

General Custer has decided to  
attack General Stuart and the rest  
of the Confederate horse who might  
be with him.

GREGG comes up full height in his saddle, eyes wide open with  
astonishment.

GREGG

Damnation, he'll loose the  
Brigade. Why, why, that's Stuart,  
Hampton and Lee waiting to strike  
for certain.

WAINWRIGHT

The General is deploying for attack  
as we speak.

GREGG turns in his saddle.

GREGG

Major Martin, sound the advance.  
Lead on Colonel.

EXT. CRESS RIDGE, CONFEDERATE POSITIONS - DAY

The fields on the ridge are quiet. The sound of gunfire is  
far away. Suddenly there is the thunderous jingle and rumble  
of horses and hundreds of Confederate soldiers trot into the  
open. General JEB STUART, in full dress uniform, high black  
boots and plumed hat leads them.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PENNINGTON'S ARTILLERY - DAY

Capt. PENNINGTON has spotted the Confederates.

PENNINGTON

Wait for my command, do you  
understand?

(pause)

Don't fire until I give the  
command.

PENNINGTON moves among the rest of the gunners, nervous men watching as thousands of Confederate cavalry trot down and across the fields in their front.

PENNINGTON (CONT'D)  
Don't fire until I tell you to.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER and staff continue to watch, some of the younger officers seem nervous.

CUSTER  
Sergeant Churchill, after  
Pennington fires I will lead the  
Brigade towards the Rebels.

CHURCHILL  
Yes sir.

CUSTER  
Make sure my battle flag follows. I  
expect it will be quite a dash.

CHURCHILL  
I'll take care of that, General.

CUSTER turns his attention back to the Confederates.

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, CRESS RIDGE - DAY Gen.

STUART is surrounded by the battle flags of his division, a strong wind stirs the stars and bars defiantly. STUART stops as several riders return across the field. To the far right flank another mass of Confederate cavalry appear and slowly move down the gentle slope. STUART watches.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

The entire brigade staff watch the awesome approach of the entire cavalry arm of Gen. LEE's Army.

CUSTER

Well, Captain Roberts, they'll be plenty of em for everyone won't there?

ROBERTS  
(very nervous)  
I expect so, sir.

CUSTER  
Even more if General Gregg doesn't get here.

STAFF COLONEL  
That's Hampton's Legion on Stuart's flank. God, look at em parade down that slope.

CUSTER  
Now gentlemen that is what I call confidence. Let's hope Pennington's guns take some of that out of em.  
(pause)  
Staff, fall back on the brigade.

CUSTER and his officers slowly walk their horses back to the lines of the Union cavalry.

EXT. UNION FORCES, PENNINGTON'S ARTILLERY - DAY

Capt. PENNINGTON straightens his back, fastens the top button of his uniform jacket and walks slowly out in front of his guns. He pulls out his short artillery sword holds it above his head, looks up and down the gun line, and lowers the sword.

PENNINGTON  
Full battery fire!

EXT. UNION ARTILLERY - DAY

The line of guns explode into action, belching out a wall of flame. PENNINGTON holds his sword point down and lets it drop, it sticks into the ground. All the gunners realize that there will be no retreat from that position.

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, CRESS RIDGE - DAY Confederates

struggle to control horses scared by the sudden

artillery attack. Rounds land and horsemen fall. STUART seems surprised but not shaken. He raises his binoculars towards the trees.



STUART

What is this?

STAFF COLONEL

General, that's a single battery at best.

STUART

What kind of foolishness is this?

STAFF COLONEL

Perhaps a rear guard.

STUART

Damnation, have General Hampton charge. I want those guns captured, Colonel Lomax.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER is dashing his horse around in tight circles in front of his Brigade. The men are tense and ready, the sounds of PENNINGTON's artillery echoes in the background. 221.

CUSTER

(wildly yelling)

Gentlemen, there are a bunch of Rebs coming down Cress Ridge, trying to keep us from going home.  
(pause)

I won't have that, so I'm riding directly through them and heaven help the Rebel who stands in my way. Are you going with me?

A wild chorus of screams rise from the Union ranks.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Very good. Let's show the Johnnies what some Michigan cavalry can do. Buglers sound the advance, keep to your sabers, boys, guide center and close order.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

With General CUSTER and his color bearers in the lead the entire 2nd Brigade canters smartly out of the woods and large flat field that slopes gently up towards Cress Ridge. The Union cavalry lines are perfectly dressed, each trooper holding his saber at carry arms.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
Come on, you Wolverines.

CUSTER gallops out ahead, and the entire brigade breaks into a gallop behind him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Charge, boys, charge!

EXT. CONFEDERATE FORCES, CRESS RIDGE - DAY

STUART is concerned, his staff is watching the Union movement.

STUART  
Hell and thunder, that's a Yankee  
Brigade!  
(pause)  
Bring your regiments on line to  
meet them. Sweep those devils from  
this field.

The Confederate line goes into the gallop; hundreds of gray and brown clad troopers charge down hill.

EXT. UNION FORCES, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

The perfectly aligned Union Brigade charges full gallop at the Confederate cavalry. Men fall here and there but CUSTER is out front.

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD/CRESS RIDGE - DAY

The Union and Confederate cavalry collide at the full gallop. There is the swirl of dust, clang of metal, screams and pistol shots. CUSTER gallops past a Confederate soldier and sabers him off his horse. Behind him his aide, Captain ROBERTS is shot, and falls under the hooves of his horse.

CUSTER  
Give them the saber men.

CHURCHILL  
(excited)  
General, behind you.

A Confederate sergeant is leveling his pistol to shoot CUSTER, Sergeant CHURCHILL's warning comes just in time. CUSTER swings down on the neck of his horse and the gunshot blows a huge hole in his saddle.

CUSTER

Damn you!

CUSTER cuts wildly with his saber hitting the Confederate across the face. Union soldiers crash in groups against Confederate horsemen.

EXT. UNION FORCES, GREGG'S DIVISION, HANOVER PIKE - DAY

Union General GREGG is leading his regiments at a fast canter with Colonel Wainwright beside him. His staff are pulling their horses up for a conference on the move.

GREGG

(yelling)

Colonel Williams, wheel the 1st Michigan in column of squadrons.

(pause)

I'll deploy the 5th and 7th as flankers on the left. General McIntosh will attack from those woods to the right with his brigade. We must destroy Stuart's center.

The staff and Gen. GREGG are cantering.

WAINWRIGHT

General, over there is Captain Pennington's artillery. I'm afraid General Custer has engaged the Rebels.

GREGG

God almighty man, Custer has drawn them out. Remember your positions.

(pause)

Scatter Stuart and we'll save both Custer and the Army.

(pause)

Have the bugler sound the charge.

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD/CRESS RIDGE - DAY There is smoke and noise all around the battle. CUSTER

canters quickly through the fighting men. He slashes at the Confederate flag bearer. The man falls and CUSTER pulls the beautiful banner down. At that time his horse is shot and both man and horse plunge to the ground. Dust covered, uniform torn and hat missing, CUSTER pulls himself to his feet. He withdraws his pistol and shoots continuously at the swirl of Confederate horsemen riding through his dwindling forces.

CUSTER  
Damn, give it to them boys.  
(pause)  
Someone get me a horse.

EXT. UNION FORCES, GREGG'S ATTACK - DAY

Gen. GREGG and Col. WAINWRIGHT lead a spirited charge of Union cavalry across the field that CUSTER had just attacked over.

GREGG  
(yelling)  
Push them back to Dixie men!

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD, CONFEDERATE FORCES - DAY

General STUART spots the attacking Union in time to realize that his efforts are spoiled for the day. He reins up his horse and yells orders to his staff.

STUART  
Lomax have our people withdraw,  
that's the Union 2nd Cavalry coming  
up.  
(pause)  
Damn them. Make sure Hampton gets  
the word. LOMAX Very fine, General.

STUART, with his saber still in his hand, turns and watches the battle as he and his staff slowly canter away from the fight.

EXT. GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD/CRESS RIDGE - DAY

A rider less horse canters past, CUSTER sees his chance, runs up and jumps on. He swings back into action as the Confederates ride away.

CUSTER  
(screaming)

Second Brigade rally on me!

CHURCHILL comes riding up, he is wounded.

CHURCHILL

General, the Rebs is running for it. Gregg's Division is pushing on the flank.

CHURCHILL (CONT'D)

We've beat the rascals.

CUSTER swings his revolver up at a group of fleeing horsemen, one of the Rebels pulls his horse up and CUSTER exchanges glances with his old West Point classmate, TOM ROSSER. CUSTER lowers his pistol, ROSSER touches his saber to the brim of his hat, a slight grin on his face. Dust, smoke, yells and firing are all around them. CHURCHILL notices the brief encounter. ROSSER spurs his horse away.

CHURCHILL (CONT'D)

(surprised)

General, you could have gotten that Reb officer, nice and proper.

A slight breeze is whispering through CUSTER's golden curly hair. He watches ROSSER ride away.

CUSTER

No, Sergeant Churchill, one can't kill his memories.

EXT. GETTYSBURG, CAVALRY AT REVIEW - DAY

CUSTER, looking slightly battered, sits his horse beside Generals PLEASONTON, KILPATRICK, GREGG and a collection of other staff officers. Regimental flags proudly displayed his Second Cavalry Brigade. PLEASONTON turns to CUSTER and hands him a piece of paper, CUSTER salutes.

PLEASONTON

(quietly, amused)

You know, you directly disobeyed my orders to move to Cemetery Ridge.

(pause)

But, you called it correctly, and stopped Stuart before his rascals could get behind us.

(pause)  
Only God knows what would have been  
our fate if no Union troops had  
opposed old Jeb.

CUSTER  
General, I had to make a decision,  
besides, looked like some very  
interesting odds.

PLEASONTON  
You and those men were lucky to  
survive. (hand note over) Yes, this  
is from General Meade, best let the  
men know about it.

CUSTER snaps off a formal salute and rides towards his  
troops, followed by executive officers, Col. WAINWRIGHT.  
PLEASONTON reins his horse back into formation, near  
KILPATRICK. KILPATRICK leans over to talk to him.

KILPATRICK  
(angry, low voiced)  
Al, I fear the worst for young  
Custer. Never have I seen such a  
dangerous glory hunter.  
(pause)

First he disobeyed orders and then  
almost loses his Brigade. And Meade  
thanks him for it.

PLEASONTON  
Don't forget Hugh; he fooled old  
Jeb Stuart into advancing, then got  
Pennington's artillery to knock him  
about.  
(pause)  
Then, damn it, charged when the  
odds were three to one against him;  
even when he wasn't sure of being  
reinforced.

EXT. GETTYSBURG REVIEW, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER canters out to his soldiers, his staff and flags  
behind him. His uniform still a mixture of non regulation  
items.

PLEASONTON (V.O)  
And, he wins the day for us.  
(pause)  
Custer's Luck is it?

EXT. REVIEW OF CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER is sitting on his horse reading MEADE'S letter to his men.

CUSTER

....your display of gallantry and courage against vastly superior odds in action against forces of the Confederacy on the third of July past, eighteen hundred and sixty three, brings a great deal of credit upon yourself and the cause for which you serve.

(pause)

And adds a very bright chapter to the history of this army. Signed Major General George Gordon Meade, Commander, Army of the Potomac.

CUSTER hands the letter to Col. WAINWRIGHT.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen of the 2nd Brigade, that was praise and recognition well deserved. But, there can be no man prouder of what you have done, of courage you have shown and the sacrifices you have made, than I am.

SOLDIER IN RANKS

Three cheers for General Custer.  
Hip, hip, hurray...

2ND BRIGADE

Hip, hip hurray... hip, hip hurray.

The thunderous cheers and applause continues as CUSTER sweeps his dark wide brimmed hat off and does a low bow to his soldiers.

CUSTER (V.O)

Dearest Libbie, My darling, we have had a difficult time of it in Pennsylvania. By the grace of God our brave forces were able to send Uncle Bob Lee and his boys scurrying back to Virginia.

EXT. MONROE MICHIGAN, MAIN STREET - DAY

LIBBIE BACON and her father, Judge BACON are gathered with other citizens looking over the news from the war pasted on the front of the local newspaper office. She looks concerned, the Judge is trying to comfort her.

CUSTER (V.O)

My Brigade lost over 250 troopers,  
God rest them, during the battle  
but were able to bring a great deal  
of praise from General Meade for  
our fighting spirit.

(pause)

Once again, General Meade has  
failed to follow up on our victory.  
Do not fear for me as I have had  
several horses shot out from under  
me with only a bruise or two to  
show for it.

EXT. MONROE, MICHIGAN, BACON HOME FRONT DOOR - DAY

LIBBIE BACON is walking slowly up to the door, reading a letter from CUSTER.

CUSTER (V.O)

I do not feel that the bullet has  
been made that can kill me. The men  
have given me their full respect  
and will follow their general  
anywhere.

EXT. NORTHERN VIRGINIA, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

Hat in his hand, curls flying, Gen. CUSTER is leading his soldiers along a dirt covered country road. Groups of black people are watching and waving as they ride by.

CUSTER (V.O)

I find myself fearless of our  
enemies but very concerned about  
your father's feelings about me.

(pause)



Does he think well of me and my promotion? I should like to return home soon and discuss our future.

EXT. CUSTER'S CAMP - DAY

CUSTER is leaning against a tree writing, several of his dogs are sitting by him. A black lady is doing laundry not far away.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

By the way, I have become very popular among the press and even have managed to hire a woman named Eliza to cook and do chores in camp.

(pause)

I am eating well, she is good at making the very best out of Army rations. But Libbie, despite all the glories and excitement of battle I find my thoughts always of you. Such a wonderful and important part of my life you have become. My love for you is the strongest of all my emotions and always will be. I miss you more than you can ever realize. Do not worry about me, Love Armstrong. P.S. Please save my newspaper articles you may come across concerning me.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

Mr. A.R. WAUD of Harper's Weekly approaches with another man, nicely dressed in a brown colored hunting suit. CUSTER recognizes WAUD and puts down his writing material and smiles.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Hello to you, Mr. Waud.

WAUD

(smiling)

Good afternoon, General Custer.

(pause)

(MORE)

WAUD (CONT'D)

I hope this impromptu visit is not an inconvenience?

CUSTER

No, not at all. The life of a soldier has too many quiet moments.

WAUD turns toward the other gentleman.

WAUD

Sir, may I have to pleasure of introducing Mr. E.A. Paul of the New York Times.

CUSTER rises and reaches out to shake PAUL's hand.

CUSTER

Very happy to meet you.

PAUL

General, the pleasure is truly mine.

(pause)

Allen has let me look over the sketches he has made of you.

CUSTER settles back down in front of the tent.

CUSTER

Sit, gentlemen, can I get you some coffee?

PAUL

That would be nice, thank you.

CUSTER

Eliza, can you bring two cups of coffee for these gentlemen?

(pause)

Yes, those wonderful illustrations.

PAUL

I'm a great admirer of Mr. Waud's work. Especially when the illustrations are of me.

All three men laugh as ELIZA shuffles over with the coffee.

PAUL (CONT'D)

The actual image of you in those pictures portrays, well, sort of the spirit the nation.

CUSTER

(sipping coffee, smiling)  
HMMMMM.

PAUL  
That and the fact that you have  
become a general at 23, sir there  
are many stories there.

CUSTER  
This sounds like an interview. And  
I'm ready for one, by golly.

WAUB  
Do you mind if I sketch while you  
gentlemen talk?

Several hours have passed. WAUD has a neat pile of sketches  
piled beside them. While talking CUSTER looks over the  
illustrations. PAUL shoots out questions one after another.

PAUL  
Does that mean that having been,  
say, marked as a McClellan Man,  
won't hurt your military career?

CUSTER  
General McClellan is and always  
will be a good friend, but I am a  
fighting officer and the Army  
knows that.

PAUL  
And?

CUSTER  
And, Mr. Paul, the fact that after  
Gettysburg my brigade pursued Lee,  
capturing hundreds of Rebels,  
cannon and battle flags tells those  
in power that Armstrong Custer  
fights, fights on the battlefield  
not in the back rooms where  
decisions on patronage and position  
are determined.

PAUL  
General, you have taken over  
command of the 2nd Brigade of

General Kilpatrick's 3rd Cavalry  
Division. Frankly, sir, made it a  
copy of you in looks and spirit.

CUSTER laughs at this; he continues to look over WAUD  
illustrations.

PAUL (CONT'D)

In fact, General, the only other  
unit in the Union Army that even  
remotely rivals your Brigade is the  
Iron Brigade from out West.

CUSTER

Yes, the fellows with the black  
hats.

PAUL

Exactly.

CUSTER

Good unit but, Mr. Paul, they were  
decimated at Gettysburg and  
although my Brigade suffered over  
200 losses we were far from  
rendered ineffective.

PAUL

Both your record and that of your  
Brigade is impressive.

CUSTER

Thank you.

PAUL

Why?

CUSTER

My leadership, I like to fight, and  
the men know that, so they like a  
good fight also.

(pause)

Lead from the front Mr. Paul and  
your soldiers will follow you  
anywhere, remember that.

WAUD has finished the sketches.

WAUD  
General, if I may interrupt?

PAUL  
Surely.

WAUD  
Sir, there are men, many of them  
your fellow officers, some of them  
civilians, a few journalists that  
say you lead reckless charges for  
nothing more than your own glory?

CUSTER  
(smiling)  
Of course I've heard those  
statements.

WAUD  
And?

CUSTER  
Gentlemen, when you receive your  
Brigadier's star at age 23 there  
are natural conflicts and  
jealousies that arise from older  
officers as well as one's peers.

PAUL  
The hazards of being a boy general  
is that it?

CUSTER  
Nicely put, Mr. Paul, exactly. My  
record speaks for itself. I fight  
because I was born to lead men into  
battle and I am good at what I do.  
(pause)  
And the greater the odds the the  
greater the glory.

EXT. CULPEPPER, VIRGINIA, UNION CAVALRY HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A military band is mounted on horseback playing Yankee  
Doodle, while the distant echo of cannon can be heard in the  
background. Gen. PLEASANTON and his staff and Gen. LYMAN are  
watching a cavalry battle from high ground.

PLEASONTON

If you'll note, General  
Kilpatrick's 3rd Division will  
sweep to the left of the Rebel  
forces.

LYMAN

(preoccupied)  
Yes, is that them now?

PLEASONTON

Yes, seems like our boys are  
charging the Rebel guns.  
(pause)  
Now there is a victory in the  
making. God, that's Custer's  
Brigade.

EXT. CULPEPPER, VIRGINIA, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER reins up his horse as his men come to grips with  
Confederate artillery. A short fight and the Confederates  
start to surrender. There is a hail of shooting and CUSTER is  
hit, he wavers on his horse then gains control.

YATES

Armstrong, are you alright?

CUSTER

(in pain)  
Nothing, George, make sure they  
disarm those Southern boys and get  
the guns back to our lines.

YATES

Surely, but be careful.

CUSTER

Don't worry about me. What's this?

EXT. WAGON UNDER ESCORT, UNION FORCES - DAY

A half a dozen Union cavalry are escorting a Confederate  
headquarters wagon with two Confederate soldiers on it. They  
have their weapons out and are in good spirits.

UNION SERGEANT  
Move along there, this ain't no  
Rebel victory parade now.

CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN  
Sergeant, I suggest you show the  
proper respect.

UNION TROOPER  
Jeez we got ourselves some proper  
prisoners here, General.

CUSTER rides up to the wagon, the enlisted men and  
Confederates salute.

CUSTER  
And what is this?

CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN  
Sir, allow me to introduce myself.  
I'm Captain Ansom Williams, aide to  
General Stuart. This is Sergeant  
Davis James the General's wagon  
driver.

CUSTER  
Gentlemen, Armstrong Custer,  
welcome to the 2nd Brigade of  
Kilpatrick's Cavalry.  
(pause)  
General Stuart's aide did you say?

UNION SERGEANT  
Caught em trying to make a go of it  
when we runned over the guns.

CUSTER  
Interesting, and this must be the  
General's property?  
(pause)  
And the what not.

He slowly walks his horse over to the side, takes his sword  
out and unhooks the door from his saddle. The Confederates  
watch in silence.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(amused)  
And what do we have inside?

He pushes the door open with his saber and a very attractive  
woman peers out at him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Madam, welcome to the 2nd Brigade,  
Union cavalry.

LADY

I am very honored sir, but what  
will become of us?

The enlisted men are snickering in their saddles, while the  
Confederates looks somewhat concerned.

CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN

General, er, the young lady is a  
very good friend of General Stuart,  
I trust that will be honored?

CUSTER

(amused)

I should think as officers it will  
be taken into consideration.

CUSTER walks his horse to the other side of the wagon and  
lifts up the canvas covering the back. There are bottles of a  
fine vintage wine stacked there.

LADY

Well, General, that is comforting.  
Oh I see that you have been  
injured.

She is looking at CUSTER's boot, a large tear is visible in  
the leather.

CUSTER

It is nothing, my lady. I trust  
General Stuart will not mind if  
several bottles of his wine are  
liberated as, should we say, the  
spoils of war.

CUSTER reaches down and takes two of the bottles.

CONFEDERATE CAPTAIN

I trust not, sir.

CUSTER

Very well, Sergeant, please escort  
the wagon to the rear.



CUSTER PERFORMS HIS TRADITIONAL LONG LOW BOW IN THE SADDLE.

CULPEPPER, VIRGINIA, PLEASONTON AND STAFF - DAY

CUSTER rides up, his uniform the same unusual mixture.  
PLEASONTON spots him and with some amusement watches his approach.

PLEASONTON

Ah, here comes Custer now, you'll  
have a chance to see him close up.

CUSTER rides up, holding his torn boot out.

CUSTER

How are you? Can I get fifteen days  
leave for this?

PLEASONTON

Looks like a nasty injury. By the  
way, this is General Lyman of  
General Meade's staff.

CUSTER

General Lyman.

LYMAN

General Custer.

Looking at his torn boot with some interest and amusement.

CUSTER

Those fellows will have to learn to  
shoot better than that. By the way,  
here is a gift from General Jeb  
Stuart himself.

CUSTER reaches across and gives each man a bottle.

LYMAN

(pleased, surprised)  
God man, General Stuart you say?

CUSTER

Yes sir, my Brigade overran his  
baggage wagon when we took the guns

down there. Caught him a bit off his step.

PLEASONTON is rolling the bottle around in his hand, reading the label and listening with amusement.

PLEASONTON

Well, now, Old Jeb does have a pretty fine taste in wine.

CUSTER

(smiling)

General, he has a fine taste in other matters, feminine matters that is.

LYMAN looks suspiciously at CUSTER and PLEASONTON while the rest of the staff muffle laughs.

LYMAN

I trust I know what you mean.

PLEASONTON

Jeb always had a certain refined taste for women, but a cavalry camp seems a bit dangerous.

(pause)

Now about that leave Curly? Why the devil would you want to leave all the fun?

CUSTER

I intend to return home and ask Miss Bacon to marry me.

PLEASONTON

(happily surprised)

Well good for you. I trust if you pursue this young lady's favors as strongly as you pursue General Stuart you should be very successful. The leave is granted and I'll throw in ten more for today's good showing.

CUSTER reins his horse up and salutes.

CUSTER

Thank you, General Pleasonton, good day gentlemen.

Salutes are returned and CUSTER wheels his horse and canters back toward his command. LYMAN turns to PLEASONTON, who is also watching CUSTER ride off.

LYMAN

So that's the famous Boy General  
that the newspapers write about.

PLEASONTON

Yes, the same Armstrong Custer.

LYMAN

He looks very much like a circus  
rider gone mad.

PLEASONTON

(snickering)

Indeed all of that, but the man  
knows how to fight and never misses  
a chance to attack.

(pause)

Miss Bacon should be careful, young  
Custer will make her a widow soon  
enough.

EXT. CULPEPPER ROAD, VIRGINIA, CUSTER'S BRIGADE -DAY

CUSTER rides past soldiers moving along the road. There are cheers here and again from men who recognize him and know of his reputation. He acknowledges it with an informal salute as he canters along.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR BACON HOUSE, MONROE, MICHIGAN - AUGUST 1863 DAY

CUSTER, in the uniform of a Brigadier General of cavalry, canters down the road towards the front of the Bacon house. He looks anxious as he dismounts and ties his horse. LIBBIE BACON comes running out of the front door and down the long sidewalk.

LIBBIE

(crying)

Armstrong, oh, Armstrong, you're  
back.

CUSTER

I'll always come back to you.

(pause)

(MORE)

And just so you can't tease me  
again, I am a general now.

LIBBIE  
(happy, crying)  
Oh, Armstrong, how I have missed  
you and worried.  
(pause)  
Well this probably won't do, Father  
would fall over if he saw me  
carrying on like this. Come along.

EXT. BACON HOME, BACK - DAY

LIBBIE leads CUSTER quickly around the big house to the vine  
covered garden out back. He picks her up and swings her  
around.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
This is the first retreat I've made  
since my promotion.

LIBBIE  
Silly old soldier, such talk.

She turns to him, they embrace and kiss for a long time, he  
slowly reaches up and takes his hat off and lets it fall.

CUSTER  
But, (pause) if this is what  
retreat is all about, I do like it.

LIBBIE  
I'm so proud of you but with all  
the battles, Father and I have  
spent much of our time looking at  
the casualty lists at the newspaper  
office, (pause) I've been worried.

CUSTER kisses her again to stop her from rambling. They kiss  
again for a long time.

CUSTER  
(gentle)  
But I'm here and you and I are  
together.

(MORE)

And Libbie Bacon I want to ask you  
to marry me, please, would you?

LIBBIE

(surprised, happy)

Well, of course, I was praying that  
you would ask me, but father must  
be told also.

CUSTER

I have dashed against a hundred

Rebel guns and even chased General Stuart off the field, but  
Judge Bacon puts the fear of God in me.

LIBBIE

He speaks highly of you and asks  
after your well being, Armstrong.

CUSTER moves nervously against the wall.

CUSTER

But does he understand our love for  
one another? The most important  
thing I feel, have ever felt.

LIBBIE

He tries to understand, at least  
he'll listen.

(pause)

Armstrong, you must talk to him  
before you go back; so we can plan  
for all of this.

CUSTER

Yes, you're right.

LIBBIE

I don't want to be without you  
again. We belong together and he'll  
understand that.

INT. BACON HOME - NIGHT

CUSTER is in uniform and sitting rather awkwardly in the  
parlor. Judge BACON is sitting on a large overstuffed chair.  
Both men are drinking tea and the Judge seems happy in his  
stuffy manner.

JUDGE BACON

This is indeed a pleasant surprise.

CUSTER

Yes, sir, Judge Bacon.

JUDGE BACON

Uh uh?

CUSTER

Hmmm, I trust you have been well?

The Judge settles himself in his chair, takes a sip of tea.

JUDGE BACON

Yes, very well thank you. With all the fighting we have been concerned about your well being.

CUSTER

Oh, yes. I do take precautions.

JUDGE BACON

Elizabeth tells me young George Yates has been added to your staff as has your younger brother Thomas?

CUSTER

This is correct, sir. George has been very active and Tom will be with us soon.

JUDGE BACON

That's good, very good. Sort of, (pause) some home folk to take care of one another I would guess.

CUSTER

It's like that, I would say.

JUDGE BACON

Ah, if I had a son I would want him to fight for the Union, but I've only Elizabeth and she is most precious and protected by myself and Mrs. Bacon.

(pause)

Now that is a very special love.

CUSTER

(nervous)

Judge Bacon, (pause) that is largely why I've come to see you.

JUDGE BACON

(attentive)  
Yes, what is it?

CUSTER  
It is about Elizabeth and, sir, it  
is about love; the love we share  
for one another.

JUDGE BACON is rather shocked by this and simply stares at  
CUSTER.

JUDGE BACON  
What is this?

CUSTER  
(waiting)  
Sir, I have asked Elizabeth to  
marry me and....  
(pause)  
and...

JUDGE BACON  
And what, Armstrong?

CUSTER  
And she has said yes. But she wants  
your blessings on this marriage.

JUDGE BACON  
Well, now, sir, this is a new  
development in our affairs isn't  
it?

CUSTER  
I believe it is Judge Bacon. But  
you must realize that I love her a  
great deal.

Judge BACON sits quietly for a while, he seems lost in  
thought and reflection. CUSTER is nervous.

JUDGE BACON  
These are very difficult times for  
us as a people.  
(little laugh)  
Need I tell you that.

CUSTER  
Sir?

JUDGE BACON

The war, the times, Armstrong. It makes us older as a nation and a people.

CUSTER

I suppose it would, Judge Bacon.

JUDGE BACON

You realize that I want the very best for my little girl, eh, she is 20 years old now.

CUSTER

Sir, if you are concerned about the temptations of drink or a soldier's life. I've always had a purpose, a dream.

JUDGE BACON

Goodness no, Custer. You are a good lad and considering the times, soldiering is a very popular profession.

(pause)

And, although neither you or my daughter realize it, I am very aware of that special feeling.

(pause)

Call it love; I guess that you two share.

(pause)

I suspect you will make my Libbie a good husband and she a good wife for you. I give this proposed union my full blessing.

Young CUSTER almost falls out of the chair, then gets up.

CUSTER

Sir, you will not regret this.

JUDGE BACON

No, Armstrong, I truly don't think that I will.

INT. FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, MONROE, MICHIGAN - DAY It

is several months later (Feb.



9, 1864), the church is full of local citizens, CUSTER family and REED family as well as members of the BACON crowd as Brig. Gen. CUSTER and ELIZABETH BACON exchange their wedding vows. CUSTER is in regulation dress blue uniform and she is in a white gown, beautiful, holding roses, she has cavalry yellow ribbons on her flowers, with several bridesmaids behind her. There are uniformed officers in the audience and among the wedding party; Capt. YATES is present as is Corp. TOM CUSTER.

MINISTER

And I pronounce you man and wife.

LIBBIE and CUSTER exchange happy glances.

MINISTER (CONT'D)

(smiling)

Er, yes, General you can do your duty and kiss the bride.

CUSTER lifts up her veil and kisses her very gently but warmly as a smiling congregation looks on.

CUT TO:

INT. BACON HOUSEHOLD, MONROE - EVENING

General GEORGE CUSTER and the new Mrs. CUSTER whirl around the huge front room. Guests are crowded in everywhere.

LIBBIE

You do dance well, General.

CUSTER

(smiling, laughing)

And you, Mrs. Custer, are my equal.

The music ends and the people and guests applaud the dashing and beautiful young couple. CUSTER waves to them as he and the smiling LIBBIE CUSTER work their way to the buffet table.

CAPTAIN YATES

Splendid Armstrong, splendid moves for a cavalryman.

GUEST

Ya look wonderful out there,  
several cheers for General and  
Mrs. Custer.

LADY GUEST

The very pride of Monroe.

ALL GUESTS

Hip hip hooray, hip hip hooray!

CUSTER and LIBBIE graciously acknowledge the cheers and good wishes from the guests. Judge BACON and his wife are standing beside EMMANUAL CUSTER and his wife.

TOM CUSTER

(holding up his hand)

Can I have your attention, your  
attention everyone.

The guest are attentive and gather around the CUSTER family.

LIBBIE

Thomas, what are you up to?

TOM CUSTER

You'll see.

(pause)

I would like to propose a toast to  
the happy couple. So, if you would  
all raise your glasses.

The crowd is very much in the mood of the event; CUSTER looks at his family, the BACONS' and his wife.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)

(very serious)

To my brother and his darling wife,  
may she bear the tribulations of a  
soldier's life and all its demands  
and adventures.

(pause)

And may she run their happy  
homestead as well as he runs his  
brigade. May God bless them and  
give them a long and happy union.

CAPTAIN YATES

Here, here.

ALL GUESTS

Here, here.

The glasses are drained and the orchestra strikes up some more dance music. Behind the General A.R. WAUD moves toward them.

INT. BACON HOME, EVENING

CUSTER

Mr. Waud, so glad you could be here.

WAUD

Congratulations, General.

CUSTER

Libbie, let me introduce you to Mr. Waud, the gentleman from Harper's.

LIBBIE

So delighted, Mr. Waud.

WAUD

Please call me Alfred, Mrs. Custer.

LIBBIE

You do such wonderful illustrations of my Armstrong.

WAUD picks up a drink, sips and listens.

WAUD

Mrs. Custer, your husband is the material for good illustrations.

CUSTER

Such flattery; Alfred merely wants to insure more coffee at my headquarters.

LIBBIE is amused and interested in WAUD's compliments and observations.

LIBBIE

Is it true, all the stories about my husband charging Rebel soldiers the way the papers say?

WAUD

Probably more true than even the newspapers tell you.

She looks at him tenderly, he smiles at both of them. Brother TOM CUSTER and Capt. GEORGE YATES walk up.

CUSTER  
More flattery I see.

LIBBIE  
Well, I knew he was brave but had hardly the notion he was that brave.

CUSTER  
I am a very careful fellow when it comes to chasing Rebs.

TOM CUSTER  
That will be the day, Armstrong. I'm sure Old Jeb Stuart and his boys have a few strong words for you.

LIBBIE  
My Boy General is that what they call him, Mr. Waud? The Boy General?

YATES  
In some circles they do.

WAUD  
Sadly, some of our own officers tend to look on General Custer's enthusiasm and accomplishments with a degree of, should we say, (pause) professional resentment.

TOM CUSTER Sounds like Kilpatrick and his crowd.

CUSTER  
Well, that does come with the laurels of my profession.

LIBBIE  
You mean, Armstrong, your fellow officers do not wish you well?

CUSTER  
It is nothing my dear, there are some hurt feelings from time to time.

YATES

Yes, a lot from Generals Kilpatrick and Merritt.

CUSTER

No, George, Wesley Merritt isn't a bad chap.

LIBBIE

How childish that grown men should behave in such a fashion.

CUSTER

It's really nothing.

WAUD

But, on to happier topics. Where will the happy couple go from here?

LIBBIE

(happily)

Oh, grand. We are off to Cleveland, then on to visit West Point, New York City and finally to Army Headquarters. Where is that now Armstrong?

CUSTER

Libbie will be setting up with me on the Rapidan River. For the time being.

(pause)

But, I have suggested that Washington might be a safer place for a young woman.

WAUD

Yes, but thankfully things are different, more genteel with Meade in command than Hooker.

LIBBIE

I am told there are many women living with their husbands at Headquarters.

CUSTER

Such is true, until the spring campaign starts.

LIBBIE

I am a general's wife and I will follow him and share in his life and the dangers of that profession.

WAUD

Spoken like a true Custer.

LIBBIE holds CUSTER tightly.

LIBBIE

I am a true Custer. 250. EXT. UNION HEADQUARTERS, RAPIDAN RIVER, VIRGINIA - DAY

Gen. CUSTER canters into Union Army headquarters. Following beside him is his new wife. LIBBIE CUSTER is dressed in a dark green riding outfit, six smartly dressed cavalry troopers from his brigade follow them. They ride up to the tent of Gen. PLEASONTON.

CUSTER

(smiling, saluting)

Good day, General Pleasonton.

PLEASONTON

And a good day to you Custer.

CUSTER

Sir, might I have the honor of introducing my wife, Elizabeth.

PLEASONTON

It is indeed an honor to meet you, Mrs. Custer.

LIBBIE

And I you General. Armstrong has told me many wonderful things about you.

PLEASONTON

He has, has he? All of them true I trust?

CUSTER

Of course.

LIBBIE

I'm sure of it.

PLEASONTON

And what are you doing for quarters?

CUSTER

We have secured a farmhouse not far from my headquarters in Stevensburg.

PLEASONTON

Splendid. I trust your time here will prove interesting Mrs. Custer.

(pause, he looks around)

Many young troopers and officers have gathered near the tent, most of them curious about the new Mrs. Custer.

PLEASONTON (CONT'D)

And I see you have made an impact already. Very good for morale.

(pause)

Curly, when you settle in, there will be a staff meeting in the morning, I'll talk to you then.

CUSTER

Looking forward to it, sir.

PLEASONTON

Good day now, it was a pleasure meeting you Mrs. Custer.

The little CUSTER party canters out of camp heading for his Brigade's headquarters.

INT. STEVESBURG FARMHOUSE, VIRGINIA - NIGHT

LIBBIE is waiting near the door for CUSTER to arrive home. His aide JOHNNIE CISCO and ELIZA are taking care of the dinner chores. Up the road rides the general and his staff of officers and flag carriers. A small parade of his pet dogs follow him.

ELIZA

See Ms. Custer you hear dem dogs first then you knows the Gen'l be almost home.

LIBBIE

Yes I see what you mean. You were right, I guess it will take me some time to get used to the way the Army runs.

ELIZA

Jes takes some time Ms. Custer. Jes takes some time.

LIBBIE

Everything ready?

ELIZA

Sure is, be a wonderful meal for yous two.

INT. CUSTER FARM, STEVENSBURG, VIRGINIA - NIGHT

CUSTER is relaxed and finishing up his meal. LIBBIE is eating across from him and several dogs are collected on the floor. CUSTER throws down pieces of meat for them.

CUSTER

So it was largely Kilpatrick's idea, I'm in agreement about striking deep into Virginia, and Charlottesville's Rebel supply depot is ripe, but...

His words stop and the impact of the mission and its dangers are not lost on LIBBIE. She is listening intently to him.

LIBBIE

But what Armstrong?

CUSTER

Kilpatrick seems to want to risk my Brigade in his attempt to have us act as a threat to Lee by tearing up the Lynchburg Railroad Bridge.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

This will give him time, at least he thinks it will, to go around the Rebel's right, strike Richmond and try to free some fifteen thousand Union prisoners there.

LIBBIE

Do you think it will work?

CUSTER



(pausing)  
Don't know, Mrs. Custer, but I don't want to sacrifice the 2nd Michigan simply to let Kilpatrick look good on his after action report.

LIBBIE  
But what can you do?

CUSTER  
Considering I will have only my fifteen hundred troops, and my old classmate General Rosser is out where I'm heading with at least five thousand mounted troops, and we don't know where Stuart and his division is.

(pause)  
I could just keep marching west when things become difficult. But whatever, the greater the odds the greater the glory.

LIBBIE is truly concerned and it shows on her face.

LIBBIE  
Well then, this is what being a soldier's wife is about.  
(pause)  
Knowing such things and being able to understand and live with them.

CUSTER looks at her; his face is serious.

CUSTER  
You realize that now, perhaps more than before. It is difficult to do these things. To take the risks.

LIBBIE  
(smiling)  
But you'll do it because, Armstrong, you are a soldier. And I will listen and wait for your return simply because I've chosen to be a soldier's wife.  
(pause)  
I'll always be there when you return; God, I am sure, will protect you.

CUSTER

God or Custer's Luck.

LIBBIE

(pause)

Or that to.

The glow from the fireplace warns the entire room.

CUSTER

(thoughtfully)

Mrs. Libbie Custer, how I love the way that sounds. How I love you.

LIBBIE

And I my Boy General.

CUSTER is looking softly at her. He gets up and reaches for her hand. They move off together.

INT. BEDROOM, CUSTER FARM, STEVENSBURG, VIRGINIA - NIGHT

CUSTER and LIBBIE are gently kissing under the thick quilt of the master bed.

EXT. UNION CAMP, VIRGINIA - MORNING

A wet February wind blows across the group of people gathered to see CUSTER's 2nd Michigan Brigade off on their famous "Charlottesville Raid". PLEASONTON and KILPATRICK are both there as is LIBBIE. She looks strong and serious. Other staff officers gather round as CUSTER leads the red scarfed troopers of the Brigade past. He canters his horse up to the viewers.

PLEASONTON

It's almost 50 miles to Charlottesville, be careful and burn those bridges.

CUSTER

(confident)

It will be taken care of, Sir.

KILPATRICK

No word on Stuart yet. You may find him on your flank so be cautious.

PLEASONTON turns to KILPATRICK in mock surprise.

PLEASONTON

General Kilpatrick, when have you  
known General Custer to be careful?  
(pause)  
You'll do well, Armstrong. Good  
luck to you.

CUSTER  
Thank you, sir. Good luck in  
Richmond Kil, tell Mr. Davis,  
Custer sends his regards.

The little collection of people smile and laugh. LIBBIE looks  
up to her husband. He salutes PLEASONTON and reaches out to  
take her hand.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Have Eliza cook up something fancy  
for my victory dinner.

LIBBIE  
I'll see to it, (pause) be careful.

CUSTER  
Always am.

CUSTER gently releases her hand and canters back to the  
Brigade. LIBBIE watches them move past. ALLEN WAUD rides up.  
He is dressed in brown hunting gear, with binoculars and  
shoulder bag.

WAUD  
Mrs. Custer, General Pleasonton,  
good morning all.

LIBBIE  
Good morning, Mr. Waud.

PLEASONTON  
Hi Al.

WAUD  
Pleasant morning for a ride in the  
country, enemy held country I might  
note.

PLEASONTON  
For God's sake Al, give us front  
page if this thing works out. We  
need it, public support for the war  
is sagging badly.

KILPATRICK

(arrogantly)

Waud you should ride with me and  
the rest of the Division. You'll be  
doing sketches in Richmond.

WAUD

Of course, and all very well  
General Kilpatrick, but I assure  
you the Boy General will give both  
the Rebels and the newspapermen  
enough to do.

He smiles over towards LIBBIE, tips his hat to those gathered  
and puts spurs to his horse.

LIBBIE

Be careful, Mr. Waud.

WAUD

Please call me Alfred, thank you  
Mrs. Custer, I will.

KILPATRICK

(turning away)

What kind of journalist is he  
anyway. The story is in Richmond.

CHARLOTTESVILLE RAID - MONTAGE

CUSTER conferring with Capt. YATES.

Lines of Union cavalry riding through the Virginia country.

Groups of black ex-slaves following the Union soldiers.

Sergeant CHURCHILL carrying the flowing battle flag as he  
and CUSTER canter at the front of the column.

CUSTER with pistol drawn and several dozen of his men  
rounding up dejected looking Confederate prisoners.

Wooden railroad bridges burning as CUSTER and his brigade  
look on.

WARD working intently on illustrations as more prisoners  
are taken.

CUSTER leading a tired Brigade of Union cavalry back to  
friendly lines.

INT. UNION CAMP, HEADQUARTERS TENT - NIGHT

A very happy Gen. PLEASONTON is reviewing CUSTER's report. The tent is empty and CUSTER is pouring himself some coffee.

PLEASONTON

Grand performance, gave the Rebs something to be worried about. And not a man lost, very good work.

CUSTER moves towards PLEASONTON while he sips his coffee.

CUSTER

And Kilpatrick?

PLEASONTON Boggled down in the mud just outside of Richmond. Missed his mark altogether I'm afraid.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Bad piece of luck.

PLEASONTON puts the report on the field table and looks at the map beside it.

PLEASONTON

It was a fool's errand and it cost us three thousand horses and almost three hundred men.

(pause)

Kilpatrick was forced into a footrace down to Harrison's landing, some of our best cavalry are coming back to camp by boat, and in disgrace.

CUSTER

That's a sad comment on the Union war effort.

(pause)

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

And also, a great many of my soldier's mounts were nothing more than run down draft animals; no better suited for cavalry service than a dairy cow. Someone should look into our purchase policy for cavalry horses.

PLEASONTON is angry at KILPATRICK, he slams his hand down on the desk.

PLEASONTON

Damn it, Kilpatrick went over my head on this one, directly to Lincoln.

(pause)

It was a political operation and the command will suffer.

CUSTER

So Kilpatrick and his efforts were bogged in both politics and Rebel mud?

PLEASONTON

(quietly)

Reputations will fall because of it.

INT. CUSTER FARM, STEVENSBURG, VIRGINIA - DAY

ELIZA AND JOHNNY CISCO are helping CUSTER pack up LIBBIE's belongings.

LIBBIE

This does not seem very fair, Armstrong.

CUSTER

Yes, but it comes directly from General Meade, all ladies are out of camp.

LIBBIE

Buy why?

CUSTER

The spring campaign will not be a pleasant affair and certainly not a place for a lady.

LIBBIE sits on a kitchen chair, she is pouting.

LIBBIE

Except Aunt Eliza.

CUSTER

Yes, what do you think about General Meade making an exception of you Eliza?

ELIZA walks out holding a bundle of blankets, she stops in the kitchen for a moment.

ELIZA

Neighborly of Gen'l Meade, jes as long as it don mean that I's not a lady.

CUSTER

(laughing)

I am sure it simply means that the Union Army can't get along without you.

ELIZA heads out to the wagon.

ELIZA

Then I like the man, like him a whole lot.

CUSTER

Libbie, come along now we have a train to catch and some grand adventures in Washington.

LIBBIE

I guess it must be done, but does General Meade know just how much I am going to miss you?

CUSTER

Next time I talk to the good general I will inform him of that fact.

INT. ORANGE AND ALEXANDRIA LINE TRAINS, PASSENGER COACH - DAY

A rather barrel chested man with a short red beard and wearing a Major General's uniform is moving along the aisle of the train. He is smoking a short cigar and addresses several people as he passes their seats.

GRANT

(quietly)

Good day, hmmm good day to you.

INT. PASSENGER COACH - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE sit together and watch the Virginia countryside. GRANT makes his way to a seat across from them. CUSTER sees a senior officer and starts to rise as is the custom.

GRANT  
No, no, please not necessary.

CUSTER  
Allow me to introduce myself,  
General.  
(pause)  
Armstrong Custer of the 2nd  
Michigan Brigade and this is my  
wife Elizabeth.

GRANT  
Oh, yes, delighted to meet both of  
you.

GRANT settles in and undoes several of the brass buttons on  
his jacket.

GRANT (CONT'D)  
Custer, let me see Custer, yes the  
wild raid several months ago on the  
enemy depots; around General Bobbie  
Lee's flank.

CUSTER  
(quietly)  
Yes that was my Brigade.

GRANT  
Yes, that was you wasn't it? The  
Boy General?  
(chuckling)  
I read Harpers also Mr. Custer.  
Quite a husband you have here Mrs.  
Custer.

LIBBIE  
Yes, I believe we don't know your  
name, sir?

GRANT  
(surprised)  
Good gracious I am sorry.

He sticks out his hand to CUSTER.

GRANT (CONT'D)  
Grant, Sam Grant.

CUSTER  
Business in the capital, sir?

GRANT



My gracious I guess you could call it that.

(pause)

I trust General Custer you are a product of West Point.

CUSTER

Spring of 1861, sir.

GRANT

You know I don't think I can recall a thing I learned at the Point.

CUSTER

General Grant, in that case we have much in common for I graduated last in my class.

GRANT

Well you sure are doing something right young Custer because you already have your first star.

(pause)

No, wait a moment I did learn something. About horses, yes, short men like myself ride big horses.

CUSTER

Perhaps.

LIBBIE

Why is that so, General Grant.

GRANT

It is very true. Makes em look taller. I look like a flea on a dog's back on my horse but I would not trade the beast away.

(pause)

He gives me the height I need.

EXT. WASHINGTON TRAIN STATION - DAY

The passengers have gotten off at the crowded station. GRANT turns to the CUSTERS' as the luggage is being picked up by porters.

GRANT

General, Mrs. Custer. I hope I didn't bore you during our trip.

CUSTER

I enjoyed the company.

LIBBIE

And so did I.

GRANT

You are a delightful couple, good  
afternoon to you.

GRANT turns, walks away and several officers and enlisted men  
walk up and greet him.

LIBBIE

What an interesting little man,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

He was all of that, made a good  
reputation out west.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, LINCOLN'S OFFICE - DAY PRESIDENT

LINCOLN is standing amid a collection of government  
officials, among them Secretary of War STANTON. Gen. GRANT is  
talking with them.

LINCOLN

General, we have followed your  
victories very closely here at the  
White House.

GRANT

Well, Mr. President, I don't know  
if I should be flattered or not.

LINCOLN smiles as he walks slowly over to the big office  
window.

LINCOLN

We all have a vested interested in  
the outcome of the conflict,  
General. Many of our daily concerns  
evolve from how our armies are  
doing against the rebellious  
states.

GRANT lights up another one of his cigars, exhales and  
listens intently to the President.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

(thoughtfully)

We have our interests and I have  
players in this game that I make  
special note of.

(pause)  
You have been one.

GRANT  
I trust, sir, you are satisfied  
with my work.

LINCOLN  
For the most part I am very  
impressed.

GRANT  
That is a good start.

LINCOLN  
You fight General and that is one  
virtue that most of my commanders  
have been lacking since the start  
of these unpleasantries. The desire  
to get out there and mix it up with  
our wayward countrymen is  
important.

GRANT pivots a little on his feet, puffing occasionally at  
his cigar.

GRANT  
It's my job and it's in my  
character, Mr. President.

LINCOLN turns towards GRANT.

LINCOLN  
  
As my new Commander of the Armies  
of the Republic you'll have over  
half a million men under arms and  
that includes those in General  
Meade's Army of the Potomac.

GRANT  
Yes, I will want to make peace with  
Meade and set things straight.

STANTON  
(quickly)  
You'll find Meade a man you can  
work with.

GRANT  
He'll have to be a man that can  
fight, for I plan to take the Army

of the Potomac South as soon as the roads dry.

LINCOLN

That is exactly what I want you to do. As I'm sure you realize your victories will greatly enhance our chances for re-election.

GRANT

Ah, yes, Mr. President, in light of my need for command I would like to shake things up a bit at headquarters; bring in some of the men who have served me out West.

LINCOLN

(smiling)

I understand that requirement.

GRANT

Perhaps, bring General Sheridan in to take over the cavalry, make it a fighting arm again.

STANTON

After that blunder near Richmond I truly wonder if it can be saved.

GRANT's attention has been focused on that.

GRANT

Yes, the Kilpatrick affair. But young, what's his name, goodness I met him on the train into Washington.

STANTON

Custer, Brigadier Custer of the Michigan Brigade.

LINCOLN

One of the brightest generals we have.

GRANT

Interesting young officer, beautiful wife, should watch him.

(pause)

No, Custer is a fighter also, and Mr. President, Mr. Stanton there will be plenty of that to be done

this Spring. There will be no turning back.

WASHINGTON, D.C. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

General and Mrs. CUSTER are greeted at the door by the Sergeant At Arms. CUSTER hands the man his card.

SERGEANT

Well, greetings to you General Custer.

(pause)

Maam.

He bows deeply to Mrs. CUSTER.

CUSTER

Thank you, we would like to view the proceedings.

SERGEANT

General, I will escort you and Mrs. Custer to the gallery.

INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, GALLERY - DAY

The Sergeant At Arms shows the CUSTERS' to their seats.

SERGEANT

General, if it is alright with you I will tell Congressman Kellogg that you are in attendance. He is always happy to meet folks from his home state.

CUSTER and LIBBIE settle down to listen to the debates on the floor, LIBBIE grips her husbands hand, he smiles at her.

INT. HOUSE FLOOR, SPEAKERS PODIUM

The Sergeant At Arms is whispering to a distinguished, well dressed older man. He nods, smiles and looks up towards the viewing area then moves to the speakers podium.

INT. HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

Congressman WILLIAM KELLOGG talks briefly with several members of the House; they also glance towards the balcony

and smile and nod their approval. KELLOGG moves to address the members and public.

KELLOGG

I would like to take a short recess from the business of government to introduce to you one of those brave military leaders who are so dedicated to protecting that same government.

People are rustling about in their seats.

KELLOGG (CONT'D)

It is indeed an honor and great privilege to introduce General George Armstrong Custer from the state of Michigan.

A great thunder of applause rises from all present. KELLOGG directs their attention towards the balcony.

KELLOGG (CONT'D)

If you would please rise General.

INT. HOUSE, BALCONY - DAY

CUSTER looks at LIBBIE, both are surprised and pleased. He gives her a squeeze and gets up to the wild applause of the people who give him a standing ovation. CUSTER looks majestic as he waves to the gathering and turns to his wife, motions for her to stand up.

CUSTER

This is a pleasant surprise.

LIBBIE

(smiling)

They know you, Armstrong, they really do.

INT. HOUSE, SPEAKER'S PODIUM - DAY

KELLOGG is clapping with the rest of them.

KELLOGG

General, would you be kind and perhaps come down here to be introduced to those present and maybe say a few words?

CUSTER seems relaxed as he stands behind the podium, LIBBIE is sitting beside him and an expectant air fills the room.

CUSTER

I want to thank Congressman Kellogg for giving me the opportunity to say a few words to you.

(pause)

Recently I returned from a raid deep into Virginia. Most of you know that our efforts met with mixed success.

(pause)

A problem my Brigade faced was not always the enemy, it was some poor quality horses that were sent to us. It does not take a scholar to realize that a cavalryman has got to have a good horse under him.

(pause)

Union boys and their leaders are as good, no they are better, than any troops of the Confederacy. But we must depend on our elected leaders to make sure we get the proper equipment and animals to win this war.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(pause)

Now, I'm very proud to serve in our Army and risk my life to protect this Union. My request from you is simply to make sure the government officials responsible for supporting us do their jobs, and do their jobs right. Thank you.

The crowd goes wild with applause and cheers. CUSTER nods and acknowledges their appreciation as he walks down among a mass of well wishers.

INT. CAPITOL BUILDING, MAIN LOBBY - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE are making their way out of the building when Senator CHANDLER, also from Michigan, walks up to them. He is a dark haired, good looking man with an obvious appeal to the ladies.

CHANDLER

Ah, there you are. General I'm  
Senator Zach Chandler.

CUSTER  
Yes, nice to meet you Senator.

He walks along with them through the halls of the Capitol.

CHANDLER  
I enjoyed your talk and this must  
be Mrs. Custer?

CUSTER  
Excuse me, Elizabeth meet Senator  
Chandler.

LIBBIE  
Very honored Senator.

He bows, reaches out and kisses her hand.

CHANDLER  
The honor is purely mine.  
(pause)  
Your husband has that rare ability  
to stir up people and bring out the  
very spirit in them.

LIBBIE  
One of his many qualities I have  
found.

LIBBIE smiles at CUSTER.

CHANDLER  
Yes, I am sure of that.  
(pause)  
Don't worry we will be looking into  
the procurement of mounts for the  
Army.

CUSTER  
A life or death matter I'm afraid.

CHANDLER  
General, does the political arena  
interest you?

CUSTER  
You flatter me, Senator Chandler. I  
am a soldier and that is truly  
service enough for me.



CHANDLER

Yes, of course, merely thought I would inquire as to your intentions.

(pause)

Now what brings you and Mrs. Custer to Washington?

INT. CAPITOL DOORWAY - DAY

The three stop near the great door leading out of the building, CUSTER and LIBBIE are enjoying the attentions of the Senator. He is enjoying looking at Mrs. CUSTER.

CUSTER

Mrs. Custer will be staying in the city during the upcoming campaign.

CHANDLER

Of course, of course no place for a woman near an Army camp anyway.

(pause)

Yes and I hear Grant will take the Army right through Virginia like he did at Vicksburg.

CUSTER

What was that Senator?

CHANDLER

Yesterday, its not general information yet but the President has made General Sam Grant the new Commander of all Union forces.

LIBBIE

Armstrong, did we not meet Mr. Grant on the trip up here?

CUSTER

The same man, I'm confident of it.

CHANDLER

A fighter Grant is, I fear a hard time of things this Spring.

(pause)

I trust Mrs. Custer will be available to see the sights?

CUSTER

Yes, thank you, I'm sure Elizabeth would appreciate the company.

CHANDLER puts out his hand to CUSTER.

CHANDLER

Well, I must be going. Once again,  
delighted to have talked to both of  
you.

CUSTER

Good day, Senator.

EXT. CAPITOL STEPS - DAY

Arm in arm the CUSTERS' walk down the steps of the Capitol.

LIBBIE

General Grant seemed so common,  
such a plain man. I could hardly  
believe he was a general at all.

CUSTER

Nice enough fellow, got a devil of  
a reputation for getting things  
done and getting men killed out  
West.

LIBBIE

Oh, Armstrong what does that mean?

CUSTER

Just what the Senator said; should  
be a very warm Spring in Virginia.

UNION CAVALRY HQ, VIRGINIA - DAY

CUSTER rides up to his headquarters in a military ambulance  
and is greeted by Captain YATES.

YATES

Thought you'd give this all up,  
Armstrong?

CUSTER

No, not even for a very beautiful  
wife like Libbie.

They walk towards the HQ tent, there are troops all around  
and the camp is busy in preparation for the campaign.

INT. HQ TENT - DAY

Both men are looking over a map; CUSTER is also going through some letters and papers that have come for him.

YATES

How was the city, did Libbie take things well?

CUSTER

We kept busy, theater, dinner, even got to talk at the House.

YATES

Yes, we heard about your talk.

CUSTER

Good news I trust?

YATES

As far as news goes; Pleasonton is out, Kilpatrick is being sent West and a Grant man, Phil Sheridan is in charge of cavalry.

(pause)

And he had some genuine ideas on what you said to Congress.

CUSTER

Well I'm back and things are off in grand fashion now aren't they.

(pause)

Trust I should go over and make my introductions to the man.

YATES

The New York Herald is helping you in that task.

INT. UNION CAVALRY HQ, SHERIDAN'S TENT - DAY

SHERIDAN's face is covered with shaving cream and he is peering into a mirror. An officer comes in.

AIDE

General Sheridan, Sir, General Custer is here to see you.

SHERIDAN

Grand, show him in.

AIDE

Yes sir.

CUSTER pushes aside the canvas door and enters the tent. He looks confident and somewhat amused at SHERIDAN's appearance.

CUSTER

Good afternoon, General Sheridan.

SHERIDAN

This is an unexpected surprise. A visit from the Boy General.

(pause)

Who has the ear of Congress when it comes to horse flesh.

CUSTER

Could never resist the opportunity to charge when I got em in the flank.

SHERIDAN looks at him, a slow smile spreading across his face.

SHERIDAN

You know Custer, I was going to get rid of you. Send you packing along with that buffoon Kilpatrick.

SHERIDAN stares hard at himself and starts to shave.

CUSTER

And?

SHERIDAN

And I talked to people.

(pause)

Except for a few malcontents I couldn't really find anyone who doesn't like you. Better yet, Custer, just about everybody respects you as a cavalryman. He fights most of em told me, ouch, damn.

CUSTER

General, try this.

He unsheathes his sword and hands it to SHERIDAN.

SHERIDAN

Yes, good blade, works well. So this thing about the horses needed to be said. I was angry simply because I wanted to say it first and loudest. But politics and generals don't mix well.

CUSTER

Can't blame a man for wanting to set the record straight. Might save a few lives.

SHERIDAN

Damn sure thing. Sam Grant is running the show down here... what do they call you, damned if I'll call you that Boy General stuff. Armstrong, isn't it?

CUSTER

Yes.

SHERIDAN

I'm going to take the cavalry right at Uncle Bob Lee's boys and heaven keep him if Stuart or Mosby try to stop me.

CUSTER

Now there's an idea that a cavalry officer can live by.

SHERIDAN

I want you to be a part of that.

(pause)

I've structured things a bit differently but it is all done to make us the best in the coming battles.

CUSTER

Sounds like my kind of war.

SHERIDAN

Grand, very grand. Sam Grant will show em a thing about fighting that no commander has done so far. And we'll draw em out for Grant, are you with me?

CUSTER

General, you can count me in on every moment of it.

EXT. UNION HQ, GRANT'S TENT - DAY

Most of the Generals and staff officers of the Army of the Potomac are gathered; MEADE, MERRITT, PENNINGTON, GREGG and so on. SHERIDAN and CUSTER stand off to the side. Lieutenant General GRANT emerges from his tent, they cease talking as GRANT looks slowly across the assembled officers.

GRANT

Eh, good morning gentlemen. Hello General Meade, General Gregg, Phil Sheridan and young Custer.

(pause)

I trust Mrs. Custer is well and that your men are getting better horses ...ah... compliments of the House of Representatives?

There is laughter among the officers.

CUSTER

Quite well, thank you, General Grant.

GRANT

Well then, good to hear it.

GRANT takes out a cigar, lights it and takes a long puff, then walks over to a map nailed on several boards.

GRANT (CONT'D)

If you will bear with me on this map here, gentlemen. I will probably end any suspense that you may have concerning our intentions.

(pause)

Gentlemen, tomorrow I am taking the Army across the Rapidan River to find and engage General Lee and the Army of Northern Virginia.

(pause)

I realize you have been waiting for this and am confident that your commands are both provisioned and rearing to get their teeth in to Uncle Bob's Rebels. So now all of us are going to get the chance.

MERRITT

General, what about Richmond?

GRANT

Good question. We'll get there but any occupation of the Confederate capital is only half a victory if the Rebels are still active and capable in the field.

(pause)

Richmond will act as the bait for Lee. We head for it and he, Stuart or Longstreet or someone in gray will die trying to stop us.

GRANT pauses for a moment, puffing on his cigar, his eyes encompass the gathering before him.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Since March last I have talked to most of you concerning our operations. Every commander knows what I expect, is aware of what is needed.

(pause)

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, let's be honest with ourselves. This will be a bloody affair but there is no turning back. Not now... not until this rebellion is brought to a successful end. And this is the Army to do it. We move in the morning, dismissed.

The staff salutes and GRANT ducks into his tent.

EXT. UNION ARMY ON THE MOVE - DAY

Lines of blue uniformed infantry and wagons and artillery crowd the roads. Groups of blacks watch from fields and fences as the troops move past.

CUSTER (V.O)

My Dearest Libbie, General Grant seems a man determined to see this war through. I am very impressed with General Sheridan also.

EXT. UNION CAVALRY ON THE MOVE - DAY

SHERIDAN is riding beside CUSTER, battle flags of both men are snapping in the breeze. There are cavalry in long columns behind them.

CUSTER (V.O)

Although a serious and dedicated man he is not without his moments of humor and good spirits.

Another man rides up to them; he is General ALFRED TORBERT, CUSTER's commander in the 1st Cavalry Division. He wears a immaculate uniform, side whiskers and seems rather sour.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

My Division commander seems the opposite and I shall have to be aware of him. The Army does offer an interesting collection of tent mates.

EXT. WILDERNESS BATTLEFIELD - MAY 1864 DAY

The three officers canter past rows of grave markers, with medical crews working and a figure bent over a camera tripod taking photographs of the battlefield.

CUSTER (V.O)

We have already fought Lee at a place called the Wilderness. It proved to be difficult going for two days, in the end Grant broke off the battle and we are heading South again. General Sheridan hopes to take the cavalry to Richmond and I hope to cover myself in glory if he does. Pray you are well? Have you been to the theater? Don't worry about me. All my love, Armstrong.

EXT. UNION CAVALRY HQ, NEAR YELLOW TAVERN, VIRGINIA - DAY

SHERIDAN and his entire staff are gathered over maps out in the open. They are dirty and sweaty; CUSTER and MERRITT are nearest their Commander as he explains his plan of attack. The sound of cannon fire is in the distance.

SHERIDAN

Scouts tell us Jeb Stuart and his damned Black Horse Raiders are



trying to screen us and block our  
move towards Richmond.

(pause)

Lee and Grant are going at here  
near Spotsylvania, makes Lee too  
far away to help old Jeb. So we  
will move around Lee's flank and  
head for the Confederate rear area;  
destroy property and  
communications. It is my intention  
to fight Stuart wherever he shows  
up. We'll give the man a fair  
fight, a regular cavalry duel  
behind his lines and in his  
territory. And damn it, gentlemen,  
we are strong and can beat that  
rascal.

(pause)

Besides, thanks to Old Curly we got  
better horses. Gentlemen, let's get  
to this.

CUT TO:

#### CUSTER'S BRIGADE ON THE MARCH - DAY

CUSTER with several officers including PENNINGTON and YATES  
canter in front of a column of cavalry over a rolling  
Virginia field. Here and there little clusters of ex-slaves  
wave and yell.

CUSTER

These people are leaving in groups  
Captain Yates. Tells us something  
about our cause.

YATES

Armstrong, we've got riders coming.  
And they look like our scouts.

Ten cavalry come thundering across the field and up to the  
command group. A young lieutenant salutes CUSTER.

SCOUT LIEUTENANT

Morning, General. Sir, I would like  
to report upwards of a brigade of  
Rebels dismounted along and across  
Brook Turnpike.

CUSTER

(excited)  
What have they got for artillery?

SCOUT LIEUTENANT  
Light guns in extended order with a  
lot of dismounted troopers just  
waiting for us.

CUSTER gag checks his horse and takes off his floppy dark  
hat, waving it wildly.

CUSTER  
George, what do you know it's  
Stuart and he's ready to fight.

YATES  
(happy)  
Sheridan gets his wish.

CUSTER  
And we are going to get those guns.

YATES  
Orders, sir?

The 2nd Brigade staff gather around the happy CUSTER, acting  
Division Commander General MERRITT rides up with his staff.

CUSTER  
Merritt, up to our front is Jeb  
Stuart. I'm going to charge his  
artillery and take the fight out of  
him.

MERRITT  
Charge in General, you have my  
support.

CUSTER  
Now we'll show Old Jeb what  
fighting is all about.

EXT. 2ND BRIGADE FRONT - DAY

CUSTER canters along his Brigade yelling out orders. YATES  
and flag bearer Sergeant CHURCHILL follow him, several of his  
dogs trot along.

CUSTER  
(very excited)

5th and 6th Michigan dismount as skirmishers. Colonel Staff and Colonel Granger form squadrons.

GRANGER

Very good.

CUSTER

1st Michigan post front. 7th Michigan in support.

Lines of blue cavalry with glittering regimental flags thunder into formation.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Captain Yates, go back and tell Alex Pennington that there won't be time for his support. Have him follow the advance.

(pause)

Gentlemen, by columns of squadrons, forward at the walk.

(pause)

Drum Major have the band strike up Yankee Doodle.

EXT. 2ND BRIGADE BAND, MOUNTED IN FIELD - DAY

Sergeant Major AXTEL, with dignified sideburns and immaculate uniform turns to the two dozen mounted musicians.

AXTEL

Let's have music for this mornings' festivities. Yankee Doodle for the general, if you would.

(pause)

One... two... three...

The rousing strains of Yankee Doodle filter across the field.

EXT. 2ND BRIGADE LINE, MOVING ACROSS FIELD - DAY

CUSTER has cantered out in front of his Brigade, the sound of the band's music behind them. He is followed by Sergeant CHURCHILL and the battle flag.

EXT. UNION REAR - DAY

General MERRITT and his staff are watching through binoculars as CUSTER's Brigade moves to the attack. General SHERIDAN and his staff ride up to MERRITT.

SHERIDAN  
What's Curly up to?

MERRITT  
I think he is going to charge  
Stuart's guns. The Invincibles are  
dug in across Brook Road.

SHERIDAN  
(excited)  
Damn it, well good for him. I think  
General Stuart has made a big  
mistake.

SHERIDAN also brings his binoculars up.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE, ON THE MOVE - DAY

Lines of men move across the field. CUSTER is out front.

CUSTER  
Dress on the colors, gentlemen. At  
the walk, keep it at the walk and  
hold the lines.

EXT. STUART'S COMMAND - DAY

General STUART with his plumed hat and gold embroidered gray uniform is on foot near his soldiers watching the approaching Union cavalry.

STUART  
Captain Dorsey I do believe they  
plan on charging directly down on  
us.

DORSEY  
Those damn Yankees have lost their  
senses, Sir.

STUART  
I plan on having them lose more  
than that.  
(pause)  
Have Colonel Green bring his  
artillery down on them.

EXT. CONFEDERATE LINES - DAY

Confederate artillery pieces start to open fire.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE, MOVING ACROSS FIELD - DAY Rifle

shots and cannon explosions are hitting the Union

cavalry. CUSTER holds his composure as several soldiers fall from their saddles. Slowly he draws his saber.

CUSTER  
Wolverines, draw sabers!

EXT. LINES OF CAVALRY - DAY

The entire line of Union cavalry draw their sabers, resting them against their shoulders.

EXT. CUSTER LEADING HIS BRIGADE - DAY

Several more explosions rock the advancing cavalry. CUSTER holds his sword out.

CUSTER  
Trot, march.  
(pause)  
At the gallop, buglers, sound the charge. Come on Wolverines!

CUSTER spurs his horse into a spirited gallop.

EXT. UNION CAVALRY BRIGADE, IN FIELD - DAY

With a loud shout the entire line erupts into a gallop, drawn sabers are lowered.

EXT. STUART'S POSITION - DAY STUART

is watching the Union attack.

STUART  
The fools are coming right on through us. Captain Dorsey have my horse sent for.  
(pause)  
We'll counter them with a mounted attack.

STUART mounts up and spurs his horse.

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS - DAY

STUART and DORSEY as well as several other officers are riding full gallop behind their troopers. The sound of battle fills the air.

STUART  
(yelling)  
Sons of the Confederacy hold this  
line. Do your duty and hold this  
line.  
(pause)  
Don't let them Yankees whip us.

EXT. SHERIDAN'S POSITION - DAY

SHERIDAN is watching the attack intently. MERRITT is also following the action.

SHERIDAN  
Magnificent control of that  
Brigade.  
(pause)  
Custer is either a fool or a very  
talented leader of cavalry.

MERRITT  
I feel he is neither, just damn  
lucky.

SHERIDAN  
Now. Wes, give him a chance, let's  
see how he handles Stuart.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE, ATTACKING REBEL POSITIONS - DAY

CUSTER, hat gone, sword held to the front and red scarf blowing, gallops in front of his charging Brigade. Soldiers fall from their saddles and horses go down as Confederate marksmen fire on them. CUSTER cascades over the rebel lines followed by hundreds of his troopers and desperate hand to hand fighting follows.

EXT. BATTLE OF YELLOW TAVERN - DAY

Union cavalry are slashing at Confederates who are starting to run. CUSTER is wielding his sword recklessly among the

fleeing Rebels, many surrender. Gen. STUART and guard are fighting off Union cavalry. STUART knows all is lost and looks around. He is hit by rifle fire and slumps on his horse. DORSEY spurs his horse over to his commander as do several other men.

DORSEY

Sir, sir are you alright?

STUART

Get the men out of this, damn it.

DORSEY

Hobart, get General Stuart away  
from here.

A group of cavalry surround the wounded STUART and escort him, still mounted, from the fight.

EXT. SHERIDAN'S POSITION - DAY

SHERIDAN puts down his binoculars and looks at the action for moment.

SHERIDAN

(satisfied, reflective)

Call it what you will, Wes, luck,  
foolishness, arrogance whatever?

(pause)

General Stuart's Invincibles are  
running away like hens to the coop.  
Brilliant charge.

(pause)

General Merritt, send one of your  
staff officers to General Custer  
and give old Curly my compliments.  
That was a grand charge and both he  
and his Brigade need to be told  
that.

MERRITT

I will, General.

SHERIDAN

And, Wesley.

MERRITT

Yes, sir?

SHERIDAN

Don't be too hard on Custer. He is  
headstrong, and a bit rash.

MERRITT

Perhaps so, General Sheridan.  
At our expense.

SHERIDAN

Hell, I'm glad he is on our side.

SHERIDAN spurs his horse and canters off with his staff,  
leaving MERRITT to think about CUSTER and their conversation.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

CUSTER is walking his horse through the battlefield, injured  
and dead men are everywhere. Dozens of prisoners are being  
pushed back to Union lines. PENNINGTON and YATES and several  
officers ride with CUSTER.

CUSTER

It was a beautiful charge. The men  
performed very well wouldn't you  
say, Colonel Granger?

GRANGER

That they did, General.

CUSTER

I must admit, gentlemen. I do live  
for this.

(pause)

There is just nothing finer, not a  
fine morning, not a woman, not  
money, truly nothing.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

A young officer rides up followed by Capt. Dorsey, captured  
in the fight. He stops and salutes CUSTER and his staff.

LIEUTENANT

Lieutenant Williams, 5th Michigan,  
General. I have a prisoner, General  
Stuart's aide as a matter of fact,  
sir.



DORSEY

Captain Jacob Dorsey, 1st Virginia  
Cavalry, on the staff of General  
Stuart.

DORSEY salutes CUSTER smartly, CUSTER returns the salute.

LIEUTENANT

Captain tells me General Stuart got  
himself wounded in the fight.

CUSTER

What's this Captain Dorsey? Stuart  
hurt?

DORSEY is angry and distraught.

DORSEY

Damn all of you, Sir. It's true  
and we should kill every Yankee in  
Virginia because of it.

YATES

I'll ask you to stop your  
insubordination, Captain.

CUSTER

Now there's a development for us.

(pause)

I regret to hear that, Captain  
Dorsey. Lieutenant please make the  
captain comfortable. Good day.

The staff watch DORSEY and his guard ride away.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

General Stuart doesn't seem quite  
as invincible now does he  
gentlemen?

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWNHOUSE, WASHINGTON - EVENING

An expensive carriage pulls up driven by uniformed men. Door  
opens and Senator ZACH CHANDLER in dress cape and evening  
clothes steps out and walks to the townhouse door. He knocks  
and a dignified elderly lady answers.

LADY

Good evening, Senator Chandler.

CHANDLER  
Good evening, Mrs. Penton.

LADY  
Mrs. Custer will be right down.  
And how is Mrs. Chandler?

INT. TOWNHOUSE, WASHINGTON - EVENING

CHANDLER steps into the parlor, the LADY follows. LIBBIE CUSTER beautifully dressed is just coming down the stairs. CHANDLER watches her with more than just polite interest.

CHANDLER  
Not well, she will miss the evening's event.  
(pause)  
Good evening, Elizabeth. You look lovely.

LIBBIE  
How kind of you Senator. Did I hear you mention that Mrs. Chandler is ill?

CHANDLER  
Yes, (pause) she won't be attending with us.

LIBBIE  
(surprised)  
Oh, I see.

CHANDLER  
I trust that will be alright with you, Elizabeth?

LIBBIE  
No that's fine. I'm sorry she is not well.

LIBBIE gets her wrap from the closet and CHANDLER moves quickly to help her get it on.

LADY  
Mrs. Custer tells me you will be at the White House this evening?

CHANDLER  
(smiling)  
Yes, I assured General Custer that I would show Mrs. Custer around,

introduce her to the important people, this is an election year you know.

LIBBIE

Yes, Senator Chandler has been very kind.

LADY

Well, have a lovely evening.

CHANDLER holds door and LIBBIE and he exit the building.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BLUE ROOM - NIGHT

The huge chandelier lit room is filled with high ranking military and civilian guests. Senator CHANDLER is beaming as he escorts LIBBIE CUSTER among his numerous friends. He stops by a dignified, tall gentleman who is standing with a dark haired young woman and very well dressed younger man.

CHANDLER

Ah, Secretary Chase, might I have the pleasure of introducing Mrs. Elizabeth Custer.

Secretary of the Treasury CHASE is evidently pleased.

CHASE

Delighted to meet you, Mrs. Custer.

(pause)

And might I have the pleasure to introduce my daughter Kate and her husband Mr. Bill Sprauge.

LIBBIE

Delighted to meet both of you.

Mrs. Custer's husband is with Phil Sheridan's cavalry.

CHASE

Well, you must be very proud of him?

LIBBIE

Yes, I am.

CHANDLER

(interrupting)

I should think so, a brigadier at the age of 23, the man has a bright future with our military.

KATIE CHASE

You must be very concerned about him with the new campaign down in Virginia.

SPRAUGE

Yes, General Grant seems to have a genuine knack for getting the job done.

CHASE

Despite the losses.

LIBBIE

I put a great deal of faith in God when it comes to Armstrong's well being.

KATIE CHASE

You would have to.

CHASE

Amen to all that.

KATIE CHASE

When you feel more comfortable in the city you must come to visit us (pause) please come for lunch. We are at the corner of Sixth and E Streets.

SPRAGUE

Yes that would be delightful.

LIBBIE

How very kind of you. I would certainly enjoy that. Well do I see the President finally breaking away from General Halleck and Seward's grip.

CHASE and CHANDLER both crane above the guests towards the Presidential reception line.

CHANDLER

Delighted to see you again, I think we will make our introductions to the President and Mrs. Lincoln.

(pause)

Salmon, Katie and Mr. Sprauge, we'll talk to you again.

LIBBIE  
Very nice to meet you.

CHASE  
Delighted.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BLUE ROOM - NIGHT

CHANDLER escorts LIBBIE across the crowded room, various guests take note of the charming Mrs. CUSTER. CHANDLER greets people along the route and talks to LIBBIE during their walk.

CHANDLER  
You'll have to be aware of the motivations, should I say of some of these people.

LIBBIE  
Oh?

CHANDLER  
Yes, Salmon Chase is a key detractor of the President, perhaps an opponent in the elections.

LIBBIE  
He seems like a nice man, concerned about Armstrong.

CHANDLER  
They all seem that way, Elizabeth.

They pass a gathering of young guests, several in uniform.

CHANDLER (CONT'D)  
Mr. Nicolay, hello. Hello Captain Lincoln.  
(pause)  
That's the President's son, on Grant's staff.

LIBBIE  
Pleasant looking young man.

CHANDLER  
Yes and you can bet your worth that your husband will never see him where the fighting is.  
(pause)  
And young Katie Chase's husband.

LIBBIE

Mr. Sprague?

CHANDLER

Yes, William Sprague. Fabulously wealthy from birth.

(pause)

But investigations reveal that he is dealing in illegal southern cotton for his mills in Providence, Rhode Island. The Spragues' are well established in that industry and it seems that young Sprague intends on keeping it that way.

(pause)

But enough of all this, here we are.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BLUE ROOM, RECEPTION LINE - NIGHT

President LINCOLN and his wife MARY LINCOLN are surrounded by a group of people. The President is dressed in dignified evening clothes and his wife an attractive rose colored gown. Senator CHANDLER leads LIBBIE up to the little gathering.

CHANDLER

Secretary Seward, ah, hello Mr. President.

LINCOLN recognizes CHANDLER immediately, a kind smile of friendship lightens up his face.

LINCOLN

Look Mary, it's Senator Chandler from the great and important state of Michigan.

The LINCOLNS' turn to greet CHANDLER and his escort.

CHANDLER

Delighted to see you, Mr. President, delighted Mrs. Lincoln, how are you?

LINCOLN

For a man whose leading a country that seems very decided that it is going to do its best to destroy itself, I am well, Senator. And who is here with you?

CHANDLER

Mr. President, Mrs. Lincoln,  
might I have the pleasure of  
introducing Mrs. Elizabeth Custer.

(pause)

Wife of General George Armstrong  
Custer.

LINCOLN tenderly reaches out and embraces LIBBIE's hand in  
his huge hands.

LINCOLN

Yes, yes Mrs. Custer how  
wonderful of you to be here  
tonight.

LIBBIE

It is very kind of Senator Chandler  
to bring me.

LINCOLN

(laughing)

Ah, Old Zach will do about anything  
to get the votes he needs.

Everyone politely laughs.

CHANDLER

Well, Mr. President, this is one  
duty of my office that I truly  
enjoy.

LINCOLN

I can understand that, Senator  
(pause) Now, General Halleck and I  
were discussing our cavalry this  
evening. It seems we talk about  
very little other than Union  
military fortunes now days.

LIBBIE

Yes, of course it is a constant  
topic for Armstrong and I in our  
many letters.

MRS. LINCOLN

Poor Mrs. Custer, the President and  
I share your concern, our son  
Robert is a captain with the Army  
of the Potomac.

LIBBIE and CHANDLER exchange glances.

LIBBIE

Yes, maam, but Armstrong seems to enjoy his trade.

(pause)

Of course I worry about him greatly.

LINCOLN

As indeed we are all concerned about our fighting men.

(pause)

Now I know your General. Yes, Senator Chandler has his reservations about some qualifications?

CHANDLER

(on the spot)

Just his state of origin, Mr. President. He was originally from Ohio.

LINCOLN

Yes, something about giving out general's stars, so many per state.

(pause)

But young Custer fights and we can't hold back our fighters. So you are the young woman whose husband goes into a cavalry charge with a shout and whoop like an Indian, the men who wear the red ties?

LIBBIE

Yes, Mr. President, that is my general.

LINCOLN

I have a story about that young man.

(pause)

Let me see if I can remember that.

MRS. LINCOLN

Father, in all of your stories none of us ever know if they are true or not.

LINCOLN

(smiling kindly)

Now, Mother, there are worse things not to know than the validity of my stories.



(pause)  
But this one is true and it  
pertains to your husband, Mrs.  
Custer.

LIBBIE  
(giggling)  
Well, sir, that makes it all the  
more interesting.

LINCOLN  
Several years ago, well almost two,  
I visited the headquarters of our  
Army down at Camp Warrenton I  
believe. Anyway General McClellan  
was commanding then.  
(pause)

(MORE)

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
Well, people, we posed out front of  
the General's tent for the official  
photograph to mark the gathering,  
Mr. Brady or Mr. Gardner was  
doing the honors and there was this  
young officer, a captain on the  
staff, who was at the far end of  
the photograph. Well he was a  
serving officer, pulled some long  
duty during the campaign and he was  
tired. It was after Antietam.  
(pause)

Well, that young captain yawned  
during the exposure of whatever  
magic they work on those  
photographic plates.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
Everyone knows you can't move and  
the captain did. Well, Mr. Brady  
told him so. I was amused and the  
captain seemed good humored as  
well.

The gathering of people laugh politely.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)  
Later I asked General McClellan the  
man's name. Captain Custer of my  
staff, he admitted.

CHANDLER and LIBBIE both smile at this.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

So there you are Mrs. Custer. I feel that I know your husband somewhat already. Should you ever have the chance the photograph is at Brady's studio and young Captain Custer is in it, (pause) but not yawning.

CHANDLER

Well it is certain that Armstrong Custer has not been sleeping much since then.

The gathering is having a good time and more people having collected to hear the conversation.

MRS. LINCOLN

Oh God will watch over young men like General Custer, and give strength to those at home.

LINCOLN

And save both the Union and this administration.

INT. CHANDLER'S CARRIAGE, WASHINGTON STREETS - NIGHT

CHANDLER is eyeing LIBBIE on the ride back to her house. She does her best to ignore it and maintain conversation. A lone coachman drives the carriage and there are dismounted cavalry at many of the street corners.

CHANDLER

There are a lot of guard details out this evening.

(pause)

More than usual.

LIBBIE

Why would that be, Senator?

CHANDLER

Fear of Rebel sabotage. Grant is starting to bleed them, wear them down and old Jeff Davis is getting concerned.

(pause)

Grant doesn't back off like the others, he just keeps pursuing them.

LIBBIE  
Armstrong has written to me about  
the campaign.

HANDLER suddenly reaches across and takes her hand, gently  
leans over and kisses her.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
(surprised)  
Senator Chandler, I think that will  
be enough.

CHANDLER  
Perhaps, Elizabeth, I have not made  
it known how I feel about you.  
(pause)  
You are a very attractive woman.

LIBBIE  
Thank you, Senator. But you have a  
wife and I have a husband. A  
husband to whom I am completely  
loyal.

CHANDLER  
I also have the power to, (pause)  
help your husband's career along  
somewhat. A senator knows many  
people.

LIBBIE looks hard at him, she is getting angry.

LIBBIE  
Senator, my husband will win his  
advancements through his merits as  
a soldier, thank you.

CHANDLER releases her hand and sinks back into his seat as  
the carriage rattles over the cobblestones.

CHANDLER  
(slightly angry)  
Yes the Boy General has always  
worked that way. His fortunes have  
worked out even for a McClellan  
man.

LIBBIE  
Yes, Senator Chandler, even for a  
McClellan man.

CHANDLER

I see, Elizabeth. Congressman Kellogg is trying to arrange a visit on the Presidential yacht to City Point when things stabilize, perhaps you would be interested in that, then?

LIBBIE

That would be wonderful as long as you understand my feelings?

CHANDLER

I think that I do, you have made them clear and I will respect that.

LIBBIE

Then there should be no difficulties between us, Senator.

CHANDLER

(pause)

None, Elizabeth. None whatsoever.

EXT. UNION LINES, VIRGINIA - MARCH 1864 DAY

ANNIE JONES races her horse across an open field pursued by several ragged looking Rebel riders. They fire at her and she returns their fire with a pistol that seems too big for her. She is dressed in her traditional mix of Union uniforms with a beat up Kepi on her head; her long dark hair streaming behind her.

EXT. UNION LINES, NEAR CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

Capt. YATES is leading a sizeable mounted patrol and notices ANNIE JONES and her ride for life. He brings his people on line and charges out of the forest at the Rebels.

YATES

(yelling)

Detachment on line, (pause) draw revolvers, forward at the trot, ho.

EXT. UNION LINES, FIELD - DAY

JONES rides wildly through their lines. The Rebels try to veer away as the Union soldiers pursue them.

JONES  
Damnation, clear me a path.

YATES  
At the gallop, (pause) fire at  
will!

The line of Union open fire and several of the Rebels tumble from their horses.

EXT. UNION LINES, FIELD - DAY

JONES reins up her horse, she has a slight tear of her uniform just on the right shoulder, there is a little blood visible.

EXT. UNION LINES, FIELD - DAY

YATES and his soldiers ride up.

JONES  
(giggling)  
You were almost too late, Captain  
Yates.

YATES  
(good natured)  
Good morning, Miss Jones. Out for a  
little ride in the country I see.

JONES  
Those were Mosby's men, what a foul  
lot.

YATES trots over to her, looks at the wound.

YATES  
Irregulars such as Colonel Mosby  
tend to be that way. Nothing wrong  
with their shooting.  
(pause)  
Look at this, Captain Brewster.

YATES touches the injured shoulder of ANNIE JONES.

JONES  
(girlish)  
Owww, damn them!

BREWSTER

If it's any comfort, Annie, there are two of em out in the field that fired their last round.

YATES

Little more to the left young lady and you would be with them.

JONES

And General Custer wouldn't get his message, now would he?

YATES

What's that girl?

JONES is gently touching her injured shoulder, a sly grin spreads across her dusty face.

JONES

I have a message from a friend and fellow schoolmate to your General.  
(pause)

(MORE)

JONES (CONT'D)

But I must deliver it in my very person.

YATES smiles over towards BREWSTER and several other soldiers.

YATES

Well, Annie, seeing as how you are shot for your troubles, me and my men will escort you back to camp.  
(pause)

Aunt Eliza will fix you up. The General is at a staff meeting, I expect him back this afternoon.

JONES

You are a gentleman, Captain Yates, and I am sure your General will listen kindly to my news.

EXT. CUSTER'S HQ, VIRGINIA - DAY

ELIZA is treating ANNIE JONES, whose major's jacket is somewhat seductively unbuttoned and pulled down over her shoulder. She is an attractive but young girl. YATES is sipping a cup of coffee while several other soldiers gather not far away and watch.

JONES

Don't need this group of boys  
watching me like this.

ELIZA

Ms. Jones, you been roun these here  
camps for a bit, child you knows  
that if soldiers ain't be fighting,  
eat'n or sleep'n they be look'n.

YATES

They're cavalry, Annie, need I say  
more.

(pause)

Would you like some coffee?

JONES

Thank you, Captain Yates. You have  
always been such a gentleman to me.

(pause)

How kind of you.

ANNIE JONES looks over her uniform collection and then back  
at YATES as he hands her the coffee cup.

JONES (CONT'D)

Thank you. I would most certainly  
like one of those red scarfs you  
people wear.

YATES

Wish I could give you one, Annie,  
but only Armstrong Custer can award  
them.

She gets pouty. ELIZA completes her work and JONES pulls her  
jacket back up.

JONES

Does go well with the blue you  
realize?

(chuckles)

Very pretty. Wouldn't you think?

EXT. CUSTER'S HQ, TENT AREA - DAY

CUSTER and his staff ride up, they are followed by several  
pet dogs. Sgt. CHURCHILL with his flag and a dozen officers.  
YATES gets up when they arrive.

YATES

Here we go, General's back.

JONES  
Bout time.

YATES  
Afternoon, Armstrong.

CUSTER  
Hello, George. See we've got  
company.

YATES  
Yes, the ever interesting, Miss  
Jones.

CUSTER dismounts and walks up to ANNIE JONES.

CUSTER  
And a good day to the fair, Miss  
Jones.

CUSTER sweeps off his hat in a low bow and takes ANNIE JONES' hand and kisses it. The soldiers watching start cheering wildly.

JONES  
General Stuart was like that until  
you killed him at Yellow Tavern.  
(pause)  
But he wasn't as pretty a general  
as you.

CUSTER  
Such flattery, Annie, or should I  
call you Major Jones?

JONES giggles in a girlish fashion, and plays with the buttons on her uniform.

JONES  
Oh, these, they ain't nothing.  
Officer friend of mine give them to  
me, yes he did.

CUSTER  
Yes, you must have several such  
friends.

JONES  
Sure do, been staying with Wade  
Hampton's men, been officially



designated a sister of mercy from  
the Surgeon-in-chief, Dr.  
Letterman. I got the letter here to  
prove it.

CUSTER  
I bet you do.

EXT. CUSTER'S HQ, TENT - DAY

CUSTER leads his mount, YATES and ANNIE JONES walk slowly  
toward his tent. The collection of dogs follow.

YATES  
We happen to meet up with Miss  
Jones while she was riding from  
Mosby's raiders.  
(pause)  
She has a message for you.

CUSTER  
Annie, Mosby's raiders are not,  
should we say gentlemen, like Wade  
Hampton's Legion.

JONES  
But General Rosser is.

CUSTER stops for a moment.

CUSTER  
What about Tom Rosser?

ANNIE JONES giggles again, then hands him a tattered piece of  
paper.

JONES  
Just about this, that's all.

CUSTER takes the paper, unfolds it and reads to those  
gathered.

CUSTER  
Greetings to General Custer and the  
Michigan Brigade. Have been  
following your battles. That was a  
near run thing at Brandy Station  
thought we would come to sabers.  
(pause)  
You would have to have moved first.  
(pause)

Trust we will meet again, to the  
glories of war, Armstrong. Always  
yours, General Thomas Rosser,  
Commanding, Army of the  
Confederacy.

YATES

Now there is a subtle challenge,  
General, if I ever heard one.

JONES

One of the nicest gentlemen and I  
knowed he was a schoolmate of yours  
at West Point.

(pause)

He begged me to bring this message  
and I wasn't going to refuse him.

CUSTER

Annie Jones, I am pleased by this  
note. I owe you a debt of  
gratitude.

(pause)

I should like to write up a note  
for Tom and direct it back.

JONES

I'm sure my nurse work will take me  
back to the Laurel Brigade soon  
enough.

YATES

As long as it keeps you away from  
Mosby's Raiders you should do well.

CUSTER releases his mount to Sgt. CHURCHILL, ELIZA is busy at  
her cooking.

JONES

And General, one of those fancy red  
scarfs would be appreciated for the  
time and effort.

(pause)

Hell, General Rosser gave me some  
of the laurel his soldiers always  
wear.

CUSTER smiles and starts to laugh, then unties his own scarf,  
picks up a thick tress of her hair and ties the scarf around  
it.

CUSTER

(kindly)

Can't let the Rebs outdo us. But  
you must wear it as a pretty woman  
should.

(pause)

Not like a cavalryman.

For a moment they look each other in the eyes.

EXT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER is finishing up a letter as YATES and PENNINGTON  
arrive, several dogs are grouped around him.

CUSTER

Gentlemen.

YATES

General?

PENNINGTON

Armstrong?

CUSTER

Sit, lads, just about done, then  
I've got news for you.

(pause)

Note for Tom Rosser. Is Annie Jones  
around?

YATES

Having dinner down by the mess  
wagon.

CUSTER

I'll want her to take this to  
Rosser in the morning.

PENNINGTON

Yes, George tells me you heard from  
him. How is he and his command  
faring in all this?

CUSTER finishes his writing and carefully folds the letter  
up.

CUSTER

Seems a little arrogant, Texas Tom  
does, here's his note, you can read  
it.

PENNINGTON

Ah, good. News from another old West Pointer.

CUSTER

Seems like we will be meeting the Laurel Brigade and Tom Rosser sooner than anybody thinks.

YATES

Hm, how's that, Armstrong?

YATES settles back against a saddle and some baggage piled up outside CUSTER's tent. Grant is getting pressure to send a sizeable force into the Shenandoah to finish up things with the Rebs once and for all.

PENNINGTON

(yawning)

Of course, makes sense. Rebs get a great deal of their supplies and a direct avenue of approach to the North from there.

CUSTER

That and the fact that Lincoln is truly worried about the election coming up.

YATES

So, find and fight the Rebels in the Valley, is that it?

CUSTER

According to Little Phil, it is.

YATES

(yawning)

What do you think of that, Alex?

PENNINGTON

Fine with me, my artillery will fight anywhere.

CUSTER

General Sheridan, division commanders and brigade commanders will be meeting shortly at City Point to discuss strategy.

(pause)

Seems like Lincoln is sending down the White House yacht for the meeting, with wives and a political escort.

YATES

How much business will be seen to  
then, General?

CUSTER

(smiling)

It's a select group scheduled to  
visit the front.

(pause)

How I miss Libbie.

PENNINGTON

How I miss my cot, bed for me.

YATES

Best advice of the war, good night,  
General.

CUSTER

Sleep well, both of you.

EXT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER yawns and stretches before slowly getting up and  
moving closer to the big camp fire. ELIZA is there putting  
some wood on it.

CUSTER

Getting late, Aunt Eliza.

Several of CUSTER's dogs follow him down by the fire.

ELIZA

Gen'l, it sure is, getting cold  
also.

(pause)

But when I was an owned woman had  
much less to wear when the chills  
come then I do now.

CUSTER

A small benefit of freedom I  
imagine.

ELIZA

This freedom business is more than  
alright by me, cepting...

(pause)

CUSTER

Except what, Eliza?

ELIZA

Well, nodin really. Cepting the war  
and all them nice young boys that  
get killed so I can have two  
blankets.

(pause)

Understand how that makes me feel?

CUSTER

Not sure that I could understand  
that.

(pause)

I don't think of the blankets or  
the men very much. Least not like  
that.

CUSTER adjusts his position near the fire and something falls  
out of his pocket.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

To me it is leading men. The  
excitement of great victories.

(pause)

Especially great charges to attain  
those victories.

CUSTER picks up his toy soldiers. ELIZA notices the toys and  
continues to work. CUSTER sits by the fire watching it burn,  
the light dances upon his face.

ELIZA

Gen'l Armstrong?

CUSTER

Hmmmm, what?

ELIZA

Then what do you think about?  
About the war I mean.

(pause)

If you don mind me asking?

CUSTER

(quietly)

I think about the excitement of it.

(pause)

In many ways I love the color, the  
glory and the feel of it. It's the  
only time that I feel truly alive.

(pause)

When I'm fighting that is.

ELIZA

Guess you be a real soldier, real soldiers we need for people like me to have two blankets, stead of none.

CUSTER

Yes, perhaps there is something to that.

ELIZA

Things is done there, night Gen'l.

CUSTER

Night, Eliza.

EXT. CUSTER TENT AREA - NIGHT

ELIZA shuffles off to her wagon area and CUSTER is again alone with his dogs.

He listens to the sound of the cavalry camp after dark. The haunting sounds of a bugle break the stillness. He slowly gets up and walks back to his tent.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER stands in his tent and slowly unbuttons his white shirt. There is a noise at the tent flap and he automatically reaches for his pistol on the field desk. ANNIE JONES steps inside, the red scarf held loosely in her hand.

CUSTER

Annie, you should be in bed.

JONES

That's why I'm here.

(pause)

That's why I'm here.

(pause)

My scarf fell out when I was washing down at the stream.

CUSTER

And?

JONES

Well, I cleaned myself all up. Used some perfumed soap and everything.

CUSTER

Now you want me to put the scarf  
back, is that it?

JONES  
Would be nice.

CUSTER slowly walks up to her, takes the scarf from her and  
starts to tie it back in her hair.

JONES (CONT'D)  
I seen how you looked at me  
earlier.

CUSTER  
You, Annie Jones, are a very pretty  
girl.

JONES  
I know you like me.

She quickly runs her hand over the buttons of her jacket,  
undoing all of them. CUSTER looks at her.

ANNIE  
(pause)  
This is a dangerous situation.

JONES  
Hell, General Armstrong Custer,  
you're no stranger to dangerous  
situations.  
(pause)  
You can snuggle with me if you  
want.

ANNIE JONES moves up very close to CUSTER, her face is just  
inches from his. With a flick of her shoulders her jacket  
falls completely off. CUSTER slowly holds the letter he has  
written to ROSSER up between her face and his.

CUSTER  
Snuggle, I don't think so. But I do  
want you to take this letter to  
General Rosser in the morning.  
(pause)  
Now get dressed, (pause) you are  
out of uniform.

CUSTER turns away and looks over some items on his field  
table as ANNIE JONES puts her jacket on and pouts a bit.

JONES



I think you were playing with my feelings?

CUSTER

Annie, I wouldn't do that.

(pause)

Good night.

She does up the buttons on her jacket and moves towards the tent door. Then turns back towards him.

JONES

No Rebel General I know is as nice looking as you.

(pause)

Good night to you.

EXT. DOCK, CITY POINT, VIRGINIA - DAY

The presidential yacht River Queen lies at dock side, a detachment of finely dressed soldiers posted at guard as government officials, including Senator CHANDLER and Congressman KELLOGG accompany officers and wives on an "official" tour of the front deck.

LIBBIE CUSTER, dressed in an attractive white and pink dress chats with KELLOGG at the top deck rail.

KELLOGG

They ought to be here any moment, Elizabeth.

KELLOGG looks at his pocket watch and back to LIBBIE.

KELLOGG (CONT'D)

Yes, (pause) any moment, Damn, excuse me, Elizabeth.

LIBBIE

Quite alright, Congressman Kellogg.

KELLOGG

Zach, what time do you have?

CHANDLER

Almost two. Big conference. Something is up.

KELLOGG

I'll tell you what's up. It's Grant's campaign. Lot of men dead at places like Cold Harbor and

Spotsylvania and the conflict no nearer solution.

LIBBIE

Will this war ever end? I'm so tired of it all.

A young man walks up to them on the deck, he is JOHN HAY, presidential assistant.

CHANDLER

Can't say when it will end, things happening all the time, bad things. Ah, young, Mr. Hay.

HAY

Senator Chandler, Congressman Kellogg and this is?

CHANDLER

Oh yes, Mrs. Custer, allow me to introduce John Hay from the White House staff.

HAY takes LIBBIE's hand in a very pleasant fashion and bows slightly.

LIBBIE

Hello, Mr. Hay. I did not notice you on the trip down from Washington?

HAY

You must call me John, please. No I have been down here for several days.

(pause)

Yes, you are the wife of our Boy General George Armstrong Custer.

KELLOGG

The one and the same.

HAY

Well, he has captured both the press and much of the Rebel Army it seems.

LIBBIE

I am very proud of him.

CHANDLER

Anything more on Early?

HAY

Yes, much of it bad.

LIBBIE

Not more bad news.

HAY

Please don't alarm yourself, Mrs. Custer.

(pause)

The Rebels have sent General Jubal Early and his mounted units up the Shenandoah into Pennsylvania and Maryland again.

(pause)

The President is very upset; feels Washington is in danger.

CHANDLER

This is the raid to end all raids.

KELLOGG

And the President should be upset. It's a military disgrace that's what it is.

(MORE)

KELLOGG (CONT'D)

Thousands of our men killed this spring and the Rebels still do what they want, (pause) ride into the North and terrorize peaceful citizens.

LIBBIE

The dear President. There seems to be no end to the torments he faces.

(pause)

What will be done if Washington is to be protected?

HAY

Much will be decided by this meeting, Mrs. Custer.

(pause)

I trust General Custer is included?

LIBBIE

He is, John.

CHANDLER

I am afraid there will be some hard riding and fighting in the valley soon enough.

EXT. VIRGINIA MANSION, UNION HQ - DAY

INT. VIRGINIA MANSION, GREAT HALL - DAY

A very angry GRANT is addressing his officers. SHERIDAN, CUSTER, MERRITT, GREGG and PENNINGTON are among those present. Numerous others sit or stand in the spacious hall of the estate.

GRANT

John Jay down here from Washington  
tells me the President is upset.

(pause)

And he should be. Jubilee Early and  
his band of rascals have demanded  
money from Frederick, Maryland, and  
half a dozen other small towns and  
damn it, they got it!

GRANT looks solemnly around the room at his officers. CUSTER  
and PENNINGTON exchange glances.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Let me continue on this sad  
subject. Word has just come to me  
from the military telegraph at the  
White House that Montgomery  
Blair's, our Post Master General,  
home has been burned.

SHERIDAN

(surprised)

Those backstreet vermin.

(pause)

Damn them!

GRANT

That's right, Phil. Now I have  
directed General Wallace and the  
Sixth Corp up for immediate defense  
of the capitol.

GRANT stops to light up his cigar and take a few long puffs.

GRANT (CONT'D)

The Sixth will replace the sick,  
lame and lazy that are trying to do  
the job now.

(pause)

But that does not take care of  
Early as a problem, a thorn in our  
side, or his hiding place in the  
Shenandoah Valley.

MERRITT

I say go in and get him on home  
ground.

GRANT

Solid thoughts, Wes, but I want  
more to it.

CUSTER

Simply destroy the valley.

(pause)

And run Jube Early to ground while  
doing it.

GRANT

Ah eh, a prize for the dashing  
Custer. Exactly what I told the  
President, Halleck and Stanton.

SHERIDAN

I don't trust Stanton, (pause)  
Halleck is incompetent and Lincoln  
is not a military man.

GRANT

And right you are about all three.  
(pause)

When I suggested that you be placed  
in charge of the force to do the  
job Stanton fused and cried that  
Phil Sheridan was too young for the  
command.

SHERIDAN

My God, Sam, I'm a soldier and what  
has age to do with that? Look at  
Armstrong, he's 24 and doing the  
job and Merritt is about the same  
age.

(pause)

Good Lord that's a slap if I ever  
got one.

GRANT is watching and smiling over SHERIDAN's anger.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Damn, Early, I can thrash the tar  
and tarnish out of him. Damned if I  
cannot.

(pause)

Look what I did to Jeb Stuart.

GRANT is laughing at the scene as are several other officers  
in the room.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

By God I'll whip him and send his  
battle flags to Stanton.

GRANT

Not a doubt in my mind, Phil.

(pause)

And I've already convinced Stanton  
and Lincoln of it. You'll be in  
command of the newly created Army  
of the Shenandoah.

(pause)

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

I expect you to attack Early,  
defeat and destroy him and destroy  
everything in the Valley of use to  
the Rebels.

Silence falls over the room, CUSTER seems happy by the news.

SHERIDAN

General Grant, when I am through in  
the Shenandoah Valley a crow will  
have to bring his own rations  
should he desire to fly over it.

EXT. DOCK, CITY POINT - DAY

HAY is beside LIBBIE, KELLOGG and CHANDLER watching for the  
arrival of the Union high command. There is the jingle of  
saddles and the thunder of horses and voices as everyone  
moves toward the railings of the boat. LIBBIE is squinting  
towards the sound, HAY has joined her, he checks his pocket  
watch as several people point towards the city streets.

LIBBIE

(excited)

There they are. Auti.

HAY  
Well, you're right.

CHANDLER  
(laughing)  
About time, eh. What mischief has  
been afoot this morning eh, Mr.  
Kellogg?

EXT. CITY POINT STREETS - DAY

CUSTER spurs his horse quickly out in front of the others, takes off his hat and waves it as he canters toward the docks. Blacks and locals get out of the way when he spurs his mount towards LIBBIE. SHERIDAN is smiling and leading the others after him followed by a military escort and band.

EXT. DAY, GANG PLANK - DAY

LIBBIE darts quickly away from her friends and through the people on deck. She is halfway down the gang plank when CUSTER canters up and reins his horse in.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Libbie Custer.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

LIBBIE is at CUSTER's horse as he reaches down and sweeps her up on the saddle and kisses her long and hard. HAY, CHANDLER and the others on deck applaud wildly as SHERIDAN and his staff ride up.

SHERIDAN  
Goodness, Custer, let that young  
lady have a breather.

CUSTER slowly releases his grip but the two look lovingly at one another. LIBBIE then realizes the circumstances and tries to straighten up a bit. She extends her hand towards SHERIDAN.

LIBBIE  
General Sheridan, it is a pleasure  
to see you again.

SHERIDAN spurs his horse closer and reaches out, takes and kisses her hand.

SHERIDAN  
(gallantly)  
Mrs. Custer, it is always a  
pleasure to see you.  
(pause)  
And if the general here would be so  
kind I want to request the first  
dance. You see I've brought our own  
band for this evening's  
festivities.

LIBBIE  
I would be delighted.

LIBBIE looks over to CUSTER for approval.

CUSTER  
Sir, I would be honored.

EXT. DOCK - DAY

SHERIDAN canters his horse around, he is excited by the days events.

SHERIDAN  
(loudly)  
Very good then, let's have a grand  
evening.

He addresses those present and then notices the gathering of politicians on the yacht.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
Greetings gentlemen, Mr. Hay. I  
trust you gentlemen will  
participate in the celebrations?

EXT. RAILING OF YACHT - DAY

CHANDLER, HAY and several others are listening to SHERIDAN

CHANDLER  
An honor, General Sheridan, but  
what are we celebrating?

SHERIDAN checks his horse and looks up at CHANDLER.

SHERIDAN



Senator Chandler, we will be celebrating the death of the Confederacy.

EXT. RAILING OF YACHT - DAY

CHANDLER and HAY are both surprised by the General's directness.

HAY

Well this is very interesting.

CHANDLER

Then I trust it will be a lively evening.

EXT. PRESIDENTIAL YACHT, TOP DECK - NIGHT

A military band plays a lively dance tune as the staff officers, government officials and ladies dance and talk. SHERIDAN is waltzing the beautiful LIBBIE CUSTER across the deck as CUSTER, HAY, CHANDLER, MERRITT, YATES and many others talk and watch. Sounds of cannon in background.

HAY

Well, General, your wife most certainly is a wonderful dancer.

CUSTER

(proud)

Thank you, Mr. Hay.

YATES

Seems like the Custer family knows how to move when the moment requires it.

CHANDLER

Seems so, (pause) Mrs. Custer on the dance floor and her young General during a cavalry charge.

CUSTER

You flatter me, it all just happens naturally.

They continue to watch the dancers.

HAY

Yes, war department staff tell me your brother Thomas Custer will be transferring into your unit?

CUSTER

Yes, Tom will be with us this month.

HAY

And with a commission?

CUSTER

Also true.

CHANDLER

They're genuine fighters from Michigan, Mr. Hay, and the government and the Army will benefit by having two such boys together.

HAY

Well, it looks like the Rebels in the Shenandoah will have more to worry about when Tom gets here.

CUSTER

We plan on making them howl from one end of the valley to the next, Mr. Hay. Please feel free to tell the President that.

CHANDLER

Damn, that's the spirit, Custer.

HAY

I will, General and should the opportunity ever present itself, well some of us have a fondness for Rebel flags.

CUSTER

Oh?

HAY

I know Secretary Stanton gets a certain pleasure out of having them displayed as captured items from the Confederates.

(pause)

Like the one you sent to the White House from the Peninsula Campaign.

CUSTER

Yes, I had almost forgotten about that. Seems like a lifetime ago.

HAY

It does.

CHANDLER

(sadly)

The war does that to us as a nation. But I wonder if there is truly a wisdom that comes with it all.

HAY

Please consider it a standing invitation for you to come to the White House with whatever you take during the campaign and make a presentation to Stanton or the President.

CUSTER

(laughing)

Mr. Hay, I accept your invitation. So remain ready to receive those flags you enjoy.

HAY

Very good. It would be great for morale.

YATES

General, we'll have to bring Mr. Waud along from Harper's.

CUSTER

Now there is a supporter of the Union cause.

CHANDLER

And rightfully so, gentlemen, rightfully so.

(pause)

What do we have here?

EXT. DECK OF YACHT - NIGHT

The music stops and the laughing SHERIDAN and LIBBIE walk over towards the gathering of people.

SHERIDAN

Ah, Libbie a finer dancer I've never known.

LIBBIE  
General you always have a generous supply of compliments.

They stop at the group.

SHERIDAN  
All of it true my dear, all true.

LIBBIE  
Armstrong, does General Sheridan command as quickly as he dances?

CUSTER takes her hand and pulls her close as the music starts up again.

CUSTER  
Often times quicker.

CHANDLER  
Well there's the music, if the General doesn't mind I would be delighted if I could have this dance with his wife?

CUSTER  
Libbie, do you think you can keep up with the Senator from Michigan?

LIBBIE  
I can certainly try.

CUSTER  
Then off with you.

LIBBIE holds out her arm and CHANDLER takes it, she laughs and gives her husband a little kiss on the cheek.

CHANDLER  
Well young lady let's see if you can tire out the government as you have fatigued our bold commander of cavalry.

SHERIDAN  
Goodness, Zach, you won't stand a chance.

SHERIDAN, CUSTER and the others watch them start dancing.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Armstrong, lets talk for a moment.

(pause)

If you gentlemen will excuse us.

CUSTER and SHERIDAN walk away from the group.

EXT. DECK OF YACHT - NIGHT

SHERIDAN lights up a small cigar and both men lean on the railing. The distinct sound of cannons can be heard in the background. They listen to the sounds of music and the war.

SHERIDAN

(quietly)

That wife of yours sure can dance.

CUSTER

That she can.

SHERIDAN

You realize Grant is deadly serious about our little visit to the Valley.

(pause)

It's going to be tough going for the cavalry.

CUSTER

It will be, Phil, but nothing we can't handle.

SHERIDAN looks over to his friend and pauses.

SHERIDAN

It's their country. I'm afraid your Wolverines are going to have some difficult moments.

(pause)

What I'm saying is I'll need to put your people right in the thick of it. If the Rebs catch you they'll string you up directly.

(pause)

Don't get caught!

CUSTER

The farther our front the better my troopers like it. Don't worry about us. We'll drive the Rebs all the way back to Richmond.

SHERIDAN

I wish I had your confidence. All I know is that Washington and Grant will be watching every fight and skirmish we are involved in.

CUSTER

And so will the newspapers.

SHERIDAN

We've got to make a good go of it there, Custer. A great deal rests on it.

CUSTER

Understood and promised.

SHERIDAN

Great.

(pause)

Look, we won't kick off for a week or so. Why don't you take the River Queen back up to Washington.

(pause)

Spend some time with Libbie, they'll be plenty to do when you get back.

EXT. RIVER QUEEN, TOP DECK - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE stand together on the deck watching the Virginia countryside slip by. He is unusually silent.

CUSTER

From Harpers Ferry south we'll be destroying anything and everything that can help the Confederacy.

LIBBIE

It's such a terrible war, when will it end?

CUSTER

Phil Sheridan's concerned about how it will end too.

(pause)

I'm finding it more difficult to leave you every time it happens. I have a mind to dress you up like and orderly and let you ride in Eliza's wagon.

LIBBIE

(sad)

Don't worry about me. I'll be a truly brave army wife. I married into this life and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else.

(pause)

Or share my life with any other general in the world.

CUSTER

I'm afraid your general has got some pretty hard campaigning ahead of him. And none of us think the Rebs will leave the Shenandoah without a devil of a fight.

LIBBIE

Tom will be with you and George Yates and I'll think about you all the time.

(pause)

I know you'll come home safely.

CUSTER

(reflective)

I'll be back and the Army will be successful.

They embrace gently as the shoreline glides past.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Marrying you, Libbie, was the best bit of luck I have ever had.

EXT. RIVER QUEEN, SIDE PADDLES - NIGHT

The paddlewheel of the presidential yacht makes a steady noise as the blades hit the water.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHENANDOAH VALLEY, SMALL PLANTATION - DAY

The sound of distant rifle and cannon fire mixed with the shouts, curses and screams of soldiers and civilians. CUSTER's 1st Michigan Brigade is destroying property of Rebel supporters in the Valley. CUSTER looks a little worn and is surrounded by staff, Capt. YATES and the newly joined Lieut. TOM CUSTER. His troopers are pushing hostile citizens away from their homes.

UNION CORPORAL  
You dirty Rebs get back outta here.  
Damn I'll run you through.

OLD MAN  
That's our home you're meaning to  
burn.

UNION SERGEANT  
(angry, hostile)  
Damn you, I got six men up in that  
field killed by Mosby's snipers and  
you cry about your farm.

UNION SERGEANT canters his horse wildly back at the OLD MAN  
and his children and wife, forcing them back.

OLD MAN  
That's my home you have no right.

CUSTER and his staff watch the activities. Several dismounted  
troopers grab the old man and restrain him. His wife and  
children scream and cry.

UNION SERGEANT  
I'll show you what right I have,  
you Rebel scum.

EXT. SMALL PLANTATION - DAY

UNION SERGEANT grabs a flaming torch and gallops up to the  
house and breaks the windows lighting the flowing curtains  
as he canters across the porch.

EXT. CUSTER STAFF AT SMALL PLANTATION - DAY

The soldiers push the OLD MAN back past CUSTER and the  
others.

OLD MAN  
You, you're CUSTER. These are your  
men and your doings.

TOM CUSTER  
Hold your tongue, old fellow.

TOM CUSTER pulls out his pistol, CUSTER holds up his hand.

CUSTER  
Don't harm him, Tom.



OLD MAN

This land was a place of milk and honey before you rode in. Now you've destroyed it. Damn all of you Yankee dogs.

CUSTER

Sir, you should have thought about the safety of your homes before you through in with Colonel Mosby and his raiders.

(pause)

I have no sympathy for you. Burn the man's barn and out buildings also.

OLD MAN

Damn you, Custer! Damn you!

YATES

Sergeant, get them away from here.

EXT. SMALL PLANTATION - DAY

Union soldiers dash through the haze of smoke, burning and destroying the plantation. The sound of screams and firing add to the scene.

EXT. CUSTER'S STAFF - DAY

The officers and guard canter away from the burning home.

TOM CUSTER

Is it always that bad, Armstrong?

CUSTER

Damn, the entire affair has taken on a cruelty none of us have seen before.

(pause)

The face of this war is changing, Tom, and they'll be scars that won't go away even after the Rebels are beaten.

EXT. SHENANDOAH VALLEY, LARGE FIELD - DAY

Col. RUSSELL ALGER, commander of the 5th Michigan Regiment under CUSTER's command has brought his men back from a raid and are resting in an open field. They look tired and dirty, but have captured and looted items hanging from their horses.

On the ground are the covered bodies of dead Union cavalrymen. CUSTER and staff canter up.

ALGER  
Afternoon, General Custer.

CUSTER swings off his horse.

CUSTER  
Good afternoon, Russ. What have you to report?

ALGER  
Devil of a time of it. We burned or destroyed everything south of Cedar Creek, the countryside is a wasteland.

CUSTER  
Grand, smashing. How about the Rebs?

ALGER walks with CUSTER to the camp stove, he gets coffee.

ALGER  
Coffee?

CUSTER  
Yes, thank you.

ALGER  
(tired)  
Damndest thing I ever saw. Mosby's Raiders are out there. Damn hard to find them and fight them though.

CUSTER  
Irregulars. Different style of soldiering.

ALGER  
They fired at us all day from the woods, bushwhacking my patrols and messengers. The command lost over a dozen men but we managed to catch four of the devils.

(pause)  
They tell me Jubal Early has 30,000 men in the Valley just waiting to catch us off guard. If we are not careful they'll do just that.

CUSTER  
Interesting, where are these Rebel  
Raiders? Take me to them.

EXT. UNION CAMP - DAY

Several Rebel prisoners are glaring at their Union guards.  
CUSTER and ALGER walk over to them. A young Captain is in  
charge of the detail.

CAPTAIN  
Sir.

CUSTER  
So these are Mosby's Raiders?

ALGER  
Killed three others in a sharp  
little ambush out on the main pike.  
(pause)  
They didn't get to their horses  
quick enough and my men rode em  
down.

CUSTER  
Have they been causing you any  
trouble Captain?

CAPTAIN  
No sir, they are a pretty sullen  
lot. Dirty, treacherous rascals, I  
wouldn't trust em.

CUSTER  
Understandable sentiments.

CUSTER walks over to them, the guards move closer and the  
rebels take note but don't come to attention.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Evidently you don't salute a senior  
officer when he is present.

RAIDER SERGEANT  
(arrogant)  
We uns do our saluting only to  
Colonel Mosby.

CUSTER

But you do your ambushing and killing from behind rocks and trees.

RAIDER PRIVATE

(laughing)

Man got to win the war best way he knowed how, general.

CUSTER

And I guess murder is the way you're trying to win by.

(pause)

Colonel Alger, how many of the 5th Michigan were killed near Cedar Creek?

ALGER

I lost a dozen men at the hands of Rebel bushwhackers. We spent half the day shooting at the shadows.

CUSTER

Good enough, I want you to have the guard detail take these four raiders out and hang them, have it done directly.

The raiders come to life over that.

RAIDER SERGEANT

You can't do that, we's prisoners of war.

CUSTER

You're bushwhacking murderers who don't deserve the dignity or protection given to prisoners of war.

RAIDER PRIVATE

Damn, you devil, this ain't right!

CUSTER

Captain, I want you to pen a warning that this is the fate of all of Mosby's Raiders. Pin it on the condemned.

(pause)

Carry on.

Salutes are exchanged, CUSTER and ALGER walk away as the guards move in on the Rebels.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD IN VALLEY - DAY

CUSTER, YATES, ALGER, TOM CUSTER and staff walk their horses slowly past the bodies of the Raiders hanging from a tree limb. The horizon is darkened by trails of smoke. They glance briefly at the dead men and ride off.

INT. CONFEDERATE HEADQUARTERS, SHENANDOAH VALLEY - NIGHT

Lt. JUBAL EARLY, thin, evil looking man moves nervously around a big map. Brig. Gen. TOM ROSSER and Col. MOSBY are also studying the map. Several staff officers are gathered about.

EARLY

Two more weeks of Mr. Sheridan's mischief and they'll not be a living thing in the Shenandoah.

MOSBY

If that butcher CUSTER has his way it will be less time, (pause) and there will be nothing remaining of my command.

He points to the map.

MOSBY (CONT'D)

Here on the Valley Pike he had seven prisoners shot. Then hung three just west of Harpers Ferry.

EARLY

The man's mad.

MOSBY

I been doing the same, sir, whenever possible but there are more Yankees in the Valley than fleas on a yellow dog.

EARLY

Damn them, Gentlemen, it will be the end of the Confederacy if we don't hand these Union troops a defeat in detail.

ROSSER

I know Armstrong Custer, he's a damn fine cavalry officer.

EARLY

So we've seen, sir.

ROSSER

He is also Sheridan's man down here. Old Phil Sheridan says destroy and Armstrong Custer and his Wolverines do it with glee.

EARLY

Custer is not to be taken lightly.

MOSBY

He's a butcher and I want a price on his head. Damn him.

EARLY looks over the map carefully. He looks up to his staff.

EARLY

They're out to ride me down, push me to the death, Grant tells Sheridan.

(pause)

Well it won't do. See here, they'll be stretched out in their line of march when they near the Shenandoah River.

MOSBY

Be there in two days time.

EARLY

True, Colonel Mosby. And we will hit them in the flank. General Rosser you will have the honor of striking at Custer and his 1st Michigan Brigade. Then we'll see how our Yankee visitors do when given a bit of truly warm Southern hospitality.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION ARMY - DAY

Lines of Union cavalry and infantry are on the march. CUSTER and his staff ride in and out of line.

CUSTER

George, take a message to General Merritt. I'm going to send patrols across the river to look for fords and Rebels.

YATES

I'll take care of that, General.

CUSTER

Oh, yes and if you come across Alex Pennington send him up here.

YATES

Yes sir.

YATES gives his horse a kick and is off.

CUSTER

Sergeant Churchill, ride to my wagon and tell Eliza I'll be out with the pickets and they'll be no stop at my tent for supper.

CHURCHILL

Sure enough, General Custer.

CHURCHILL moves off as CUSTER and several of his regimental commanders canter along the column of march.

CUSTER

We're too exposed here gentlemen. I want Pennington to get his artillery closed up and I want our baggage brought up also. I don't know what Wilson is trying to do but I don't like the positioning of the troops.

COLONEL

General Wilson has got his people strung almost back to Harpers Ferry.

CUSTER

That won't do. This Brigade will have to tighten up.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS NEAR ROAD - DAY

General ROSSER rides between lines of dismounted Confederate cavalry secluded in the woods. Behind them are rows of infantry and artillery pieces.

ROSSER

I believe that's Custer's Brigade, behind him just across the creek will be the Yankee 3rd Division under Wilson.

COLONEL WALL

Yes sir, those be the Michigan soldiers of Custer. I can see the red scarves.

Both men are watching the Union troops through their binoculars.

ROSSER

Wall, get the regiments on line. We'll strike when General Early hits their center.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION ARMY, CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER canters with his brother along the line of march.

CUSTER

We are less than three miles from Winchester. With any luck we'll be able to take the town.

There is the far off rumble of cannon and rifle fire. Both men rein in their horses.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

That will be Wilson getting him back over the Opequon Creek.

TOM CUSTER

And from the sound of it getting hit hard.

CUSTER

Damn them, that's got to be Early's main thrust. And we're all strung out along this road.

CUT TO:



EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS, ROSSER'S COMMAND - DAY

ROSSER hears the sound of fighting, waits for a moment, looks up and down his line. He pulls his pistol from its holster and fires one shot in the air.

ROSSER  
Laural Brigade, by line of  
squadrons, march.

EXT. CONFEDERATE ARMY - DAY

A long line of Confederate cavalry advances at the trot across a field.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER, TOM CUSTER and several staff members are surprised by the sudden attack on the Rebel cavalry.

TOM CUSTER  
What the bloody damn is that?

STAFF MAJOR  
Rebel horse and they'll flank us  
for sure.

CUSTER  
Major Roberts, Tom get to the  
regiments, (pause) have them  
execute an orderly withdrawal  
across the creek on to the center.

TOM CUSTER  
Very good.

CUSTER  
Pennington, get your artillery over  
to Wilson's area as fast as  
possible. Leave our baggage wagons  
if you must.

Firing has erupted and Union cavalry are starting to fall, CUSTER and staff take off.

EXT. CONFEDERATE ARMY, FIELD - DAY

ROSSER is out front of his cavalry, long lines of troops canter after him, red battle flags fluttering.

ROSSER

Draw sabers, (pause) sound the charge!

Lines of Rebels draw their sabers as the pace picks up.

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER is cantering back with his soldiers, back along the road past wagons that are in a mixed up traffic jam.

CUSTER

Hold your formations damn you.  
Let's have an orderly withdrawal.

EXT. CONFEDERATE CAVALRY - DAY

Groups of Rebel cavalry ride up and surround the Union wagons. There is sporadic shooting but most Union soldiers surrender. ELIZA tries to fend laughing Rebel horsemen off with a pan and buggy whip.

ELIZA

(screaming)

Get you hands off me and my things!

REBEL PRIVATE

Demon of a darkie, I outta shoot you.

Several Rebels jump on the General's wagon and try to subdue her.

REBEL CORPORAL

Feisty one, here John get her arms.

ELIZA

These here be the things of Gen'l Custer. He will harm you for this.

The SERGEANT knocks her down with his pistol butt.

REBEL SERGEANT

Maybe so, but right now your general is being chased right on out of this here valley.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER, sword at the rest on his shoulder is trying to control his cavalry as they gallop full speed over the Virginia countryside.

CUSTER

Guide for the creek, never mind a ford we can cross it, it isn't deep.

(pause)

Be prepared to dismount on the other side.

CUSTER's Brigade is charging across the creek, YATES rides up to him.

YATES

Sir, Merritt will be able to hold his position, (pause) Wilson is pinned down on the other side of the creek.

CUSTER

Damn it, George, we'll have to hold at the banks. Have the bugler sound the halt.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE CAVALRY - DAY

Lines of Rebel cavalry are charging after the fleeing Yankees. ROSSER rides quickly beside his flag bearer slashing at the enemy. He notices the Union cavalry making a stand.

ROSSER

The Yankees are dismounted at the river. Orderly, alert the regimental commanders to rally on my flag.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

Union soldiers are darting around their positions building up protective earthworks, horses are galloping around while CUSTER, sword in hand, walks about directing the defense.

CUSTER

Secure your mounts gentlemen, we're still the 1st Michigan Cavalry Brigade.

(pause)

Tom, how are the other regiments faring?

TOM CUSTER

Alger and Granger are digging in, the 5th is trying to set up skirmishers.

There is an increasing sound of rifle fire.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)

I don't know about the others. Here comes Pennington.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITIONS - DAY

Capt. PENNINGTON wheels his horse into the lines, the animal stumbles through the tangle of men as he quickly dismounts.

PENNINGTON

(exhausted)

General, I managed to get all my guns into position. The batteries will protect our flanks.

CUSTER

Smashing, Alex. They'll have plenty of hot work to do directly. I think that's Rosser's Division out there.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROSSER'S POSITIONS - DAY

ROSSER is giving his regimental commanders the plan for the attack on CUSTER's Brigade.

COLONEL WALL

Rosser, Old Jubal hot the Yanks pinned down on the river road.

ROSSER

And we got the rest of em right here. Chase us to the death will they

GENERAL SMITH

Orders, General?

ROSSER

Third Brigade move around the left,  
cross the creek if you need be to  
get at em.

(pause)

General Smith, you will take your  
brigade to the Union right flank  
and strike at em there.

GENERAL SMITH

I will hit them at the center. God  
have mercy on those Yankees because  
I will have none at all, sir.

ROSSER

It will all be quite simple, watch  
for my attack after you get into  
position.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S BRIGADE - DAY

CUSTER is with several officers as well as YATES, TOM CUSTER,  
and PENNINGTON. Sgt. CHURCHILL has joined them, they duck  
rifle fire.

CUSTER

(excited)

Alex, you have got to hold them off  
with your guns. If you don't  
they'll flank us for sure. That's  
Rosser out there, and I damn well  
know what he's up to.

PENNINGTON, several officers and enlisted soldiers are moving  
to their horses. CUSTER follows in his shirt sleeves.

PENNINGTON

We'll hold them back, Armstrong.

CUSTER turns quickly back to YATES who is firing out at the  
Rebels.

CUSTER

I don't like fighting from a  
dismounted position,

(pause)

Tom ride quickly down to Colonel  
Granger with the 1st and make sure

he is aware of our need to hold  
this line.

TOM CUSTER  
Yes sir, consider it done.

CUSTER  
And be careful or father will never  
forgive me for getting you killed.

YATES  
Rebels are moving across the field,  
Armstrong, down to our right.

CUSTER  
They'll be everywhere if  
Pennington's guns don't hold them.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION POSITIONS - DAY

Tired and dirty cavalry from CUSTER's Brigade keep behind  
trees, rocks and logs while they fire at groups of charging  
Confederate horsemen. The sound of gunfire is almost  
everywhere as men and horses fall.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER strolls among his men, he looks calm and determined.

CUSTER  
Fire low men, keep up a steady fire  
but keep it low.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION ARTILLERY - DAY

PENNINGTON directs artillery fire at the Confederate cavalry.  
TOM CUSTER is watching. Newspaper artist A.R. WAUD, hands  
over his ears, walks up to PENNINGTON.

WAUD  
Excuse me, Captain, excuse me.

PENNINGTON  
Yes, can't hear you, (pause) let's  
move back over here a bit.

EXT. BEHIND GUNS - DAY

They move away from the booming cannons.

PENNINGTON  
Hello, sorry about the noise.

WAUD  
It's alright, (pause) I'm trying to  
get to General Custer's position?

PENNINGTON slowly takes off his kepi and wipes the sweat and  
dirt from his face.

PENNINGTON  
Dangerous business Mr. Waud, we've  
got Rebels everywhere and my  
battery is trying to beat them  
back.

WAUD  
I have no problem with that, I  
accompanied the General on the  
Charlottesville raid.

PENNINGTON  
Yes, I thought you looked familiar.  
Well, that's his brother Tom and  
he'll be heading back down to the  
Brigade headquarters, follow along  
if you like.

WAUD  
Thank you, captain.

PENNINGTON  
And tell the General we've got  
things under control up here.

CUT TO:

CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

TOM CUSTER and A.R. WAUD make their way quickly to CUSTER's  
battle position. Heavy firing is still going on and CUSTER  
continues to direct the action.

YATES  
(tense)  
Got Rebs on three sides now.

CUSTER

Rosser's got a division to toss at us, damn where's Wilson and some support?

WAUD and TOM CUSTER dash quickly over, both keeping down. CUSTER hardly notices them.

WAUD  
Harper's is here, General, you can start winning the war now.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Mr. Waud damn nice to see you. I figured that last time out would be enough for you?

WAUD  
Can't keep me away from a good story.

TOM CUSTER scrambles up beside CHURCHILL, YATES and several other men.

TOM CUSTER  
Pennington's doing okay, Armstrong.

WAUD  
Yes, the young captain sends his regards and asked me to inform you that all is under control.

CUSTER stops and fires a few times from his pistol.

CUSTER  
Bully, smashing news. Now Mr. Waud stay around and I'll give you some great illustrations for your paper.

CUSTER scrambles over to YATES.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
George, if Pennington is holding them then it means we still have the road open to Wilson's Division.

YATES  
But it will be full of Mosby's raiders, I expect. They'll be skulking around waiting for riders wearing Union blue.



(pause)  
It will be a hard trip with  
anything less than a troop.

CUSTER  
Then I'm taking Sergeant Churchill  
back to Wilson to borrow some  
brigades.

YATES  
Let me or Tom go, for God's sake.

CUSTER  
Can't. Wilson will not tolerate  
such action by anyone less than a  
Brigadier.

YATES  
You'll get killed; either by the  
Rebs or Wilson.

CUSTER  
Perhaps, rather than falling  
here, like waiting for the wheel-  
barrow race at the country fair.  
(MORE)  
I'm a cavalry officer and this is a  
cavalry brigade.  
(pause)  
We'll die in the saddle with sabers  
in our hands George, if we must die  
at all.

YATES  
Good luck to you.

CUSTER  
Get the word out, (pause) have the  
commanders get their regiments  
ready to charge when I lead  
Wilson's troops back.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD BEHIND UNION LINES - DAY

CUSTER and Sgt. CHURCHILL gallop across the dirt road. Four  
Rebel riders pull out from the trees to confront them. CUSTER  
and CHURCHILL take their pistols out.

CUSTER  
Take the ones on the right.

The Rebels raise their guns at the CUSTER and CHURCHILL fire. Three of the Rebels fall, the other gallops off, wounded.

CUT TO:

UNION POSITIONS, WILSON'S DIVISION - DAY

CUSTER and CHURCHILL gallop up to Col. J. B. McINTOSH, in the 1st Brigade of Gen. WILSON'S 3rd Cavalry Division.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(excited)

Hello to you, McIntosh, I'll need this regiment.

MCINTOSH

(indignant)

What, what's that. This is General Wilson's command, Custer. You can't take over like that.

CUSTER reins up his horse.

CUSTER

Well I am, I need these men to push Rosser's Rebels off my Brigade.

(MORE)

(pause)

You people are gathering dust back here.

MCINTOSH

Over my dead body.

CUSTER draws his pistol, as several of McIntosh's aides do the same. CHURCHILL pulls his pistol out to cover them.

CUSTER

I was hoping it wouldn't come to that. Now I'm giving you a direct order, this regiment is now under my command.

McINTOSH seems undecided, worried. CUSTER is determined.

MCINTOSH

You are senior officer present, my regiment is at your command.

CUSTER

Good show, it's an easy ride to my positions. Please tell your officers to prepare for an attack.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER IN FRONT OF REGIMENT - DAY

CUSTER and CHURCHILL canter in front of an entire regiment of Union cavalry.

CUSTER

Bugler, sound the advance (pause)  
by columns of squadrons, forward.  
Colonel McIntosh, we will hit the  
Rebel flank, I plan to drive them  
away from my Brigade and push them  
all the way through Winchester if  
need be.

MCINTOSH

This will be the regiment to do it.

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS, ROSSER AND EARLY'S  
HEADQUARTERS - DAY

ROSSER and EARLY are conferring over a big map on the ground.  
The sound of battle is in the background.

ROSSER

General Early, we are wearing down  
Custer's Brigade. With their defeat  
we will effectively break the 1st  
and 3rd Cavalry Division's of  
Sheridan's forces.

EARLY

Defeating them in detail?

ROSSER

Defeating them in detail, at our  
leisure.

STAFF MAJOR

What the hell and damnation is  
that?

Both general's hear the surprise in the MAJOR's voice and  
turn toward him.

ROSSER

What seems to be the matter, Major?

STAFF MAJOR

Sir, this is highly out of the ordinary but that seems like a great many Union cavalry advancing on our flank.

Both men exchange glances and scurry up with their binoculars.

EARLY

I can't see how that could be, Sheridan is pinned everywhere.

ROSSER is viewing the advance with his binoculars.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION ADVANCE - DAY (ROSSER'S P.O.V)

Lines of Union cavalry are charging down on the Confederate positions. Hatless and with his saber out CUSTER is leading them.

ROSSER

Damn, well I'll be, that's Custer leading those Yankees directly into our flank.

EARLY

But, but he's down there.

STAFF MAJOR

Not anymore.

ROSSER

Major Thomas, have the brigade commanders fall back across the river. Damn him, we will try to hold there.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION SOLDIERS RIDING AT CONFEDERATE SOLDIERS - DAY

A wild scramble of soldiers fighting, shouts and gunshots. CUSTER is slashing away at the enemy, he gets hit from behind.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLE - DAY

CUSTER's riderless horse gallops away through the fighting.

CUT TO:

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON - DAY

President LINCOLN, Secretary STANTON and several officials are talking to a group of reporters in the lobby.

FIRST REPORTER

Sir, how extensive was our victory at Winchester?

LINCOLN

A strong win, gentlemen.

STANTON

Mr. President, if I might add to that.

LINCOLN

Surely, Mr. Secretary.

STANTON

Very good, (pause) as the President said, it was a strong victory which we hope will do much to end Rebel activity in the Shenandoah Valley.

SECOND REPORTER

What about the death of General Custer?

STANTON

No truth to it, that was only a rumor.

LINCOLN

(smiling)

If I might, (pause) seems like everyone is aware of the story concerning General Custer.

(pause)

Well, I know the Custers' and it came as a shock to me also. In fact Mr. Stanton, myself and Major Eckert, our communications officer, have been in constant contact with the Army of the Potomac down in the Winchester area trying to get reports of casualty figures. And we

have been told that the young  
General is not one of them.

STANTON

He did lead a charge in a  
successful bid to free his Brigade  
from a Confederate attack. But he  
was not killed in that action.

FIRST REPORTER

Has Mrs. Custer been told? About  
the good news I mean?

STANTON looks at LINCOLN, and then back to the reporters.

STANTON

Because we could not confirm the  
rumor I don't believe Mrs. Custer  
was really told anything.

LINCOLN

At this moment she is part of a  
group of ladies visiting wounded  
from that engagement outside of the  
capital.

(pause)

The only thing she will be told is  
that because of her husband's  
gallantry in battle he is to be  
made a Major General and given his  
own division to command.

STANTON

We will all admit that is better  
news than the rumors circulating  
around Washington.

(pause)

Now if you gentlemen will excuse  
us.

LINCOLN and STANTON move away from the press.

UNION HOSPITAL, ALEXANDRIA - NIGHT

LIBBIE and several other ladies are going among wounded  
soldiers giving out small packages and talking to them. One  
older veteran recognizes her.

OLD VETERAN

Excuse me lady, excuse me.

LIBBIE

Yes?

OLD VETERAN

Ma'am, I believe I recognize you  
from camp near Stevensburg.

(pause)

I believe you are Mrs. Armstrong  
Custer.

LIBBIE

I am Mrs. Custer.

OLD VETERAN

Forgive me for not rising ma'am,  
but it's sure an honor to see you  
again.

LIBBIE

You are very kind to have  
remembered.

OLD VETERAN

Ma'am, I'll tell you where the  
honor is. The honor is serving  
with your husband. You ask any of  
the 1st Michigan Brigade lying up  
here, (pause) there is no finer  
General in the whole Union Army  
than Armstrong Custer.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN TO WASHINGTON - NIGHT

LIBBIE is seated with her friends on the trip back to  
Washington.

LADY

Libbie, this letter came through  
for you. I'm afraid delivery just  
missed you before we left.

LIBBIE

Oh, thank you.

She tears open a letter from CUSTER.

CUSTER (V.O.)

My Dearest Wife, You have probably  
heard of our excitement here in the  
Shenandoah. My Brigade had a near  
run meeting with Tom Rosser's

Rebels and if it wasn't for my stealing extra troops from General Wilson, things may have taken a very bad turn. The Rebels managed to seize our baggage wagons which included all of your letters, and even Eliza, who they released several days later. I was shaken up in the fight, but none the worst. But the best news is that I have been given another star and the command of the 3rd Division of Cavalry. Your boy is making a good showing of himself.

(CONT'D)

CUSTER (V.O)

You must make plans to join me when the Army goes into winter quarters. The season promises to be most enjoyable. As always I miss you greatly. Your loving husband,  
Armstrong.

LIBBIE holds the letter close to her heart. She smiles.

LADY

(concerned)

Is everything alright?

LIBBIE

Oh yes, very much so. Armstrong has just received his promotion to major general and another command.

LADY

Congratulations Mrs. Custer, you must be very proud of him. And he is so young.

CUT TO:

INT. SHERIDAN'S TENT - NIGHT

SHERIDAN is going over paperwork, several staff members are in the tent.

SHERIDAN

Captain Colby.



COLBY

Sir?

SHERIDAN

General Custer should be arriving shortly; please notify me when he passes the guard mound. Get the band out for some music.

(pause)

I want to personally meet him. You know, a little ceremony, good for morale and such.

COLBY

I understand, sir. I'll take care of it.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHERIDAN'S HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

The BAND MASTER gives the sign and the band strikes up Yankee Doodle. A large gathering of cavalry are on hand to watch the torch light arrival of the Army's newest major general. CUSTER, dressed in an immaculate uniform rides into view with his staff, YATES, TOM CUSTER, PENNINGTON and several others. SHERIDAN is at the tent flap waiting for him. The soldiers start to sing.

SOLDIERS

Yankee Doodle is a tune Americans  
delight in: Good to fiddle, dance  
or sing, And just the thing for  
fightin. Yankee Doodle keep it up,  
Yankee Doodle dandy, mind the music  
and the steps and with the girls be  
handy.

The singing fades as CUSTER dismounts, a smiling SHERIDAN watches.

EXT. SHERIDAN'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER walks up to his commander and salutes.

CUSTER

Good evening, General.

SHERIDAN

God, Armstrong, I am proud of you!

SHERIDAN reaches out and shakes CUSTER's hand. The troops start to cheer.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
(smiling)  
Now let's talk about winning this war.

They duck into the tent.

CUT TO:

EXT. UNION LINES - NIGHT

CUSTER rides beside YATES and TOM CUSTER on their way back to his headquarters.

CUSTER  
The President, Grant, Meade, Stanton all wired their congratulations on the Winchester fight.  
(pause)  
Grant even ordered the guns around Petersburg to fire a 100 cannon salute.

YATES  
That must have made Old Bob Lee nervous.

CUSTER  
What makes me nervous is that rumor that I had been killed in the fight.

YATES  
Can't happen, Armstrong, you would just never allow it.

CUSTER  
Anyway, Sheridan is going to push ahead. Says he'll depend on the 3rd Division to do much of the dirty work.  
(pause)  
He wants everything from Winchester to Waynesboro completely destroyed.

YATES  
(very surprised)

What, (pause) that's almost 100 miles, the Rebels will do everything they can to stop it.

TOM CUSTER

What about the railroad, can't let that continue to run can we?

CUSTER

He wants the Virginia Central Railroad destroyed as well.

They ride along in silence.

CUT TO:

EXT. HEADQUARTERS, 3RD DIVISION - NIGHT

The staff rides past the guard, salutes are given and returned. CUSTER reaches slowly into the pocket of his coat and pulls out the small soldier figures, looks at them briefly and pushes them back. Nobody notices.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER and staff ride slowly up to his tent. Sgt. CHURCHILL meets them.

CHURCHILL

Evening, General, everything go okay?

CUSTER and staff dismount.

CUSTER

Yes, thank you, Churchill, kindly have the farrier check her right front hoof, (pause) seems to be favoring it.

CHURCHILL

Fine, General.

(pause)

By the way, sir, I've got a little blackie up by the tent fire, Eliza's feeding him.

CUSTER

What?

CHURCHILL

Come through the lines this evening  
with a message for you from the  
Rebs.

CUSTER

Now there is an interesting  
development.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

ELIZA is cooking and watching the boy eat. The dogs are all  
around him.

ELIZA

(laughing)

Them's dogs like you bout as much as  
they do the general.

BOY

He a good man?

ELIZA

Gen'l Custer the best, how them  
Rebels to yah?

BOY

Say they kill me right proper if  
I don't carry this to Gen'l Custer.

ELIZA sits heavily down by her fire and pots.

ELIZA

They is bad uns, caught me at the  
big fight down by Winchester.  
Thought I was through with this  
life, new freedom and all. Took all  
them letters from Mrs. Custer and  
everything we got.

CUSTER and staff arrive at the camp fire.

YATES

(laughing)

And if they did, Eliza, the war  
would be over now, the Rebs would  
be no match for you.

The little BOY looks scared and moves slightly away.

CUSTER

Hello lad. What brings you to camp?  
Don't worry I'm on your side.

ELIZA

Gen'l, this here is Moses and he  
here with a message for you.  
(pause)  
Moses, that be Mr. Custer, the man  
the Rebs sent you to see.

He looks at CUSTER and slowly reaches into his tattered shirt  
pocket and pulls out a letter.

BOY

Them Rebs say they kill me ifn this  
don't get to you.  
(pause)  
They asking for some proof I done  
right thing by them.

CUSTER takes the letter and opens it and reads to himself.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, it's old Tom Rosser  
congratulating me on my promotion  
and command.  
(pause)  
Good show, he managed to secure  
most of Libbie's letters which he  
will return at a convenient time;  
in a captured Washington he hopes.

TOM CUSTER

That's Rebel optimism if I ever  
heard it.

PENNINGTON

He'll have to ride through my guns  
again.

CUSTER

Wait, listen, (pause) some luck and  
fine battery action kept me from  
having you to dinner at Winchester,  
trust we will meet again on better  
terms, Most honorably Tom Rosser.

CUSTER slowly puts the letter down.

PENNINGTON

Better terms for Texas Tom would not include my guns.

CUSTER

(whispered)

Tom Rosser is out there waiting, and we will meet again.

BOY

Sir, can you make this right for me?

ELIZA

Susssh, Moses.

CUSTER

No, Eliza it's fine. Moses, you go down by the horses and see Sergeant Churchill, have him give you rations for several days, ought to be enough.

BOY

It be plenty enough.

CUSTER

I'll pen a letter for General Rosser and you can bring it to him in the morning. Run along now.

BOY

Yessum, gen'l.

TOM CUSTER The arrogance of the man.

CUSTER

No, it's not that Thomas, he gives even this messy affair a little of the glamour of the war's early days.

(pause)

I rather like that.

PENNINGTON

Nonsense, the Rebels want us out of the Valley.

CUSTER

Well, Alex, that question will have to be decided in battle won't it?

PENNINGTON and CUSTER looks at one another.

PENNINGTON  
(smiling)  
To the glories of war, Armstrong.

CUSTER  
(pause)  
To the glories of war, Alex.

CUT TO:

EXT. STRASBURG PIKE, VIRGINIA, CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

CUSTER, in his cavalier uniform and red scarf canters slowly in front of his division, drawn up on a huge field, battle flags flying and brigade commanders in front.

The brigade commanders ride over for a brief conference. Lines of uniformed soldiers stand their mounts in perfect alignment.

CUSTER  
Gentlemen, ready your brigades for an advance. That's General Rosser's Laurel Division in front of us and their smarting for a fight, damn it, we will give them one.

BRIGADE COMMANDER  
What about support, General?

CUSTER  
General Merritt's Division will attack the rebels on the left.  
(pause)  
Pennington's artillery will support our attack.  
(pause)  
Any questions? None, then send your skirmishers out and direct the Band Master to give us some music.

The Brigade Commanders return to their commands and the sounds of The Boys are Marching echo in the background.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

Capt. YATES spurs his horse forward as does flag carrier CHURCHILL who positions himself directly in front of the lead rank.

YATES

General Rosser is arrayed in a strong position with more riders than pretty girls at the town fair. His guns are unlimbered as well.

CUSTER

Yes, good for him, George. Old Tom Rosser is most certainly ready for this fight.

(pause)

Has his men drawn up like morning parade at West Point.

CUSTER gives his horse some rein and it kicks and rears in the fall wind.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

God, George, how I love this.

CUT TO:

EXT. CONFEDERATE, LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

The dark haired Gen. ROSSER, resplendent in gray coat with gold braid, sits on his horse in front of lines of gray uniformed cavalry. The red and blue battle flags snap in the breeze; he is watching the Union Army as are several of his staff.

ROSSER

Can you all see that golden haired officer out in front?

(pause)

Well, that be nobody other than Armstrong Custer. Damn if he isn't the very pride of the Yank cavalry.

STAFF OFFICER

He is a real blue coated fighter all right.

ROSSER

That he is, sir, that he surely is. Let's hear some of our music,



gentlemen, so as to get rid of this  
Yankee noise.

The sounds of Dixie can be heard over the Southern ranks.

ROSSER (CONT'D)

Now that's more like it. Today,  
General Custer, I am going to give  
you the licking of your military  
career.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

CUSTER squints out toward the Confederate position, artist  
A.R. WAUD has walked his horse out in front of the lines of  
cavalry and is busy sketching away. YATES canters up to  
CUSTER.

YATES

Sir, the Division is ready.

CUSTER

Fine, Captain Yates. Wait for my  
command.

He canters away to the front of his Division, looks down the  
lines of cavalry. CUSTER removes his black hat and does a low  
bow from the saddle towards the Rebel lines. Hat still off he  
rides over to his position at the flag.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Ready, Sergeant Churchill?

CHURCHILL

Can't wait much longer, sir.

CUSTER

Smashing. Buglers, sound the  
advance.

(pause)

By column of squadrons, walk, trot,  
forward.

CUSTER slams his hat on and the entire Division moves  
forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

ROSSER looks at his staff, and they look back towards the Union advance.

ROSSER  
Damn pretty sight isn't it?  
Armstrong, could always do good for  
looks.

EXT. UNION LINES - DAY

3rd Division Band Master is leading the band in Yankee Doodle.

EXT. UNION ARTILLERY - DAY

PENNINGTON is standing behind a line of cannons.

PENNINGTON  
Prepare for independent battery  
fire.  
(pause)  
Fire!

A loud crash of guns and smoke is everywhere as the Union gunnery quickly reload.

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

Artillery rounds explode in the Confederate positions, men horses start to fall.

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

CUSTER is out front of his troops at a canter, the lines remain perfect, the flags snapping in the air.

CUSTER  
Steady boys, dress to the center,  
draw sabers, (pause) bugler sound  
the charge.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION, LINE OF TROOPS - DAY

The men draw their sabers in unison.

UNION CAPTAIN  
Three cheers for Custer.

TROOPERS  
Hip hip hooray, hip hip hooray, hip  
hip hooray!

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

Lines of cannon and dismounted soldiers level their weapons  
and fire.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

The lines of charging Union keep coming, men and horses fall.  
CUSTER is out front.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

ROSSER has taken his pistol out and is waving it back and  
forth.

ROSSER  
Have the artillery double shoot  
their guns. Damn it, sir, I want  
them stopped.

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

CUSTER is out front leading his cavalry on, men are falling  
in larger numbers but the ranks close up and keep moving.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

ROSSER spurs his horse to the front of his troops.

ROSSER  
(yelling)  
Brigades, forward at the trot.

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

Ranks of mounted Confederates move forward.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

ROSSER, his flag and staff officers surround him, he draws his sword.

ROSSER  
Trumpeter, (pause) give us the  
charge.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Charging Union horsemen ride into the attacking Confederate Cavalry. There is a wild melee of shouts, gunfire, screams, bugle calls, and clash of sabers.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, UNION POSITIONS - DAY

CUSTER is swinging madly at Confederates, he cuts down one and fends off another. Sgt. CHURCHILL is beside him swinging his flag staff as a weapon and firing his pistol.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, CONFEDERATE POSITIONS - DAY

Gen. ROSSER fires quickly at several charging Yankees, gets struck in the arm by a saber. Confederate lines falter.

ROSSER  
Damn you, Yankee.  
(pause)  
Trumpeter sound retreat. Save the  
guns.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Confederate soldiers are fighting to disengage themselves from the Union troopers.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, UNION POSITIONS - DAY

CUSTER, missing his hat and with a rip in his jacket, slashes wildly at the fleeing Confederates. CHURCHILL is beside him but gets hit in the chest.

CHURCHILL  
(painful)  
Damn sir, I've been hit.

He starts to fall off the horse as CUSTER reaches over and grabs the flag.

CUSTER  
(screaming madly)  
Damn them, move the line forward.  
(pause)  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Get the regiments forward to their  
guns.

EXT. CONFEDERATE ARTILLERY - DAY

TOM CUSTER and a troop of Union Cavalry gallop up to several rebel cannons. A brief pistol and saber fight follows as TOM CUSTER levels his pistol on the battery commander.

TOM CUSTER  
Captain, kindly surrender your  
weapons or we will wipe out this  
entire gun crew.

REBEL CAPTAIN  
(disgusted)  
As you wish sir, my saber.

He hands over his saber to TOM CUSTER as Union troopers cheer and tear the battery flag down.

CUT TO:

EXT. LAUREL DIVISION - DAY

ROSSER with a look of concern rides amid his retreating men. He catches up to cannon being driven to the rear.

ROSSER

Damn it, sir, get those guns to safety. We'll try to regroup and make a stand just east of Maurertown.

Several of his men are hit and tumble off their horses.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - DAY

A wild looking CUSTER carries the Division flag and continues to charge in front of his saber swinging troops. There is smoke and gunfire everywhere.

LINCOLN (V.O)

I have here a report directed from General Sheridan on an active campaign in the Shenandoah Valley to his superior General Grant, Commander In Chief of all our armies.

(MORE)

LINCOLN (V.O) (CONT'D)

(pause)

And of course eventually to the Secretary of War, here.

(pause)

This past October 9th at a place called Tom's Brook, our cavalry forces under the command of Generals Custer and Merritt did engage, and completely rout a greater force of Rebel cavalry.

(pause)

Chasing this force back to the town of Woodstock some 12 miles from the initial point of contact. A similar engagement took place at Cedar Creek on October 19th with another Union victory.

CUT TO:

INT. WHITE HOUSE, LINCOLN'S OFFICE - DAY

LINCOLN is reading the report to his cabinet. STANTON, CHASE, WELLS and others are there as is JOHN HAY.

LINCOLN

(tired)

General Sheridan continues;  
Custer's 3rd Division alone  
captured over 40 cannons, numerous  
battle flags and rebel prisoners  
during these engagements.

LINCOLN stops for a moment and looks at his cabinet.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

In closing Sheridan says he  
believes the Rebel threat in the  
Valley is finished for good.

INT. LINCOLN'S OFFICE - DAY The  
gathered cabinet applaud.

INT. LINCOLN'S OFFICE - DAY LINCOLN  
continues to review the report.

LINCOLN

Seems like the end of Mr. Jubal  
Early and with General Sherman  
somewhere in Georgia perhaps, just  
perhaps, this war will end sometime  
soon.

(pause)

Johnny, did you drop a bee in  
Custer's ear about those flags?

HAY

(smiling)

Yes, Mr. President, down in City  
Point this Summer.

LINCOLN

I realize gentlemen that it seems a  
trifle silly to be thinking about  
Rebel flags now. But for some odd  
reason, seeing them brought here to  
the White House makes me feel that  
part of the divided nation is being  
returned. Sort of coming back home  
to us.

CUT TO:

EXT. WASHINGTON, PENNSYLVANIA AVE. - DAY

A large crowd of men, women and children are following and cheering a horse drawn omnibus up to the White House. Happy Union cavalry are inside with Confederate flags and banners protruding from the open windows. Artist WAUD and Gen. CUSTER are riding by the driver, both men enjoying the spectacle they are causing.

CUSTER  
I imagine the main door is fine.

DRIVER  
That's the door then, General.

He reaches out to shake CUSTER's hand.

CUSTER  
Thank you and good day.

DRIVER  
The pleasure has been all mine.

CUSTER reaches for his money.

DRIVER (CONT'D)  
No sir, I won't accept a penny; if I was 20 years younger I would be fighting right alongside you boys. This is the least I can do.

CUSTER  
That's very kind of you, Ready Mr. Waud, come along lads.

EXT. PENNSYLVANIA AVE. - DAY

The happy soldiers troop out of the cab, each carrying a flag, the gathering crowd cheers.

LADY  
Is that Custer? I think it is.

GENTLEMAN  
Sure is, I recognize him from Harper's.

EXT. WHITE HOUSE PORCH - DAY

CUSTER and WAUD walk side by side followed by the soldiers.

CUSTER



Well Al, they recognize me from  
your drawings.

WAUD

Yes, General, that's a tribute to  
both of us.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BLUE ROOM - DAY

An old but dignified protocol officer meets the CUSTER party  
in the Blue Room.

PROTOCOL OFFICER

If you would be so kind, the  
President and several members of  
the cabinet will be here directly.

WAUD

Thank you.

CUSTER

Relax, gentlemen.

SOLDIER

Sir, next time around I want to be  
standing in Jeff Davis's office in  
a captured Richmond.

WAUD

That's the spirit.

CUSTER

You will Private Sweeny, in time.

INT. WHITE HOUSE, BLUE ROOM - DAY

The big door opens and in walks President LINCOLN, Secretary  
STANTON, Senator CHANDLER, Secretary WELLES and several  
others including JOHN HAY. The soldiers all seem impressed.

STANTON

Mr. President, may I have the  
pleasure of introducing Major  
General Custer and men from his 3rd  
Cavalry Division, and you know Mr.  
Waud of Harper's.

CUSTER

Mr. President.

LINCOLN

General, this is indeed an honor,  
hello Mr. Waud.

STANTON

As requested, General Custer has  
come to present captured  
Confederate battle flags to you.

LINCOLN walks slowly over to the soldiers.

LINCOLN

Well, I see that our newest Major  
General has been busy.

(pause)

Now I feel somewhat like a child on  
Christmas morning. I do so like the  
pageantry of war; don't care much  
for the rest of it.

STANTON

Eh, these flags are from the  
Shenandoah Campaign, isn't that  
correct, General?

CUSTER

Yes, Mr. Secretary. Each one was  
taken in battle by the man who now  
holds it.

LINCOLN

But this lad can't be much older  
than my Tad.

LINCOLN walks over to a young soldier holding a huge flag.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

How old are you boy?

SOLDIER

Turned seventeen last month, Mr.  
President.

LINCOLN

Goodness, Mr. Stanton, I didn't  
know we were taking them so young.

STANTON

(somber)

War is a terrible thing, boys  
become men so fast.

LINCOLN

General Custer, our boy general, what is the estimation from a man who actually goes out and fights this war, as to how long the Confederacy will last?

CUSTER

Mr. President, the Rebels are not able to replace their losses in men or equipment.

(pause)

Perhaps six more months of determined campaigning should finish things.

LINCOLN

Six more months, Lord, the deaths in half a year of war could be staggering.

CUSTER

It has not been an easy business, sir, the Confederates do not give up without a fight.

LINCOLN bows his head and thinks for a moment.

LINCOLN

(sadly)

Yes, General, this is so very true. But as I look at the true and simple faces of these soldiers, (pause) our young soldiers, I can't help but think that on the other side there are faces very much like these.

(pause)

And that they will die for a cause that we hope is truly a lost one.

Everyone becomes quiet.

LINCOLN (CONT'D)

Secretary Stanton, I believe you have something to say to these brave men?

STANTON

Yes, why yes, er, eh, on behalf of the President and a grateful nation we thank all of you brave soldiers

for these flags and the valor you displayed in battle to get them.

(pause)

And, I want to add that each soldier here will receive a medal from the government as a sign of appreciation for the services you have given to the nation.

CUSTER

Mr. President, Secretary Stanton, on behalf of my men we thank you for the honor of presenting these flags to you and hope that in the future we can present Richmond to you as well. The soldiers break out in cheers and laughter.

LINCOLN

(smiling)

Now that is something to look forward to and General Custer, I believe you and your men are just the people to do that.

CUSTER

One other thing, (pause) after the men get their medals could they not get their fare paid to their homes and back to camp?

STANTON is uneasy with this, he looks at LINCOLN who smiles slyly and kindly at CUSTER.

STANTON

Eh, er, well I.

LINCOLN

Doesn't seem too much to get in the bargain.

(pause)

It is a small thing to ask for men who are going to follow General Custer all the way to Richmond.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP WINCHESTER, CUSTER HEADQUARTERS - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE pose with his staff; PENNINGTON, YATES, TOM CUSTER and several others on the front steps of a huge mansion, his HQ for the winter. The photographer is under the protective dark curtain of his camera.

GARDNER  
(muffled)  
Be still, be still now, very good.

The camera flashes and everyone laughs and loosens up.

LIBBIE  
Armstrong, I want that photograph.

CUSTER  
Mr. Gardner took a dozen  
photographs.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I'm sure he'll think kindly of  
donating one to the family?

Photographer ALEXANDER GARDNER is busy with several assistants getting his equipment put away.

GARDNER  
(smiling)  
I would be delighted to, Mrs.  
Custer.

PENNINGTON  
Hello to the Custers', (pause) will  
you not join us for a ride before  
dinner?

CUSTER  
A ride is it?

LIBBIE  
(laughing)  
Oh, Auti lets.  
(pause)  
You Mustn't turn down the dashing  
Colonel Pennington or...

CUSTER scoops her up in his arms, she giggles.

CUSTER  
Or what, my lady?

LIBBIE

Or he will take his cannons and go home.

CUT TO:

EXT. HITCHING POST NEAR MANSION - DAY

PENNINGTON and YATES are walking over to their horses.

PENNINGTON

Now there's an idea, just limber up the guns and go home.

YATES

I think not, Sheridan wouldn't approve it.

PENNINGTON

Who would be brave enough to ask him?

(pause)

Come along you two, you also Tom, main gate in fifteen minutes.

EXT. MANSION STEPS - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE are on the steps, TOM CUSTER is at the door.

CUSTER

A brisk ride will do us good, but Alex, George wear your side arms, (pause) there is still a war going on.

EXT. OPEN FIELD, AUTUMN, VIRGINIA - NOVEMBER 1864 DAY

CUSTER, YATES, TOM CUSTER, PENNINGTON and LIBBIE (in an attractive hunter green riding outfit), race their horses across a huge field. Several pet dogs follow closely by the General, everyone laughing.

EXT. OPEN AREA IN FOREST - DAY

As a group they approach a brook, CUSTER is there first and jumps it, PENNINGTON and the others follow. LIBBIE's hair has come undone and trails in the wind. She is captivating and he watches her as they ride through the forest.

CUT TO:

INT. BALLROOM, SHERIDAN'S MANSION HQ - NIGHT

Officers and their ladies are gathered for one of the seasonal balls. SHERIDAN is decked out in his finest dress blues as are CUSTER and the rest. LIBBIE is in a stunning blue and gold gown. Also present is EDWARD PAUL of the New York Times.

SHERIDAN

Ladies and gentlemen, let's have a regular lively time tonight.  
(pause)

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

To start our dancing and celebrate our Army's recent victories, Band Master Axtell would like to play a new song he has written, the Custer Quick Step.

The guests laugh and clap, CUSTER squeezes LIBBIE and tries to suppress a smile.

AXTELL

If General and Mrs. Custer would be so kind to lead in, (pause)  
Officers and ladies, the Custer Quick Step.

INT. DANCE FLOOR - NIGHT

The band plays a lively number and CUSTER leads off the dancing while SHERIDAN and the others join in.

LIBBIE

(happy)  
I think your dancing is what I love most about you.

CUSTER

(laughing)  
Perhaps you have been away from me too long? The whirl around the dance floor.

INT. CUSTER MANSION, BEDROOM - NIGHT

CUSTER and LIBBIE are standing in the half light of the big bedroom. He is softly kissing her.

LIBBIE

I miss you so much when you are away.

CUSTER

And I miss you also.

LIBBIE

But, (pause) it is so beautiful with the Army now; It almost makes me not want it ever to end.

CUSTER moves slowly to the window. He looks out for a long time. She moves quietly toward him.

CUSTER

I know what that's like. The war has a way of becoming your entire reason for living. It gives me such intense satisfaction.

LIBBIE

Much of what you wanted from soldiering you've gotten because of it.

His face is half illuminated as he looks over at her.

CUSTER

Yes, I am amazed at an event in our lives that takes so much away from this nation but can give so much to us.

LIBBIE

But it will end so, you and General Sheridan and Grant will see to that.

CUSTER

It must, (pause) if it doesn't it will destroy all of them.

LIBBIE

(concerned)

Perhaps that is what concerns me so much. I don't want the war to destroy you, Auti.



He turns fully towards her.

CUSTER

It won't, it can't. I have led numerous charges in almost a dozen battles, Libbie, and nothing more than a torn boot or a tumble from horse has happened to me.

LIBBIE

But how much longer can you do that?

CUSTER

Forever if I must. I'm a soldier and my job is to lead men into battle and someday, (pause) someday it will be more than that.

LIBBIE

I don't understand?

CUSTER

McClellan and Kellogg both suggested business or government to me, when the war is over.

(pause)

I believe I am destined for even greater things than I have achieved so far. Very great accomplishments. Perhaps it is not all that different, (pause) business or battles, (pause) We will see.

LIBBIE

Whatever you decide, I will always be with you.

CUSTER

I know you will. Whatever happens always remember I will survive it.

LIBBIE

Come to bed, Armstrong.

FADE IN:

"OUTSIDE PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA, SPRING OF 1865."

EXT. UNION POSITIONS - DAY

SHERIDAN rides wildly up to CUSTER. They exchange salutes. In the background the band is playing when Johnny Comes Marching Home and the distant sound of gunfire and cannon can be heard.

SHERIDAN

(very excited)

Armstrong, damn it we've got them,  
there is no hope for the Rebs now.

(pause)

Go after them, mash them up  
soundly, let's put an end to this  
business. Deploy your division for  
the attack.

CUSTER

With all speed, Phil.

CUSTER spurs his horse out to the front, his flag bearer and bugler follow.

EXT. CUSTER'S DIVISION - APRIL 6, 1865 SAYLER'S CREEK,  
VIRGINIA

CUSTER reins his horse with its front feet kicking the air.  
He draws his sword.

CUSTER

(yelling)

This is it, gentlemen.  
Commanders bring your brigades by  
squadrons, right into line.

(pause)

Bugler, sound the advance. Draw  
sabers.

BATTLE OF SAYLOR'S CREEK - MONTAGE

CUSTER with his flag

Line of Union soldiers charging

TOM CUSTER charging beside CUSTER

Union cavalry falling

Line of Union soldiers charging

Ragged looking Confederates aiming rifles

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS - DAY

A line of very beaten looking Rebels wait as the Union cavalry ride down on them.

REBEL OFFICER  
Hold, hold, (pause) fire.

A huge cloud of smoke blanks out the Union attack.

REBEL OFFICER (CONT'D)  
Quickly men, reload them muskets.

EXT. CONFEDERATE POSITIONS - DAY

The Union cavalry burst through the smoke and over the Rebel barricades slashing and screaming.

REBEL OFFICER  
Prepare to receive cavalry.

TOM CUSTER shooting his pistol, Confederate soldiers scatter as TOM Custer grabs for rebel flag.

EXT. CONFEDERATE BARRICADE - DAY/BATTLE

TOM CUSTER grapples with the Rebel for the billowing Battle flag. He tries to spur his horse over the man who pulls out his pistol and fires it directly at TOM CUSTER.

REBEL  
Damn you!

Blood covers right side of TOM CUSTER'S face.

TOM CUSTER  
Surrender, (pause) Ouch, Tarnal,  
you damn greyback!

TOM CUSTER never lets go of the flag as his face is splattered with blood. He fires pointblank at Confederate who falls dead.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Damn, damn, I warned you!

TOM CUSTER with the flag rides through dust and smoke to command group.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)

The damn Rebel shot me, Armstrong,  
but I got his flag. Let's follow  
them.

CUSTER

Where the devil do you think you're  
going? Damn, Tom, you'll die from  
loss of blood.

CUSTER reaches over and grabs the halter of his brother's  
horse.

TOM CUSTER

Come along, Armstrong, they'll get  
away.

CUSTER

Don't be foolish, get to the rear  
and report to the surgeon.

TOM CUSTER

And miss all the fun. Never,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

Alright, you are under arrest.

TOM CUSTER

What?

CUSTER

Captain Yates, escort Lieutenant  
Custer under arrest to the surgeon.

YATES

Yes sir. Come along, Tom.

The two of them start to ride off. TOM CUSTER is unsteady in  
his saddle.

CUSTER

Hell and Damnation Lt. Custer, you  
were busier than a whorehouse on  
nickel night. By the way Tom, I  
believe your country owes you  
recognition.

TOM CUSTER

They'll have to send it to me in  
the guardhouse.

EXT. GRANT'S HEADQUARTERS - DAY

GRANT is standing by a field desk going over papers, there are several staff officers by him as well as EDWARD PAUL from the New York Times and CHARLES COFFIN from the Boston Journal.

GRANT

Well, Mr. Paul (pause), Mr. Coffin  
I am hopeful that you are in on the  
final moments of General Lee's  
Army.

COFFIN

It does appear, General Grant, that  
the rebellion is about to end in a  
final flurry of bugles and sabers.

GRANT turns to the piles of reports on his desk and shakes his head.

GRANT

No, seems like it will end under a  
mound of reports.

(pause)

This just arrived in from General  
Sheridan.

PAUL

For the official record General?

GRANT

(smiling)

Of course, probably doesn't matter  
now anyway, seems like we've got  
them boxed.

(pause)

This report just came in from  
General Sheridan.

(pause)

This morning forces belonging to

General Custer's Third Cavalry Division captured four Confederate trains loaded with supplies for General Lee's Army. This action took place at Appomattox Station.

COFFIN

General, how do you feel that will  
affect the Rebels?

GRANT

(smiling)

They were hungry before and now  
they'll be even more so. My

experience indicates that hungry men think more about filling their stomachs than about fighting, Mr. Coffin.

COFFIN

I see.

PAUL

Did you say General Custer's division?

GRANT

Yes, I did. Isn't he something, now there is a man who just plain likes to fight.

PAUL

And does a darn good job of it.

GRANT

That he does, in fact Custer and his cavalry have cut the Appomattox Road and Lynchburg Pike.

(pause)

I would say effectively cutting off General Bob Lee's escape.

CUT TO:

CONFEDERATE HEADQUARTER'S CAMP OF GENERAL ROBERT LEE-  
EVENING OF APRIL 8, 1865 OUTSIDE OF APPOMATOX, VIRGINIA

A large camp fire is burning, less than half a dozen bearded and tired Looking Confederate senior officers are quietly staring into the dancing flames; LONGSTREET, GORDON, FITZHUGH LEE are all present. In the near background ragged groups of confederate soldiers are quietly crouching around smaller fires, several torn flags hang in rows. General ROBERT E. LEE is standing a bit off from his staff, arms folded Across his chest and head bent down; he stares into the fire and looks Old and tired. A tall and muscular officer, General LONGSTREET, moves slowly over and Removes his hat, LEE comes out of his trance and looks at his Corp Commander.

LONGSTREET

And Grant's sentiments?

LEE turns back to the fire and thinks for a moment.

LONGSTREET (CONT'D)

As written in the morning's report,  
General Lee, the supply wagons were  
taken by Federal Cavalry.

(long pause)

I fear that will be the last of  
them.

LEE looks back at LONGSTREET, a slight frown covering his  
face.

LEE

Well, General Longstreet, I hope  
that will not be so.

(almost whispering)

And Richmond has fallen (pause)  
I could not save that city. General  
Grant wants peace, wants our army  
to surrender, sir. Expresses what I  
deem a sincere desire to see this  
end.

LONGSTREET

(angry smirk)

General Lee he is a Yankee. What  
sir, can one expect from such a  
man?

LEE gazes over what he can see of his camp, in the distance  
there is sporadic rifle fire, very distant.

LEE

He is a soldier, Pete, I do not  
know much of him. He does not want  
to see more blood.

LEE looks about and back to the fire, he is concerned,  
troubled And tired. LEE looks quickly over at LONGSTREET.

LEE (CONT'D)

And Pete there others on my staff  
that warn that further resistance  
is hopeless. Colonel Owen advises  
for this army to fade into the  
fields and forests of Virginia.

LONGSTREET

There are others who support such a  
thought.

LEE

Sir, although I respect his  
sentiments and he is certainly a

fine officer. I will not have that  
be our fate.

LONGSTREET looks down somewhat dejected, the fire dances  
before them.

LEE (CONT'D)  
(thoughtful pause)  
No sir I will not have that.  
Tomorrow I will go and see General  
Grant.

LONGSTREET  
General Lee, if Sam Grant does not  
give us good terms, come back and  
let us fight it out with them.

LEE looks very tired, glances at LONGSTREET with a slight  
smile.

EXT. NEAR APPOMATAX COURT HOUSE, CUSTER'S POSITION -  
EARLY MORNING, LAST DAY OF THE WAR IN VIRGINIA, OBSERVERS  
P.O.V

Hundreds of sleeping Union cavalry men, Custer's division,  
regimental flags catching first sunlight. Custer sits up,  
pushes blankets away. Several dogs lick his face and he pats  
them.

CUT TO:

CAPTAIN SIMMS AND ANOTHER CONFEDERATE OFFICER RIDE OUT,  
DRIVING THEIR HORSES HARD AND FAST FOR THE UNION LINES WITH A  
WHITE FLAG. RIFLE FIRE SURROUNDS THEM.

GRANT (V.O.)  
In the past 24 hours we have  
captured over a third of Lee's  
Army, almost 200 supply wagons, 40  
fieldpieces and a dozen battle  
flags.

PAUL (V.O.)  
How can they continue?

GRANT (V.O.)  
I don't think they can, Mr. Paul.

PAUL  
What will happen?

GRANT



I feel General Lee will ask to discuss surrender terms with me. I hope to God he will... and end all this carnage. By God we have captured just about all they possess..... except their very will to keep on fighting

CUT TO:

APPOMATAX TURNPIKE, OPEN FIELDS. LATE MORNING, APRIL 9, 1865

CAPTAIN SIMMS rides upon COLONEL WHITAKER, Custer's chief of Staff and several mounted soldiers who are surprised by the Confederates and raise their weapons on them.

SIMS  
(yelling, waving white flag)  
(MORE)

SIMS (CONT'D)  
Hold your fire, damn you, do not you uns in the Union honor a flag of truce.

UNION MAJOR  
(angry, aiming his pistol)  
Damnation to you, sir. You people bellyache and bluff all over these roads.

WHITAKER  
Hold up Major Anderson, do not shot that man. What brings you forward captain?

SIMS  
(exhausted, looking nervously around)  
I have a message for General Sheridan.

UNION MAJOR  
The very hell you do Johnnie!

The cluster of horsemen prance around, everyone is nervous and angry. WHITAKER tries to maintain some control of a dangerous impromptu meeting.

WHITAKER

He's not here I tell you. But  
General Custer is, you had better  
meet with him. This way captain.

COLLECTION OF UNION AND CONFEDERATE CAVALRY RIDES ACROSS  
LARGE FIELD, GUN AND CANNON FIRE IS HEARD, MOVE TOWARD A  
LARGE UNION CAVALRY UNIT RIDING QUICKLY ALONG.

CUT TO:

NEAR HEAD OF UNION CAVALRY, APPOMATOX TURNPIKE

SIMS and WHITAKER ride up to a dust covered CUSTER, red scarf  
flapping, staff officers close behind.

CUSTER  
(returning salute)  
Who are you and what do you wish?

CUSTER reins up his horse while the cavalry keep riding

SIMS  
I am of General Longstreet's staff,  
but the bearer of a message from  
General Gordon asking General  
Sheridan for a suspension of  
hostilities until General Lee can  
be heard from (long pause) who has  
gone down the road a piece to me  
meet in conference with General  
Grant.

CUSTER  
(animated)  
So you say, captain, we will listen  
to no terms but that of  
unconditional surrender. We are  
behind your army now and it is at  
our mercy.

Dozens of Union cavalry are riding past them as they talk,  
the rumble of hoofs and jingle of gear almost blocking our  
their words.

SIMS  
(shouting above noise)  
Will you allow me to carry this  
message back?

CUSTER swings his horse in a tight circle, other Union  
officers have gathered to watch and listen.

CUSTER  
(still very animated)  
Yes.

SIMS  
Do you wish to send an officer with  
me?

CUSTER casts a quick glance over the collection of his staff,  
TOM CUSTER is not too far away, so is Colonel WHITAKER and  
Major ANDERSON, several others.

CUSTER  
Yes, Colonel Whitaker and Major  
Anderson escort this man back to  
his lines and seek a response to my  
terms.

APPOMATOX TURNPIKE - DAY

The men salute, SIMS with escort wheel quickly away and  
CUSTER trots beside the moving column, which seems to go on  
forever.

APPOMATOX TURNPIKE - ABOUT AN HOUR LATER

CUSTER'S division is halted, long lines of soldiers kneel by  
a broken Fence, their Spencer carbines up and aimed towards  
trees and rebel Soldiers. CUSTER and Colonel CAPEHART and  
several orderlies stand Dismounted, CUSTER is searching up  
and down the road and fields

CUSTER  
(quietly, almost to  
himself)  
Damnation (pause) where is  
Colonel Whitaker? Do you see him  
Capehart? Where is he?

A bullet hits one of the orderly's horses, it rears and falls  
Kicking dead on the road. The men exchange rather concerned  
Looks.

CAPEHART  
Damn (pause) that is not all the  
Butternuts are hitting. They have  
emptied near half a dozen saddles  
at the head of this column, George.

ORDERLY SERGEANT  
(concerned)

Thought they was wanting to sit a spell, doing more shooting then sitting. Beat the Dutch it does.

CUSTER  
(looking about)  
I fear Whitaker has fallen and with him any message.

CUSTER spins around and into action, the amount of firing has increased. He quickly mounts his horse.

CAPEHART  
Blazes, Custer get down.

CUSTER  
Sergeant Tipton, have you a tattered piece of cloth, anything!

The young cavalry man is rummaging in his saddlebag.

TIPTON  
That I do general, fancy this?  
He pulls out a soiled bluish handkerchief.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Bully... that is the ticket. You will join me. I am going to see what is going on... come along Sergeant Tipton.

The two men are mounted, CAPEHART seems hesitant.

CAPEHART  
General, crossing over to the Confederate lines does not seem wise.

CUSTER  
Henry throw out skirmishers. If I fall, start the ball without me. Charge these bastards.

OPEN FIELDS JUST OUTSIDE OF CONFEDERATE LINES NOONTIME

CUSTER and TIPTON are racing their horses directly up to Cluster of tattered Confederate soldiers, who seem almost To tired to care. CUSTER is waving his impromptu truce flag Wildly.

OLD SERGEANT

(smirking)

Well, you all, welcome to the Army  
of Northern Virginia. If you all  
looking for something to eat, we  
are plum out.

Dusty collection of soldiers, rifles carried loosely, and  
Uniforms a mess, chuckle and move in on CUSTER and TIPTON.  
Possibly a dangerous moment.

CUSTER

I carry a flag of truce, where is  
your general?

REBEL

(yelling)

Could use them boots, sergeant.  
Think we might do some trading?

The ragtag Rebels move in on them, CUSTER is about to Draw  
his saber. A Confederate officer trots up on his Horse.

CUSTER

Direct us to your commanding  
general.

GIBBES

(commanding voice)

Sergeant (pause) be so kind to move  
your men back from here, give our  
visitors.. (pause) My very  
goodness, George Custer.

CUSTER and TIPTON spur their horses out of the soldiers,  
CUSTER turns quickly in his saddle.

CUSTER

Damnation, Wade Gibbes, a sight you  
are!

The soldiers have moved back and look on at the impromptu  
meeting.

GIBBES

(laughing loudly)

Come to join up have you Curly?

CUSTER

Pshaw, long way from the Hudson,  
are we not. Wade get me to  
Longstreet can you?

CUT TO:

SMALL HILL, SHADE TREES WITH CONFEDERATE FLAGS -EARLY  
AFTERNOON

Confederate staff officers and Sgt TIPTON look on from a  
Distance as CUSTER and LONGSTREET talk.

CUSTER

General Longstreet (pause) Sheridan  
and I are in dependent here today  
and unless you surrender  
immediately. Sir we are going to  
pitch in.

LONGSTREET takes a long slow look at CUSTER; measuring him up  
He squints at the younger Union general. He removes his hat  
and wipes his forehead.

LONGSTREET

(angry)

As I told your man earlier,  
Whitaker. I am not in command of  
this army, General Lee is and he  
has gone back to meet with General  
Grant with regard to surrender.

CUSTER

(very impatient and  
frustrated)

Well than, just never mind about  
Lee. We demand that the surrender  
be made to us. If you do not do so  
we will renew hostilities and any  
blood shed you will be responsible.

LONGSTREET motions for his orderly to bring up his horse, he  
Slaps his hat on his side and mounts up, swing to look at  
CUSTER

LONGSTREET

(very mad)

Pitch in as much as you like and if  
that is to be done I will do my  
part in meeting you.

CUSTER is very surprised, Sgt TIPTON spurs up his horse  
beside him. LONGSTREET calls over his shoulder to his nearest  
staff, Never taking his stare off CUSTER

LONGSTREET (CONT'D)

Notify General Johnson to move his division to the front and then have general Pickett move his division forward to General Gordon's left.

LONGSTREET stare long and hard at a subdued CUSTER

LONGSTREET (CONT'D)

Do it at once.

CUSTER backs down rather meekly

CUSTER

Well then General Longstreet, well (pause) probably we had better hear from Lee and Grant. Do not move your troops sir; I will confer with General Sheridan. By your leave.

LONGSTREET

(cold voiced)

Very well. Orderly take this gentleman and conduct him back to his lines.

CUSTER and TIPTON have mounted up as the Confederate major rides up to them.

LONGSTREET (CONT'D)

And he may consider himself lucky to get back safely after his impertinent errand.

CUSTER

(unhappy, surprised)

Good day to you.

The three spur their horses down the hill and back towards Union Lines. LONGSTREET turns a younger staff officer.

LONGSTREET

(sly smile)

That young man has never played the Game of bluff (pause) those divisions no longer exist.

EXT. FIRST BRIGADE FRONT - DAY CUSTER

gallops back along their positions.

CUSTER

(laughing)

Men, the white flag is up, it's  
Just about over. Alex and George  
Get the brigades into marching  
Order, we are heading for  
Appomattox.

YATES

What is the word, General?

CUSTER

Grant and Lee are meeting at  
Appomattox, seem like that will be  
the end of it. Let us get the  
division on the march, we will not  
want to miss it. Old Longstreet is  
outflanked, out manned and out of  
luck. But not out of fight.

EXT. APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE, ROAD NEAR MCLEAN HOME - DAY

CUSTER and PENNINGTON ride in front of the Division. The sun  
shines on the spring trees and grass as CUSTER's Division  
marches down the lanes. He notices lines of Confederate  
troops in tatters and looking beat and tired drawn up beside  
the road.

CUSTER

Alex, send the word down the line  
of march to have our men throw  
their rations to those men.

PENNINGTON

With pleasure, Armstrong.

EXT. APPOMATAX ROADS, MCLEAN'S HOME - APRIL 9, 1865 DAY

CUSTER brings his soldiers into position in a grassy field  
near the road leading to the McLean home. The red brick  
building has a white porch that is filled with military aides  
and officers. The area is quiet; cavalry guidons snap in the  
breeze.

CUSTER

Column halt, prepare to dismount.

CUSTER's commands to his brigade commanders are echoed  
throughout the line of cavalry. Something catches CUSTER's  
eye.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Column, (pause) as you were.



EXT. MCLEAN HOUSE PORCH - DAY

Gen. GRANT escorts Gen. Lee out of the building, both men exchange small talk as LEE's horse is brought to the foot of the porch. LEE walks slowly down to his horse, he is dressed in an immaculate gray and gold uniform. He mounts his horse and turns toward GRANT, who tips his worn hat in salute. LEE raises his gray hat in response.

LEE  
(quietly)  
Again, (pause) thank you for your  
kindness. Good day, General Grant.

GRANT  
Good afternoon, General Lee.

LEE walks his horse quietly away, joined by his color bearer and several members of his staff. They ride slowly towards CUSTER's troops.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

Gen. LEE and his staff slowly walk their horses past CUSTER's Third Cavalry Division. CUSTER performs the appropriate military protocol. He pulls his sword out.

CUSTER  
(sharply)  
Command, attention. Draw sabers,  
present sabers. Major Axtell.

AXTELL  
Sir?

CUSTER  
Dixie.

The band strikes up a quick rendition of Dixie and CUSTER gives Gen. LEE a saber salute. LEE touches the brim of his hat, there are tears in both men's eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S CAMP, APPOMATAX - DAY

CUSTER, PENNINGTON, YATES, BRIGGS and several other staff officers are enjoying a meal. ELIZA moves around the camp filling dishes.

ELIZA

Now, Mister Alex, if'n you don eat,  
you gonna get sick.

CUSTER  
Better eat, Alex.

PENNINGTON  
I am stuffed, Miss Eliza. I really  
am.

YATES  
Saw Tom this morning, mad as hell  
that he missed the surrender.

CUSTER leans back and smiles.

CUSTER  
Lord I am tired. How does old Tom  
look?

YATES  
Swollen up like a Autumn chipmunk,  
but he is on the mend.

ELIZA  
Gen'l, me thinks that is General  
Sheridan and a rebel officer.

CUSTER  
Ah, what is this?

Everyone gets up as Gen. SHERIDAN and Col. LEA from the  
Confederate Army walk into the camp area. CUSTER is  
overwhelmed and hugs LEA as everyone else looks on and  
smiles.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
God, (pause) I can't believe it.  
You old Rebel.

LEA  
Armstrong, I knew you'd make it,  
through all of this. Goodness, it's  
grand to see you all.

SHERIDAN  
The good colonel seemed like he  
wanted to talk about old memories  
with you, so I told him I would  
escort him to your camp.

(pause)  
Seeing as how I was heading this way myself.

CUSTER  
Oh, yes, Colonel John Lea, please meet my staff, Colonel Alex Pennington, George Yates, Colonel George Briggs (pause) Eliza my cook. Of course you have met General Sheridan.

LEA  
Very pleased to meet you all. General Custer was best man at my wedding, (pause) seems like ages ago.

CUSTER  
And how is Mrs. Lea? Well I hope?

LEA  
Well, sir, seeing as I have not seen her for the better part of a year, yes she is doing fine, thank you.

SHERIDAN  
The separation of loved ones during war is a terrible thing. Ah, yes, while we're on the subject, and if you'll excuse my intrusion on this thankful reunion.

CUSTER  
By all means, General.

SHERIDAN  
I have here the very table, bought from Mr. McLean, that the terms of agreement and surrender were written up and signed upon earlier today.

He holds it out to CUSTER.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
It's the surrender table, all due respect to Colonel Lea, and nobody deserves it more than you, Armstrong.

CUSTER

But, Phil, really, I could not accept such an honor.

SHERIDAN

Go on, it truly belongs to you. Give it to Libbie as a token of my appreciation.

CUSTER takes the table, admiring it.

LEA

A gift of truly historical significance, sir.

PENNINGTON

Very much so.

CUSTER

Sir, I am humbled.

SHERIDAN

(laughing)

One thing I've learned about you, Armstrong.

(pause)

Is that you are very rarely humbled.

(pause)

I also have been informed that Mrs. Custer is with a select delegation accompanying President Lincoln to the captured Confederate capital of Richmond.

CUSTER

(surprised)

How do you know?

SHERIDAN

Telegram just a moment ago from Admiral Dave Porter on station at City Point.

CUSTER

That's not more than 50 miles east of here.

SHERIDAN

(thoughtful)

So it is, hmmm, if a man left early with a good horse, ought to be there by morning.

YATES

The fighting's over, no hostile  
forces to worry about.

CUSTER

(smiling)

And I surely would like to deliver  
this gift in person.

SHERIDAN

Well, I sure would like Libbie to  
have it as soon as possible. So why  
don't you boys catch up on old  
times and Armstrong, leave the  
Division under the able command of  
Alex Pennington and I'll authorize  
say, four days leave to complete  
the mission we just discussed.

CUSTER

I truly appreciate that, General.

SHERIDAN

My pleasure, good day, gentlemen.

SHERIDAN turns and walks away.

CUSTER

It has been an honor serving with  
Phil Sheridan.

PENNINGTON

Looks like he feels the same way  
about you.

CUT TO:

EXT. RICHMOND STREET - MORNING

CUSTER walks his horse down a street in Richmond, Virginia.  
The little table is strapped to his saddle. There are  
soldiers on guard everywhere.

CUSTER

Excuse me, Corporal. Where can I  
find the former presidential  
mansion?

Young corporal salutes.

CORPORAL

Sir, you ain't more than two blocks away. Just take your next right and you'll spot it sure enough.

INT. EXECUTIVE MANSION, RICHMOND - DAY

CUSTER pushes open the big door, a captain and several ladies are talking in the hallway.

CAPTAIN  
Can I help you?

CUSTER walks in carrying the table.

CUSTER  
Yes, I'm Mrs. Custer's husband.

CAPTAIN  
Oh, yes, yes General Custer of the 3rd Cavalry Division. How nice of you to come, Mrs. Custer is sleeping in the master bedroom, second floor to the right.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

LIBBIE is sleeping in a large bed, the room is beautifully decorated. CUSTER slowly opens the door and walks across to gaze at her. He kisses her gently, she wakes up.

LIBBIE  
Eh, now, Armstrong what a wonderful surprise.

She throws her arms around him and they tumble laughing onto the bed.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
I fought for almost four years to get into Richmond and you, my wife, make it here before me.  
(pause)  
Libbie, God I love you. But there is not justice at all.

They kiss long and hard.

LIBBIE

Would you expect anything less from  
a wife of the Union's greatest  
cavalry leader?

CUSTER  
Some might question that.

LIBBIE  
But we certainly won't.

He pulls her close to him again.

CUSTER  
Goodness how I have missed you.

LIBBIE  
And I you, I'm here with the  
President's delegation to visit the  
city. You see what your name has  
given me?

CUSTER  
And you see what General Sheridan  
has given me to give to you.

CUSTER reaches down and picks up the little table.

LIBBIE  
How precious, has he improved his  
dancing yet?

CUSTER  
Perhaps he will now that the war is  
over.

LIBBIE  
(laughing)  
Yes, next to seeing you that is the  
best of events.

CUSTER  
And this my lady, is the table on  
which Grant and Lee signed the  
documents of surrender.

LIBBIE  
No Armstrong, we can't keep that,  
it is an object of history, a  
national treasure.

CUSTER  
Perhaps, but the only treasure here  
is you.

They start to kiss tenderly. He slowly unbuttons his uniform.

DAVIS' MANSION BEDROOM - MONTAGE

LIBBIE and CUSTER together.

Kissing passionately.

He is playing with her hair.

They are making love.

She is softly caressing him.

They are both asleep in each other's arms.

INT. RESTAURANT, RICHMOND - DAY

CUSTER pulls the chair out for LIBBIE, both are dressed very fashionably.

LIBBIE  
(sad)  
When must you go back?

CUSTER  
Several days, I'll go back to the  
capital with you.

LIBBIE  
Armstrong, I don't want to be  
without you again.  
(pause)  
You look so tired, I worry, I  
really do.

CUSTER  
The war is over, Pennington will  
bring the Division up to Camp  
Arlington and they will muster out  
from there. And I have survived it.  
(pause)  
He'll be returning to civilian  
ways; George Yates is undecided.

LIBBIE is thinking.

LIBBIE



What will you do Armstrong? Now  
that it's over.

ARMSTRONG

(pause)

There are some lucrative positions  
that will be opening up.

(pause)

I have thought about politics and,  
well, I'll have to remain with the  
army until something better comes  
up. I hope you understand?

LIBBIE

I do, Armstrong. I signed on for a  
soldier's life when I married you.  
But for one I will not go through  
the separations again.

(pause)

(MORE)

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

If they send you off to some far  
away duty station then I must go  
also. Do you understand?

CUSTER

Yes, you are every bit a soldier's  
wife.

FADE IN:

"WAR DEPARTMENT JULY 1866"

INT. SECRETARY STANTON'S OFFICE - DAY

STANTON, looking older, is going over paperwork at his desk.  
A clerk enters the room.

CLERK

Mr. Secretary, Captain Custer to  
see you.

He stares over his glasses, and lets the paperwork fall on  
the desk. STANTON gets up and walks to the middle of the  
room.

STANTON

Yes, Custer, send him in.

CLERK

I will.

CUSTER walks in, he now wears captain's bars, his major general's rank only in effect during the war. He looks tanned.

CUSTER

How nice of you to see me,  
Mr. Stanton

STANTON

General, it is always nice to greet  
you.

They shake hands.

STANTON (CONT'D)

Sit down, Armstrong, please. How is  
Mrs. Custer?

CUSTER

Her father's recent death was a sad  
event, but she is well now.

STANTON

I am sorry to hear that. By the way  
I read General Sheridan's report on  
your assignment in Texas, excellent  
work but it is unfortunate that  
Congress removed most of the  
generalships in effect during the  
recent hostilities.

CUSTER

It was, I have found it difficult  
making ends meet now on a captain's  
pay.

STANTON picks up a piece of paper on the table beside them.

STANTON

As indeed I would expect.

(pause)

I imagine that is what brought you  
to request a year's leave of  
absence to serve in the Mexican  
Army against those dreadful French  
imperialists down there. Is that  
the case?

CUSTER

That and a chance to gain more active service.

STANTON

(laughing)

Ah, some men never tire of fighting. I believe you are that type.

(pause)

Well, the news here is not good either. Although both Grant and Sheridan endorsed you warmly in this endeavor, the President felt that it was truly unwise for an American officer of such accomplishment to become involved in such a, (pause) should we say, controversial enterprise.

CUSTER sits slowly back, he is bothered by this news.

CUSTER

Yes, I understand.

STANTON looks at him and adjusts his glasses.

STANTON

I realize, General, that this is not the best of news, especially considering the recent, should we say, setbacks you have experienced.

(pause)

But you are a soldier and able to endure such things.

CUSTER

I have a great deal to be thankful for, Mr. Secretary.

STANTON

Yes, and now I believe a little good news might be in order.

STANTON sits back in his chair, a sly smile spreading across his face.

CUSTER

And what would that be, sir?

STANTON

Congress, in its' somewhat meandering wisdom has authorized

the increase of the standing army  
by 10 new cavalry regiments.

(pause)

These will be assigned duty largely  
in occupation of the south or more  
so in the western territories.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN ON PLAINS - DAY

CUSTER is holding LIBBIE's hand tightly, YATES, TOM CUSTER  
and ELIZA have the windows open as they wave their hats at  
herds of buffalo stampeding beside the moving train.

STANTON (V.O.)

Now I have been authorized to offer  
you a position in one of these new  
regiments. Which one, let me see,  
ah, yes the 7th Cavalry to be  
stationed in Fort Hays in Kansas.

(pause)

(MORE)

STANTON (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It will be difficult work getting  
these new regiments to function  
effectively, but I know of no  
officer more capable of doing it.  
Ah yes, with that comes a regular  
army commission of lieutenant  
colonel. Are you interested,  
Captain Custer?

CUSTER (V.O.)

Let me take George Yates and my  
brother Tom with me for staff  
officers and I'll accept.

STANTON (V.O.)

(laughing)

Anything you say, (pause) Colonel  
Custer of the 7th Cavalry. Have a  
good trip.

The train travels along through the endless golden plains of  
Kansas. The other passengers smile and laugh at the antics of  
the CUSTER party.

TOM CUSTER

(amazed)

Armstrong, did you ever see anything like this. Endless space (pause) and countless buffalo.

CUSTER

Now a man could do some serious hunting here.

YATES

Shoot forever and never run out of game.

ELIZA

Sure is enough for dinner out there.

LIBBIE

And plenty of room for picnics, Armstrong, I would like to have picnics out here.

The three men look at her.

CUSTER

Surely, Libbie, but what about the Indians?

LIBBIE

Your 7th Cavalry will take care of any hostiles.

CUSTER moves away from the open window and sits down beside her.

CUSTER

You realize that life at Fort Riley will be difficult.

LIBBIE

As long as I'm with you it really won't matter.

CUSTER

How I love you.

EXT. ROAD NEAR OFFICER'S QUARTERS, FORT RILEY - DAY

A young soldier is driving the CUSTER party to their quarters. In front of the building a squat, red headed officer, with several staff, is waiting.

DRIVER

Colonel Custer, I told you General Sherman was on post, well sir he is now standing at your front gate.

LIBBIE

So that's the Sherman who took Atlanta.

Everyone is peering out as they drive up.

TOM CUSTER

Burned it and made the Rebels howl.

LIBBIE

Do you know him, Armstrong?

CUSTER

Never met the man, trust he is making an effort to meet the new officers of the 7th.

EXT. FRONT OF OFFICER'S QUARTERS - DAY

CUSTER gets out and helps LIBBIE, others get out and SHERMAN approaches them. ELIZA starts to unload.

CUSTER

Sir, Colonel Custer reporting to post.

SHERMAN

I'm Sherman, very glad to see you.

They salute.

CUSTER

General Sherman, may I introduce my wife, Elizabeth, staff officers Captain Yates and Lieutenant Custer and my employee, Eliza Bates.

SHERMAN

How do you do Mrs. Custer, Ms. Bates, gentlemen.

(pause)

This here is Major Eliot and Lieutenant Cooke, all soon to be members of your staff. Let me welcome all of you to Fort Riley, Military Division of Missouri. I have taken the liberty of setting up a little feed for all of you, trust you are tired?

(pause)  
The enlisted men will see to the  
luggage.

INT. CUSTER QUARTERS - DAY

There are several tables nicely decorated and laid out with food, a small orchestra is playing in the corner. Officers and new arrivals are mingling. CUSTER is talking to SHERMAN.

SHERMAN

To be completely honest with you,  
Colonel Custer, I don't know how  
much Phil Sheridan or Stanton told  
you about this place?

CUSTER

Not a great deal, I'll need more to  
get things in perspective.

SHERMAN

Well don't fool yourself Custer,  
the frontier is a beautiful place  
but unforgiving. There is little  
room for mistakes, especially on  
the campaign.

CUSTER

Tell me about the 7th?

SHERMAN

Brand new, undisciplined, lots of  
veterans from the War's western  
campaign. Most of em don't take  
well to discipline.

CUSTER

Sounds like a promising group of  
cavalry.

SHERMAN

Far from either promising or  
cavalry I must admit. Desertion  
rates are high, provisions are bad  
and morale seems low. The  
commander, Colonel Smith can't seem  
to get a handle on it.

CUSTER

Sounds interesting, but I see you  
do have some amenities.

CUSTER nods to the orchestra.

SHERMAN

Yes, some; the 7th has a fair band.

CUSTER

And the status with the hostiles?

SHERMAN

(laughing)

Probably couldn't be worse, not a good time or place for a woman Custer, I'll tell you that.

CUSTER

Neither Libbie or I would have it any other way, General. She came with the assignment.

SHERMAN looks directly and seriously at CUSTER.

SHERMAN

Just remember; this isn't Virginia and angry, violent and armed Sioux or Cheyenne dog warriors are not cut from the same mold as Stuart or Early.

CUSTER

I trust not.

SHERMAN

Ah, yes, and a lot of the savages are nicely armed by our own Indian Department.

(pause)

They're crafty, Custer, sneak up on your command in a flash and then they hit you and are gone. Trouble is, you can't tell the friendly ones from the hostiles.

CUSTER reaches to the table and picks up another pastry.

CUSTER

When do I get to meet these residents of the territories?

SHERMAN

Probably too soon; I'm bending to government pressure and sending General Winfield Hancock after them this Spring. I trust you know him?



CUSTER

Served with him on the Peninsula Campaign, good officer.

SHERMAN

Well you will be with the 7th when they go on campaign and heaven help our boys if they are not ready for it.

(pause)

Oh, by the way, don't get too comfortable here, you'll be working with the regiment out at Fort Hays.

CUT TO:

INT. CUSTER'S OFFICE, FORT HAYS - DAY

Most of the regimental officers are gathered in CUSTER's office.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, I have reviewed the morning report with both amusement and disgust.

(pause)

Seven men confined to the guard house because of fighting indicates either a spirited unit or a drunken one.

(pause)

I suspect a drunken one. Desertions for the past month as totaled equal 18. I find this unacceptable, almost a third of a company in a month.

ELLIOT

Beg your pardon, Colonel, it was worse this past Spring.

CUSTER

Thank you Major Elliot, but this is bad enough, in no way acceptable.

(pause)

Further review indicates that several of the names on this list

show up on lists for past weeks,  
numerous times.

KEOGH

I won't doubt if some of our brave  
boys don't hold the record for  
nights in the guardhouse.

CUSTER

Exactly, Captain Keogh, and it must  
stop. Damn it, I intend to stop it.  
(pause)

Any soldier who's name shows up  
more than once on the guardhouse  
roster will be ordered out before  
company formation in the morning.  
(pause)

Those individuals will then be  
bucked and gagged and secured on  
the parade ground without food or  
water for the entire day.

BENTEEN

Certainly harsh measures, aren't  
they Colonel Custer?

CUSTER

They get more so, Captain Benteen.  
All others, with one infraction  
will report to punishment duty at  
Captain Yates' area directly after  
breakfast.  
(pause)

Captain Yates, you will put these  
men to work digging a pit 20 feet  
deep and 20 feet in diameter, to be  
boarded over with a small hole cut  
for a ladder.  
(pause)

Any future trouble makers will  
enjoy the comforts of confinement  
in that hole rather than our  
current guardhouse.

YATES

Very well, sir.

CUSTER

Company commanders will supply  
Captain Yates with the names of the

men in question. As for our deserters, (pause) those who are caught will have their heads shaved, be branded with a D and dishonorably discharged for their troubles.

CUSTER stops and looks around at his officers.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, the problems that plague this unit will stop. Do you have any questions?

YATES

Colonel, where did you want that underground facility dug?

CUSTER

(laughing)

Well George, you can bet your next pay call it won't be under my window.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

See my striker, Private Burkman, he'll show you the place.

(pause)

By the way, Mrs. Custer and I would enjoy the company of the officers at a picnic after Sunday morning call. It will be held on the hill a quarter mile from the gate. Dismissed.

EXT. OUTSIDE OFFICE HALL - DAY

BENTEEN and KEOGH are walking out.

BENTEEN

(quietly)

He seems a bit sadistic, doesn't he, Keogh?

KEOGH

Not at all, rather refreshing approach I'd say. Seen worse in Missouri during the war.

BENTEEN

If you want my opinion, he'll  
destroy the Regiment with that type  
of policy.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FT. HAYS - DAY

CUSTER walks slowly across the parade ground, YATES and COOKE follow him. Six sweating soldiers have their hands and feet tied together, a stick tightened between their teeth and all secured to a hitching post. They look very uncomfortable.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, next time you will stay  
out here for three days.

(pause)

Think about that when you decide to  
get drunk and break up the post.

He stares several directly in the face.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Three days, gentlemen.

CUT TO:

EXT. KANSAS HILLSIDE - DAY

Most of the officers and their wives are gathered on a beautiful grassy hill. CUSTER and LIBBIE are enjoying the event. KEOGH, YATES, TOM CUSTER, SMITH, RENO, COOKE, and Capt. TOM WEIR are among those present. The regimental band is playing.

CUSTER

I don't see Captain Benteen?

WEIR

Slightly disposed, Colonel.

CUSTER

Pity, we are having a wonderful  
gathering.

(pause)

I believe our Eliza makes the very  
best chicken.

CUSTER leans back to enjoy his food.

YATES

Has anyone visited the new guardhouse?

LIBBIE

Armstrong that is such a terrible place.

KEOGH

Terrible place but an excellent deterrent, Mrs. Custer.

TOM CUSTER Myles is right about that, I wouldn't want to spend even a night down there.

CUSTER

(laughing)

And you are probably the only officer who I'll have to imprison in the place.

Everyone laughs at that.

TOM CUSTER

Can you believe this man, he had his younger brother arrested at Five Forks in April of 65.

LIBBIE

Probably saved your life, Thomas.

YATES

Most certainly saved the Confederacy.

CUSTER

Seems like I have been hearing a great deal of weeping over my policies. Well I've got some other ideas, perhaps easier to take, I want Bill Cooke here to hold some Marksmanship competition among the companies. Determine the best 50 troopers and we'll group them into a unit of sharpshooters.

COOKE

Sounds entertaining, the men should be enthusiastic about it.

CUSTER

And I'll take that a step further.  
Our sharpshooters will not have to  
pull guard detail or messing  
duties.

KEOGH

Now there's the ticket. Will touch  
the very heart and soul of the  
lads.

CUSTER

And I want to have some horse, mule  
and foot races for both officers  
and enlisted alike.

LIBBIE

Now that will test Armstrong's idea  
of Custer's Luck.

YATES

About time I'll have a chance to  
beat the Colonel in something  
besides a cavalry charge.

The band starts to play a very upbeat tune.

CUSTER

And yes, Captain Weir, buffalo.

WEIR

Colonel, what about the buffalo?

CUSTER

Let us organize a couple of buffalo  
hunts.

WEIR

There is no problem in doing that,  
one of their major routes of  
migration and feeding can't be more  
than seven miles from here.

KEOGH

Directly in Sioux territory.

CUSTER

Well, there are millions of the  
brutes, Sioux won't miss a few.  
Besides, how did you think they  
became so good as mounted warriors?  
(pause)

By riding down buffalo. It will  
make it interesting, (pause) make

better marksmen of our soldiers and supply the camp with meat and a little recreation. I would love to bag a couple of them.

TOM CUSTER

Anything would be better than the trash the depot sends us.

(pause)

Bread baked before the war.

CUSTER

Bill, remind me of these things at officers' call Monday and Weir, get that Indian of yours, what's his name?

WEIR

Bloody Knife, sir.

CUSTER

Yes, Bloody Knife. Get him to take out the officers for a hunt around midweek.

Many of the officers and their wives have gathered around to listen to the Colonel.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

By golly, what is that tune?

KEOGH

Garry Owen, Colonel. It is an old Irish drinking song.

CUSTER

(laughing)

Well I don't know much about drinking and even less about what the Irish sing when they drink, but I'll tell you that fancy tune makes me feel like riding and fighting.

LIBBIE

Makes me feel like dancing.

CUSTER

Oh, yes, we'll have to hold a military ball right quick.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS - DAY

CUSTER and several of his dogs ride beside YATES, KEOGH, WEIR, SMITH, TOM CUSTER and several other officers. BLOODY KNIFE rides a little to their front. CUSTER is wearing a wide brimmed hat and a buckskin jacket.

WEIR

Bloody Knife has found them.

CUSTER

Smashing good show.

EXT. HUNTING PARTY - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE, wearing buckskin pants, several feathers in his dark braided hair and a faded Army jacket rides his pony up to them. He is pointing to their front.

BLOODY KNIFE

(smiling)

There be you buffalo, Colonel Custah.

WEIR

Good job, Knife.

TOM CUSTER

Will you look at the devils, must be two thousand.

CUSTER has taken his pistol out, the dogs are whimpering at his horses feet.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, good shooting to you.

WEIR

Colonel, a bit of advice. This is Sioux country so we should probably stay in pairs.

CUSTER

(thoughtful)

You people can do what you must, but I'm off to get a buffalo.

BLOODY KNIFE

Not to shooting your foot, dogs or horse, Custah.

CUSTER



(indignant)  
Don't worry about me, my friend. I  
intend to show you fellows a thing  
or two about shooting from the  
saddle.

CUSTER spurs his horse as do the others; entire party spreads  
out towards buffalo herd.

BLOODY KNIFE  
Yooooowhe ah!

EXT. KANSAS PLAINS - DAY

CUSTER and his dogs are chasing after a huge buffalo, they  
plunge over the gentle slopes.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Get him boys, run him down!

The dogs are barking and nipping at the running buffalo.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(laughing)  
Give him a run for it, let's give  
him a run.

YATES is swinging off his horse, BLOODY KNIFE is on the  
ground looking at a buffalo YATES has shot.

YATES  
(laughing)  
There, my good man, what do you  
think of that shooting. Looks like  
the Colonel has been done one  
better.

BLOODY KNIFE  
You a captain who can shoot.

WEIR and TOM CUSTER ride up, both excited about the chase.

WEIR  
I've got two of them so far.  
(pause)  
Well, what will Custer say about  
all this.

YATES  
Yes, but where the devil is he?

BLOODY KNIFE

Seen him and his dogs riding hard  
after a big bull.

CUSTER is yelling wildly during the chase, he draws a pistol and prepares to fire. The buffalo suddenly changes direction and tries to run into his horse. The pistol misfires and strikes CUSTER's horse, man and animal go down in a tumble.

CUSTER

Hey, whooo, there.

CUSTER bounces across the plain before rolling to a stop. The dogs scamper up to him and the buffalo stops and turns. CUSTER slowly gets up and dusts himself off, he looks at his dead horse then turns toward the buffalo. It is not more than six feet away and snorting angrily at him. He slowly picks up his revolver and stares at the big animal.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

So fellow what are you going to do?

(pause)

Perhaps we ought just call it a  
draw and go our separate ways?

The buffalo lowers it head and continues to paw the grass.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

I am going to miss that horse, but  
I'll tell you one thing for sure, I  
am not going to miss you.

The buffalo snorts once, shakes it body and then gallops away.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Good day to you.

(pause)

Now where the devil am I?

CUSTER looks around at the trackless plains.

EXT. KANSAS PLAINS - DAY

CUSTER is trudging along carrying his saddle, the dogs walking beside him. He squints into the distance and shades his eyes.

EXT. KANSAS PLAINS (CUSTER'S P.O.V) - DAY DUST

cloud on the horizon indicates riders. CUSTER squints at the riders, slowly takes out his revolver and checks it.

CUSTER  
Now. Could be friendly.  
(pause)  
And they might be the entire Sioux  
Nation. However, let's get ready to  
welcome em one way or the other.

EXT. KANSAS PLAINS, HUNTING PARTY - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE is leading the entire hunting party in a search for CUSTER. He spots his man and motions to the others.

WEIR  
(concerned)  
Knife, what do you see, what is it?

BLOODY KNIFE  
A very tired Custah.  
(pause)  
He worried about us coming.

YATES  
Thank God, are you sure?

BLOODY KNIFE  
It Custah.

EXT. KANSAS PLAINS, MEETING PLACE - DAY

CUSTER has his hat off wiping a sweat stained forehead, the others canter up.

CUSTER  
What took you so long?

TOM CUSTER  
Good Lord, Armstrong, we had no  
idea where you went to.

CUSTER  
Nice day for a stroll.

YATES  
Where the devil is your horse?

CUSTER walks over to COOKE.

CUSTER

Now that is a long story.

(pause)

Give me a hand up, Bill. Here Tom,  
carry the saddle.

COOKE helps CUSTER swing up on the saddle behind him.

BLOODY KNIFE

(smiling)

Not long story, Custah, you shoot  
horse.

CUSTER

(annoyed)

How can you be sure of that?

BLOODY KNIFE

No hole in foot, no hole in dogs.

(pause)

Hole in horse.

CUSTER

(angry)

Come one let's get back, (pause)  
damn Indian.

The others are snickering as they spur their horses after  
them.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FT. HAY - DAY

Gen. HANCOCK, CUSTER and several other mounted men gather in  
front of the 7th Cavalry Regiment and batteries of horse  
drawn artillery and infantry.

HANCOCK

Colonel Custer, this is the scout  
James Butler "Wild Bill" Hickok,  
Mr.

Henry Stanley from the New York Herald and Mr. T. R. Davis  
from Harper's Weekly.

CUSTER

Pleased, gentlemen.

DAVIS

Al Waud sends his regards, Colonel.

CUSTER

How is he?

DAVIS

Fine, sorry he missed this assignment.

HANCOCK

For the benefit of the gentlemen of the press, Colonel Custer and Wild Bill already know our mission, this column is to advance west towards the Arkansas and Smoky Hill river basins.

(pause)

I have ordered Indian Agent Wynkoop to notify all the major chiefs to meet us there for a peace council.

DAVIS

Are you optimistic, General?

HANCOCK

Let's put it this way, Mr. Davis we will try anything to stop these Indians from murdering white settlers on the frontier.

STANLEY

Can this be considered a punitive expedition?

HANCOCK

Only if the chiefs don't show up. Also for the record; we have no warlike intentions but if the chiefs fail to attend this council I intend to unleash the 7th Cavalry to hunt them down and thrash them good and proper.

EXT. PEACE CONFERENCE AREA - DAY

HANCOCK, CUSTER, COOKE, YATES and Agent WYNKOOP cluster around their horses. Several small bands of Indians are sitting in a large circle.

WYNKOOP

Over two months ago I sent them all the news about the council.

CUSTER

This is all you have?

HANCOCK

Less than a third of them, Wild Bill is scouting to the north of here but I don't expect much.

WYNKOOP

General Hancock, I just don't understand.

HANCOCK is very angry.

HANCOCK

Damn it, I understand, Mr. Wynkoop.  
(pause)

Those same Indians who should be sitting here talking peace are out lifting the scalps and burning the homes of innocent people throughout this territory.

WYNKOOP

(disturbed)  
I find it hard...

HANCOCK

I find But I'll tell you one thing, I'm going to put an end to it.

WYNKOOP

These people are not prone to answer to the United States government.

HANCOCK

Damn, but they do a nice job of killing its citizens.  
(pause)

I have had enough. When Hickok reports in, Colonel Custer, prepare to move your regiment into the field to force any hostile Indians to this council.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY AREA - NIGHT

CUSTER is hunched down against the cold with BENTEEN, YATES and COOKE as HANCOCK canters over to them.

HANCOCK

Armstrong Custer, damn it Wild Bill just got back.

CUSTER

And?

HANCOCK

Just as I suspected, damn Wynkoop and the rest of em. No Indians for miles, none anywhere.

CUSTER

Shoots holes in the peace council now doesn't it.

HANCOCK

Custer, start early with your regiment and track down any hostiles you find. I'm interested in a Chief called Pawnee Killer, he has influence over the others.

CUSTER

If he is out there, General, I'll find him.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY ON THE MOVE - DAY

A long line of mounted troops stretch across the Kansas plains.

HANCOCK (V.O)

Head west to the Pawnee Fork area, Bloody Knife can get you there. About 40 miles west of here. Find them, Custer, whatever you do (pause) find them.

EXT. CUSTER WITH COMMAND GROUP - DAY

CUSTER is braced against the wet Spring breeze, the others are scanning the horizon for movement.

COOKE

Scouts are coming in, Colonel.

CUSTER

Have Captain Yates bring his troop to the front, they'll resume the order of march from there.

EXT. CUSTER'S COMMAND - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE and several of his Indian scouts are reporting to CUSTER and his officers.

BLOODY KNIFE

No Indians, Custah, plenty dead whites, (pause) you see, you see.

CUSTER

Damn it, Knife, I want to see the Sioux. Where would they be?

BLOODY KNIFE looks on the ground, picks up some sand and throws it in the air.

BLOODY KNIFE

Go like sand in wind. They here, are many, you follow and they break up.

WEIR

They spread out into smaller groups.

BLOODY KNIFE

(smiling)

Ya, em, spread out. Custah never catch them. Indian no want talk nobody.

CUSTER slaps his gauntlets against his knee, and moves back to his horse. He mounts up.

CUSTER

Listen, all of you. We will find the hostiles and force em back or fight them. Either one is fine with me.

YATES

Fine with me, Colonel.

KEOGH

Chase em down sooner or later.

CUSTER

That's the spirit. Cooke have the bugler sound boots and saddles, mount em up.

CUSTER spurs his horse.



CUSTER (CONT'D)

We'll follow Bloody Knife's lead  
and then scout north towards the  
South Platte River if we have to.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY MARCHING - DAY

CUSTER, COOKE, BLOODY KNIFE, WEIR, YATES and the others ride  
slowly past the smoking ruins of a government mail station.  
Several badly cut up bodies lie near the ruins.

BLOODY KNIFE

Custah, Sioux here for dirty work,  
Cheyennes, too.

CUSTER

Captain Yates, detail several of  
your men to identify and bury the  
dead.

YATES

Yes sir.

YATES walks his horse away towards his company, several  
officers and enlisted men gather near CUSTER.

CUSTER

This could be a dirty little war,  
gentlemen.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY MARCHING - DAY

A long line of cavalry stretches across the Kansas plains.  
COOKE and BENTEEN are riding beside one another.

BENTEEN

This is fast becoming a fool's  
mission, William.

COOKE

Good character building, but hard  
on one's bottom.

BENTEEN

Damn iron ass up there will have a  
mutiny before he knows it.

(pause)

My men are already crumbling.

COOKE

Damn, Fred, why do you think we  
have the sharpshooters.

EXT. INDIANS ON RIDGE - DAY (CUSTER'S P.O.V)

A group of 20 or so Indians watch the cavalry from a ridge  
line. They sit on their horses in complete silence.

EXT. CUSTER'S STAFF - DAY

CUSTER, BLOODY KNIFE and staff bring the command to a halt  
and watch the Indians.

WEIR

Bloody Knife says they been  
watching us like that for several  
hours.

COOKE

Knife, who are they? What tribe?

BLOODY KNIFE

Pawnee Killer, him Sioux.

(pause)

Him bad Indian.

CUSTER

Will he make a move?

BLOODY KNIFE

Pawnee Killer watch, first look and  
think about Custah. Then maybe  
talk, (pause) maybe fist.

BLOODY KNIFE sitting up in saddle pounding fist in the air.

TOM CUSTER

Can we catch the devil, how about  
hitting his village?

BLOODY KNIFE

(laughing)

Little Tom Custah funny. Pawnee  
Killer village no where here. You  
see him, you never see his village.

CUSTER

Damn.

BLOODY KNIFE

Custah, things happen with him soon enough. Never catch him.

EXT. CUSTER'S COMMAND GROUP, 7TH CAVALRY ON THE MARCH - DAY

CUSTER is out front with COOKE, YATES, and SMITH. The sun is beating down on the regiment. A young officer canters his horse up the line of march to join them.

CUSTER

What is it, Lieutenant Nowlan?

NOWLAN

Colonel, D Company is getting very rowdy. Captain Benteen and the first sergeant are having a time of it.

(pause)

Some bad words are passing between parties involved.

CUSTER

Cooke, ride back there will you and settle it. Inform Captain Benteen if he can't handle his command to see me.

NOWLAN

Fine sir.

They exchange salutes, NOWLAN and COOKE canter back towards the command.

CUSTER

Like to given em some action to occupy their thoughts.

(pause)

George, I have never seen anything like this. Almost 80 miles in the saddle and we can't catch those devils.

YATES

Mosby could have learned a thing or two from Pawnee Killer.

CUSTER

Very true. How are your men doing?

YATES

Tired, but they'll hold together.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

Small tents line a section of plain, several guards stand at their posts, lines of cavalry, horses nibble grass, and then poke heads up.

EXT. NEAR CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

Dozens of Indians creep along high grass within sight of cavalry positions. Indians put arrows on bows while others aim their rifles. A cruel looking chief in breech cloth, buckskin shirt takes his rifle and fires the first shot at the camp. Indian's let go with arrows and screams.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - MORNING

CUSTER is asleep in his cot when the firing starts. He jumps up as TOM CUSTER sticks his head into the tent.

TOM CUSTER

Indians have come for breakfast,  
Armstrong.

TOM CUSTER ducks quickly out as CUSTER grabs a red robe and rifle and dashes outside.

EXT. CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

Bugles are sounding as officers order men out to the defense. A soldier get hit by an arrow and drops near CUSTER who moves toward the firing in his red robe.

CUSTER

Captain Yates, get your command  
down to the stable area, protect  
our mounts!

CUSTER takes a few steps, aims and fires his carbine.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Cooke, bring the sharpshooters into  
it.

EXT. CAVALRY POSITIONS - MORNING

Capt. COOKE leads a line of sharpshooters into position, each man drops down and takes aim; they are half dressed; bits and pieces of uniforms.

COOKE

Slow and take aim, volley fire then  
fire at targets of opportunity.

The men tighten up and sight their carbines.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Fire!

The line explodes with a roar.

EXT. INDIAN POSITIONS - MORNING

Indians are firing and reloading, the soldier's fire sweeps through them, several are hit and plunge backward. Others crouch low.

EXT. CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

CUSTER is firing along with a group of his men, they move forward as they reload.

CUSTER

Hold em boys, aim low, hold em.

The roar of gunfire and wild war whoops of Indians blend with the commands of the cavalry; men from all over run in different directions.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Looks like a charge, boys.

(pause)

Private Burkman, place my flag up here. I want them to know who they are fighting.

BURKMAN and BLOODY KNIFE come running up to CUSTER and the group of men fighting with him.

BURKMAN

They won't forget this damn attack, Colonel.

CUSTER

Who are they, Bloody Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE

Knife think you got Pawnee Killer out there, bad Indian.

EXT. INDIAN AREA - MORNING

Over 100 mounted Indians are galloping across a small, shallow river towards the 7th Cavalry's position.

PAWNEE KILLER

Mila hanska ki iyuha wicakte po!  
Hekfa kiya wica ka hapa po!  
(Kill all the Long Knives!  
Drive them back!)

EXT. CAVALRY CAMP, CUSTER'S FIRING LINE - MORNING

CUSTER and his men have dug in somewhat, officers report to him for orders.

YATES

Command has secured the horses,  
Benteen and Smith report only minor  
casualties. Hell of a way to wake  
up.

CUSTER

Good show, here they come. Aim low.

The cavalry start a slow but steady fire.

EXT. INDIAN ATTACK - MORNING

Several braves fall off their horses, others cling low and try to fire back and ride through the cavalry. Heavy fire drives them quickly back.

EXT. COOKE'S SHARPSHOOTERS - MORNING

Captain Cooke stands behind his men watching them fire.

COOKE

Detachment, cease fire!

The soldiers stop shooting, some squint over at the Indians.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Very fine shooting, men.

(pause)

Now, they seem to have had enough  
for one morning. Every third man  
back to camp for ammunition. The  
last two men on line fall back to  
prepare for breakfast.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - MORNING

CUSTER is in his red robe with carbine in hand. BLOODY KNIFE and several troopers are standing near him.

BLOODY KNIFE

(laughing)

Custah have first meeting with  
Pawnee Killer, bad Indian run away.

CUSTER

So that's how our friends choose to  
fight.

(pause)

Early morning attacks, like demons  
in the dawn.

BLOODY KNIFE

Sioux not like anybody you know,  
Custah learn or die.

CUSTER

(laughing)

Well, my friend I don't intend on  
dying. Perhaps it will be a good  
time for us to talk with the Sioux,  
catch them while their noses are  
still bloody.

BLOODY KNIFE

I go with Little Turtle, arrange  
council our side of river.

BLOODY KNIFE is moving away, turns back to CUSTER.

BLOODY KNIFE (CONT'D)

Custah (pause), you keep wearing  
that color and every Sioux  
shoot your way, you die then.

The men around CUSTER laugh, he does also.

CUT TO:

EXT. BANK OF NORTH FORK RIVER - DAY

CUSTER, BLOODY KNIFE, TOM CUSTER, WEIR, YATES and Maj. ELLIOT  
with several soldiers wait on the river bank for PAWNEE  
KILLER and his chiefs.

EXT. CAVALRY'S POSITION - DAY (CUSTER'S P.O.V)

PAWNEE KILLER slowly rides out of the high grass and scrub trees with several braves. They stop, he raises his hand.

PAWNEE KILLER

Hau, Penin Hanska, Wicasa  
initacanyelo Kola kiciya kel,  
wounglankin ktelo. Nape mayuza yo!  
(Greetings to Long Hair  
Chief. Let us talk as  
friends and shake hands.)

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE translates to CUSTER. The soldiers look a little nervous.

BLOODY KNIFE

Pawnee Killer say, greetings, want  
to come shake hands with you. He  
agrees to words of council.

CUSTER

Then tell him to come ahead.

BLOODY KNIFE

Ho, hecetu welo, ca wounglakin  
ktelo.  
(It is agreed, we will  
meet.)

EXT. PAWNEE KILLER'S AREA - DAY

PAWNEE KILLER and his braves listen, mumble quickly among themselves and start walking their horses across the shallow river.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER and his group wait, they seem uneasy.

YATES

(quietly)  
I don't trust these devils,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

Let them say their piece, watch  
them closely.  
(pause)



What do you suspect, Bloody Knife?

He looks at CUSTER for a moment.

BLOODY KNIFE

Heh, these Sioux Dog Soldiers,  
crazy, crazy do anything.

CUSTER

(sarcastic)

Well, that is comforting.

EXT. CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

Sioux arrive, smiling and extending their hands, everyone  
shakes hands.

CUSTER

Bloody Knife, tell Pawnee Killer we  
are happy to greet him and want him  
to come with us to the peace  
council at the Arkansas river  
basin.

BLOODY KNIFE turns to PAWNEE KILLER and his warriors.

BLOODY KNIFE

Wicasa itacanwan pehinhanska  
eciyapikile Lakofa wan palanikte  
eniciyai Kile kici Canlwasfeya  
mniniciya cinyelo. Arkansas River  
heciya omniciye tanka kta ca he  
Kici la cin yelo.

(Long Hair Chief is happy to talk  
to Pawnee Killer of the Sioux. He  
wants you to travel with him to the  
big council on the Arkansas river.)

PAWNEE KILLER listens, he is amused.

PAWNEE KILLER

(smiling)

Pehiin hanska cante wasteya  
wanblakelo. Lakota kit ate iyecel  
omani pelo. Ho nahan Omniciye  
tanka ki hel cinpi hantans yapi  
kte Shi yelo. (pause) Akicita tona  
oniptu huwo? Peju Sapa nahan,  
canhanpi nahan, maza su  
uncinpelo.

(I am happy to see Longhair.  
Sioux travel like the wind and do  
not have to go to council if they  
do not want to.)

(pause)

(How many soldiers are with you? We  
want coffee, sugar and ammunition.)

The Sioux braves chuckle at this. CUSTER looks at WEIR and  
ELLIOT.

CUSTER

And?

BLOODY KNIFE

He happy to see Long Hair. Say  
Sioux travel like wind, not have to  
be at council.

(pause)

(MORE)

BLOODY KNIFE (CONT'D)

And he want to know about number of  
long knife with you.

(pause)

Pawnee Killer wants sugar and  
coffee.

CUSTER

Tell him no sugar, no coffee, tell  
him we want him and his village to  
return with us.

BLOODY KNIFE

Okay, Custah.

(pause)

Canhanpi nahan, pejuta sapa nahan  
Maza suki lena unnicupi kte shi  
yelo.

(We will not give you any sugar,  
coffee or ammunition.)

(pause)

Wicoti ki le gluha unkaniglap  
ktelo.

(You must bring your village back  
with us.)

PAWNEE KILLER

(agitated)

Hunhe! Pejuta sapa wanicele.

No coffee!

(pause)

Ca pejuta sapa nahan canhanpi  
wanica Nace? Hoca wana palanikte

lyayin ktelo. Pehin hanska tanyan  
omani yo!  
(No coffee or sugar? Pawnee Killer  
will go away now. Good bye, Long  
Hair.)

BLOODY KNIFE

He not happy. Say no coffee, no  
sugar, good-bye, Long Hair.

CUSTER

Tell him we will follow and fight  
him again if we must.

BLOODY KNIFE

Watch other Sioux, nobody happy  
here.

(pause)

Pehin hanska leyelo ta akicita ki  
Ake nicizapi kta keyelo.  
(Long Hair says his soldiers will  
fight you again.)

PAWNEE KILLER and his braves start to move back slowly, they  
raise one hand in the symbol of nonaggression and departure.

PAWNEE KILLER

Oxate ki, tate iyecel lyayapi kta  
ca pehin hanska Lakota. Ki tohanni  
iyewicayin kte sni yelo.  
(Long hair never find Sioux. Tribe  
go like the wind.)

BLOODY KNIFE

He say Long Hair never find  
Lakota, they go like the wind.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY LINE OF MARCH - DAY

It is a terribly hot day, the cavalry are exhausted, worn and  
demoralized. They're stretched out in a rough formation  
across the plains.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY LINE OF MARCH - DAY

Captain YATES and BENTEEN race their horses up the line.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, COOKE, BLOODY KNIFE, BURKMAN and several others walk their horses at the front of the column as YATES and BENTEEN ride up.

YATES  
Bad news, Armstrong.

BENTEEN  
We've got a squad out on French leave, Colonel. Squad from my company damn it.

CUSTER is surprised.

CUSTER  
Damn them, (pause) how many this time?

BENTEEN  
Seven from my best count.

COOKE  
That makes 25 to date.  
(pause)  
Orders, Colonel.

CUSTER  
For God's sake, Captain Benteen, you must keep better account of your men.  
(pause)  
Lieutenant Cooke, make a note of this and put the word out to the rest of the company commanders. Let the Indians get the deserters; they won't get far.

BENTEEN is not happy about the reprimand, he reins up his horse.

BENTEEN  
(angry)  
Perhaps, sir, if you would cease driving these men and horses half to death in this wild forced march, you would not have this problem.

CUSTER is taken aback and responds angrily.

CUSTER

Let me remind you, Captain Benteen, this is an expedition in search of hostiles. I will conduct it as is required to complete it successfully.

The two men glare at each other.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
I said, is that understood, Captain?

BENTEEN  
Understood, Colonel Custer.

BENTEEN salutes and rides back to his command.

CUSTER  
Damn the insubordination of that officer.  
(pause)  
I won't tolerate it.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
And Bloody Knife I want to find those hostiles, do you understand?

BLOODY KNIFE  
Bloody Knife and scouts do best.

BLOODY KNIFE and his three Indian scouts spur their horses out from the command.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY LINE OF MARCH - DAY

YATES canters his horse back beside Major ELLIOT.

ELLIOT  
The Colonel is getting a bit angry at the command.

YATES  
Never seen him so angry, he's running himself and the old 7th into the damn plains.

ELLIOT  
Good amount of pressure to punish these damn savages.  
(pause)

Only thing happened so far is our getting punished.

YATES

Armstrong Custer is accustomed to getting directly at his enemy and fighting it out. Indians are not that way, can't get near them.

ELLIOT

Very true, Captain Yates, dangerous business.

(pause)

A very dangerous business.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

Four cavalymen are tacking up their horses, another is keeping watch over the camp. They swing into the saddles and walk their horses out past rows of tents, several soldiers wake up and walk quickly over to them.

SERGEANT DESERTER

Where are those boys from B company? PRIVATE DESERTER Seen em at the edge of camp, just waiting on us.

(pause)

Damn, got the First Sergeant coming over.

EXT. EDGE OF CAMP - MORNING

A soldier in shirt sleeves and suspenders approaches them.

SERGEANT DESERTER

Give that horse some rein, kick the First Shirt if you gotta.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP - MORNING

FIRST SERGEANT is running after the four men, he grabs at the reins of one of their horses.

FIRST SERGEANT

Wallace, where you think you're going?

(pause)

You come back here.

PRIVATE DESERTER

No more Army life for me, First  
Sergeant. Leave me be, damn you.

FIRST SERGEANT

No you don't, you come back here.  
Somebody get Lieutenant Smith.

The four men start laughing, wave their hats and ride away,  
past many of the rest of the regiment just coming out of  
their tents.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - MORNING

CUSTER is in his pants, cleaning up and talking to YATES,  
COOKE and TOM CUSTER when they hear commotion outside.

CUSTER

I still believe it's the bad  
rations and provisions that is  
causing much of our problems.

COOKE

Perhaps, Colonel, we are just  
pushing them too hard.

(pause)

They have their limits.

CUSTER

Maybe, but if I can take it so  
should they. Damn it, Bill, they're  
American cavalry not school girls  
out for a Sunday morning ride.

YATES

All I know is this command is in  
serious danger if more of the  
enlisted decide to depart for parts  
unknown.

(pause)

What the devil is that?

CUSTER

More hostiles?

They head for the tent door.

EXT. OUTSIDE CUSTER'S TENT - MORNING

All four men, rifles in hand, run outside the tent. A young  
corporal runs up to them, followed by Private BURKMAN.

CORPORAL  
Colonel, Lieutenant Smith told me  
to inform you that six men just  
deserted from the far end of the  
camp.

CUSTER  
Damn it, I won't tolerate anymore  
of this.

TOM CUSTER  
They take their weapons?

CORPORAL  
Everything the government gived em,  
they took.

CUSTER  
Tom, George, Cooke take half a  
dozen of the sharpshooters with  
you and bring those fools in.  
(pause)  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I want no more of this. And if they  
resist in any way, shoot them down.

COOKE  
Very good, Colonel.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS, DESERTERS - DAY

The six deserters are spurring their horses madly across the  
high grasslands.

EXT. PLAINS, CAVALRY PURSUIT DETACHMENT - DAY

Captain COOKE leads YATES, TOM CUSTER and seven troopers in  
fast pursuit of the fleeing deserters.

COOKE  
There they are, pick your targets.  
Knock em out of the saddles if they  
resist.

EXT. DESERTERS POSITION - DAY



They have reined their horses in and are looking back.

DESERTER SERGEANT

(worried)

My God, it's Cooke and his  
sharpshooters, get ready to defend  
yourselves, boys, looks like they  
mean business.

He starts to draw his pistol as the sound of rifle fire is heard. The sergeant grabs his side and tumbles from his horse. Two others try to spur their horses on and get knocked off. One gets up and starts to run, the others scatter.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS, PURSUIT - DAY

TOM CUSTER and YATES ride over the plains chasing one deserter on horseback and another on foot. The man on foot raises his hands as if to surrender.

YATES

(loudly)

Watch that one, Tom.

DESERTER

For God's sake, don't shoot.

TOM CUSTER gallops directly towards the man, his pistol lowered, he fires. The deserter is trying to surrender.

DESERTER (CONT'D)

Good God, I'm hit.

The deserter falls and TOM CUSTER and YATES canter up to him, he is badly injured.

TOM CUSTER

I oughta put another hole through  
you.

(pause)

Damn yellow dog.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP, CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

The troopers watch as TOM CUSTER, COOKE, YATES and the sharpshooters escort the captured deserters back into camp. The three injured men are strapped across the saddles of horses.

EXT. CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

CUSTER canters his horse over the convoy of prisoners and guards, salutes are exchanged. Major ELLIOT rides with him.

COOKE

Colonel, managed to get five out of six deserters.

CUSTER

Any trouble?

COOKE

Several tried to resist, consequently the injuries you see here.

CUSTER

Excellent work.

DESERTER SERGEANT

Damn it, I'm hurt, (pause) hurt can't you see. Help me.

CUSTER canters his horse over to the injured men and draws his pistol.

CUSTER

(angry)

If you don't stop that damn noise I'll blow your head off. You've got exactly what you deserve. I have no pity for deserters.

Maj. ELLIOT and the regimental surgeon canter up to CUSTER.

DR. COATES

(soothing)

Here now, Colonel Custer, these men are injured. Let me help them.

CUSTER reins his horse around, very angry.

CUSTER

Dr. Coates, Major Elliot, I forbid anyone to tend to those men. Cooke,

place them in one on the supply wagons.

                  COOKE  
I'll see to it, Colonel Custer.

                  CUSTER  
Let them think about their injuries for a while.  
                  (pause)  
Have the First Sergeant shave the heads of all those who tried to desert this morning.

CUSTER spurs his horse away towards the camp.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP - DAY

CUSTER canters wildly across the tent line, the officers and men watch him in fear, amazement and respect.

                  CUSTER (CONT'D)  
                  (yelling)  
Let that be a lesson to any man who considers desertion from the 7th Cavalry Regiment.

He looks them in the eye as he passes, stopping and staring at Captain Benteen.

                  CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I will tolerate no desertions,  
                  (pause) as I will not tolerate those who question my command of the Regiment.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY LINE OF MARCH, CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, COOKE, ELLIOT and BLOODY KNIFE ride slowly through the intense heat past the burned out ruins of several wagons. A girls' doll, several books and clothing blow around in the wind. The bodies of settlers, bristling with arrows, are lying near the wagons.

                  CUSTER  
Damn it, Elliot, we will track Pawnee Killer to the far ends of

the territory to avenge these people.

DR. COATES canters his horse up.

DR. COATES

Thought I should inform you Colonel that one of the wounded deserters has just died. CUSTER looks at COATES, then over to ELLIOT.

CUSTER

Thank you, Dr. Coates. Major Elliot, muster a burial detail out of Captain Benteen's company to see to these unfortunate people. Bury our deserter with them.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY, BENTEEN'S COMPANY AREA - DAY

BENTEEN is conferring with his first sergeant.

BENTEEN

Seems like Old Custer, our golden haired commander, is sure to destroy this command and more so my company before this mission is over.

The first sergeant is busy saddling up his horse.

FIRST SERGEANT

Been doing a fine job of wearing the regiment down, that's for certain, Captain.

BENTEEN

Well, (pause) these things have a way of coming back on a man. The Boy General won't be exempt when military justice finds him.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT WALLACE, KANSAS TERRITORY - DAY

CUSTER leads his staff and a tired column of the 7th Cavalry into Fort Wallace. The Fort is a rundown operation manned by gaunt and ragged looking soldiers. An officer walks out to greet CUSTER.

CAPTAIN BARNITZ

Thank God you're here, Colonel  
Custer.

CUSTER

Hello, Captain Barnitz. Command  
halt. Commanders have your  
companies dismount, see to their  
horses.

BARNITZ

We are in a state of siege here.  
Supplies are low and the hostiles  
have just about cut us off from the  
main routes.

EXT. FORT WALLACE PARADE GROUND - DAY

CUSTER slips slowly off his horse as YATES, COOKE and ELLIOT  
walk up.

ELLIOT

Things look rough here, Al?

BARNITZ

I was just giving the Colonel the  
details.

(pause)

No supplies and Colonel, Fort Hayes  
has been washed out, everyone been  
evacuated to Fort Harker, just east  
of there.

(MORE)

BARNITZ (CONT'D)

Even got us a cholera epidemic  
broken out in the territory.

CUSTER

(concerned)

My wife is at Fort Hays, any word  
from her or orders from General  
Hancock?

BARNITZ

I am sorry to report no news.

YATES

Don't like the sound of it,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER moves nervously around.

CUSTER

Nor do I. Bill get me 75 men, on our best mounts and all our empty wagons. I will leave most of our command here Captain Barnitz and push on for supplies and instructions from General Hancock.

TOM CUSTER canters his horse up to them. CUSTER turns to him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Tom, I fear bad news. Fort Hays has been evacuated and there is cholera in the territory.

(pause)

And I haven't a word from Libbie.

TOM CUSTER

Well, seems like this place is going to the very devil.

CUSTER

(worried)

I must determine if Libbie is safe and get supplies.

(pause)

Cooke is putting together a flying detachment for the run east.

TOM CUSTER

I want to go, Armstrong.

CUSTER

And you shall. Go tell Major Elliot what is what, he will take charge in our absence.

Capt. BARNITZ hurries over to them.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Now be quick about it, Tom.

TOM CUSTER spurs his horse away at a canter as BARNITZ arrives.

BARNITZ

You may have to go all the way to Fort Riley. That's over 100 miles from here.

CUSTER

Don't worry about me, Al, I'll get you your supplies and find my wife.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT RILEY, KANSAS TERRITORY - DAY

A very tired looking CUSTER rides his horse across the parade ground in front of the officer's quarters. LIBBIE just steps out of a building carrying a large basket. ELIZA is with her.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Good day, Mrs. Custer.

LIBBIE  
(surprised)  
Armstrong, it's you!

She drops her basket and runs down the stairs. He reaches down and pulls her up onto the saddle with him.

CUSTER  
I was so worried about you.

LIBBIE  
Why, I'm well. I was worried sick about you.

They kiss for a while.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
Where are your men?

CUSTER  
What's left is at Fort Wallace,  
some back at Fort Harker getting  
supplies.

LIBBIE  
Armstrong, I am so happy to see  
you.

ELIZA picks up the basket and saunters down to the CUSTERS.

ELIZA  
Gonna be some serious celebrating  
tonight.

FADE IN:

"SECRETARY OF WAR'S OFFICE, WASHINGTON"

INT. WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON - DAY

A studious fair haired man with glasses is going over several pieces of paper when a knock on his office door gets his attention.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
(preoccupied)  
Yes, yes, come in.

The door slowly opens and a youngish man softly steps into the room.

CHEEVERS  
Afternoon, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Yes, what is it Cheevers?

CHEEVERS  
General Grant has arrived, sir.

Secretary of War THOMAS puts the papers down and gets up, walks around his big desk.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Very good, send him in.

INT. SECRETARY OF WAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Gen. GRANT ambles into the office. THOMAS walks up and shakes hands with him.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Sam, nice of you to come over.  
(pause)

(MORE)

SECRETARY THOMAS (CONT'D)  
Have a seat, I need some clarification.

GRANT walks over to a big couch and sits heavily into it. THOMAS sits on the edge of a leather office chair.

GRANT  
Hell Mr. Secretary, I'll do my best.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
It's about the Hancock expedition.

GRANT



That topic could ruin a man's day.  
(pause)  
Perhaps, ruin a man's week, Mr.  
Secretary.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
(thoughtful)  
Yes, more about Colonel Custer's  
part in it.  
(pause)  
Hancock wants to bring charges  
against Custer.

GRANT seems shocked. He thinks for a moment.

GRANT  
(surprised)  
I knew it didn't go well. Bill  
Sherman has kept me up on it, but  
charges against Custer?  
(pause)  
That means a court martial.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Probably so.  
(pause)  
The entire Hancock affair was  
almost a complete failure. The  
government spent hundreds of  
thousands of dollars, lost several  
dozen soldiers, a great deal of  
equipment and horses. Our friend  
Custer almost destroyed an entire  
cavalry regiment by riding it all  
over Kansas and the Colorado  
Territory.

GRANT  
Hmmm, yes, that would be the 7th  
Cavalry I believe?

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Yes, he has, or should I say had  
the 7th Cavalry Regiment. Hancock  
wants to put him under arrest.  
(pause)  
My God, after all of that we could  
account for not more than a dozen  
dead Indians. I can't remember a  
worse campaign for our Army since,  
well since Bull Run back in 61. We  
don't seem to know how to fight  
those savages yet, Sam.

GRANT sinks back in the couch, fumbles for one of his cigars.

GRANT  
A cigar, Secretary Thomas?

SECRETARY THOMAS  
No thanks, Sam.

GRANT  
What are the charges pending  
against Custer?

Secretary THOMAS pages through the papers on his desk.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
Seems like he has really touched  
the fire this time. Here, absent  
without leave from his command,  
seems like he managed to visit his  
wife while on active campaigning.  
Conduct prejudicial to good  
military order and discipline.  
(pause)

He ordered deserters shot without  
due process under the law. One of  
them died. Perhaps acceptable  
during wartime but seems like the  
relatives of the dead soldier  
notified their senator.

GRANT  
(concerned)  
I see, different kind of war out  
there I guess?

SECRETARY THOMAS  
There are several other lesser  
charges tacked on.

GRANT holds up his hand to stop the listing.

GRANT  
Not necessary, Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY THOMAS  
(quietly)  
And the hostiles continue to break  
every treaty made. They kill and  
destroy at random.  
(pause)  
With all the problems President

Johnson is facing; a disastrous Indian campaign and an out of control colonel of cavalry is another unwanted burden.

GRANT

During the war Custer was a great Officer, but then Sheridan held pretty tight control over him.

(pause)

Custer is the type of man who can sometimes be his own worst enemy. Hancock should have known that.

SECRETARY THOMAS Well, General, seems like he has got enough enemies out there now. I've really got no other choice than to authorize the arrest and let it come out in the trial.

GRANT (CONT'D)

I understand, sir, but as a brother soldier I would like to make a statement on Custer's behalf, (pause) once I have read all the reports that is.

CUT TO:

EXT. FORT RILEY PARADE GROUND - DAY

CUSTER is standing in front of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, everyone is in full military dress uniform, helmets with plumes and gold braid.

SECRETARY THOMAS (V.O)

I certainly understand the bond between fighting men. I respect that, Sam.

GRANT (V.O)

One thing about Armstrong Custer, he sure can fight. Where is he now?

SECRETARY THOMAS (V.O)

At Fort Riley, the proceedings will take place there.

GRANT (V.O)

Hate to see a man with his record get a bad discharge.

SECRETARY THOMAS (V.O)

Understandable, he most certainly has a fight on his hands now.

EXT. FORT RILEY, POST HEADQUARTERS BUILDING - DAY Gen.

SHERIDAN accompanied by several other colonels proceed from the post headquarters, march directly up to CUSTER. The wind blows the plume on the helmet gently.

GRANT (V.O)  
(quietly laughing)  
He has this quality he calls  
Custer's Luck, got him through the  
tight scraps during the war.

SECRETARY THOMAS (V.O)  
He'll need every bit of it now.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

Gen. SHERIDAN looks nervous and sad as he clears his throat. CUSTER's expression does not change.

SHERIDAN  
Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong  
Custer, 7th US Cavalry, per order  
of the General-in-Chief the  
determination of charges against  
you have been established by  
general court martial.  
(pause)

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
On the charge of being absent  
without leave from your command  
when that command was actively  
engaged against hostile Indians on  
or about July 15th last.  
(pause)  
Guilty.  
(pause)

On the charge of conduct  
prejudicial to good military order  
and discipline in that you did  
sanction the shooting of soldiers  
in the act of desertion while on  
active campaign on or about July  
7th last. An act which not only  
deprived the suspects of trial but  
resulted in the death of one of  
these men.

(pause)

Guilty.

(pause)

And, that by your order had men wounded in this incident, placed in government wagons prohibiting and denying them proper medical care.

(pause)

Also guilty.

SHERIDAN looks at CUSTER who does not show the slightest bit of emotion.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The Court does find the accused guilty of all said charges. In consideration of his past performances while in service of his country and through the recommendations of several general officers, sentences Lieutenant Colonel Custer to be suspended from rank and command for one year, and the complete forfeiture of all pay and allowances during this time.

SHERIDAN slowly folds up the paper, tucking it into his pocket.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Colonel Custer you are dismissed from service.

(pause)

Major Elliot, take over the regiment.

CUSTER and SHERIDAN exchange salutes.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(sadly)

I am sorry Armstrong. If there is anything I can do contact me.

(pause)

Where will you go?

CUSTER

(tired)

Back to Monroe for awhile, perhaps East to New York.

(pause)

It will be nice to get out of the saddle for a time. Good bye, Phil.

CUSTER turns and removes his dress helmet and walks away.

INT. TRAIN ON GREAT PLAINS - DAY

CUSTER has a book in his lap but is resting his head on his hand gazing out the window as the Great Plains speed by. LIBBIE is seated across from him. The train car is almost empty.

CUSTER  
(quietly)  
Libbie.

LIBBIE  
Yes.

CUSTER  
I will always consider myself a  
scapegoat for the failure of the  
Hancock expedition.  
(pause)  
Really, for the government's Indian  
policy failure.

LIBBIE  
I feel you are correct.

CUSTER  
That is probably the only part of  
this episode that truly bothers me.  
(pause)  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
That and the fact that I will miss  
George Yates and Tom a great deal.

LIBBIE  
So will I. We both will miss them.

CUSTER  
(smiling)  
They are like our family out here.

Yes.

LIBBIE

(pause)

Armstrong, I would like to have a family you realize?

CUSTER looks at her for a moment and smiles. He reaches out and takes her hand.

CUSTER  
Children is it? Now that I have so much time on my hands it might not be a bad idea.

CUSTER gives LIBBIE a gentle kiss on the cheek.

FADE IN:

"NEW YORK, 1868"

INT. DELMONICO'S RESTAURANT, NEW YORK - NIGHT

CUSTER and LIBBIE are walking through the plush lobby of Delmonico's, when someone calls to them from the crowd. Harper's Weekly artist AL WAUD walks quickly up to them.

WAUD  
General, oh General Custer.

CUSTER  
(surprised, pleased)  
Why Al Waud, what a surprise.

WAUD  
I would recognize you in civilian attire as well as a uniform.

CUSTER  
Libbie, you remember Mr. Waud from Harper's?

The three of them shake hands.

LIBBIE  
Of course I do, Mr. Waud, how nice to see you again.

WAUD  
Delighted, again, Mrs. Custer. Dreadfully sorry to see you under the circumstances.

CUSTER

It's nothing, Al. Just a little vacation. My but we are a long way from the battles in Virginia.

(pause)

How is Harpers treating you?

WAUD

Actually I'm working tonight, doing illustrations of Lawrence Barrett.

LIBBIE

The actor, how exciting.

CUSTER

We saw him just two nights ago in MacBeth. Wonderful.

(pause)

Just Wonderful!

WAUD is looking around.

WAUD

Excellent, he was just here with me. I will introduce you to him. Ah, yes, there he is entertaining his public as always.

INT. DELMONICO'S - NIGHT (CUSTER AND WAUD'S P.O.V)

A good looking man with dark curls and evening clothes is waving and departing from a group of smiling people. He is looking toward WAUD and CUSTER.

INT. DELMONICO'S, CUSTER PARTY - NIGHT CUSTER,

LIBBIE and WAUD watch BARRETT approach.

WAUD

Good, interesting assignment but I miss the excitement of the rebellion days.

(MORE)

WAUD (CONT'D)

Seems like the Army is still not doing well on the frontier?

CUSTER

Oh, they'll have to manage without me.



INT. DELMONICO'S - NIGHT

Actor LAWRENCE BARRETT saunters over to them.

BARRETT

Sorry Alfred, (pause) now you can draw pictures of my bad side and publish them.

WAUD

Mr. Barrett may I introduce...

BARRETT

(interrupting)  
General and Mrs. Custer.

CUSTER

Delighted.

He shakes CUSTER's hand and kisses LIBBIE's.

BARRETT

You see Alfred I read your magazine as well. The General appears often enough.

CUSTER

Mr. Barrett, I am flattered.

WAUD

Although I don't think Tom Davis does as good a rendition of the general as I do.

LIBBIE

Nor do I, Mr. Waud.

WAUD

Ah, if Mrs. Custer would only call me Alfred.

Everyone chuckles at this, the General takes her hand.

WAUD

You two have much in common. Mr. Barrett served as an artillery captain in the rebellion.

CUSTER

How interesting.

BARRETT

Not as bold a career as yours,  
General.

CUSTER

A friend once told me that all  
military officers must be a little  
bit of an actor.

(pause)

In that way we have much more in  
common than most people would  
understand.

BARRETT

(laughing)

That is very true, General, very  
true.

He brings his walking stick up and makes several fencing  
moves towards CUSTER who laughs loudly and parries a blow  
playfully with his own walking stick. LIBBIE and WAUD and  
several guests are watching and smiling.

BARRETT (CONT'D)

There is only a fine line between  
the two. There, now I can say that  
I have fenced against the great  
General Custer.

CUSTER

And I against MacBeth.

BARRETT

Beware, General, America is a  
country that enjoys her heroes  
young, dashing and dead at an early  
age.

(pause)

That is why MacBeth and I do so  
well.

CUSTER

(laughing)

I will take heed of that, Mr.  
Barrett.

WAUD

Will you join us for dinner?

CUSTER

Thank you but we have just  
finished.

BARRETT

Well, then we must talk again.  
Between moments of history making  
for both of us.

WAUD

Will you be in New York long?

CUSTER

Several more days and then back to  
my family in Monroe, Michigan.

(pause)

I am in a state of forced  
relaxation one might say.

WAUD

I trust we will all meet again.

BARRETT

Yes that would be excellent. Mr.  
Waud informs me that our Army is  
not doing well on the frontier?

CUSTER

This is true, (pause) but they  
can't blame me for that now can  
they?

BARRETT

General, remember what I said about  
American heroes.

CUSTER looks at him with a certain knowing smile.

FADE IN:

"MONROE, MICHIGAN, SEPTEMBER 1868"

EXT. CUSTER HOME, MONROE, MICHIGAN - DAY

A telegraph worker walks quickly up to the large doors at the  
CUSTER home. BOSTON CUSTER answers.

TELEGRAPH WORKER

Howdy, got a telegram, just arrived  
for General Custer.

BOSTON CUSTER  
Thank you I'll take it.

INT. CUSTER HOME, LIVING ROOM - DAY

BOSTON CUSTER comes running into the big family parlor waving  
the telegram. LIBBIE is sewing on a couch, FATHER CUSTER is  
asleep at his reading and CUSTER is writing a letter at the  
table.

BOSTON CUSTER  
(yelling)  
Armstrong, official telegram. You  
got an official telegram.

FATHER CUSTER wakes up.

FATHER CUSTER  
What the blazes, Boston. What is  
all this?

CUSTER  
Give it here, Boston.

LIBBIE looks interested as CUSTER opens the telegram and  
reads it.

BOSTON  
Could there be another war,  
Armstrong?

LIBBIE  
What is it, Armstrong?

FATHER CUSTER  
(concerned)  
Is Thomas alright?

CUSTER  
(yelling)  
Yeeeeee hah!  
(pause)  
It's from Phil Sheridan, the Army  
is planning a winter campaign  
against the hostiles and everyone  
has asked for me to join them.

FATHER CUSTER  
My Lord, how about that.

CUSTER is up and grabs LIBBIE whom he dances around the room.

CUSTER

It proves that they were wrong. I  
am back in less than a year.

(pause)

I must leave at once, Libbie,  
sweetheart you must follow with our  
possessions when they are packed.  
Oh glorious Phil Sheridan. I knew  
they would realize their foolish  
mistake. I knew it.

CAMP SUPPLY, KANSAS TERRITORY - AUTUMN 1868 DAY

A bearded and buckskin dressed CUSTER leans down from his  
horse and talks to Gen. SHERIDAN. CALIFORNIA JOE, a dirty  
looking, pipe chewing man with flaming red beard listens on.

SHERIDAN

(smiling)

Armstrong, glad you are ready to  
fight Indians again and not ruin  
your regiment in the process.

(pause)

California Joe thinks we can catch  
them in the snow. I rely on you for  
a victory. I am letting you act  
entirely on your own. Simply  
proceed south towards the Washita  
River, Black Kettle's village  
should be wintering there.

CUSTER

(smiling)

Don't worry, Phil, if they are out  
there I'll beat them.

SHERIDAN

Good. Destroy their village, kill  
their ponies and warriors and bring  
back all captured women and  
children. Armstrong, I'm cutting  
you loose. Do not let me down.

CUSTER reins his horse up.

CUSTER

General, this winter weather will keep em pinned down and I'll whip them proper.

Both men salute.

SHERIDAN

I believe you will, Colonel. The field is yours, good luck and may God protect you.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP, INDIAN TERRITORY - NIGHT CUSTER

and his officers and scouts are clustered down by a small fire. TOM CUSTER, ELLIOT, WEIR, BENTEEN, YATES are all present. It is very cold.

CUSTER

(whispering)

The scouts have detected a large Cheyenne Village down near the Washita.

(pause)

I plan to divide the Regiment into four equal units and attack at dawn. I believe it is Black Kettle's village, consequently hostile.

BENTEEN

Any ideas on the number?

CUSTER

Can't tell in the darkness but the pony herd alone numbers over 800.

YATES

Plenty of targets, however you look at it.

CUSTER

Major Elliot will take companies G, M and H downstream and circle the village to the left. Captain Thompson, you will take B and F and hit the village from the rear in coordination with Major Elliot.

(pause)

Captain Myers will take E and I to strike from the forests on the right.

(pause)

I will take the remaining companies and strike from this direction.

(pause)

Questions?

ELLIOT

None here.

THOMPSON

Understood.

CUSTER

Good, we attack at dawn. You have plenty of time to get into positions. Surprise is key to success so no fires and keep the men quiet.

(pause)

The signal for attack will be from the band, when you hear em strike up Garry Owen, attack.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - MORNING

The village is completely asleep, small wisps of smoke rise here and there. The snow covered ground sweeps quietly away from the lodges and teepees. In the distance the notes of Garry Owen can be heard.

EXT. INDIAN TEEPEE - MORNING

Several braves stumble shirtless out of their teepee, they look around and blink back the sleep. Several other members of the tribe stumble past. They can hear the music.

EXT. FIELDS NEAR VILLAGE - MORNING (INDIAN'S P.O.V)

Lines of cavalry can be seen charging across the white fields, another group plunges out of the tree line behind them, while still more race their horses through the shallow area of the Washita River. Sporadic gunfire is heard and the music continues.

INDIAN BRAVE

(surprised)

Wake up. Wake up quickly. The white  
soldiers are attacking.

Indian braves are dashing out, some armed, others not.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAVALRY POSITIONS - DAY

The 7th Cavalry Band is seated on their horses, band master  
in front, playing Garry Owen.

EXT. CUSTER'S COMPANY - DAY

The buckskin clad CUSTER is out front of his troopers,  
pistols are out and the men cheer as the line of mounted men  
charge across a white field.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Half dressed Indian braves, women and children are stumbling  
through their village. Gunfire starts to sound as clusters of  
mounted cavalry plow into teepees, cooking areas and running  
Indians.

CAVALRY SERGEANT

(excited)

Spare the women and children, get  
those damn bucks.

YATES

Fire the tents and drive them  
towards the river.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

TOM CUSTER races his horse after several braves on foot. He  
takes aim, fires three times, hits one then the other. An  
Indian spins around and shoots TOM CUSTER, wounding him.

TOM CUSTER

Damn you!

Indians and soldiers are fighting and running every which way  
past him as he checks his injured hand.



EXT. NEAR CREEK - DAY

A line of Indians braves are trying to stand and fight at the banks of the river. They kneel, stand and lay on the ground shooting at the mounted soldiers who ride toward them.

EXT. NEAR CREEK BANK - DAY

CUSTER, sword out, spurs his horse towards the Indians at the creek bank.

CUSTER  
(yelling wildly)  
Here they are. Damn it men drive  
them into the water.  
(pause)  
Lieutenant Cooke, get your sharp-  
shooters into action on the river  
bank.

A line of saber swinging, screaming soldiers follow CUSTER, several are hit and fall off their horses.

EXT. CREEK BANK - DAY

CUSTER slashes wildly at the Indians as his horse skids into them. He is joined by more soldiers and a wild fight takes place.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

Clusters of Indians have made it to their horses and are escaping. Major ELLIOT notices as he fires at them with his revolver.

ELLIOT  
Sergeant Major Kennedy, quickly  
muster a detachment to pursue those  
savages.

EXT. BATTLE IN VILLAGE, ELLIOT'S POSITION - DAY

ELLIOTT rears his horse wildly around as a number of soldiers gallop after him. They head out across the fields in pursuit of the fleeing Indians.

EXT. NEAR INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

COOKE is leading a line of sharpshooters into position by some snow covered trees. They settle down and start shooting.

SHARPSHOOTER

Got a line of them Bucks trying to get across the river, sir.

COOKE

Gentlemen, take your time and clean them out. Watch your targets, steady on the aim.

THE SOLDIERS START A DELIBERATE FIRE AT THE INDIANS.

EXT. NEAR CREEK - DAY

The Indians are being hit and start to retreat across the water.

INDIAN CHIEF

(yelling)

Brave warriors go back.

Indians start to disengage and run across the water.

EXT. COOKE'S POSITION - DAY

Lt. COOKE is quietly walking the firing line of his sharpshooters. CUSTER rides up with Private BURKMAN, YATES and TOM CUSTER and several other soldiers.

CUSTER

Smashing, victory, Bill, we've just about got them on the run.

COOKE

Stubborn devils, can't hold on much longer.

(pause)

I saw Elliot skedaddle off down the river.

YATES

I believe he is running the hostiles to ground.

CUSTER

Excellent, the devils won't forget this little party soon.

(pause)  
George, see to herding the women  
and children together. Tom, I want  
everything burned and the ponies  
killed. Nothing is to be left to  
the hostiles.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN GROUND, DOWN RIVER - DAY

Maj. ELLIOT is out in front of 20 of his men, they are  
driving their horses at a full gallop, riding across a wide  
field, snow is being kicked into the air.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

The teepees are burning and armed soldiers are collecting  
prisoners or burning things. The gunfire is fading out as  
CUSTER canters through the destruction. The First Sergeant  
rides up to him.

FIRST SERGEANT  
Sharp little gathering, Colonel.

He salutes, CUSTER returns it.

CUSTER  
It was all of that, First Sergeant.  
Please make sure the men know I'm  
proud of them.

FIRST SERGEANT  
They'll be pleased to hear it.  
(pause)  
Ah, sir, I think you oughta see  
this.

CUSTER  
What is it?

FIRST SERGEANT  
This way, Colonel.

CUT TO:

EXT. DOWN RIVER, FIELD - DAY

ELLIOT's command pursues the Indians, suddenly the bordering forests explode with gunfire, arrows and savage screams. The entire front group of Cavalry tumble horses and all.

ELLIOT  
Dismount, form a circle.

EXT. ELLIOT'S POSITION - DAY

Cavalry have dismounted and are firing at the Indians, several are hit and fall.

SERGEANT MAJOR  
(yelling)  
Aim them guns, men, aim low.

He gets hit with an arrow and falls to one knee.

ELLIOT  
Damn it, keep up a steady fire.  
(pause)  
We can hold them back until help comes.

ELLIOT takes a steady aim and fires his revolver at the charging Indians.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

CUSTER is sitting on his horse looking down at the half burned remains of an Indian teepee. The FIRST SERGEANT, YATES, TOM CUSTER and KEOGH are also looking the scene over. The FIRST SERGEANT has a book in his hand.

CUSTER  
(sad)  
My God, what killed them?

CUSTER slowly dismounts, smoke and distant firing can be heard. BLOODY KNIFE trots his pony up as CUSTER walks over to the tent.

FIRST SERGEANT  
Cheyenne blades, quick stabs to the stomach, (pause) probably soon after we come charging in.

YATES  
No telling what type of conduct they were subject to before this.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

CUSTER kneels down beside the wreckage of the teepee, the bodies of two white children, a small girl and even younger boy, both dead.

CUSTER  
This is barbaric, barbaric.

FIRST SERGEANT  
Found this photograph album with  
em, Colonel.

He hands a worn album to CUSTER who rises slowly to his feet and quietly pages through it.

CUSTER  
I find this totally unacceptable.

KEOGH  
My men found a goodly number of  
scalps in half the lodgings they  
knocked down.

CUSTER  
Is there any wonder why we must  
actively campaign against these  
people. Perhaps some of the Indian  
agents should get a look at these  
unfortunate children.  
(pause)  
Captain Yates, please take this  
album and try to secure some sort  
of identification.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
First Sergeant, after the men have  
burned the village and killed the  
ponies, have a detail give these  
children a decent burial.

CUSTER grabs the reins of his horse and mounts up, slowly walks off. YATES, KEOGH and BLOODY KNIFE follow him.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

The crack of gunfire and the screeching of ponies can be heard, angry soldiers are pushing and dragging Indian women to a collection point. The village is still burning.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE, CUSTER'S REVIEW - DAY

CUSTER, YATES, KEOGH and BLOODY KNIFE sit on their horses and watch soldiers trying to push Indian squaws along.

CUSTER

They fight better than their men.

(pause)

Bloody Knife, tell them that we will not harm them.

EXT. VILLAGE, PRISONER COLLECTION AREA - DAY BLOODY

KNIFE dismounts and walks up to the Indian women.

CUSTER

As the great chief of the white warriors they have my word on that.

BLOODY KNIFE

The Chief of the Long Knives will watch his soldiers; he gives you his word that no harm will come to you.

INDIAN SQUAW

(We are thankful that such a powerful leader can be so kind.)

BLOODY KNIFE smiles and turns to CUSTER.

BLOODY KNIFE

She happy Custah such powerful chief and no harm them.

CUSTER

Yes, have them go along quietly and they will not be harmed.

(pause)

George, when Major Elliot gets back have the command ready to move out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD, ELLIOT'S POSITION - DAY

Hundreds of Indians are kicking, shooting and stabbing at the bodies of Maj. ELLIOT's small detachment. They are pulling off clothing and scalping the dead men.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - LATE IN DAY

CUSTER, SMITH and COOKE are watching the Indian prisoners assembling. There are over 50 women and children under guard. BLOODY KNIFE leads an Indian woman and a very beautiful girl of almost 20 up to them. CUSTER dismounts to talk to them.

SMITH

Now there is one worth capturing.

COOKE

I should say so, a local Indian beauty.

CUSTER

Enough of that, now.

BLOODY KNIFE

She say she sister of chief of this village, Black Kettle.

(pause)

Say many village near here.

CUSTER

Sounds like an old trick of some sort, Knife.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

CUSTER, BLOODY KNIFE the INDIAN WOMAN and INDIAN GIRL stand together. CUSTER is attracted to the young girl, MONAHSETAH.

BLOODY KNIFE

(smiling)

This no trick, Custah, plenty Indians nearby.

MONAHSETAH

(I have here a beautiful flower.)

BLOODY KNIFE picks up the girl's hand, she giggles gently, and places it on CUSTER's.

CUSTER

Cooke, Smith make a note of this, must be some type of ceremony.

(pause)

We may despise these people's cruelty, but you can't deny that they are not exotic in their own way.

INDIAN WOMAN

(smiling)

(Perhaps a new wife for the Chief of the Long Knives?)

A small group of Indians has gathered to watch. The INDIAN WOMAN takes out a pretty necklace of red and yellow beads and puts it over CUSTER's head. The beautiful INDIAN GIRL giggles and smiles.

CUSTER

(amused)

What the devil is happening, Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE

Listen, Custah.

INDIAN WOMAN

(chanting)

(Oh lovely Monahsetah will keep faith with her husband; share his home and his food. May the spirits make their life together a happy one.)

CUSTER

What is she saying?

BLOODY KNIFE

This girl is daughter of chief Little Rock, killed in fight. She called Monahsetah and ripe fruit for Big Chief Yellow hair to marry.

CUSTER

(startled)

What, (pause) what does that mean?

BLOODY KNIFE

She marrying you to girl, Chief Yellow hair will then have no desire to kill and fight his relations.

COOKE and SMITH both start to chuckle, CUSTER turns to them with a scowl.



CUSTER

But, that is ridiculous I already  
have a wife, don't be foolish.

(pause)

Tell the woman that I truly  
appreciate her kindness, and the  
young woman is very beautiful, but  
I can't marry her. Go ahead and  
tell her.

BLOODY KNIFE

(smiling)

Too late Custah, you a member of  
Cheyenne family now.

COOKE and SMITH are laughing at the marriage.

COOKE

(laughing)

Congratulations, Colonel, aren't  
you going to kiss the bride?

SMITH

A beautiful couple.

CUSTER is struggling to mount his horse.

CUSTER

I don't find it all that funny.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY POSITIONS NEAR VILLAGE - DAY

Capt. BENTEEN's company is in firing positions around the  
village. Capt. YATES rides up to BENTEEN, both men's  
attention are directed to the nearby hills.

YATES

Fred, when Major Elliot gets back  
the Colonel wants to move the  
entire command out.

BENTEEN

Might I suggest we make fast work  
of our departure. California Joe  
tells me a great many of our  
friends are gathering on those  
hills.

EXT. HILLS ABOVE VILLAGE - DAY (CAVALRY'S P.O.V)

In the sparsely wooded hills Indians can be seen in the hundreds. They simply watch and wait.

EXT. BENTEEN'S FIRING LINE - DAY

YATES canters his horse behind the lines of firing troopers. BENTEEN's attention is focused off at the hills. Scattered firing can be heard.

YATES  
Must be almost 300 of the red devils up there.

BENTEEN  
At least, but we can't depart without hearing from Elliot. As long as they stay up there things will be sweet.

YATES spurs his horse away towards CUSTER's position.

YATES  
That will be for Colonel Custer to decide.

BENTEEN turns back towards his positions, muttering almost to himself.

BENTEEN  
If that be the case, the damned fool will leave Elliot to either the Indians or the wolves.  
(pause)  
Sergeant Roberts prepare the men to mount and withdraw to the column.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE, 7TH CAVALRY COLUMN - DAY

Lines of troopers and captives stand by their horses near the still smoking village.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, YATES, COOKE and BLOODY KNIFE canter past the soldiers.

COOKE  
I've got the sharpshooters out covering our flanks.

CUSTER  
Any news on Major Elliot?

COOKE  
Bloody Knife scouted the river,  
both sides with California Joe,  
and nothing.  
(pause)  
Joe is scouting the Indian forces  
on the hills now.

CUSTER  
We can't afford to wait for Elliot  
he has 20 men with him. They'll be  
able to fight their way out if they  
have to.

YATES  
I suspect they were cut off and had  
to retreat further up the river.

CUSTER  
That is an excellent possibility.  
(pause)  
Lieutenant Cooke, have the  
trumpeter sound to horse and mount.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY - DAY

The sounds of bugles echo across the line of soldiers, they  
move to their horses and mount. The guards motion for the  
prisoners to mount also.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER walks his horse in front of his officers as CALIFORNIA  
JOE and several Indian scouts canter up.

CALIFORNIA JOE  
(winded)  
Bejesus, Colonel, thar is more of  
dem damn redskins' in those hills  
then a man can count.  
(pause)  
They is armed, watching and  
waiting, sniffing the morning  
breeze.

CUSTER  
Anything on Elliot?

CALIFORNIA JOE

Not a thing, seems to have  
vanished.

CUSTER canters up to YATES and COOKE.

CUSTER

Seems like our friends plan on  
pouncing on us before we make it  
back to Camp Supply.

(pause)

Let's give them something to worry  
about; I'm going to march the  
column towards their villages. I  
trust they will scurry back to  
protect everything that is dear to  
them. We will counter march after  
dark back to our base.

YATES

Dangerous business considering the  
numbers.

CUSTER

(laughing)

I have just destroyed Black  
Kettle's village, dealt a dangerous  
blow to the Cheyenne. When have I  
ever been troubled by numbers,  
Captain Yates.

(pause)

Take my word for it; they'll run  
off to protect their homes, and  
we'll be on our way back at night.  
Indians won't fight when the sun  
goes down.

(pause)

7th Cavalry by column of twos,  
forward, ho. Cooke, keep close  
watch on our flanks.

COOKE

No Indian will get within 50 yards  
of my men.

The officers spur their horses on over the snow covered  
field.

CUSTER

Band master, play "Ain't I Glad To  
get Out Of The Wilderness".

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY LINE - DAY

CUSTER gallops his horse down the line of troops, hat in hand, golden hair blowing in the wind as his horse kicks up a spray of white snow. The troops cheer him as he rides by.

CUSTER  
(yelling)  
Gentlemen, it was a great victory,  
we'll be at Camp Supply before you  
know it.

CUSTER reins up his horse near the captured Indians and stares at the beautiful MEYOTZI. She looks back at him. He does a low bow to her and canters away.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP SUPPLY - DAY

The 7th Cavalry parades in review past Gen. SHERIDAN. CUSTER canters his horse out front surrounded by his officers and buckskin clad scouts. The band plays "Garry Owen" as SHERIDAN returns the salute from CUSTER.

SHERIDAN  
(smiling)  
A truly smashing victory,  
Armstrong.  
(pause)  
Truly smashing. I am very proud of  
the gallant 7th.

CUSTER  
Thank you, General.

INT. SHERIDAN'S TENT - NIGHT

SHERIDAN is looking over several items from the Indian village attacked on the Washita. CUSTER and COOKE are standing near his field desk.

SHERIDAN  
Armstrong, you have never let me  
down. It was like campaigning in  
the Shenandoah all over again. You  
made them howl. But damn, I would

like to know what became of  
Elliot?

CUSTER

After this many days I fear the  
worst.

SHERIDAN

Dead, you think?

CUSTER

Major Elliot was a bold and brave  
officer, but in the heat of battle  
he departed the main command  
without orders.

(pause)

And I feel paid the ultimate price.

COOKE

The scouts scoured the area for  
them. Nothing was ever found and  
the Indians were gathering for who  
knew what.

SHERIDAN places the photograph album gently on the table and  
turns to the two officers.

SHERIDAN

Despite this Elliot thing you did  
well out there.

(pause)

The winter campaign worked and I  
intend to carry war to the other  
tribes that fail the government's  
call.

(pause)

We will make war on them  
constantly; destroy their families  
and villages if we must. There will  
be more Washita until they come to  
the reservations. With Sam Grant in  
the White House, we'll have the  
military support we need.

CUSTER

Phil, (pause) the news of the  
Cheyenne defeat will spread  
throughout the frontier. The  
Indians will double their security  
making it more difficult for us to  
catch them again.

COOKE

Or disperse into a hundred smaller bands that would cost too much time and money to track down. I fear the government would not tolerate that.

CUSTER

Let's give them a chance at negotiation.

SHERIDAN looks very surprised at this remark.

SHERIDAN

Now this doesn't sound like the Custer I know; peace talks?

CUSTER

Yes, our victory is big medicine to them. The news will spread and so will our reputation.

(pause)

Perhaps chiefs like Medicine-Arrows of the Cheyenne and Satanta of the Kiowa will listen to us?

SHERIDAN

It sounds like a ticket to a scalping. Do you intend to go it alone?

CUSTER turns to COOKE.

CUSTER

No sir, but the peace approach may work if I visit them with only a small but steady force and representatives who can translate for me.

SHERIDAN

Interesting, but I think not.

CUSTER

With your approval I would like to take my brother Tom and Cooke's 50 sharpshooters, the Indian girl, Monahsetah, one other officer and several other Cheyenne and the Blackfoot Neva as my interpreter.

(pause)

It will be a force capable of protecting itself but not big enough to threaten the villages. We

can head back up the Washita River  
and go in from there.

SHERIDAN paces thoughtfully around for a while.

SHERIDAN

Good logic, but you realize I can't  
order you to do this. However, if  
you volunteer, as do the men, I  
will give you full power as a peace  
commissioner and support you with  
all my authority. But damn it, be  
careful!

CUSTER

Then, general, I volunteer.

CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER is busy packing his equipment, he picks up the beaded  
necklace and entwines it around the small toy soldiers that  
he always carries with him. He is thinking.

INT. INDIAN LODGE - NIGHT

CUSTER is half dressed as is MONAHSETAH, her beautiful dark  
hair flowing down around her naked shoulders. He gently runs  
his finger over her cheek and chin. They slowly kiss and fall  
gently back into thick buffalo robes, their love making is  
softly illuminated by the camp fire in the center of the  
lodge.

CUT TO:

EXT. WINTER PLAINS, CUSTER'S COLUMN - DAY

A bearded CUSTER in buckskin surrounded by the beautiful  
MONAHSETAH, TOM CUSTER, NEVA and several Cheyenne with his  
sharpshooters in line behind make their way across a snow  
covered plain.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

CUSTER watches the Cheyenne walk slowly back and motion to  
him, he looks at his brother, they dismount and follow the  
Indians pulling their horses behind them.



EXT. FIELD - DAY

The Indians are walking among the frozen bodies of cavalrymen. CUSTER and TOM CUSTER slowly kneel over a body, arrows are sticking out of it.

CUSTER

(sad)

It's Joel Elliot, they butchered  
the entire detachment.

TOM CUSTER

So ends the mystery, (pause) there  
was nothing we could have done,  
Armstrong, really.

CUSTER

Probably not.

Both men get up and walk back to their horses.

PEACE PURSUITS - MONTAGE

CUSTER raising hand in greeting to Kiowas.

CUSTER listening as NEVA translates to hostile Indians.

Arapahoe Chief shaking CUSTER's hand.

CUSTER holding MONAHSETAH in their tent.

A worn out line of soldiers crossing vast plains.

CUSTER and Indian chiefs smiling together.

CUSTER watching MONAHSETAH as they ride together.

EXT. NEAR CHEYENNE VILLAGE - DAY

CUSTER, TOM CUSTER and a very worn cluster of soldiers sit on their horses while on the ridges above them hundreds of warriors wait and watch.

CUSTER

Not very good odds, eh, Tom?

TOM CUSTER looks at his brother and offers a half smile.

TOM CUSTER

I've seen worse.

CUSTER

Well let's look the part until Neva gets back.

(pause)

Command, line of troopers, extend from the right, ho.

The men quickly canter their horses into a long line of soldiers facing the Indians. The Cheyenne look a little anxious at this.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Sergeant Howard, make sure the command is dressed on Captain Custer here. And prepared for mounted skirmish.

(pause)

This should add a little haste to Neva's efforts to get Medicine-Arrow to talk to me.

TOM CUSTER

Or get us one hell of a running fight.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY NEVA

canters his pony up to CUSTER.

NEVA

Colonel, Medicine-Arrow not happy that Yellow hair is so close to his camp. He remembers what happened on Washita this past winter.

CUSTER

You told him we come in peace?

NEVA

Yes, (pause) but it took many moments to have him extend an invitation for you to sit in his teepee. You must come alone now with me.

TOM CUSTER

Be careful, brother.

CUSTER

Don't worry, Tom, they won't harm me. I'm worth much more alive than dead. Lead on Neva.

EXT. CHEYENNE VILLAGE - DAY

CUSTER and NEVA stand amid hundreds of Cheyenne braves, women, children and dogs. MEDICINE-ARROWS comes out of his tent to greet them.

MEDICINE-ARROWS  
(smiling)  
Greetings, Yellow Hair.

CUSTER  
Greetings, Medicine-Arrows

MEDICINE-ARROWS  
Am told Yellow hair seeks peace with the Cheyenne?

CUSTER  
The Great Father has asked me to visit Medicine-Arrow for that reason.

MEDICINE-ARROWS  
And what was the reason the Yellow hair visited the Cheyenne on the Washita this past snow?

CUSTER  
To show the Cheyenne that war against the Great Father is bad medicine.

Both men stare at one another for a very long few minutes.

MEDICINE-ARROWS  
Yes, Medicine-Arrows believes this is so. Come, we will smoke.

He motions CUSTER and NEVA inside.

INT. MEDICINE-ARROW'S TENT - DAY

CUSTER is seated to the right of Chief MEDICINE-ARROWS, NEVA is beside him, with several lower chiefs and the chief medicine man of the tribe.

MEDICINE-ARROWS

We pass the pipe.

He takes a long puff off of an ornate pipe and passes it to CUSTER. Instantly the MEDICINE MAN clasps CUSTER's right hand to his heart. All the time he is chanting; CUSTER looks to NEVA.

NEVA

He is removing any harm for the  
Cheyenne's you may possess.

MEDICINE MAN

Let the Everywhere Spirit drive  
away any harm this man has in his  
heart for us.

CUSTER

But, Medicine-Arrows knows I come  
in peace.

MEDICINE-ARROWS

And what message do you bring me in  
the name of peace?

CUSTER

That more war and sorrow will be  
had between Cheyenne and white  
braves if Medicine-Arrows does not  
lead his people into the land given  
to them by the Great Father.

MEDICINE-ARROWS

(Yellow hair knows I have all the  
land now that my people desire.)

CUSTER

It is not the land that the Great  
Father offers to you.

(pause)

From it your braves attack and kill  
my people. This must stop.

MEDICINE-ARROWS

(And how will the Cheyenne eat on  
this land, Yellow hair?)

CUSTER

The Great Father has always shared  
his food with your people. It will  
be so again.

The pipe is passed about in silence.

MEDICINE-ARROWS

(My people want no more war and sorrow with your people. We will come again to the land given us by the Great Father. But, Yellow hair, if you come again with a bad purpose to harm my people, one day you and all your men will be killed.)

At that moment the medicine man loosens the ashes from the pipe and spills them on CUSTER's boots. NEVA looks angry over this.

NEVA

(No, I ask you to stop this.)

MEDICINE-ARROWS

Yellow hair, when the snow melt I lead my people in, you have my word.

CUSTER

And you have mine.

Both men shake hands, the subchiefs' are smiling.

CUT TO:

EXT. ON TRAIL - DAY

CUSTER and NEVA canter along, they are returning with the good news to the rest of the command.

NEVA

The medicine man put a curse on you, Colonel, when he placed ashes on your boots.

CUSTER

Rubbish, Neva, I got Medicine-Arrows to surrender didn't I? The

last of the hostile holdouts,  
frontier will be quiet now. My luck  
was evidently stronger than his  
curse.

CUSTER is laughing happily, he spurs his horse into a gallop.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(loudly)  
I've done what I came out to do;  
brought peace to the frontier,  
Neva.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS, SPRINGTIME - DAY

CUSTER and LIBBIE are galloping their horses across the  
greenish brown plains. He reaches over and picks her directly  
off her horse and sits her down on his.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
This is where my wild flower  
belongs.

LIBBIE  
I will always belong with you.

He reins up the horse, and they face one another and kiss.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
I hope you don't have anymore  
campaigns to attend to.

CUSTER  
I will get good and rusty in my  
work if I don't my dear.

LIBBIE  
I can't believe Margaret is  
married, can you?

CUSTER  
Goodness, neither can I. I missed  
so much of her life when she was  
growing up.

LIBBIE  
But the war was on.

CUSTER

She is the only little sister I have and I feel like I have let her down.

LIBBIE

You brought her husband into the Regiment, that counts for something.

CUSTER

Yes, Lieutenant Calhoun will prove to be a good officer, and Maggie will be excellent company for you.  
(pause)

Did I tell you about the note Jim Calhoun sent to me; he said that if the time ever comes he will never let me down.

LIBBIE

I believe he won't, such a nice man he is. But you are the nicest, Auti.

They kiss again.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

We are very much like a big happy family out here.

CUSTER

Yes, and when Boston arrives the entire family will be complete, such rumors about family connections that will bring.

LIBBIE

Perhaps we should get back, Armstrong, they will miss us.

CUSTER kisses her more passionately and she responds.

CUSTER

Do you realize you are talking to the youngest general in the Union Army, (pause) the man who brought peace to the frontier.

LIBBIE

My Boy General, hmmm that feels wonderful.

CUSTER

So who cares if they miss us. As long as we're together.

They slide gently off the horse, he picks her up and walks to the shade of the only tree in a wide expanse of plain. The horses start to graze.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER HOME, FORT HAYS - DAY

LIBBIE and CUSTER ride up to the house, on the front porch is TOM CUSTER, and W. W. COOKE and NELLIE and EMMA WADSWORTH, visiting from Monroe. Also, JIM CALHOUN and his wife MAGGIE CUSTER CALHOUN.

TOM CUSTER

You've been missing in action, Colonel.

CUSTER

Emma, hello Nellie, I trust you've been bringing some manners to these almost heathen members of my command?

EMMA WADSWORTH

(giggling)

I trust both Tom and William need much more than manners.

LIBBIE

Yes, I would say that is true.

COOKE

Well, Armstrong, read this, it will tell you something about manners in the regiment. Seems like we have a dog that walks on two legs among us.

EXT. CUSTER HOUSE - DAY

CUSTER slides off his horse as COOKE hands him a newspaper.

CUSTER

(intent)



This is the damndest thing I have ever read. And in the New York Times of all places.

(pause)

Cookey, who is responsible for this?

COOKE

One of our own officers.

TOM CUSTER

We've got to find out on this one, Armstrong.

CUSTER moves quickly towards the house.

CUSTER

Cooke, signal officer's call at the field tent. Ladies if you will excuse me.

CUT TO:

INT. CUSTER'S FIELD TENT - NIGHT

The officers of the 7th Cavalry are gathered around in a large circle; YATES, SMITH, KEOGH, TOM CUSTER, KNOWLAN, BENTEEN, COOKE and about 20 others as CUSTER glares at them.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, on an off duty night I would not normally call you together, but something has been written here in of all publications, the New York Times that, to say the damn very least, casts great discredit upon both me and the 7th Cavalry. It concerns the loss of Major Elliot at the Washita fight.

The officers look at one another, some shaking their heads. CUSTER holds up a copy of the paper and slams it down on the field table.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Let me remind all those present that a search was made for Elliot, a brave and dedicated officer, who I might also add I was very fond of. But due to conditions of a

tactical nature the command was forced to withdraw. And, damn it, I did not leave Elliot for dead. The man who insinuated that in this letter should step forward and be horsewhipped.

CUSTER is moving angrily around the tent. Slowly Capt. BENTEEN moves forward. He unsnaps the cover on his pistol.

BENTEEN

Well, Colonel I'm the man you are looking for.

(pause)

I wrote that letter.

CUSTER

(very angry)

I should have suspected such conduct from you.

BENTEEN moves out in front of the other officers. He and CUSTER glare at one another.

BENTEEN

I'm ready for that horsewhipping you mentioned.

CUSTER

Don't try to call my bluff, Captain. Your conduct is a disgrace to this regiment. I ought to call you out on this.

BENTEEN

(smiling)

What, and kill another officer of the 7th, add me to the list with Elliot's name on it.

CUSTER

The rest of you are dismissed. Captain Benteen, you are to remain.

YATES, TOM CUSTER and the others move slowly for the tent door.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER glares at BENTEEN who stares back at him.

CUSTER

Now, Captain Benteen, I am inclined to ask you just what kind of man would lay an entire regiment of US cavalry open to such ridicule.

(pause)

Especially after a successful campaign in which you also played a part?

BENTEEN

The type of man who doesn't care for officers who seek only glory from their profession, and don't give a damn for those who get hurt while they seek such fame. And rise to their ranks, largely through the influence of those in high places that they have befriended, also for their own gain.

CUSTER turns his back on BENTEEN and walks across the tent before spinning quickly around. The move startles BENTEEN who makes a move for his revolver and then stops.

CUSTER

Now, Captain Benteen, you seem a little tense.

(pause)

Lies and poorly thought out assumptions do that to a man. For your information, Captain, every time I risked my life in action against an enemy of my country I never asked a friend if they thought it would benefit my career in their eyes. And any glory, if you can call it that, was the result of victories hard fought by brave men who followed with the understanding of the calling that you seem to lack, Captain.

BENTEEN

Tell that to Elliot, Colonel Custer. And see what he says.

CUSTER

I don't have to. He knew the demands and risks of the profession; as do Smith, Yates, Cooke and the other officers.

(pause)

All, excluding you, I can trust.  
All who will follow me faithfully  
when called to do so. Now, you have  
not heard the last of me on this.  
You are dismissed, Captain.

BENTEEN  
Very well, Colonel.

BENTEEN does a stiff turn and walks out. CUSTER stares at the door and then back at the newspaper.

CUT TO:

INT. INDIAN LODGE - NIGHT

Several older women help MONAHSETAH give birth. It is a silent event, following the Cheyenne tradition. A small boy is cradled in her arms, its hair far lighter than most Indian babies.

OLDER WOMAN  
(gentle smile)  
(Be gentle with your new son, silly girl.)

MONAHSETAH gently cradles and kisses the small child.

MONAHSETAH  
(Such a strong and beautiful boy. A true warrior like his father.)

EXT. INDIAN LODGE - NIGHT

BLOODY KNIFE, CUSTER and YATES ride up to the lodge, dismount and enter.

INT. INDIAN LODGE - NIGHT

MONAHSETAH is wrapped in buffalo robes, she gently hands the child to CUSTER, YATES, BLOODY KNIFE and the other Indian women watch.

MONAHSETAH  
Yellow Swallow this is your father.  
He is strong, a great chief. My

beautiful son, will you be such a warrior? Where will your stars take you?

CUSTER gently holds the child, looks in wonder at his friends and at MONAHSETAH.

CUSTER  
He is beautiful, perhaps too much so to be a warrior.

CUSTER takes out one of the toy cavalry figures and places it gently in the grip of the tiny child.

CUSTER  
But until the day he knows what is in his stars this will be his, a memento from his father.

BLOODY KNIFE laughs and translates for the women.

BLOODY KNIFE  
Your husband says the child is too beautiful to be a warrior.

Both women chuckle at this.

CUSTER  
You will not be safe here, Monahsetah.  
(pause)  
The Cheyenne are not accepting of this.

MONAHSETAH  
I have lived well in the shadow of their anger, we will make our own light.

CUSTER  
You know I am going away, back to the east for several moons?

MONAHSETAH  
Monahsetah understands.

CUSTER  
Someone must see to you and the baby's care.

MONAHSETAH  
We will be well, like all time.

CUSTER  
I am concerned.

CUT TO:

EXT. PLAINS, CUSTER'S GROUP - NIGHT

CUSTER is thinking on the ride back to post, YATES and BLOODY KNIFE are with him.

BLOODY KNIFE  
Custah, has beautiful son, many reasons to be proud.

CUSTER  
Custer, also many reasons to be worried.  
(pause)  
George, Libbie and I will be leaving next week for New York. With Bloody Knife's help I want you to get Monahsetah away from here, especially away from the Cheyenne. Knife can help her get well up north to Sioux country.

YATES  
Don't worry I'll see to it, Armstrong.

CUSTER  
And, George, we should keep the birth as quiet as possible. I'll give you some funds, (pause) see to it she and the child have clothing and several horses, at least four as payment to the tribe.

YATES  
I'll keep this discreet, nobody will be the wiser.

CUSTER  
Do you understand, Bloody Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE  
My tongue is as stone, Custah.

CUSTER

For God's sake make sure Benteen and his friends are not informed, they'll do the devil's work with this sort of thing.

YATES

(guardedly)

Yes, I would say your career is of little concern to friend Benteen.

(pause)

How about Tom?

CUSTER

He knew she was with child, I'll talk to him at the right moment. She will be safe with the Sioux, she's an Indian princess, their kind of royalty, she should be protected.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FORT HAYS - DAY 1872

Flags are fluttering as cavalry and infantry stand in formation and mounted Sioux braves dash their ponies back and forth across the parade ground. CUSTER and BUFFALO BILL CODY stand beside Gen. PHIL SHERIDAN and several other politicians and generals under American and Russian flags.

SHERIDAN

(whispering)

Armstrong, Bill, since Grant got into the White House and gave me my promotion he has been tasking me with the oddest assignments.

CUSTER

He knows your specialty, Phil.

SHERIDAN

(suspicious)

I'm not sure I know what that means, Armstrong. Or that I like it.

(pause)

Here they come, the Russian royal court in Kansas, my God. You two mind your protocol.

BUFFALO BILL

Don't you worry, Phil, we'll show  
this youngster the ways of the  
West.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FORT HAYS - DAY

Three expensive coaches, each with the Russian royal emblem  
and drawn by matched sets of four horses, roll on to the  
parade ground. They are driven by grey coated Russian  
soldiers and followed by an honor guard of US Cavalry.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FORT HAYS - DAY

The military band comes to attention and starts to play the  
Russian national anthem. The Indians start to yell and canter  
their ponies after the carriages.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, CUSTER'S LOCATION - DAY

CUSTER, SHERIDAN, BUFFALO BILL and the rest watch the Russian  
dignitaries arrival. SHERIDAN looks very nervous.

SHERIDAN

(worried)

My God, Armstrong, I hope Spotted  
Tail's Sioux can be trusted. I  
don't want an incident.

CUSTER

What do you think, Bill, are they  
hitting the warpath today?

BUFFALO BILL

(chuckling)

Now that would be a mighty  
interesting moment in American  
history.

SHERIDAN looks at him in horror, CUSTER smiles.

CUSTER

Phil, we would be fighting the  
Indians and the Russians at the  
same time.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, REVIEW AREA - DAY

The coaches come to a stop and a footman swings down and  
stands by the door. The cavalry escort falls into line at  
mounted attention. The band continues to play.



ESCORT OFFICER  
Detachment, (pause) present arms!

The mounted escort draw their sabers. The footman opens the door.

EXT. REVIEWING AREA - DAY

SHERIDAN leans over to the GOVERNOR at his right. CUSTER and BUFFALO BILL come to a dignified attention.

SHERIDAN  
Well, this is my cue. Governor, if you will accompany me.

GOVERNOR  
Thank you, General Sheridan, after you.

SHERIDAN and the GOVERNOR walk toward the coach.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

SPOTTED TAIL'S Sioux rein their ponies in to see the royal visitors.

EXT. PARADE GROUND - DAY

The door of the royal carriage is open, several Russian military aides and attaches are in line before it. SHERIDAN and the GOVERNOR wait at the end of the greeting committee.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, CARRIAGE - DAY

GRAND DUKE ALEXIS, third son of the Czar of Russia, gets out followed by his military aide ADMIRAL POSSIET. They walk directly to SHERIDAN's delegation.

EXT. REVIEW AREA - DAY

A smiling Grand Duke reaches SHERIDAN and party.

ADMIRAL POSSIET  
Yes, General Sheridan, I presume?

SHERIDAN

Admiral Possiet, this is Governor Harvey.

The three men shake hands vigorously.

ADMIRAL POSSIET

May I have the pleasure of introducing the Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich Romanov of the Imperial Russian Court.

The young man is all smiles as he steps forward, and receives a smart salute from SHERIDAN and handshakes from the GOVERNOR; he is dressed in an immaculate white uniform.

ADMIRAL POSSIET (CONT'D)

Your highness this is General

Sheridan and Governor James Harvey.

DUKE ALEXIS

I am so very pleased to see all of you.

SHERIDAN

Welcome to Fort Hays, your highness.

GOVERNOR And welcome to Kansas.

DUKE ALEXIS

Is so exciting just to be here in this wild part of your country.

GOVERNOR

(laughing)

Well, your highness, we are trying to do something about that.

SHERIDAN turns and directs the party over to the reviewing area.

SHERIDAN

Grand Duke Romanov and Admiral Possiet, if you would be so kind to step over here. I would like you to meet several individuals who are

doing their best to tame this wild land.

EXT. REVIEW AREA - DAY

CUSTER and BUFFALO BILL look very impressive in their buckskin and beaded costumes. The Royal Party stops in front of them.

SHERIDAN

Grand Duke Romanov, Admiral Possiet, may I have the pleasure of introducing to you the famed scout Buffalo Bill Cody and Colonel Armstrong Custer of the 7th Cavalry Regiment.

DUKE ALEXIS

Hello, Buffalo Bill. It is my hope you will lead us to these buffalo for our hunting party.

BUFFALO BILL

Your highness, I will find all the buffalo you want to shoot. That, sir, I guarantee.

Duke ALEXIS walks a step on to CUSTER, who salutes him. The young Russian holds out his hand.

DUKE ALEXIS

(smiling)

Am pleased to meet General Custer.

CUSTER

The pleasure is mine, Grand Duke Romanov.

DUKE ALEXIS

I have heard much about you. You are the American soldier who charges Indians and rebellious subjects with a saber and your musical regiments.

SHERIDAN, BUFFALO BILL and all present smile and laugh.

CUSTER

(smiling)

Only, your highness, when they won't surrender peacefully.

DUKE ALEXIS

I am looking forward to hunting  
with you on these wild American  
plains.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT PLAINS KANSAS - DAY

Almost 30 mounted men and perhaps a dozen Indians ride over  
the plains followed by a small convoy of wagons.

EXT. HEAD OF COLUMN - DAY

BUFFALO BILL and several Indian braves canter up to CUSTER,  
Duke ALEXIS and several Russian and American officials.  
CUSTER, ALEXIS, and BUFFALO BILL are dressed in buckskin  
suits, the others in uniforms or civilian attire. Everyone  
carries an expensive hunting rifle.

BUFFALO BILL

Armstrong, Two Deers tells me that  
about a mile north of here is one  
of the biggest herds of buffalos he  
has ever seen.

CUSTER reins his horse around, wiping off his hat.

CUSTER

Well, Duke Alexis, that sounds like  
good news to me.

Duke ALEXIS pulls his rifle out of the leather holder.

DUKE ALEXIS

Did you hear that? Count  
Olsonfieff, the buffalos are at  
hand.

COUNT OLSONFIEFF

That is good news, your highness.  
(pause)  
Colonel Custer, I trust it is safe  
to approach them?

CUSTER

Bill and the Indians will get em  
moving.

(pause)

Ride on them when they are on the run, try to keep at least 30 feet between them and your horse. A startled buffalo can move quickly when it has a mind to. Are we ready, Bill, lead on.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Captain Davis, tell the wagons to follow us north.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT PLAINS, BUFFALO HERD - DAY

Group of screaming Indians gallop out in front of the other riders and start a huge herd of buffalo moving. CUSTER and the others woop as they pursue the animals.

EXT. HUNTING PARTY - DAY

CUSTER and BUFFALO BILL both have their rifles out, they are followed by several Russians and Duke ALEXIS and the CUSTER dogs. Hundreds of buffalo roar by.

CUSTER

Good hunting to everyone, let's bring down some buffalo.

EXT. HUNTING PARTY - DAY

The Grand Duke ALEXIS gallops across the prairie pursuing buffalo, several Indian scouts are whooping along. He is enjoying himself as he shoots several of the shaggy animals down. Count OLSONFIEFF rides behind him as do CUSTER and several US cavalry troopers.

DUKE ALEXIS

(yelling)

Olsonfieff, (pause) Colonel Custer, I have gotten my first buffalo.

CUSTER  
Excellent shooting, Duke Alexis.  
(pause)  
A fine animal.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - EVENING

Indians and soldiers are busy collecting and skinning the buffalos. CUSTER and Duke ALEXIS wander through the camp.

DUKE ALEXIS  
There, over there, that is my first buffalo; A magnificent moment for all Romanovs and the Russian empire.

He leads his friend to the animal.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - DAY

A Russian officer is supervising a photographer as he sets up his tripod and camera. BUFFALO BILL is watching him as are several Indians. CUSTER and Duke ALEXIS walk over.

BUFFALO BILL  
Greetings, your highness, I trust the hunt was to your liking?

DUKE ALEXIS  
Yes, nothing could have been better.  
(pause)  
Lieutenant Sterlegoff, have your photographer take an image of me, Colonel Custer and Buffalo Bill besides my buffalo.

CUSTER  
Sounds fine.

BUFFALO BILL  
I am honored, how does my hair look, Armstrong?

CUSTER  
Fine, Bill.

DUKE ALEXIS

And bring the red Indians here  
also. Please, colonel, stand with  
us; a truly great moment.

CUSTER, BUFFALO BILL, Duke ALEXIS and a dozen Indians collect  
in front of the buffalo.

COUNT OLSONFIEFF

Ah, the Czar will be very proud of  
you, your highness.

DUKE ALEXIS

To stand among these Cossacks of  
the western America, Kansas  
Territory, is a proud day for the  
Romanovs. My true American friends.

The camera goes off with the puff and smoke of burning  
sulphur.

EXT. HUNTING CAMP - DAY

The group starts to break up, Duke ALEXIS stops CUSTER.

DUKE ALEXIS

(sincere)

Colonel Custer, (pause) you have  
been very helpful in making my  
visit the success that it was.

CUSTER

It has been a great pleasure  
getting to know you and learn about  
your family and country.

(pause)

And of course to hunt with you.

DUKE ALEXIS

All this, the Red Indians, Buffalo  
Bill, the American West; it is too  
much like a dream, a wonderful  
dream that I will have to leave  
behind.

(pause)

The Russian Royal Family is not  
always as lucky as you might think.  
There are no buffalo in St.  
Petersburg.

CUSTER

Yes, your highness, I think I  
understand what you are saying.

Duke ALEXIS reaches into his pocket and takes out a small ornate pin. He hands it to CUSTER.

DUKE ALEXIS

This is the cipher of the Romanov Family, (pause) please accept it as a gift from me, the Romanov eagle.

CUSTER is touched, he looks it over with admiration.

CUSTER

Well, I thank you, (pause) it is beautiful and very noble.

DUKE ALEXIS

I am sure that this, my eagle, will be able to fly free over all that is out here. All that I can only remember is from my mind, heart and images.

CUSTER takes the young Russian's hand.

CUSTER

I promise you that it will always fly free out over this country.

DUKE ALEXIS

Thank you, Colonel Custer, thank you.

EXT. FORT LINCOLN, 7TH CALVARY PREPARES FOR BLACK HILLS EXPEDITION, 1874

CUSTER and staff canter along lines of cavalry, RENO, Lt. COOKE, Major Forsyth and Captain FRED GRANT are all there prepared for campaign, wagons, cannon and wives are gathered on the parade ground. The 7th Cavalry Band is gathered in formation; it is a rather festive moment.

SHERIDAN (V.O)

From telegram sent from General Sheridan's Chicago Headquarters Lt. Colonel George Custer, 7th Cavalry, Commanding, Ft. Lincoln Dakota Territory. Sir, prepare at



once to outfit and expedition to the Black Hills to investigate rumors of large gold deposits and survey area for possible establishment of military posts. Armstrong, it is common knowledge this is land is set aside apart for the absolute and undisturbed use and occupation of the Indians. But Armstrong it is common knowledge industrial march of our civilized nation must have its way.

(MORE)

SHERIDAN (V.O) (CONT'D)

Your Regiment is well equipped I expect no problems entering the sacred Black Hills, it is good hunting land and I trust you will find that fulfilling. And, watch your words as you will have the President's son on your staff. Good luck my friend. Sheridan.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER glances over to LIBBIE who stands on the porch of the headquarters building with several officers wives. He gives her a little salute then turns to his regiment.

CUSTER

Companies, prepare to mount.

The sound of the company commanders ordering preparation to mount echoes over the regiment.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Mount!

EXT. CAVALRY REGIMENT - DAY

The entire 7th Cavalry Regiment mounts in unison as the band plays The Girl I Left Behind Me.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER canters over to his staff; RENO, YATES, COOKE and his youngest brother, BOSTON CUSTER, are present as is Lieutenant VARNUM and BLOODY KNIFE.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, as you realize we have almost six days of travel across the plains before we even get to Sioux territory and the Black Hills.

(pause)

It will be a warm and dusty trip and I fear we may have to fight our way into the Hills. Now Lieutenant Varnum and Knife, I want you to take the scouts well out in advance, Major Reno, you will support them in the advance with B and C Companies. The rest of the order of march remains the same.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(pause)

This should prove to be an interesting adventure for all of us. Carry on.

Salutes are exchanged. The staff ride back to their positions. BOSTON CUSTER, a very young man in a buckskin suit and jauntily mounted on a good horse like his older brother holds back.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Boston, it's good to have you with us, listen to me and be careful or father will have both our hides.

BOSTON CUSTER

Don't worry about me, brother.

CUSTER canters his horse beside the mounted column.

CUSTER

Column, forward, at the walk, march!

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY, PARADE GROUND - DAY

The entire Regiment starts to slowly move out, civilians and family wave from the buildings and sides of the parade ground. The Regimental Band kicks up the tune, The Girl I Left Behind Me. The watching family members wave and cheer

EXT. DAKOTA TERRITORY, 7TH CAVALRY - DAY

CUSTER and his staff are looking with binoculars, they are travel worn.

CUSTER

This is the only piece of land I  
have ever seen that warns me off.

YATES

I can't remember any Rebel held  
piece in Virginia that was as  
forbidding.

EXT. BLACK HILLS. (CUSTER'S P.O.V) - DAY

The Black Hills rise darkly out of the Dakota Plains, they  
are gray black and thickly forested, almost evil looking.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

The staff is gathered in conference on a small hill.

VARNUM

Other than a great many pillars of  
smoke no hostile presence that we  
could find.

CUSTER

Scout our approach route once more;  
send Bloody Knife back with your  
findings.

CUSTER turns to the officers.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, have your commands ready  
to deploy either for a march or  
attack when I give the word. Until  
then we wait.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK HILLS - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE leads a line of cavalry through a deeply  
forested hillside. CUSTER, COOKE and YATES look cautiously  
around.

BLOODY KNIFE

Custah, we meet Varnum perhaps,  
mile from here.

YATES

If he is still alive.

BLOODY KNIFE  
(smiling)  
No bad Sioux yet, Mr. Yates.

CUSTER  
George, ride back to Reno and have  
him prepare the wagons to follow  
our trail. Everything looks  
peaceful so far.  
(pause)  
Tell Lieutenant Custer to act as  
trail party, we don't want any  
stragglers on this picnic.

YATES  
I'll take care of it, sir.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK HILLS, VALLEY - DAY

CUSTER and BLOODY KNIFE and VARNUM are out in front of the  
command, cantering across a beautiful flower filled field.

VARNUM  
(laughing)  
I can see why the Sioux want to  
keep this place for themselves.

CUSTER  
My God, it's a bloody paradise.

A flock of huge wild geese fly up and over them, CUSTER  
struggles to get his rifle out. BLOODY KNIFE beats him to it  
and hits a goose.

BLOODY KNIFE  
Sioux, not worry, they have plenty.

EXT. FLOWERED FIELD - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE spurs his horse over and picks up the dead goose  
on the run, laughing all the time.

CUSTER'S POSITION IN FIELD - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE  
Canters up with the bird.

BLOODY KNIFE (CONT'D)  
Dinner on Bloody Knife tonight,  
Custah.

CUSTER  
Lucky shot, thanks.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP, HEADQUARTERS - NIGHT

CUSTER, in shirtsleeves, sips a cup of coffee near an open fire; COOKE is taking notes, YATES, TOM and BOSTON CUSTER finish their food while BLOODY KNIFE and zoologist GEORGE GRINNELL stare at the fire.

GRINNELL  
I would like Mr. Illingworth to  
take some photographs of river  
banks in the morning, Colonel  
Custer.

CUSTER  
I have no problem with that. The  
regiment will be at rest all day,  
Bloody Knife and his men have  
agreed to take us on a hunt, anyone  
who is interested among officers  
and expedition officials are  
welcome. We'll send for him when it  
comes time to photographically  
document my trophies.

CUSTER smirks and turns away.

BLOODY KNIFE  
(laughing)  
Custah, trust his rifle too much.

BOSTON CUSTER  
Pretty confident of yourself,  
brother Armstrong?

CUSTER  
Of course. Oh, yes, by the way,  
Bill, make sure that the commanders  
put the word out that I want  
security at all times while in  
camp. Nobody wanders out without  
weapons or a guard mount.

GRINNELL

In my case, Colonel, how will that be handled?

COOKE

The officer of the day will supply all civilians guard escort from their company.

GRINNELL

Very well, but do you really expect trouble?

CUSTER

No reason to court disaster unprotected, Mr. Grinnell.

BLOODY KNIFE

Plenty Sioux out in shadows, Yellow Hair soldier chief speaks truth.

CUSTER

Also, Lieutenant Cooke.

COOKE

Yes, Colonel?

CUSTER

I think Smith, Miles Moylan and Jimmy Calhoun will want to be part of the hunting excursion, give them the times and details. Well, gentlemen, long day coming up, time for rest. Good night.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST, HUNTING PARTY - DAY

CUSTER, BLOODY KNIFE, CALHOUN and TOM CUSTER walk their horses silently through the forest, guns at the ready.

BLOODY KNIFE

Be very still, Custah, bear up in trees.

CALHOUN

(whispering)

Damn, I can't see the bugger, Knife, where is he?

CUSTER  
I seem him Jimmy, big monster.

EXT. TREES - DAY

A large bear is digging at the ground in the trees; it catches the scent of the men and stands still, a low growl coming from it.

EXT. HUNTING PARTY IN FOREST - DAY

CALHOUN cocks his rifle, CUSTER is taking a cautious aim while the others have fanned out.

CUSTER  
(quietly)  
Well, Mr. Bear, what are you waiting for?

TOM CUSTER  
Do you seem him, Armstrong? Can you get an aim on him?

EXT. TREES - DAY

The bear sees the men and snorts once more, roars and charges at them; lumbering through bushes and small trees.

EXT. HUNTING PARTY - DAY

The men freeze, CUSTER quietly walks out from near a tree, takes a slow and deliberate aim.

CUSTER  
Here he comes, lads, get ready.

CALHOUN and BLOODY KNIFE raise their weapons also.

CALHOUN  
I'll back you up.

CUSTER  
Fires, once, fires again.

BLOODY KNIFE  
That okay shooting, Custah, okay shooting.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

CUSTER and BLOODY KNIFE pose beside a large Grizzly while photographer WILLIAM ILLINGWORTH and his assistant ready their camera for a photograph. Several people watch.

ILLINGWORTH  
Just a moment now, Colonel.

CUSTER  
If we wait too much longer his  
traveling partners are gonna show  
up.

ILLINGWORTH quickly comes out from the camera hood.

ILLINGWORTH  
What did you say?

CUSTER  
These animals travel in pairs. The  
others must be around here  
somewhere.

ILLINGWORTH  
That's what I thought.

He ducks quickly under the hood and takes the photograph, while YATES, COOKE and CALHOUN laugh at his panic.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY CAMP - NIGHT

CUSTER is sitting by the campfire writing a letter, BOSTON and TOM CUSTER are sipping coffee, while YATES cleans his rifle and BLOODY KNIFE pages through several texts GEORGE GRINNELL has let him look at. GRINNELL smiles at the Indian while reviewing his notes.

GRINNELL  
(smiling)  
What do you think of those, Knife?

The Indian looks up at him.

BLOODY KNIFE  
Bloody Knife has seen many of  
these. Just like these in picture  
books.



GRINNELL

You realize, Colonel Custer, that this place is a virtual paradise as far as game is concerned?

CUSTER

Yes, George, it is easy to see why the Sioux protect it so. If I were one of them I would do the same.

BOSTON CUSTER

What's the next route of march, Armstrong?

CUSTER

I suspect it is a good 80 or so miles to the center of the Hills. We'll check the area for gold; see what Mr. Ross and Mr. McKay come up with.

YATES

If it is gold, like they say, it's going to be hell trying to keep the prospectors and settlers away.

CUSTER

It will be all of that. Whatever we find I'll send Charlie Reynolds out ahead with the dispatches. Let the rest of the country decide what to do.

(pause)

My main concern is linking up with that Northern Pacific railroad survey team once we leave the hills.

TOM CUSTER

I hope you can track down the railroad people, Knife?

BLOODY KNIFE

If the Iron Horse men out there, Bloody Knife find them.

EXT. CUSTER'S CAMP FIRE - NIGHT

CUSTER settles down with his paper and pen, writing a letter to LIBBIE.

CUSTER (V.O)

My Dearest Libbie, We have discovered a rich and beautiful country. A land that is full of game and forests.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE CAVALRY MARCHING - DAY

Lines of mounted soldiers ride through a field high with green grass and wild flowers. The men have braided the flowers through their horses' saddles, equipment and bridles.

CUSTER (V.O)

We have encountered vast fields of the most beautiful wild flowers. And I have attained every hunter's dream, I got my grizzly.

EXT. BESIDE CREEK, CUSTER AND MEMBERS OF EXPEDITION - DAY

Miners ROSS and MCKAY are holding up pans for CUSTER and several others to look at. CUSTER picks up a small pile of glittering mud.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

On the 30th of July, miner Ross found gold at our French Creek camp. There seems to be an abundance of the precious metal in the Hills.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOP, CUSTER AND PARTY - DAY

CUSTER, TOM CUSTER, LUDLOW, YATES and GRINNELL struggle up to the top of a mountain, the majestic Black Hills spread out before them. They are happy and congratulate one another.

CUSTER (V.O)

Our engineers have even agreed to name a mountain peak and park after your Boy General. I continue to send dispatches to Mr. Bennett and expect to be in contact with his representative upon my return.

CUSTER raises his rifle and while the others look on he fires a salute into the clouds.

CUSTER (V.O) (CONT'D)

We have had no problems with  
Indians and the spirits of the  
entire command are very good. I  
will think about you until I  
return. Your loving Boy, Armstrong.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT PLAINS, 7TH CAVALRY - DAY

CUSTER at the head of his expedition, watches the horizon.  
COOKE canters up.

COOKE  
Problems, Colonel?

CUSTER  
No, William, I think not. That is  
Bloody Knife with the Northern  
Pacific surveyors.

EXT. RIDERS IN THE DISTANCE

A small group of riders can be seen approaching from across  
the plains.

EXT. CUSTER'S COMMAND GROUP - DAY

CUSTER is watching the approach of the riders through his  
binoculars. He slowly lowers them and a wide smile spreads  
across his face.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
I just do not believe what I see,  
it can't be.

COOKE  
What is it?

CUSTER  
Just an old enemy, Bill, that I am  
very glad to see. Have the command  
dismount, I'll be back directly.

CUSTER spurs his horse.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Yeahhhhhh, Rosser you old Rebel.

CUT TO:

EXT. RIDERS WITH BLOODY KNIFE - DAY

Dark bearded TOM ROSSER, now chief surveyor with the Northern Pacific, hears CUSTER scream his name. A big smile spreads across his face. He spurs his horse quickly forward.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - DAY

The two men meet halfway between their commands. CUSTER leans across his horse and hugs his old friend. ROSSER slaps CUSTER on the back.

CUSTER

Texas Tom, damn what a sight after,  
well how long has it been?

ROSSER

Hell, Armstrong, Spring of 1865,  
that's almost ten years. Officials  
told me I would link up with the  
Army but, no sir, I had no idea you  
would be commanding.

CUSTER leans back in his saddle, laughing.

CUSTER

General Rosser, the 7th United  
States Cavalry at your service.

ROSSER

I truly appreciate your  
hospitality, General Custer.

CUT TO:

EXT. EXPEDITION CAMP FIRE - NIGHT

The gentle murmur of conversation and the flames of campfires cut the night as CUSTER and ROSSER settle down with coffee cups.

ROSSER

Who would ever have guessed two old warriors like us would meet up again?

CUSTER

Working for the same boss this time around.

ROSSER

One might consider it that way, poetically speaking.

CUSTER

And the railroad men treat you fine, Tom?

ROSSER

(yawning)

Hard work, but it is honest money, I reckon.

CUSTER

Now aren't you happy I convinced you to lose the war and come back into the Union.

Both men laugh loudly at that.

ROSSER

Damn, Armstrong, I remember them days like it was yesterday.

(pause)

Hell, the Shenandoah, and the damned Woodstock races.

CUSTER

I hope you've forgiven me for that?

ROSSER

Never held any bad feelings bout it, Armstrong.

CUSTER

But you have to admit, Tom. They were exciting times for all of us.

ROSSER

They sure were all of that, my friend.

CUSTER and ROSSER smile at each other.

CUSTER  
To the glory of war.

ROSSER  
To the glory of war.

Both men raise their coffee cups and toast.

ROSSER (CONT'D)  
Must say, I am a bit surprised to  
find you still serving in the Army.

CUSTER  
Gets in a man, some men anyways.

ROSSER  
There's money to be made on the  
outside, Armstrong, plenty of it.

CUSTER  
Thought has passed through my  
reflections time and again.

ROSSER  
A man with your reputation and I  
dare believe friends in the right  
places should do well for himself.

CUSTER  
Well, Tom, now that you mention it.  
I know you can keep sort of a  
secret?

ROSSER  
On my honor as a former enemy and  
officer, sir.

CUSTER smiles slyly then looks about.

CUSTER  
Tom, I'm seriously thinking about  
politics.

ROSSER  
Fair enough.

CUSTER  
I'm thinking about making a run for  
the presidency, Tom.

ROSSER  
(surprised)

Wow, now that's very serious politics, sir. Damn serious.

CUSTER

I believe I could do it. Could not do any worse than Grant, and as a Democrat there are some powerful people back East who have voiced an interest in supporting a Custer candidacy.

ROSSER

(laughing)

Sounds fine to me. Hell, if they ever give the voting rights back to old Rebels like me I'll vote for you. Damn if I wouldn't.

(pause)

You're a sincere and honest man, Armstrong, I don't think I know of a more noble spirit than you.

CUSTER

Thank you, Thomas.

ROSSER

While we are on the topic of honesty, or should I say lack of it, there is something back at Fort Lincoln you should be aware of.

CUSTER's interest is up.

CUSTER

What's wrong?

ROSSER

Some mighty funny business dealings.

(pause)

Much of centered around that post trader at Lincoln and some rather shady business folk down in Bismark.

CUSTER

That would be sutler, Robert Seip.

ROSSER

He's the one. Been teaming up with the Bismark crowd; Seip been

working with that bunch to take goods sent up the Missouri River for sale to the Army and distribution to the Indians for their own private sales. Old Seip doctors up the records to cover the missing items.

CUSTER And sells the items to the soldiers at a badly increased price because the War Department prohibits buying from anyone but the sutler.

Very true, Colonel. Good reason to believe that the stolen stuff is sold very high with big chunks of that money going back to officials in the capital.

CUSTER

I suspect that is the case.

ROSSER

Cuts down on supplies for the reservation Indians and about summertime they jump the reservations.

CUSTER

Can't blame them, if the government isn't coming up with the proper amount of rations. One thing the Indians are getting enough of is government weapons and plenty of patent ammunition to go with it. The Bismark crowd is stealing it through military channels and selling it to the Sioux.

(pause)

People tell a lot of things to an old Reb officer. Guess they think I'm still bitter about the war.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Where did you say this was being done?

ROSSER

Snoop around the warehouses down along the river in Bismark. Illegal and dangerous goods piling up down there.

(pause)

Some really good firearms, Armstrong, even better than the



ones your boys carry. If we aren't careful someday an angry Sioux nation is gonna use em against the whites and there will be hell to pay.

CUSTER sits up and is thinking it all over while he watches the fire.

CUSTER

That's good information, Tom, I thank you for it. You're not the only one that figures there are some bad dealings going on between post traders and officials in the War Department.

(pause)

I'll take a look at the affairs of Mr. Seip and his crowd when we get back to Fort Lincoln.

ROSSER

Hell, Armstrong, you'd made a damn good American president. For a Yankee.

Both men laugh.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER QUARTERS, FT. LINCOLN - DAY

Lines of troopers canter past as CUSTER swings down from his horse looking dirty and tired and sprints up the steps of his home. LIBBIE is pushing quickly through the front door followed by ELIZA. They run into each other's arms. Several companies of the 7th Cavalry cheer.

CUSTER

Oh, Lord, Libbie how I missed you.

LIBBIE

Welcome home to my Boy General.

They hold each other for a long time.

CUSTER

You got all my letters?

LIBBIE

All of them.

(pause)

But they are never as good as  
having you around.

ELIZA

Gen'l, I swear she read em all a  
hundred and ten times each. She is  
quite a girl your Libbie.

CUSTER

Only a hundred and ten times,  
Libbie Custer, those are two  
hundred reading letters.

INT. CUSTER HOME - NIGHT

CUSTER sits at the table with YATES, CALHOUN, RENO, COOKE,  
TOM CUSTER, KEOGH, MOYLAN, SMITH and LUDLOW. Strategy is  
being discussed regarding the information from ROSSER.

TOM CUSTER

What else did Tom Rosser say,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

He was fairly sure that both  
government weapons and patent  
ammunition were being stored in  
those warehouses in Bismark.

KEOGH

Damn Seip and his fellow  
scoundrels.

CUSTER

Several days after the regiment  
returned I made contact with a  
writer, whose name must remain  
unsaid, from the New York Herald.

(pause)

My contacts in New York had told me  
some time ago he would be in the  
area, sort of looking around the  
territory. There do seem to be  
questionable activities in the  
granting of trading post licenses  
as well as vanishing government  
allotments. Couple this with the  
drastically inflated prices Seip

charges and, well we have problems here at Fort Lincoln.

CALHOUN

What can we do about it, Colonel?

CUSTER looks at his staff, then takes a little walk around the room.

CUSTER

Seize the town, declare martial law.

(pause)

Get into those warehouses and see what is being kept there.

The staff exchange glances.

KEOGH

They'll be hell and damnation to pay in Bismark when the 7th rides in.

TOM CUSTER

(smiling)

I say we ride now.

CUSTER

Hold up one. We'll ride, but like this is a regulation military operation.

(pause)

I will ask Lieutenant Cooke to check both the civilian and military laws governing arrest as well as the specific types of crimes that have been committed.

(pause)

Bill, if you would take care of it.

COOKE

I'll see to it, Colonel.

CUSTER

I'll need that in the morning. I want company commanders to prepare their companies to ride tomorrow night. Major Reno and I will work out the approach and mission of each company.

(pause)

I don't want unnecessary trouble,  
the mission must be quick and  
decisive. Are there any questions?

YATES

What about security in the post?

CUSTER

Keep the move quiet. Have your  
commands restricted to their  
company areas after the dinner  
meal.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

First sergeants should supervise  
preparations after that. Captain  
Benteen and his command will remain  
as post security back here.

(pause)

I'll have officers' call at noon  
tomorrow with the rest of the  
details.

CUT TO:

EXT. BISMARCK MAIN STREET - NIGHT

Mayor SAMUEL TURNER and several associates are just entering  
his buggy in front of one of the town's major hotels. The  
streets are fairly empty.

TURNER

Enjoyed dinner with you gentlemen.  
It is a custom that we will have to  
follow more often.

FIRST ASSOCIATE

The feeling is mutual, Mr. Mayor.

EXT. MAIN STREET, FAR END - NIGHT

There is the rumble of horses. CUSTER appears in campaign uniform followed by his flag, staff and several companies of the 7th Cavalry.

EXT. MAIN STREET, HOTEL - NIGHT

Mayor TURNER stands up in his buggy, several people step out of local taverns and stores as CUSTER brings his command directly up to TURNER.

FIRST ASSOCIATE

What does this mean, Sam? Isn't that Custer from Fort Lincoln?

The buggy horse spooks slightly.

TURNER

Yes, it is Colonel Custer. Whoaaa, there, steady.  
(pause)

Colonel Custer, what is the meaning of this? You know you have got to notify the city council at least two days in advance of any maneuvers through Bismark.

EXT. HOTEL FRONT, MAIN STREET - NIGHT

CUSTER holds up his hand and halts his command.

CUSTER

Good evening, Mayor Turner. Good evening, gentlemen.  
(pause)

Sir, by the laws of the United States government, I hereby declare a state of martial law over the city of Bismark, Dakota Territory.

TURNER

(loudly)  
You what, have you gone mad, Colonel?

CUSTER

And under the terms and stipulations of martial law all civilian authority now transfers to the existing military commander.  
(pause)

Mr. Mayor, I am that commander and Bismark is currently under the command and control of the 7th Cavalry Regiment, United States Army.

TURNER

You have gone mad. Good God, Custer, I'll have your job for this.

Large groups of people are starting to gather on the streets.

CUSTER

Lieutenant Cooke, supervise the posting of the notices and have Captain Yates' company clear and secure this street.

COOKE

Very good, sir.

COOKE salutes and spurs his horse away.

TURNER

Damn it, (pause) you can't do This. Why, tell me why?

CUSTER

Mr. Mayor, I have been told from reliable individuals that government supplies are being taken from river transport and hidden in local warehouses by Bismark citizens.

(pause)

I have also been told that government weapons are being stored for sale to the Indians.

(pause)

That is illegal and that is why I'm here this evening.

FIRST ASSOCIATE

I don't like this, Sam. Problems. Stop him.

TURNER

Damn you, Custer.

(pause)

I'll send for my sheriff.

CUSTER

At this time the dock side  
warehouses, telegraph office and  
Bismark jail are all under  
protective custody of my soldiers,  
Mr. Mayor.

TURNER and his friends exchange horrified looks, TURNER  
slowly sinks back into the buggy seat.

SECOND ASSOCIATE

Mr. Mayor, you've got to put a stop  
to this madness.

TURNER

Damn it, Hill, with what. Can't you  
see the man has gone mad.  
(pause)  
Go get Seip, quickly.

CUSTER

Grand idea, Mr. Mayor. I'll be at  
the warehouses. Mr. Seip should  
probably join the command there.  
(pause)  
By the way, gentlemen, my Crow  
scouts have got the roads out of  
Bismark guarded.

TURNER

(angry)  
This is an outrage, Custer, you  
can't treat this town like one of  
the Indian villages you've  
conquered.

CUSTER waves him off, spurs his horse.

CUSTER

For your protection, I've detailed  
Sergeant Korn and several troopers  
as you guard mount. Good evening,  
Mr. Mayor.

EXT. BISMARK MAIN STREET - NIGHT

CUSTER and his troopers canter down the main street, a crowd  
has gathered and some of them are angry.

BISMARK RESIDENT #1

What is this, Colonel, an attack?

BISMARK RESIDENT #2

Get your men back to Fort Lincoln.

The troops canter past.

CUT TO:

INT. DOCK WAREHOUSES, BISMARCK - NIGHT

TOM CUSTER, KEOGH and SMITH and several enlisted men are going over records; several large boxes are open and CUSTER is inspecting them.

SMITH

We've got ourselves a regular little store here, Colonel.

They walk among the open boxes.

SMITH (CONT'D)

Out back there are bags and bags of grain originally shipped to Fort Lincoln, it never arrived.

CUSTER

How interesting.

SMITH

And here are rations for Lincoln. Better still, a great many rations, blankets and such, originally marked for delivery to the agencies at Fort Berthold and Standing Rock.

CUSTER kneels down and looks at the box lids and the contents.

CUSTER

So, when this stuff comes up the Missouri some enterprising character is routing to this location?

SMITH

Seems about right.

INT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT



CUSTER and SMITH are looking over the items on the floor when TOM CUSTER and MILES MOYLAN come up with a handful of rifles and ammunition.

TOM CUSTER  
Lookee here, Armstrong.

CUSTER  
This is taking on all the surprises of Christmas.

MOYLAN  
Several boxes of these Springfields with plenty of ammunition to go with them.

TOM CUSTER  
Ammunition was mostly for us at Lincoln. The rifles have a local delivery address.

CUSTER takes a brand new rifle and checks it out.

MOYLAN  
It is my guess that some enterprising chaps here in Bismark were planning on marketing these to the Indians. Government ammunition being tossed in just to make the profits a little sweeter.

(pause)

Can't blame the Sioux for leaving the reservations. Cheated out of rations and supplies and armed with good guns and plenty of ammunition.

TOM CUSTER  
Makes returning to hunting buffalo a lot easier and necessary after a winter of half rations.

CUSTER turns to the others, weapon still in his hand.

CUSTER  
Makes em a little angry also, makes hunting troops and citizens a great deal easier.

EXT. WAREHOUSE - NIGHT

CUSTER, SMITH and KEOGH are standing outside of the warehouse when trader SEIP rides up in his buggy.

SEIP

(angry)

Colonel, Colonel Custer. What is going on here? I demand explanations.

CUSTER

Well, Mr. Seip, so do I.

SEIP

What do you mean?

CUSTER

I mean that there are a great many stores in this warehouse that were destined for delivery at Fort Lincoln and it seems stolen and kept here.

SEIP

I know nothing about it.

CUSTER

I seem to recall that similar items are sold at your facility for exaggerated prices.

SEIP

Don't attempt to involve me, Colonel.

CUSTER

I would like to see your inventory of goods, Mr. Seip, just to make sure.

SEIP

My records are not available for review.

CUSTER

We will see about that, Mr. Seip. I also uncovered rifles and stolen government ammunition. All of which is of questionable source and destination, Mr. Seip. Would you know anything about that?

SEIP

Nothing.

CUSTER

You are not very cooperative,  
perhaps you need more time to think  
about it.

SEIP

What are you talking about?

CUSTER canters his horse up very close to SEIP's buggy, SEIP  
draws back protectively.

CUSTER

In the morning, Mr. Seip, I am  
sending Captain Yates with a  
detachment of the Regiment and  
supply wagons to Bismark to  
purchase most of the items you sell  
at your store.

SEIP

I know where you're taking this.

CUSTER

That's right. The 7th will be  
running it's own general store.  
(pause)

With far better prices than you  
charge, Seip. This will give you  
plenty of time to think about my  
investigation into the munitions  
and stores illegally kept here.

SEIP

You can't do that Custer. The War  
Department prohibits anyone but the  
post trader from selling to  
soldiers.

CUSTER

That's true, Mr. Seip, but not at  
the prices you post or not goods  
stolen from the government in the  
first place.  
(pause)

You had better hope I don't find  
your name mentioned in any of  
this, Mr. Seip.

SEIP snaps the whip at his horses and turns the buggy around.

SEIP

(very angry)

You can't do this. Damn it, Custer,  
have you gone crazy.

(pause)  
You can't ruin me. I will be  
contacting Secretary Belknap about  
you.

SEIP spurs his buggy away.

CUT TO:

INT. TRAIN ON PLAINS - DAY DECEMBER 1874

A half full train speeds across the Great Plains heading East. CUSTER is in full uniform and LIBBIE in stylish traveling clothes watch the plains go by from their seats. CUSTER is aloof, she is happy about the time away from the fort.

LIBBIE  
I do hope Tom behaves himself in  
our absence, Armstrong.

LIBBIE looks at CUSTER, he seems not to have heard her.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
I hope Tom takes care of himself.  
Armstrong, hello?

CUSTER  
I'm sorry, dear, what was that?

LIBBIE  
I am concerned about Thomas.

CUSTER  
Oh, he'll do good enough.

LIBBIE watches him for a moment. CUSTER is pensive.

LIBBIE  
What is wrong, Armstrong? You seem  
so far away.

CUSTER  
Perhaps, just a bit.  
(pause)  
I have been thinking of pursuing  
other career avenues, (pause) I  
mean truly looking at another  
calling.

LIBBIE

Oh, very interesting thoughts?

CUSTER pushes himself back in his seat, fold his arms across his chest and Off and over the other travelers in the wide coach as it gently rattles east.

CUSTER  
(smiling almost to  
himself)  
(MORE)

Well, Libbie, there are no more  
butternuts to fight and that weighs  
on a man. Somewhat anyway. Yes  
(pause) it does.

LIBBIE  
I do understand, but the rebellion  
was Such a dreadful time, very  
difficult for condition from day to  
day, and brother Tom's injuries.  
All of it.

She takes his hand and pushes it close to her face. LIBBIE turns in her Seat and looks directly at her husband. CUSTER has a flashback to MONAHSETAH holding the baby YELLOW SWALLOW and another quick image of her with the baby papoose style on her back, wind in her hair, colorful bead work covering her neck and entwined in her dark braids.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
But Autie I do understand. A man  
Would have much on his mind at such  
times.

CUSTER  
Yes, such is true.

LIBBIE  
But, George Custer, you are so far  
Away now. It concerns me greatly.

CUSTER seems fatigued, looks out window for a long time. He is forlorn, he is thinking and then turns to LIBBIE.

CUSTER  
The military is all well and good,  
but I'm afraid we are wasting our  
days stuck out here. There are  
other ways for a man to make a  
living. Perhaps we could consider  
returning East and start that  
family.

LIBBIE

God will bless us with children if we wish for such, I know it in my heart.

CUSTER

The Army is different from the one I first entered. And I have tried various options since the rebellion ended.

(MORE)

The politicians stopped me from going to Mexico and I was denied command of West Point and the Army now seems plagued by politics and policies that truly hamper its mission.

LIBBIE

But there have been splendid moments; our time in Kentucky was pleasant, you enjoyed our moments in Elizabethtown.

CUSTER

(thoughtful, slight smile)

That I did, the hunting was a grand pass time. And you "Miss Stand By" were the best of the best, you have made me so proud, going to such postings. What must you think about your general?

LIBBIE quickly kisses him on the cheek, laughing slightly.

LIBBIE

Oh look at me, shame on Mrs. Custer. Of course you silly goose, I am a soldier's wife (long pause) where you go I will follow. But, Autie, still I have often felt that they have used your services badly, you have proven a most capable officer. A hero, really.

CUSTER looks at her, smiles and settles himself back in his seat. He closes his eyes and for a moment there is a flashback of a tumbling Indian child, YELLOW SWALLOW, trying to keep up with his mother who is running slightly in front of him. CUSTER is watching and laughing from his horse, the small boy runs up to him and he gathers the child in his arms, raising him high.

CUSTER

(smiling)  
You don't court martial heroes now  
do you?

LIBBIE  
That was a tragic mistake. But they  
called you back, didn't they?

CUSTER  
They did, and I won a smashing  
victory on the Washita and brought  
peace to the frontier. In New York  
Lawrence Barrett will be  
introducing me to people who might  
be of service to us.

LIBBIE  
In what way?

CUSTER  
Men who are well established in  
business and government. I'll also  
renew some acquaintances in the  
newspapers, see about the book.  
There is much to tell them about  
frontier army life. You know,  
Libbie, I have always felt I was  
destined to lead, but the  
leadership I now practice goes  
nowhere.

CUSTER leans back towards the window, looking out and  
thinking before he turns back to his wife.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
These men of the 7th (pause) they  
are a strange lot, Libbie, a  
lifeless crew, not spirited one  
bit. Far different than the men who  
rallied under my leadership during  
the Rebellion.

LIBBIE  
It has been frustrating, Autie, I  
do realize that. What about the new  
assignment General Sheridan has  
been working on for you?

CUSTER  
We will have to see just what Phil  
Sheridan can do in an  
administration that seems riddled  
with corruption. Grant is fighting

a war in the White House that he  
isn't used to.

LIBBIE

Politics and the military don't  
agree with one another?

CUSTER reflects deeply for a moment, his eyes narrow and his  
face gives way to a smile; he is remembering.

NORTHERN OHIO, 1866, PRESIDENTIAL TRAIN TOUR (FLASHBACK)

It is one of the many speaking stops for President JOHNSON,  
who pushing out to the rails waving to the large crowds and  
trying to make his speech. General GRANT is behind him in  
uniform and so is CUSTER. The scene is tumultuous but silent,  
Both GRANT and CUSTER wave politely at the crowd, JOHNSON is  
smiling and waving both his hands.

MAN IN CROWD

(Waving and excited)

Custer to the White House, Custer  
for the executive office.

YOUNG BOY

(screaming and laughing)

Curly Custer for president.

The crowd is cheering, and JOHNSON looks about, maintaining a  
forced smile. GRANT picks us on the awkwardness of the moment  
and steps some- what in front of CUSTER, he starts waving and  
gesturing towards the President. A GAUNT VETERAN, lean and  
wearing an old blue uniform jacket pushes closer to parked  
train.

GAUNT VETERAN

(yelling)

General Custer for president. Put a  
Wolverine in the White House will  
yeah.

he memory fades to the sound of the rolling train, CUSTER  
comes back into the present.

CUSTER

Not for Sam Grant, but for me,  
well, I am entertaining the idea.  
And if the nation comes calling I  
for one will not be found wanting.  
Be aware of that, Libbie Custer.



He looks up and smiles at her, they hold hands.

EXT. GREAT PLAINS - DAY, DECEMBER 1874

The train speeds across the endless wilderness of the Great Plains.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY CONFERENCE ROOM, NEW YORK - DAY, LATER IN JANUARY 1875

LAWRENCE BARRETT stands by his chair, CUSTER in civilian attire seated beside him. Several very well dressed gentlemen sit at the dark mahogany table in front.

BARRETT

Gentlemen, it is indeed my pleasure to introduce to you an American who is an avid sportsman, accomplished soldier and perhaps best of all, a Democrat. Who has taken time away from our wild western frontier and the pages of history, he and his gallant regiment are writing out there.

BELMONT

(kidding)

Come along, Barrett, we've seen his illustration on Harper's.

PARKER

(slowly rising)

And might I add all the rest of newspapers in the North. New Jersey wants to appoint him an honorary native son.

BARRETT is caught up in the good natured chance to perform. He looks down at CUSTER.

BARRETT

Colonel, if all my fans were like this I would be finished on the stage.

Everyone laughs at this comment.

BARRETT (CONT'D)

It is my pleasure to introduce Colonel George Armstrong Custer. Financier, Jason Gould, of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, Mr. August Belmont, and Mr. Joel Parker former governor and now Attorney General of New Jersey, the governor's an old "War Democrat" BARRETT takes a long pause as the men nod towards CUSTER.

BARRETT (CONT'D)

All are well off business and community leaders and, ah, the men behind the Democratic Party in the city.

PARKER

Indeed the nation, Lawrence, delighted to meet you general.

CUSTER

Very pleased, gentlemen. The honor is all mine.

BELMONT

I was in General Gregg's division at Gettysburg and I remember how you turned things around at Cress Ridge, Colonel.

BELMONT is up and gesturing towards the others, CUSTER tries to look Humble but that does not work.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

That was fine leadership. Many believe it saved the Union!

CUSTER

Thank you, Mr. Belmont. Many also felt it was reckless and ill planned.

GOULD

Nonsense, such nonsense. Damn it I say, it was brilliant well done. Stopped Old Jeb Stewart, that Rascal, from turning our flanks. Damn it Belmont you were there, did it not? I ask you did it not? Let us hope that leadership can be used for the Democrats.

BARRETT all motion, flamboyant, moves around the big desk trying to get the attention.

BARRETT  
(voice elevated)  
Now here, here, gentlemen must we  
refight the Rebellion. Heavens get  
soldiers together and it is all  
talk of campaigns and such.

The collection of men laugh at this and settle down a bit.

BARRETT (CONT'D)  
And, of course Mr. James Gordon  
Bennett publisher of the New York  
Herald. Who I believe you know,  
Armstrong?

GOULD  
Colonel Custer, a pleasure to meet  
the man who has graced the pages of  
my associate, Mr. Bennett's  
publication so often.

The men laugh honestly, there is a heavy amount of cigar  
smoke in the room and GOULD and BELMONT sip from whisky  
glasses. BENNETT Gets up and shakes CUSTER'S hand. CUSTER  
nods again towards the gathering of very powerful men with  
special attention to BENNETT standing near him.

BENNETT  
Excellent to see you again, George.  
You look fit. Long way from those  
Fields in Virginia are we not?

CUSTER  
(big smile)  
Goodness, James, nice to see you as  
well. What a surprise.

BARRETT  
(very theatrical)  
Mr. Belmont, I believe you are the  
spokesman for this group?

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

BELMONT gets up and walks to the center of the room.

BELMONT  
Of course, Colonel, when Larry  
Bennett told us of your written  
inquiries into other professional  
fulfillment back East we were most

interested in, should I say the financial rewards your good name and reputation would have on any number of business ventures.

Long pause as the others smile and nod gently at CUSTER

BELMONT (CONT'D)  
(sly smile)

(MORE)

BELMONT (CONT'D)  
And might I also add, the positive impact a hero such as yourself would have on Democratic Party's prospects in the future.

CUSTER  
I trust Mr. Barrett has told you of my unhappiness with the present Republican Administration's policy toward the Military especially with regard to the Registered traders in my District.

GOULD gets up at this and walks to the center of the big room.

GOULD  
Colonel, I don't think there is a Democrat, I dare say an American, who is not angry and tired of the extensive reductions in the size of the military and restrictions placed on our soldiers in accomplishing their mission on the frontier.

GOULD looks out over all gathered in the large room, ponders for a moment.

GOULD (CONT'D)  
Worse still, the corruption within the upper levels of the Grant Administration is a public humiliation to all citizens of this republic. Not to mention the continued occupation by federal troops of former Confederate states.

BELMONT

(very animated)  
The damn Republican mischief those scalawags are up to with the strong arm of the military. Our information sources tell us that both the War Department and Department of the Interior...

GOULD  
To name a few.

BELMONT  
Yes, Grant's appointments are involved in everything from illegal sales of post and agency traderships to influence pedaling and a host of assorted crimes. The list is extensive. Couple those shenanigans with Grant placing every corrupt and incompetent friend and kin in a government job that becomes open.

PARKER  
As well as the financial mismanagement and horrific trade deficit all of which got us the banks run and panic in 1873 (coughing angrily) Good God! Britain still has not recovered from that Republican mess.

GOULD  
(smirking)  
I for one think that may not be a bad state of affairs for old John Bull.

CUSTER  
You seem to have dependable sources I trust they tell you about Indian agents who provide weapons and ammunition from government stores to the Sioux and Cheyenne?

BENNETT  
(angry)  
We do, sir, and they indicate that such individuals as Bill Belknap our Secretary of War and the President's brother may be deeply involved in all of these misdeeds.

Public servants they most certainly are not!

BELMONT

(laughing)

Good Lord, Bennett I'm in the wrong business.

BARRETT

(laughing)

And you see, Armstrong, you thought the Sioux were treacherous.

CUSTER

At least I can fight them on fair ground. Even if their weapons are supplied by our government.

BELMONT

That's the thing, Colonel, I feel Mr. Bennett may offer you a chance to fight the corruption in our current leadership also.

CUSTER

Continue, Mr. Bennett, I'm very interested.

BENNETT

(smiling)

Our sources learn a great deal, Colonel. For instance, we know that Grant is seriously considering a third run for re-election.

PARKER

But a Democratically controlled House of Representatives with its intention to form committee and investigate governmental corruption is threatening his intent. Sam Grant might have been a good general, but he is, at best, a poor politician. I'm sorry Mr. Bennett, please continue.

BENNETT

Colonel, while serving in the Upper Missouri River, you were of great service to my paper.... really the people of this nations last year when you and your command moved against what should we call it, the

irregularities of the subtlers in  
Bismark. And provided the paper  
with Important facts.

BENNETT looks around at ten other men, especially PARKER.

BENNETT (CONT'D)

(smiling)

And now Congress has taken all this  
to heart, they are fully dedicated  
to a widespread investigation. We  
will have men in the area looking  
into this all in the name of good  
journalism. I, the Herald I mean,  
would appreciate your continued  
support should it come to that?

CUSTER

Mr. Bennett, one thing is for  
certain, should such be the case  
you will have my full support in  
any investigations your staff may  
conduct on the posts or Indian  
Agencies.

BENNETT

Of course every effort will be made  
to keep your involvement  
confidential. But there will  
probably be hearings, people will  
be called upon to testify to  
Congress.

BELMONT

(loudly)

And when the pathetic truth about  
Republican corruption on the  
frontier Gets out we, of course,  
will do everything Legally possible  
to unseat Grant. Congressional  
hearings will hasten our party's  
success in its quest for the White  
House.

PARKER

Greatly enhance our chances,  
Colonel.

CUSTER

We share the desire for our party to gain the presidency and end Republican mismanagement.

BELMONT

We all feel that way, Custer. In the months before the election many names will be discussed as possible standard bearers for our party.

PARKER

In all honesty, Colonel, your name has been mentioned. Been mentioned more than once.

The room gets silent over that statement, CUSTER seems surprised, but steady about the possibility.

CUSTER

Well, I am indeed flattered by the suggestion. Truly, gentlemen I am deeply honored, such an opportunity.

BELMONT

You are a proven leader with a strong record and credentials. And Mr. Bennett tells me his contacts with Phil Sheridan, commander of the Department of the Platte, are talking of another military campaign against The Lakota Sioux and Northern Cheyenne who still refuse to come to the reservations.

BENNETT

I believe my people are true to form on this George; you have heard the same.

CUSTER

Yes, yes there is talk, there are always such rumors.

BENNETT

(quiet, sly sounding)

Well, General, we do not have the dates but it is something the Grant Administration must accomplish.

PARKER

Damn, how much more of that man can this country tolerate? I ask you?



BELMONT

Such a military action will be a reality and gentlemen before the next presidential contest, this I assure you.

The big room gets awful quiet, cigar smoke drifts up and around them. CUSTER's eyes gleam around at the power brokers he is dealing with.

BELMONT (CONT'D)

And General one thing I know about this great nation under God, it gives the presidency to the men who win its wars (long pause) Washington and Old Zach Taylor even that rascal Grant.

GOULD

Aye, he should have stayed in uniform. Just how will history remember Sam Grant now.

BELMONT

So when the Democrats meet in Saint Louis the Summer of 1876, I would strongly suggest you be present, Colonel Custer. And bring a victory over those red devils with you.

BENNETT

George, there is not much belief that the Indians will stand and fight. But a good swipe at them, dust them off a bit, my paper will do the rest.

CUSTER focuses on BENNETT, clears his thoughts a bit, this is an overwhelming moment in his career.

CUSTER

You have always been most kind to my efforts, the 7th Cavalry last bloodied them in 1873. We can certainly do such again. I have not a doubt of that.

BENNETT

And the more you appear in my paper the greater your following becomes. A Custer candidacy would get a lot

of attention from my publications,  
I assure you.

PARKER

(excited)

General Custer, you hail from Ohio  
but your family are farming stock  
in Michigan are they not?

CUSTER

That is true Governor Parker.

PARKER does an exaggerated little dance, BARRETT almost joins  
in BELMONT, GOULD and BENNETT snicker at the site.

PARKER

(laughing loudly)

Could not be better, this assures  
those two strong states, and we  
will have them for the Democrats.  
Those voters are fine common men,  
they will support a war hero.

BELMONT

It is indeed something to think  
about.

(pause)

But let me warn you, Colonel, warn  
all of you, caution must be  
practiced. The Grant administration  
will do their best to discredit  
anyone they feel threatens their  
intentions.

CUSTER

Yes, much to think about.

CUT TO:

INT. RESTAURANT, NEW YORK - NIGHT

Gen. SHERIDAN, CUSTER and LIBBIE are having dinner.

SHERIDAN

The food is good here, the very  
best in a city that prides itself  
in the Culinary arts. You'll both  
enjoy it.

LIBBIE

I'm sure we will, but Phillip does  
not Chicago offer such fare?

SHERIDAN is holding the menu and leans back to ponder the question.

SHERIDAN

Oh, yes it does, my dear, pride themselves in steaks and that sort of thing. But let me tell you when I want the best, blazes, it is here in New York.

(laughing)

Do you not agree, Armstrong?

CUSTER

Actually, I remain partial to either Delmonico's or Eliza's cooking. But here and now I defer to the General's judgment.

SHERIDAN

Well, both of us agree most anything beats the food from an Army mess.

CUSTER

Very true, by the way Phil, what were the surprises you had for us?

LIBBIE

Yes, do tell, I love surprises.

SHERIDAN

(laughing)

In time, my sweet girl. How has your leave been, Armstrong, been to the theater?

CUSTER

Wonderful, we always enjoy our time in New York. Visits to my publisher, catching up on things.

SHERIDAN

Beats Fort Hays any day I would wager?

LIBBIE

We have been to the theater several times and have shopped at some of the finest establishments, we also dined with Lawrence Barrett and his wife.

CUSTER

Yes, really, they are old friends  
of ours.

SHERIDAN

Hmmm, yes, the actor, interesting  
fellow. He is Irish you know, do  
not let that stage name fool you.  
Trouble with Mr. Barrett, one never  
knows who he is going to be next;  
MacBeth, Hamlet or perhaps Richard  
the Third.

LIBBIE

(teasingly)

Pshaw, you are being so naughty  
General Philip.

SHERIDAN

It is true, my dear lady. Very good  
at his trade but always in  
character. He was in the 28th  
Massachusetts during the Rebellion,  
Armstrong.

CUSTER

Yes, Barrett had mentioned that, a  
Captain I believe.

SHERIDAN

Indeed, resigned early. Smart move,  
unit was full of scrapping  
Irishmen, shot up pretty bad all  
over Virginia. Probably one of the  
smartest things the man ever did.

SHERIDAN looks about the busy restaurant, motions to the  
waiter.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

I am hungry, and I could use a  
drink. Get our man's attention  
would you, Colonel.

(pause)

Thought highly of among the  
Democrats you know?

CUSTER

Yes, I know, Phil.

There is a short pause, SHERIDAN shifts a bit in his seat.

SHERIDAN

With all the troubles Grant is having in the White House, they're awful jumpy about contacts with popular members of the opposition.  
(MORE)

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

(pause)

Bad business, all of it.

The waiter comes over, very prime and immaculate.

WAITER

A drink, General? And let me get your orders in.

SHERIDAN

Damn fine, young man. A whiskey, Oh double that.

CUSTER and LIBBIE exchange glances and smile.

INTERIOR RESTAURANT, AFTER DINNER, JANUARY 1875

CUSTER and SHERIDAN are relaxing with cigars, LIBBIE is people watching.

LIBBIE

Phillip, what is that news you are holding from the General and myself?

(joking)

You've caught me, cornered and out flanked better than any Rebel cavalry could have done, this lady of yours eh, Custer? If you must know, then you must.

CUSTER

Libbie Custer knows her tactics. But you've got us both wondering.

SHERIDAN is in a jolly mood, he takes a long pull from his drink.

SHERIDAN

Several things, first thing, I am getting married.

CUSTER

To General Rucker's daughter, correct?

SHERIDAN

(happy)

About time I moved to the attack in that relationship, wouldn't you agree, Armstrong? Take what is mine.

CUSTER

Many congratulations, Phil.

LIBBIE

We are so happy for both of you, General.

SHERIDAN

Well thank you, Irene said yes this last Tuesday and I have been wanting to tell you the happy news.

SHERIDAN takes another long drink of his drink, and then another.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

But there's more.

CUSTER

Well if it is as good as the last it will have been a wonderful evening.

SHERIDAN

There is no doubt that the Administration is in trouble; damn Sam Grant was a good general. And... and well there it stops. Should have stayed in uniform.

CUSTER

I will not dispute that, Phil.

SHERIDAN

That's not the half of it and it involves the Department of the Platte. Yes, where we hang our hats, Armstrong.

SHERIDAN takes another pull from his glass of whiskey; looks around the dining area. He moves his chair up closer to CUSTER and LIBBIE.

SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

The railroads, hell, men with money, are pushing to lay tracks up in the Dakota Territory, the northern route, right through Indian land!

CUSTER

There is a treaty that should put an end to all that. Much of that area is Sioux Reservation land, the Black Hills and all.

SHERIDAN

I tell you the government will rethink the 1868 treaty. Besides, every summer half the Indians, probably more than half, jump the reservation and return to follow the buffalo herds.

(pause)

Damn, Colonel, please excuse me Libbie, they're just as much treaty violators as we would be.

CUSTER

And the White House? The President?

SHERIDAN

Hell, Sam is being pressured to do something right, Lord knows he does precious little of that. It is about money and when you found gold in the Black Hills last year, well that is money and try to keep an American away from gold, well sir can't be done. The press is torturing the poor man.

CUSTER

The Army in all this, General?

SHERIDAN looks at CUSTER for a moment.

SHERIDAN

Anyone knows that the solution to the Indian problem is the railroad. Brings in people, helps us settle the land; build things up. The country has a right to all, well most of it!

CUSTER

(smiling)

The Lakota may not feel the same way. But in the case of hostilities, it will move troops and supplies easily.

SHERIDAN

Got a lesson in that during the Rebellion, didn't we? Now some of this is talk, people speculating a might. But the possibility of the Army being called to protect the Railroads, goodness get the Sioux and the rest of em back on the Reservations..... very real chance.

CUSTER

The regiment took them on in 73.

SHERIDAN

That you did, lad. The 7th is one of the best riding regiments in the Army and if it comes to a campaign we will need them up north to help the Northern Pacific people anyway we can.

(pause)

Mrs. Custer the Indians may be upset but they will not stand and fight the 7th.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE, WHITE HOUSE - DAY, JANUARY 1875

GRANT is going over some papers on his desk while SHERIDAN sits in a large chair and looks over a newspaper.

SHERMAN

Evidently this administration has no friends at the New York Herald?

GRANT lays the papers down, checks his watch and looks over to SHERMAN.

GRANT

It's a Democratic paper, Phil, everyone knows that. Where the deuce is Belknap, he's always late for these meetings.

SHERMAN



Seem to have made the Indian question an election issue, Mr. President?

GRANT pushes restlessly back in his chair and rubs his hands across his face and beard.

GRANT

My people inform me that Custer has been supplying the Herald with much of their information.

SHERMAN

Yes, I have heard that also.

GRANT

He is a Democrat and has made no attempt to play that down. I tell you, Bill, this administration has plenty of problems without someone of Custer's popularity working against it. Damn, his seizure of Bismark and that silly investigation didn't help a bit.

SHERMAN

What's the latest on Representative Clymer's investigation?

GRANT slowly stands up and looks straight at SHERMAN.

GRANT

(tired laugh)

Oh, we've got good times in the House with Heister Clymer and his fellows.

(pause)

I never heard so many charges of patronage, abuse of office, theft of government stores and so on in all my life. All nonsense.

SHERMAN

(awkward)

It must be a terrible burden.

GRANT

It is all of that, damn, where is Belknap?

INT. MAIN DOOR, GRANT'S OFFICE - DAY

Secretary of War WILLIAM BELKNAP enters the room. He looks pale and unkempt. GRANT watches him enter. SHERMAN gets up.

BELKNAP

Dreadfully sorry, Mr. President.  
Hello, General Sherman.

GRANT

Damn it, Bill, with so much going against us can't we at least have promptness in our camp? Have a seat.

INT. OFFICE AREA - DAY

The three men settle into their chairs, GRANT lights up a cigar as BELKNAP looks nervously around.

BELKNAP

I am sorry, Mr. President. Very sorry.

GRANT

Fine, let's get on with it. A drink gentlemen?

GRANT pulls a bottle and several glasses out from the desk.

SHERMAN

Little too early for me, thanks.  
GRANT Bill?

BELKNAP

Oh, I would like to but my nerves are worn and that won't help.

GRANT

Sure as hell would. Good whiskey got me through the Rebellion in grand form and damn if Lincoln didn't know about it.

GRANT pours himself a stiff drink.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Told his other generals to drink the same because I fought and they didn't.

(pause)

I miss Lincoln sometimes, Honest Abe, ever miss him, Bill?

SHERMAN

I didn't know him anywhere as well as you did.

GRANT

(reflective)

Yes, of course, seemed like easier times back then despite the war. Honest Abe, how anyone can remain honest in this line of work confuses me.

BELKNAP

That, Mr. President, brings up Congress's concerns.

GRANT

What about them?

BELKNAP

Well, they most certainly are going ahead with both their investigation of Secretary Delano and the Interior Department... and... (pause) the War Department.

GRANT

Those are the Democrats for you, boys, they smell a little rot and they go for an election victory.

BELKNAP

Clymer expects to subpoena a host of witnesses on corruption in the government.

SHERMAN

Sounds like serious business?

(angry)

It is all of that, Bill. The scoundrels are trying to stop me from another term as president, but I'm not out of the contest yet, gentlemen.

BELKNAP

And Custer is one of those to be called before them.

GRANT

Damn it, Bill, I suspect Custer of working against us. You kept him in

line during the war, do it now. I don't trust him.

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

Still recall the fuss he made before Congress about the quality of government horses, when was that, 63 or 64, sometime.

SHERMAN

I recall it all too well, sir.

GRANT

I tell you it won't go well for him if his testimony goes against this administration.

The room becomes silent as GRANT pours himself another drink, and slugs it down.

GRANT

Damn him. Where is Custer now?

SHERMAN

He and his wife are in the east, come out every autumn and winter. He has business, spend his time Here and Michigan

GRANT

Heck, I don't know where he makes me feel more uncomfortable. Here or back at Fort Lincoln.

BELKNAP

On that subject. The Indian Bureau informs Secretary Delano that increasing numbers of the western plains tribes continue to depart their reservations.

SHERMAN

The Herald blames insufficient rations and government mismanagement for this.

GRANT

Hmmm, I read what they wrote, Phil. I'll dispute that; where are they getting that information?

BELKNAP

Custer?

GRANT

Perhaps.

SHERMAN

If the reports are true then things must be bad on the reservations. Indians usually wait for the warmer months before jumping the reservations.

GRANT leans back and takes a long puff from his cigar.

GRANT

Gentlemen, considering these circumstances and taking into consideration the straights that this administration is in Perhaps a little diversion, justified diversion that is, will be needed.

BELKNAP

You had in mind, Mr. President?

GRANT

An active campaign against hostiles who violate treaty agreements and leave the reservations.

SHERMAN

It would provide you with some good news in the form of military victories for a change, sir.

GRANT

Damn right and we'd be justified in taking to the field on this one.

(pause)

What do you think, Bill? The Army have any problem whipping a few hundred stray Sioux?

SHERMAN scratches his head and looks at GRANT.

SHERMAN

Depending on their numbers, if we can catch them, we can beat them.

GRANT

What about it, Bill?

BELKNAP

I think it is a necessary action.

GRANT

Excellent. Bill touch base with Sherman and have your staffs make the proper arrangements. He can brief me when you're in St. Louis.

(pause)

Gentlemen, I believe we can expect a little good news in the near future. ?

SUPERIMPOSE: "ONE YEAR LATER"

CUT TO:

INT. CUSTER HOME, FORT LINCOLN - DAY FEBRUARY 1876

LIBBIE and CUSTER get their stuff into the house, TOM CUSTER and CALHOUN and his wife MAGGIE are bringing in arms full from a large sleigh outside.

MAGGIE CALHOUN

We missed you, did we not James?

JIM CALHOUN

(smiling)

That we did, but now Armstrong I officially turn over guard of your dogs back to you.

CALHOUN giggles at that, his wife looks at him. TOM CUSTER is lugging a small trunk into the house as CUSTER leans down and pats several large brindel colored dogs who lick his face.

TOM CUSTER

And to you brother, I give you back command of the 7th United States Cavalry.

CUSTER

Goodness, Lieutenant do not let brother Benteen hear such talk. Thanks so much for rescuing us.

MAGGIE CALHOUN looks over all the packages loaded on the CUSTER table.

MAGGIE CALHOUN  
Lucky you, Libbie, look at all  
these wonderful wrappings.

LIBBIE joins MAGGIE CALHOUN at the table, while CUSTER and CALHOUN step to the open door and watch TOM CUSTER bring in some More things.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
You do excellent work, Tom, you do  
realize you will be commander of  
the regiment by and by.

TOM CUSTER collects the last of the bundles, snow lightly covers his hair, he is a handsome young officer. He turns towards CUSTER, CALLHOUN, LIBBIE the sled amid a steady snow fall with several of the CUSTER dogs gathered around him. He is trying his best to gather the rest of the packages and trunks. MAGGIE CALHOUN comes out wrapping a shawl around her self.

TOM CUSTER  
Armstrong, perhaps brother, but now  
my delight is rescuing you and this  
delightful, beautiful lady from  
Dakota snow.

TOM CUSTER drops several packages on the sleigh and quickly scoops up his sister in law and swings her around as they both laugh and giggle.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)  
The 7th can run without Colonel  
Custer for a spell but it is lost  
without you, Libbie. Damned if it  
is not.

LIBBIE  
(laughing loudly)  
Thomas Custer you silly goose, you  
are the most troublesome man.

CALHOUN  
It is true, Libbie. Goodness  
Armstrong feed your dogs they are  
all about the place.

LIBBIE

I for one am glad to be home, the Colonel may feel differently. Come along Miss Maggie I must show you The gingham fabric we bought in New York, let our brave soldiers catch up on what ever they must.

CALHOUN and CUSTER laugh and watch TOM CUSTER struggles with his task. The ladies scurry inside through the snow.

INT CUSTER HOME, FORT LINCOLN, NIGHT

CUSTER holds a cup of coffee, several of his dogs are sleeping by a big sparkling fire that causes shadows to dance over the spacious room that is decorated in animal trophies, battle flags, hanging pictures and weapons. CALHOUN stands near the mantle piece, TOM CUSTER is sitting near the far end of the fireplace gently patting one of the dogs. CUSTER is warming himself, seems thoughtful.

CALHOUN

So, how did goes it? You were gone long enough.

CUSTER

If you lads had not moved so smartly we would have been away much longer. That gentleman, Kellogg from the Bismark Tribune, bless him.

TOM CUSTER

Quick thinking on his part.

CUSTER

He is man to benefit us, able to get the news out to the Eastern papers. Good man to keep close.

CUSTER turns to his brother-in-law and brother, a bit reflective.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Excellent, how we love New York. When my military career is done I believe we'll settle there.

CALHOUN

What's the news from the city, Armstrong?



CUSTER

Stopped in to see Bennett at the Herald, the Congressional investigation is all the news and I told him yet again the Indian Bureau is a den of thieves and the War Department is much the same. Seems like Belknap cannot last for long.

CUSTER turns the mug around in his hands starring hard into the fire.

TOM CUSTER

Damn, have you ever seen such a state of affairs?

CUSTER

They're all a bunch of bribe taking gun runners and Belknap can't last much longer. Orvil Grant is taking nothing but advantage of his brother's presidency. And the springtime is in full swing. How do we stands, Tom?

TOM CUSTER

George Cooke will be over in the morning with a full briefing. Reno and Benteen have been on the company commanders. We will need remounts but Armstrong at least one in three of the men have never seen an engagement.

CALHOUN

This not the regiment from 1873. The troops are shallow in numbers and men as green as a Michigan corn field in April.

CUSTER

Well, my brave lads there is interesting news to report.

CALHOUN

Good lord, out with it, Colonel.

CUSTER

Directly after Delano resigned from the Interior Department his replacement as you are aware my old friend Zach Chandler took over and

now has gotten his marching orders  
from Grant.

TOM CUSTER

And?

CUSTER

And the Bureau of Indian Affairs  
has ordered all that all Indians  
return to their reservations by the  
end of January last. And if they  
refuses the United States  
government will consider them  
hostile and the War Department will  
be compelled to force them to obey.  
Sitting Bull and all the Sioux will  
be in a bit of fix will they not?

CUSTER looks at young CALHOUN and his brother TOM CUSTER, the  
fire leaps Up and the shadows bounce eerily off their faces.

CALHOUN

My God, Armstrong than it is to be  
a Spring campaign for the 7th.

TOM CUSTER

And the Democrats, Armstrong?

CUSTER

Well Jimmy Calhoun and brother Tom  
it is to be a campaign for us in  
the 7th.

(pause)

And a run for the White House for  
me.

CALHOUN

Such news, Colonel, such news.

CUSTER

Boys, should we take the field and  
I believe this is to be. We will  
need a smashing victory, one in  
which we can wrap a Custer  
candidacy in!

TOM CUSTER looks his brother straight in the face, places his  
hand on his Shoulder as the fire dances in their faces.

TOM CUSTER

And you will have it, I promise you  
will have that victory.

INT. CUSTER HOME - NIGHT

A small welcome home party is present. YATES, SMITH, KEOGH,  
TOM CUSTER, COOKE, BOSTON CUSTER, EMMA and NELLIE WADSWORTH,  
MAGGIE CALHOUN, DR. PORTER and WEIR are sitting near the  
piano or gathered around it as LIBBIE CUSTER plays.

BOSTON CUSTER  
Play something warm and slow,  
Libbie.

YATES  
Yes to melt this snow away.

MRS. YATES  
Spring snow storms always make  
George sad.

MRS. YATES holds her husband's hand, CUSTER gently holds  
LIBBIE as she plays more music for them.

COOKE  
Colonel, got young Private Brown  
come over from the telegraph office  
with a telegram for you.

CUSTER turns to his guests.

CUSTER  
If you will excuse me for a moment?

INT. CUSTER BACK HALLWAY - NIGHT

CUSTER is standing beside Private BROWN who holds out a  
telegram for him.

BROWN  
Beg the Colonel's pardon, but this  
come in for you just a bit ago.

CUSTER takes the telegram and starts to open it.

CUSTER  
Very well, how is the weather out  
there, Private Brown?

BROWN  
Snow is still coming down, sir.

CUSTER reads the telegrams.

CUSTER  
(preoccupied)  
Is it, hmmmmmmmm.

BROWN  
Will there be a response, sir?

CUSTER  
No, probably in the morning. I'll  
go over to the telegraph office in  
the morning.  
(pause)  
Good evening, Private Brown.

BROWN  
Night, sir.

INT. CUSTER PARLOR - NIGHT

CUSTER walks slowly back into the parlor, and puts his hand  
on LIBBIE's shoulder. The guests suspect some news.

CUSTER  
(smiling)  
Well this is a curious crowd if I  
ever saw one.  
(pause)  
Yes, I do have some interesting  
news.

TOM CUSTER, and COOKE move closer to CUSTER, everyone is  
attentive.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
This just came from the Congress,  
House Sergeant at Arms, requiring  
my appearance before  
Representative Hesiter Clymer's  
Committee in the capital.

The party guests get somewhat quiet, LIBBIE moves up to her  
husband and hugs him.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Another trip East so soon (pause)  
Well certainly the timing is  
somewhat A miss isn't it. The  
Clymer Committee as part of the  
current investigation into the War  
Department. Seems like history

can't be made in this country  
without a few words from General  
Custer.

COOKE

Will you not lead the Regiment,  
Colonel?

CUSTER

Of course, I'm sure I will. Just  
say my piece and come back. Seems  
like we are called upon to drive  
both the rascals out of  
Washington and the Sioux back to  
their reservations. Do not worry  
George. Seems like history in  
this country cannot be made  
without a few words from Colonel  
Custer of the 7th US  
Cavalry.

KEOGH picks up a glass of punch and raises it in the air.

KEOGH

(smiling)

Well, officers and their ladies,  
(pause) here's to a successful  
campaign and the prompt return of  
Colonel Custer to lead us to  
victory.

TOM CUSTER

Here, here.

Punch glasses are raised.

INT. PARLOR, PIANO - NIGHT

CUSTER leans over and gently kisses LIBBIE.

LIBBIE

You must be careful both with the  
hostiles and in Washington. I'm  
worried.

CUSTER

Don't be. I'll take care. Now, how  
about a little Garry Owen?

The tune fills the parlor as the men join in singing.

CUT TO:

660. INT. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, CLYMER HEARING - DAY

In uniform CUSTER steps through the door leading into the hearing room. Representative CLYMER escorts him to the door. A gathering of newspaper reporters waits in the hall, AL WAUD from Harper's Weekly stands in the back.

CLYMER

Again I want to thank you for  
testifying before the Committee,  
Colonel Custer.

CUSTER

Such duty cannot be taken lightly,  
Representative Clymer.

CLYMER

The Sergeant At Arms tells me the  
press, that looks like them, yes,  
are waiting for a chance to talk to  
you. We will contact you at your  
Washington address if need be, good  
day and thank you again, sir.

The two men shake hands and CUSTER turns and walks towards the newspaper men.

INT. HALLWAY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

Several well dressed reporters approach CUSTER, he stops in front of them.

EDWARDS

Colonel Custer, I am Cyrus Edwards  
from the Washington Star. These  
gentlemen represent the Chicago  
Tribune, Harper's and the  
Associated Press.

CUSTER

(polite)

Good afternoon, gentlemen. I am  
always happy to see the press doing  
their job.

EDWARDS

Then you don't mind responding to several questions, Colonel?

CUSTER

I have the time and all of you know I enjoy talking.

The reporters laugh at this.

EDWARDS

Sir, I believe you've just completed your second day of testimony before the Clymer Committee. Are you satisfied with Secretary Belknap's recent resignation and arrest? Do you think your testimony had any effect on those events?

CUSTER

I would rather not comment on my testimony but I believe that Mr. Belknap is being dealt with under the full measure of the law.

TRIBUNE REPORTER

Colonel, is there any truth that you supplied damaging information on Mr. Belknap and the President's brother directly to the New York Herald?

CUSTER

Sorry to disappoint you again boys, but that is too close to my testimony and I'll have to keep silent on that.

EDWARDS

Well, what about President Grant's anger at you for your association with known Democrats and the damage your public statements might have done to his chance for re-election?

TRIBUNE REPORTER

And is there any chance that Grant may stop you from participating in the upcoming Indian campaign? As an Indian hater what would that do to you?

CUSTER

I don't know what the President's feelings are but I am certain that he places the blame for his problems directly on his administration and not on me. Let me clarify your understanding of my talent with the western Indians. I do not hate them one bit. Indeed I admire much about their lifestyle.  
(pause)

But, as a soldier I go where my government sends me and I trust it will be in command of the 7th Cavalry Regiment on campaign this spring. I also happen to believe that under my command the 7th can beat any number of Sioux or Cheyenne gathered to confront it. Now, sirs, if you'll excuse me I recognize an old friend.

EDWARDS

One more question, Colonel Custer?

CUSTER

Yes?

EDWARDS

How are the sales of your book going?

CUSTER

(laughing)

My Life On The Plains is selling very well, thank you. Good day.

INT. HALLWAY, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES - DAY

CUSTER departs the group of reporters and moves quickly towards WAUD who lowers his sketch pad to greet him.

CUSTER

Damn it, Al, I should look for you whenever the fighting is the thickest and my enemies are most numerous.

They shake hands.

WAUD



Always said you make a great story  
Colonel and even greater  
illustrations.

He holds up a drawing of CUSTER on a hill fending off  
numerous politicians and Indians with his saber. CUSTER  
stares at it for a moment, looking serious then breaks into a  
loud laugh.

CUSTER

Bully, Al, sometimes I feel like  
this. Should we have lunch and  
catch up on old times?

WAUD

I would be delighted, Colonel, and  
how is Mrs. Custer?

CUT TO:

INT. WASHINGTON RESTAURANT - DAY

Both men are seated and finishing their coffee.

WAUD

You know, Armstrong, there was a  
question back there that didn't  
come out. A subject that has been  
getting a great deal of attention  
in powerful circles.

CUSTER

(attentive)

Not the Washita fight again? Can't  
be, it's forgotten now.

WAUD

Another fight, one might say.

CUSTER

And that is?

WAUD

A fight for the White House,  
Colonel. There is some serious  
speculation about your intent to  
run for the presidency.

CUSTER leans slowly back in his seat and takes another sip of coffee. His eyes never leave his friend's face.

WAUD (CONT'D)

A great deal of speculation.

CUSTER

How do you know?

WAUD

(smiling)

I'm a newspaper man, got my ear against every important door in this city.

CUSTER

Yes, of course. I am flattered.

(pause)

And what would you think of such a candidacy, Al?

WAUD takes a quick slug from his coffee and pours himself some more before looking up at CUSTER.

WAUD

Well, my friend, can't say that I didn't expect it. Have for a very long time now.

(pause)

Ever since that day down in Virginia when Edward Paul and I talked to you.

CUSTER

I recall. Not long after the Gettysburg battle.

WAUD

That's right.

CUSTER

Good gracious, Al, I was not more than 23 at that time.

WAUD

True, but you had led your Brigade in a risky attack on Rebel forces far greater than your own numbers.

(pause)

Took a big risk and beat them.  
Sometimes the seeds of greatness  
are planted early.

CUSTER  
Interesting.

WAUD  
(smiling)  
You know me, Colonel, always  
looking for a good story.  
(pause)  
And for a long time I've felt that  
this was one of the better ones. A  
very good story in fact.

CUSTER  
Hell, Al, Grant is a drunken  
scoundrel who has surrounded  
himself with a gang of crooks and  
strap hangers.

WAUD  
I agree with you.

CUSTER  
I have no doubts that I could whip  
him if I were the Democratic choice  
for president.

WAUD  
I think Grant feels the same way.  
There is a great deal of resentment  
towards you in the White House,  
Armstrong. When do you return to  
Fort Lincoln?

CUSTER  
General Sherman has instructed me  
to get an authorization from the  
White House before I head back.

WAUD  
That could be your problem. An  
angry inner circle up there may  
attempt to punish you by keeping  
you out of the action against the  
Sioux.

CUSTER leans slowly forward at this news.

CUSTER

I am to see Grant in the morning.  
Clymer is just about certain there  
will be no need for further  
testimony.

WAUD

Be careful, Colonel, Grant can  
carry a grudge that will make  
Gettysburg look like a picnic.

(pause)

Your testimony has finished Grant's  
brother's scheme.

CUSTER

I can't believe Grant would try  
something like that. Withhold my  
command for pure vengeance.

(pause)

Damn, I'm the only officer with  
enough experience at Indian  
fighting to do the job. Besides, I  
have trained the 7th to its present  
level of effectiveness. The  
president knows that.

WAUD

Perhaps he does, Colonel, but Sam  
Grant is not without his faults.

CUSTER

I don't think he would punish me  
and hurt the chance of a successful  
spring campaign out of spite or  
political gain. If anyone should  
know better, Grant should. I'll be  
there and you are welcome to join  
me.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE, WHITE HOUSE - DAY

Chief Presidential Aide RUFUS INGALLS stands by the  
President's desk as GRANT fiddles with a card CUSTER sent in.

GRANT

(angry)

I refuse to see, Colonel Custer.

GRANT tosses the card down on the desk and picks up some papers.

INGALLS

But, sir, this is his third visit. He has been pacing the floor out there for almost two hours.

GRANT

Let him pace until he wears a hole in the carpet or until the end of my term, thanks to him it will probably be earlier than I anticipated. Hell, maybe he'll be in this seat by then.

INGALLS

Mr. President, at least spare him the embarrassment of waiting outside like this. Think of his past services.

GRANT

No. Maybe that is the problem, too much is given to him on past services. I don't want to see him, and I won't.

INT. PRESIDENTIAL ANTIROOM, WHITE HOUSE - DAY

CUSTER is pacing the carpet as the door opens and INGALLS comes through. He walks up to CUSTER.

CUSTER

What of it?

INGALLS

I am sorry, Custer, but the President simply refuses to see you. I've almost begged him to.

CUSTER

Damn it. Can't you try again?

INGALLS

I am truly sorry but he just won't consent to a meeting.

CUSTER turns slowly away.

INGALLS (CONT'D)

(sad)  
I am sorry.

CUSTER  
It is fine old fellow; you're not  
to blame. Should things change I  
will be at the War Department.

CUT TO:

INT. SECRETARY OF WAR'S OFFICE - DAY

Secretary of War ALPHONSO TAFT looks up from his desk at  
CUSTER who is seated to his right.

TAFT  
Custer, my hands are completely  
tied. The President has forbidden  
me from allowing you to return to  
Fort Lincoln to assume command of  
your Regiment.

CUSTER  
Good God, but why?

TAFT  
Well, Colonel Custer, you might try  
keeping your mouth shut when it  
comes to Grant's administration.  
(pause)  
Especially his brother's  
activities.

CUSTER lowers his head and is quiet for a moment.

TAFT (CONT'D)  
I do believe General Sherman is  
in, why don't you see him. He and  
Grant campaigned together. The  
President might listen to him.

CUSTER  
It will probably be my last chance.  
Something has got to be done.

TAFT  
I wouldn't get my hopes up on this  
one. I've never seen Grant more  
angry than he is now.

INT. SHERMAN'S OFFICE - DAY

SHERMAN rests his head on his hands as he listens to CUSTER. CUSTER is very upset and starts to cry.

CUSTER

I beg of you, General, you have got to help me.

(pause)

Damned if I'll be left behind when my 7th goes on this campaign. Please, sir, talk to the President.

SHERMAN gets up and walks over to the window of his office, allowing CUSTER time to compose himself.

SHERMAN

If I recall correctly the last thing Grant said to me on this subject was, er, let me see, 'Custer will sit here and rot in Washington, he will not command during the expedition against the Sioux.' He is very upset.

CUSTER

General Sherman, I appeal to you and him as a fellow soldier, don't let my Regiment march to battle without me to lead it.

SHERMAN turns away from the window and looks at CUSTER.

SHERMAN

I'll talk to him, Armstrong. General Terry has already requested your presence.

(pause)

This time you most certainly will need all of your Custer's Luck.

CUT TO:

INT. GRANT'S OFFICE, WHITE HOUSE - DAY

SHERMAN stands beside GRANT in his office.

SHERMAN

Terry and Sheridan have both requested his expertise.

GRANT

(angry)

Get somebody else, try Miles or somebody.

SHERMAN

Unavailable and not the man to lead the 7th Cavalry in this type of action.

GRANT moves part way across the office, he takes out a cigar and starts to chew on it.

GRANT

He is a wild fellow, Bill, and damned if I don't tame him.

SHERMAN

He is also the most experienced officer for the job of leading cavalry against the hostiles.

(pause)

The papers have already gotten hold of your actions towards Custer, Mr. President.

GRANT

I've read them, Democratic rags is what they are.

SHERMAN

They've still got the people up in arms over your decision to leave Custer out of it. If the campaign fails because he is not there, more men lost and the government slapped in the face by a bunch of reservation jumping hostiles, then your presidency may be well beyond saving, sir.

GRANT

(resentful)

(MORE)

GRANT (CONT'D)

I suspect that and his Democratic friends may have already seen to it.

(pause)

Damn that young fool.

SHERMAN

I ask you to reconsider your decision, Mr. President? The 7th



is understaffed as far as officers are concerned.

GRANT

No, Bill, I think not. Let Custer spend the expedition cooling his heels in Washington.

SHERMAN seems angry and moves closer to GRANT.

SHERMAN

(emphatic)

Look, this promises to be a hard campaign and the Army will need its best men for it.

(pause)

Mr. President, think what you like about Custer, he is still one of our best.

GRANT looks at him, considering what is being said.

SHERMAN (CONT'D)

Good God, Sam, then as a fellow soldier and a friend, let him go. General Terry will keep him under control and the government will settle the Indian question much to your credit. Hell, I'll tell him to stay away from the press. I'll order him to.

GRANT stops chewing on the cigar and thinks about it.

GRANT

Damn it, Bill, tell him to go. The farther away from me Custer is, the better I like it. Let him use that luck of his, on Sitting Bull and the Sioux.

CUT TO:

INT. CUSTER HOME, FORT LINCOLN - NIGHT

LIBBIE cut off CUSTER's long locks.

LIBBIE

(somber)

I'll miss these. I am going to keep them for an ornamentation, Autie.

CUSTER

I am looking forward to seeing it.

(pause)

Libbie, it will be hot and dusty out there and I won't have a great deal of time for grooming. So, what must be must.

LIBBIE

I know, but you look so dashing and I remember the war.

CUSTER

This is not Virginia, Mrs. Custer, and the Sioux are not gentlemen Rebels.

She picks up one of the long golden tresses and looks at it.

LIBBIE

I hope our children will have this color hair.

He gently reaches up and takes her hand and holds it close to his heart.

CUSTER

I hope our children won't have to be soldiers.

LIBBIE

Armstrong, I'm so worried about this campaign. I am.

CUSTER

(somber)

There is nothing to it. We'll find them. They'll try to run away and we'll whip em.

LIBBIE

I don't feel right about it.

CUSTER

Please don't worry, Libbie. Besides, looks like you've already scalped me so the Sioux will have no interest in Colonel Custer.

He laughs loudly.

EXT. PARADE GROUND, FT. LINCOLN - MORNING

Lines of troopers are slowly walking their horses into formation wagons and Gatling guns are being lined up for the start of Sioux Campaign of 1876. CUSTER, his hair cut very short, in full buckskin outfit canters up beside Gen. TERRY. A young man in similar outfit and a civilian follow him, several frontier characters sit their horses beside TERRY.

TERRY

(happy)

Good morning, Colonel Custer, the Regiment never looked better.

CUSTER

Morning, General, thank you. The 7th is ready for anything that comes along.

(pause)

May I have the pleasure of introducing my nephew, Armstrong Reed, out from Monroe and working with the command and Mr. Kellogg, correspondent for the New York Herald.

TERRY tips his hat in greeting the two men.

TERRY

Very pleased, well young Mr. Reed I trust you'll find plenty of adventure on this trip. Just listen to your uncle and you'll have more than enough stories to tell when you get back to Michigan.

(pause)

Mr. Kellogg, glad to have you with us. Colonel, you already know scouts Mitch Bouyer, Fred Girard and Charlie Reynolds.

CUSTER

I have worked with them in the past. I trust we'll have a successful scout again gentlemen?

BOUYER

We'll find your Indians, Colonel.

GIRARD

Looks like you've had a bit of them fine locks trimmed, Colonel. Heck them Sioux won't be a bit interested in a short haired white chief.

The little group laughs.

CUSTER

(smiling)

Some people think that things became so hot in Washington that I cut my hair to relieve the heat.

(pause)

Truth is this will be a long campaign, in possibly the warmest days of the season and one must dress and prepare accordingly.

TERRY

I was just discussing our plans with these men, Armstrong.

(pause)

They are aware of their responsibilities to take us the 200 plus miles to the supply steamer Far West on the Yellowstone River.

(pause)

We will then rendezvous with Colonel Gibbon's command. With these units in the field and General Crook coming up from the south I expect only success, gentlemen.

CUSTER

With the 7th I guarantee nothing less, General Terry. If you'll excuse me I should like to bid good bye to Mrs. Custer.

TERRY

By all means.

Salutes are exchanged and CUSTER canters his horse away.

EXT. OFFICER'S ROW, CUSTER HOME - MORNING

A short distance away stands the officers' homes. JIMMY CALHOUN is hugging MAGGIE CALHOUN (CUSTER's sister) while LIBBIE watches CUSTER canter up and swing down off his horse. LIBBIE and CUSTER embrace.

CUSTER

(sad)

I am so proud of you.

LIBBIE

(crying)

Armstrong, I dread this separation.  
I'm truly worried already.

(pause)

I fear there will be problems this  
time. I do, Armstrong, please be  
careful.

CUSTER

I will be very careful and the only  
problems will be catching the  
rascals.

They hold each other for a long time, then he pushes gently  
away.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Who is a soldier's wife?

LIBBIE wipes away her tears and tries to smile.

LIBBIE

I am, I will always be your wife.  
A soldier's wife, Armstrong.

CUSTER

(trying to smile)

There, splendid, now we have a  
great many wonderful plans ahead  
and they'll all come true as soon  
as I return.

LIBBIE

Yes, as soon as you return.

CUSTER

Remember that? I love you so very  
much, sweetheart.

They kiss and hug again.

LIBBIE

I love you. Please be careful.

CUSTER pulls away and turns to CALHOUN.

CUSTER

Well, now, away with the gallant  
7th, eh, Jimmy?

(pause)

Don't worry, Maggie, I'll keep him  
in line for you.

MAGGIE CALHOUN

I know you will, Armstrong, just  
get him back safe, that's all I  
ask.

(pause)

And, Jimmy, don't forget to share  
that cake I baked for you.

CALHOUN

Only if they behave, love to you my  
Sweets. By for now.

CUSTER and CALHOUN walk to their horses, swing up and CUSTER  
does one of the low bows to LIBBIE who throws him a kiss in  
return. They spur their horses back to the command.

EXT. CUSTER HOME - MORNING

The women watch them ride back across the parade ground to  
the gathering Regiment. The sounds of Garry Owen can be  
heard.

LIBBIE

(quietly)

Maggie, oh, Maggie, I am so worried  
about our boys.

MAGGIE

Gotta believe in them, Libbie.  
They'll be just fine. I know they  
will.

LIBBIE

I pray you are right.

LIBBIE watches the Regiment start its march out with very sad  
eyes. She waves to CUSTER.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

Bye, my darling, Armstrong.

CUT TO:

INT. MAIN LOUNGE, FAR WEST - NIGHT

TERRY, CUSTER, GIBBON and Maj. BRISBAN are gathered around a map covered table.

TERRY

Anything from General Crook, Major  
Brisban?

BRISBAN

I'm afraid I have nothing to  
report.

TERRY

(thoughtful)

I expected better from him. But it  
is wild country, I guess he is  
somewhat lost in it.

GIBBON

I have directed some of the Crows  
to scout down the Tongue River in  
the morning to see if they can meet  
up with him.

TERRY

Very fine, I wish them luck. Now,  
gentlemen, plan of attack.  
Armstrong, get your Regiment ready  
to move up the Rosebud in search of  
the hostiles. Move southward and to  
your left. You must determine the  
direction of hostile movement and  
above all prevent them from getting  
away to the southeast.

CUSTER

Very well, sir.

TERRY

Now you may have to proceed as far  
as the Little Big Horn in your  
scout.

TERRY moves his finger across the map, the other men watch intently.

TERRY (CONT'D)

Colonel Gibbon, your column will  
proceed to the mouth of the Big  
Horn River and move south to where  
the Bighorn and Little Bighorn  
meet.

(pause)

At say, a rate of march of some ten to 15 miles a day our two columns should converge in about five days.

(pause)

Concentrated attack, gentlemen, should hostile Sioux be spotted, will be on June 26th. Success will depend on coordination of both columns and communications between us.

GIBBON

Easy enough. But it would be more comforting to know their damn numbers.

TERRY

Impossible, Indian agents don't keep up on just how many are leaving the reservation. Sitting Bull is believed to have about 1,500 warriors with him.

CUSTER

Whatever he has, my Regiment will drive him to ground.

TERRY and GIBBON look at CUSTER.

TERRY

You realize, Colonel Custer, that I cannot truly give you exact instructions while you are away from us.

(pause)

(MORE)

TERRY (CONT'D)

But I have the greatest confidence in your experience commanding troops against hostile Indians. I don't want to hamper your progress.

CUSTER

I appreciate your feelings, General Terry.

TERRY

I fully expect that all columns will arrive at the designated location at the same time. And, I will accompany Colonel Gibbon's command.



(pause)

As I was saying, we should arrive on June 26th to assist one another. Use your own good judgment, Custer. If you arrive first and consider it prudent for a successful attack, by all means do so.

GIBBON

But for God's sake, Armstrong, do be careful. Rumor has it that Bull and his people intend on fighting.

CUSTER

It has been my experience that most Indians will take flight when with their families. I am not concerned with much other than preventing them from escaping.

BRISBAN

General Terry, sir, about the extra troops?

TERRY

Oh yes, further more, Colonel Gibbon offers you his cavalry squadron under Major Brisbane to augment the 7th cavalry.

CUSTER

Really, gentlemen, it won't be needed. My Regiment can do the job alone.

TERRY

Then I advise you to take the Gatling gun battery, your route will be the most dangerous.

CUSTER thinks for a moment.

CUSTER

General, again I must beg to decline. This will be a matter of a fight or a footrace. When the Sioux high tail it the guns will slow me down.

TERRY

Fine then, Armstrong. Whatever you do hold on to your wounded.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY AREA, CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

CUSTER and YATES walk through the campfire light of the Regiment area. They meet COOKE standing by the campfire.

CUSTER  
Hello, Bill.

COOKE  
Evening, Colonel.

CUSTER  
I want officer's call in 30 minutes; gather them in my tent would you?

COOKE  
I will notify the officers. How was your meeting?

CUSTER  
Looks like the 7th will have most of the action on this campaign. Oh, let the good doctors Lord, Porter and DeWolf remain out of this.

INT. CUSTER'S TENT - NIGHT

The officers of the 7th Cavalry Regiment gather in CUSTER's tent. COOKE, MOYLAN, KEOGH, YATES, RENO, BENTEEN, HARRINGTON, VARNUM, SMITH, WEIR, CALHOUN, TOM CUSTER and the others wait and listen.

CUSTER  
We march up the Rosebud in the morning. Gentlemen, it will be light marching order which means no wagons, tents or sabers. Have your supply sergeants pack the company mules with 15 days rations. Each trooper will carry 100 carbine rounds and 20 rounds of revolver ammunition. I want 2,000 rounds per company on the mules.

CUSTER moves nervously around the tent. He seems a little depressed and edgy.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
We can only guess how many Sioux and Cheyenne are gathered in the

Rosebud region. If indeed they are there at all. But if they are this Regiment will find them, and we'll travel from here to hell to accomplish that. My biggest concern is the hostiles slipping around us and getting away. We cannot let that happen. It must not happen. A great deal depends on this scout and success will be obtained only by a hard riding Regiment that pulls together. Now a meeting of the columns is planned for the 26th but General Terry has given me freedom to attack before then if the opportunity presents itself. I plan on surprising the Sioux just like I did on the Washita. Those of you who were there remember our victory. Surprise again will be an important factor.

CUSTER stops abruptly and looks across the faces of his officers. There is complete silence in the large tent.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, more than ever I will need your full support. Victory for the 7th means everything in this campaign and I intend to lead you in to it. Are there questions?

COOKE

Sir, what time is wake up?

CUSTER

First call will be four. Boots and saddles will be sounded at 5. Make sure everyone is aware of that, Bill. If there are no more questions, goodnight, gentlemen.

EXT. REGIMENTAL AREA - NIGHT

Lt. VARNUM, YATES and KEOGH are walking away from the tent past the Regimental flag which is blowing outside the headquarters tent. The wind topples the flag and YATES moves to put it back up.

YATES

Well now that won't do. Here Varnum hold my dispatch book will you?

YATES pushes the flag back into the ground and the men start to walk away. The wind knocks it down again and an enlisted orderly moves to put it up.

KEOGH

Damn, put some more muscle in it,  
George.

YATES

Well, I guess I must.

He moves back towards the flag.

ORDERLY

Don't you worry Captain, I'll get  
to this.

YATES

Grand, thank you, lad.

The men watch him put the flag up and start walking again.

VARNUM

(sullen)

You know.

(pause)

I think Colonel Custer is going to  
be killed.

YATES

What?

KEOGH

Come along, Lieutenant, not spooked  
by a flag and some wind are you?

VARNUM

Of course not, but I never heard  
the man appeal to the command like  
he did tonight. And the scouts are  
acting oddly. Constantly making  
medicine. Talking about more Sioux  
than grass on the plains.

YATES

You've been in charge of them too  
long, Varnum. Their little black  
magic activities are getting to  
you. Damned Bloody Knife could make  
anybody nervous.

VARNUM

Perhaps, but I'm concerned about all this.

EXT. ARMY CAMP, OFFICER'S AREA - MORNING

CUSTER canters his horse up to TERRY, GIBBON and BRISBAN who are standing near a cluster of tents.

TERRY  
Ready? Then off you go, Custer.

CUSTER  
Splendid, see you on the 26th.

GIBBON  
Good luck to you.

TERRY  
Yes, God speed and use caution and your best judgment should you come across the hostiles.

GIBBON  
And, Custer, don't be greedy about this. Wait for us to join you.

CUSTER spurs his horse away. He gives a hat off salute.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
I won't.

EXT. OFFICER'S AREA - MORNING

The three men watch him ride off to his regiment.

BRISBAN  
What the devil does Custer mean by that?

TERRY  
You don't trust Custer's capacity for command do you, Jim?

BRISBAN  
No, General, I do not.  
(pause)

No telling how many Sioux are out there and Custer is as dangerous as a clock wound backwards.

(pause)

I know that Sherman prohibited him from talking to the press and what does he do, allows a writer from the New York Herald along.

GIBBON

At least he left the band behind.

BRISBAN

(angry)

Only because he needed their horses.

TERRY

Well, gentlemen, he was fairly disgraced by the President so I believe he needs some military glory to get back into good graces. So to speak.

(pause)

Custer is happy now commanding the 7th on campaign. I have no doubt that he will whip the Sioux if he finds them.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY ON PLAINS - DAY

A long line of cavalry moves across the endless grassy plains. Bright company flags break up the column, a trail of dust blows behind them.

EXT. HEAD OF COLUMN, CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, AUTIE REED, COOKE and TOM CUSTER ride at the head of the column followed by Sergeant Hughes carrying the battle flag. They are dusty and unshaven, CUSTER is in full buckskin uniform with his red scarf. The command rides over a small hill.

EXT. OTHER SIDE OF HILL - DAY (SCOUTS' P.O.V)

REYNOLDS, BOUYER, BLOODY KNIFE and several Indian scouts are standing or kneeling on the ground looking over an immense piece of torn up plains. They see CUSTER's headquarters group ride up.

BOUYER

Greetings, Colonel.

BOUYER walks slowly up to CUSTER's horse, pushes his wide brimmed hat back and squints up at the officers.

CUSTER  
What is this, Bouyer?

BOUYER  
Sir, a whole lot of Indians about a day or so ahead of us.

COOKE and TOM CUSTER survey the massive size of the trail.

TOM CUSTER  
(astonished)  
No, can't be Mitch. Could it be a buffalo herd?

BOUYER  
(matter of fact)  
Well, Captain Tom, buffalo don't drop no bead work gighaws.

BOUYER holds up a small string of brightly colored beading on leather band.

COOKE  
Well then, Armstrong, the hostiles are in the neighborhood that seems certain.

CUSTER walks his horse over the massive trail looking down at the ground. He stops at BLOODY KNIFE's horse.

EXT. CUSTER AND BLOODY KNIFE ON TRAIL - DAY

CUSTER looks at the Indian scout then back at the trail.

BLOODY KNIFE  
(solemn)  
What, Custah, have thoughts about?

CUSTER  
(smiling)  
I am wondering what Bloody Knife thinks about this? What does it mean?

BLOODY KNIFE walks his pony in several small circles around CUSTER.

BLOODY KNIFE

It mean death.

(pause)

The gathering of tribes too much.  
Plenty Sioux and Cheyenne warriors,  
like grass on plains. They fight  
Yellow hair Custah. Them waiting  
for us.

(pause)

Them not men without sense, these  
Sioux. More of them then soldiers  
have bullets.

CUSTER jerks his horse around.

CUSTER

We will have to see about that,  
Knife.

(pause)

Lieutenant Cooke, have Varnum take  
his scouts well ahead and find  
their village. The command will put  
up after today's march and wait  
their return.

EXT. REGIMENTAL CAMP AREA - DAY

The entire 7th Cavalry has bivouacked in a small forested  
area. Groups of men cluster around, rest or repair equipment  
and clean weapons. The officers discuss business.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, REED, TOM CUSTER, YATES and KELLOGG gather near their  
horses waiting and talking.

KELLOGG

Colonel Custer, there has been some  
serious speculation about your  
plans, sir?

(pause)

Perhaps this will be a good time to  
get something on the record?

CUSTER glances at YATES and TOM CUSTER with a twinkle in his  
eye.

CUSTER

Well, Mr. Kellogg, perhaps it is.

(pause)

I believe Tom and George have a  
good idea about my plans. But now



is a very good time to let the press have some well deserved insight.

(pause)

I don't feel that a major cavalry campaign is the best place to be plotting political strategy but the truth is, I intend to win a smashing victory against Sitting Bull, show the American people the follies of Grant's Indian policy. A policy that brings our two cultures into armed conflict unneeded conflict at that, sir.

KELLOGG

And then, Colonel?

CUSTER

I plan on attending the Democratic Convention to be held at the end of the month. And fully anticipate that my name will be placed on the platform as that party's nominee for president of this republic.

KELLOGG

Well, Colonel, I can't say I am all that surprised.

TOM CUSTER

How about that, Autie? You'll be able to spend your summers down in Washington instead of out here hunting Sioux.

ARMSTRONG REED

Hunting Sioux suits me well enough, uncle.

TOM CUSTER

Armstrong has good reason to suspect strong support for his efforts.

CUSTER

The time is right for a true hero. A man who is not afraid to risk most everything for the betterment of his country.

KELLOGG

And your military career?

CUSTER

A means to this end. I have always been partial to lead, Mr. Kellogg. To lead the nation will be the fulfillment of it. This military victory over the Indians will be the next step, I am sure of it.

REED gets up and stretches a bit.

ARMSTRONG REED

Uncle, as long as you whip the Sioux before you leave for Washington, I am all for you. Think I'll find Boston.

The group chuckles over this.

KELLOGG

Then this is for the record? It is official then?

CUSTER

Completely. You have it first.

KELLOGG

And you seem so sure of your victory against the hostiles?

CUSTER

If they stay still, we will fight and beat them. As for the Republicans; they can't run either and I will beat them also. And, Mark, I need you to get the word to Mr. Bennett by all expedient means. Tell them that the 7th met and drove from the Montana fields warriors of Sioux nation... smashing victory. Be kind to mention Colonel Custer commanded.

KELLOGG

You seem very confident.

CUSTER

Custer's Luck, Mr. Kellogg.

EXT. CALHOUN AND KEOGH'S AREA - DAY

Both men sit in the grass and talk.

CALHOUN

You put together a will, Myles?

KEOGH is cleaning his pistol and looks up.

KEOGH

(laughing)

That I did, laddie.

CALHOUN

What type of fight do you think  
we'll find?

KEOGH

Ah, probably a running one. We'll  
have to chase the little devils all  
over the plains, I figure.

(pause)

No, Jimmy, I'm not believing that  
anyone will cash in on my last  
words and requests. Unless I take a  
tumble while chasing some running  
squaw.

BOSTON CUSTER and ARMSTRONG REED saunter up.

CALHOUN

Ready for action, young Mr. Reed?

ARMSTRONG REED

(confident )

I intend of getting some scalping  
knives and beading as souvenirs.

KEOGH

Certain to be plenty of that going  
around.

CALHOUN

Mind what we say out there. Don't  
go getting brave and run off into  
trouble.

ARMSTRONG REED

I'll be careful.

KEOGH

(smiling)

Make that a promise young Reed.

ARMSTRONG REED

For what it is worth I promise.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLY PLAINS NEAR CAMP - DAY

BOUYER rides quickly into camp.

EXT. CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

CUSTER, TOM CUSTER and YATES walk out to meet BOUYER, several enlisted soldiers watch them.

BOUYER

We found your village, Colonel.

CUSTER

What is the size and where?

BOUYER ambles over on a sweaty horse.

BOUYER

Down thar on the Little Big Horn,  
is the damn biggest village I ever  
seen and I been on these here  
plains quite some time.

CUSTER

That is what we are here for, Mr.  
Boyer and they need to be sent  
scadaddling back to the  
reservation.

BOUYER

(pause)

I tell you, sir, there's a heap of  
em. Hell lot bigger than your  
command can handle.

YATES

(laughing)

Gives us plenty of targets.

BOUYER

You won't truly be laughing if you  
tangle with these critters, I tell  
ya.

CUSTER

(excited)

Nonsense, where and how far from here?

BOUYER

Perhaps 12 miles from here. The whole thing is at least 3 miles long directly along the river band. Hundreds of lodges just cover the ground.

CUSTER

I remain confident that the 7th Cavalry can beat any collection of hostiles on these plains. But here take me to the lookout and I'll see with my own eyes.

CUSTER pulls himself up on his mount and kicks it into motion. He and BOUYER start to ride out of the camp.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Tom, move the regiment out of camp at eight. Follow our trail at a quick walk.

(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Meet you at the ridge and I'll take the command across the divide.

TOM CUSTER

Sure enough, Armstrong.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCOUTS' AREA ON CROW'S NEST - MORNING

CUSTER and BOUYER walk their mounts up to a secluded area high in the hills where VARNUM, REYNOLDS, GIRARD, BLOODY KNIFE and several Indian scouts are waiting and watching.

VARNUM

(tired, tense)

Morning, Colonel, found your Indians.

CUSTER

What do we have, gentlemen?

CUSTER slides down off his horse and walks quickly to where they have established a concealed watch post.

REYNOLDS

There's more damn Indians over there, Colonel Sir, than I ever seen in any one place before.

CUSTER squints out over the plains, VARNUM hands him a pair of binoculars.

CUSTER

Thanks, Varnum. Hazy, morning haze. How do you know, Charlie? I don't see a damn thing.

REYNOLDS

I smell the damn devils that's part how I knowed. A heap big village, look at that pony herd.

VARNUM

At the flat bench lands across the river on the far side of the village.

(pause)

Looks like pebbles on a carpet, Colonel.

CUSTER

I can't be sure. Damn, my eyes are as good as anyone's up here.

BOUYER

Thousands of ponies being close herded. Biggest herd I ever seen anywhere.

(pause)

Lot more grazing down by the Cottonwoods on the banks of the Little Big Horn.

CUSTER stares at the village for a long time.

BOUYER (CONT'D)

A good part of the village is behind them bluffs, but believe me, it is there.

(pause)

Like I said, too many of em for us to handle. We gonna have one hell of a hard fight on our hands if you don't mind me saying.

CUSTER lowers his binoculars and turns to the scouts.

CUSTER

That is exactly why we came out here; for one hell of a hard fight.  
(pause)  
Did you expect anything different?  
Have they spotted us?

REYNOLDS

No, Colonel Custer, they ain't seen us. I'm as sure as fire ready to exchange bullets with the hostiles as any man in this command. But, sir, if we go in there, we'll never come out.

CUSTER

Nonsense, Charlie, we'll get through them in one day.

BLOODY KNIFE starts to sing and move gently from right to left.

BOUYER

Knife is singing his death song.  
(pause)  
What you think this?

BLOODY KNIFE stops singing and moving and looks directly at CUSTER.

BLOODY KNIFE

(pause)  
Custah, you and I are going home tonight by a road we have not traveled.

CUSTER

Enough of this. The regiment is coming up, we'll meet them at the foot of this hill.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY REGIMENT - DAY

COOKE and TOM CUSTER are out front of entire regiment as it moves across the plains.

EXT. CAVALRY PACK MULES - DAY

The mules are being herded by both military and civilians across the plains. Several boxes on one of the mules get

loose and fall off amid the dust and movement. The herders didn't notice.

EXT. HEAD OF 7TH CAVALRY COLUMN - DAY

YATES gallops his horse with several other men up the line of march. He reins up to TOM CUSTER, COOKE and BENTEEN.

YATES

Tom, we've lost a box or two from one of the mules.

TOM CUSTER

Damn, when, how far back?

YATES

Can't really say, not too long ago.

COOKE

We really should retrieve it, Tom.

TOM CUSTER

George, send someone back to get them.

(MORE)

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)

We don't want to jeopardize our position, and if the Sioux find it they'll be damned suspicious of things.

YATES

Sergeant Curtis, take a detachment back and retrieve those boxes. Check with Captain Keogh on sightings, he's guarding the supply train today.

CURTIS

Alright, Cap'n Yates. We'll ride em down.

TOM CUSTER

And for God's sake be careful back there.

Salutes are exchanged and Sergeant Curtis reins his horse back towards the line of march.

CUT TO:



EXT. PLAINS, FALLEN BOXES - DAY

Three Cheyenne Indians are sitting on the ground prying open the boxes that fell off the pack mule. They hold their ponies by long ropes and chat among themselves.

LEAD WARRIOR  
(smiling)  
(Strange food, strange food.)

SECOND WARRIOR  
(Oh, what will this taste like.)

The second warrior holds up a tin, pries it open and pulls out a handful of hardtack. They all laugh.

EXT. CAVALRY DETAIL, PLAINS - DAY

Sergeant CURTIS leads five other troopers down a grassy slope.

EXT. PLAINS, INDIANS SITTING AROUND BOXES - DAY (CURTIS' P.O.V)

They Cheyenne are startled, drop the contents of the boxes and spring for their ponies.

EXT. CAVALRY DETACHMENT, PLAINS - DAY

CURTIS spurs his horse forward, pulling his revolver from the holster. The troopers do the same.

CURTIS  
(yelling)  
Damn, them savages. Make it hot for em boys.

Sporadic shots are fired at the Indians as the soldiers gallop across the plains.

EXT. PLAINS, INDIANS POSITION - DAY

The three Indians gallop away, one gets hit and barely hangs on to his pony.

HURT WARRIOR  
(Ride fast, my brothers. I am hurt.)

CUT TO:

EXT. FOOT OF HILL - DAY

CUSTER, VARNUM, BLOODY KNIFE, REYNOLDS, BOUYER and several Indian scouts canter down the last of the slope from the Crow's Nest.

EXT. PLAINS NEAR FOOT OF HILL, 7TH CAVALRY IN LINE OF MARCH - DAY

TOM CUSTER, YATES, COOKE and RENO are out front of the Regiment as it links up with CUSTER.

EXT. PLAINS 7TH CAVALRY REGIMENT - DAY

CUSTER and his scouts canter up to TOM CUSTER and the headquarters group.

TOM CUSTER  
(excited)  
Damnation, Colonel, the Indians  
have spotted us.

CUSTER reins his horse up as do the others.

CUSTER  
What is that?

TOM CUSTER  
One of Yate's pack mules dropped  
several boxes and I sent Sergeant  
Curtis from E company back with a  
detail. They fell on a group of  
bucks prying the damn boxes open.  
(pause)  
They fired on em but they got away.

COOKE  
Besides that piece of news, Keogh  
says he's seen hostiles screening  
us since we started out this  
morning.

CUSTER  
Damn them!

CUSTER dismounts and moves around his horse nervously.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Who's my duty orderly today?

RENO

That would be Sergeant Martin from Benteen's company.

CUSTER

Have him sound officer's call at once and dismount the Regiment, Major Reno. Have Sergeant Hughes bring up my flag.

EXT. CUSTER'S AREA, OFFICER'S CALL - DAY

CUSTER moves around the group of 30 officers with an edgy nervousness. The men look worn, tired and tense.

COOKE

All officers of the Regiment are present, Colonel.

CUSTER turns and directs his attention to them.

CUSTER

Gentlemen, my original intentions were to approach the village we have been seeking for a surprise attack from several directions in the morning. An action timed to coordinate with our meeting Terry's column.

(pause)

This would have been much like our victory at the Washita.

(pause)

But the fact that the hostiles have spotted us makes it imperative to attack at once.

A small cluster of cheers sounds from the group.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Wait, listen to me, this seems to be a large gathering and I fear they will try their best to get around us. Damn, they may be striking and packing this very minute.

(pause)

We must not let them get away. It would be nothing but a disgrace for this Regiment and me as your commander if that happens. I

suspect we will have a footrace  
with these hostiles.

TOM CUSTER

(laughing)

If that be the case, we'll run the  
Sioux to ground, Armstrong.

CUSTER

I trust we will.

(pause)

Now, the Regiment will advance  
towards the village in three  
battalions. Captain Benteen, you  
will command companies H, K and D,  
taking them to scout to our left.

(pause)

Major Reno, with A, G and M you  
will follow the main trail directly  
to the Little Big Horn. I will take  
the other companies and move to  
Reno's right.

BENTEEN

Colonel, wouldn't it be wise to  
keep the Regiment together and wait  
for General Terry's arrival, he  
can't be more than a day's ride off  
in light of the possible size of  
the village?

CUSTER

Not my plan of attack, Captain  
Benteen. Scout to the left and lay  
into anything you find. Those are  
your orders.

(pause)

Captain McDougall will stay with  
the pack train. We will keep a  
three mile wide front in our  
approach. This should stop Sitting  
Bull and his followers from  
slipping away. Gentlemen, if what  
our scouts tell us is true, this  
could be the fight of our lives.  
But I know you are capable of  
complete victory. We move out  
directly, dismissed.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY, PLAINS - DAY

Lines of cavalry canter across the plains. A large portion turns off from the main line. Flags are fluttering and dust is everywhere.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER, COOKE, BLOODY KNIFE, BOUYER and Sergeant MARTIN are in the lead of the column as they canter across rough plains.

COOKE

Benteen has deployed with his  
command to screen the right.

CUSTER nods his understanding, as Maj. RENO gallops his horse up.

CUSTER

Splendid, William.

RENO

Colonel, I will bring my command  
into line, parallel to yours. But  
let us keep together.

CUSTER waves in agreement. Maj. RENO veers away and he rides into the valley.

EXT. PLAINS, CUSTER'S AREA - DAY

VARNUM and GIRARD are on a bluff not far from the command. CUSTER is out front and notices them. GIRARD is yelling at the command as VARNUM canters his horse to them.

GIRARD

(yelling loudly)

There go your Indians, Colonel,  
runnin like a bunch of demons!

CUSTER reins his horse quickly in and the command does the same. COOKE and BOUYER ride up beside him as VARNUM rides up.

VARNUM

(excited)

Colonel, we've seen a large group  
of hostiles in the valley.

(pause)

They seem to be moving away from  
us.

CUSTER

Can't let them do that. Cooke, you,  
Keogh and Lieutenant Varnum ride  
over to Reno and tell him the Sioux  
are several miles ahead in the  
valley.

(pause)

Have him cross the river and attack  
from the southern end of the  
village. Tell him he will have my  
support.

COOKE

I'll make sure he knows.

COOKE spurs his horse away, VARNUM follows him. KELLOGG  
canters up as CUSTER rides over to the gathered Indian  
scouts, Crow and Rees. BLOODY KNIFE is there waiting.

CUSTER

(smiling)

Well, Mr. Kellogg, cat is out of  
the bag now. This should make  
another interesting story on the  
campaigns of Custer.

KELLOGG

Plan of attacking now, Colonel  
Custer?

CUSTER

Yes, of course, I have already  
deployed Benteen and sent orders  
to Reno. We hit them momentarily.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN SCOUTS' POSITION - DAY

CUSTER rears up his horse in front of the Indians and turns  
in the saddle to address them.

CUSTER

We are riding to attack the Sioux village.

(pause)

You Crows were not paid to fight but given money to bring us here. You may go home. Bloody Knife, my brother, and his warriors will join Major Reno's command.

(pause)

We are going to have a big fight and I will teach the Sioux a lesson by beating them. After I whip them I will go to Washington and become the Great White Father. Fight hard and help the Great Spirit give us a victory.

EXT. SCOUTS' AREA - DAY

Several of the Indians are making an excited yipping sound and run their ponies around in tight circles. The Crows who are not paid to fight walk their ponies silently to side and just look at the soldiers and Ree scouts.

CROW SCOUT

(solemn)

Yellow hair and his soldiers will not see the sun rise again.

CUSTER checks his horse and looks at the Crows.

CUSTER

(angry)

Nonsense, I will go to Washington and give my red brothers peace and plenty of blankets.

The line of Crows start to chant a solemn death song.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Trumpeter, sound the advance.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY, PLAINS - DAY

The group of Crow scouts continue their sad chant as lines of troops canter their horses past them.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENO'S COMMAND, LITTLE BIG HORN RIVER - DAY

RENO and his troops are splashing across the river. COOKE and KEOGH ride along with him.

RENO  
We are going in boys!  
(pause)  
Wallace, Hodgson, have the first  
sergeants make ready for the  
attack.

Both KEOGH and COOKE stop their mounts on the other side of the river and watch RENO's command start to deploy.

KEOGH  
Careful now, Marcus, I can see a  
great deal of dust down towards the  
village, looks like they are coming  
out for a fight.

RENO stands up in his stirrups and looks towards the village.

RENO  
Could be. We'll have to take some  
of the vinegar out of them. Mind  
you, I'll need Custer's support.

COOKE  
Good luck.

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

There is a great deal of excitement and confusion as braves grab their weapons and ride horses through their village. Indian squaws, children and old people cry or try to take shelter. MONAHSETAH and her seven year old son, YELLOW SWALLOW, dash out into the camp and look around at the



excitement. A lean child, YELLOW SWALLOW has lighter skin and hair color than most Indians.

YELLOW SWALLOW  
(worried)  
(Mother, mother what is it?)

MONAHSETAH hurries him along, amid running women and warriors.

MONAHSETAH  
The white soldiers are here. Hurry  
they will kill everyone if our  
warriors do not beat them.  
Hurry, hurry, we must run.

They dart among the running Indians.

CUT TO:

EXT. VALLEY PLAIN, RENO'S COMMAND - DAY

A long line of cavalry canter across the plains.

EXT. VALLEY PLAIN - DAY (RENO'S P.O.V)

Hundreds of Indians are massing and riding out towards the Cavalry. The sound of shooting fills the air.

EXT. RENO'S POSITION - DAY

RENO and several of his officers are just in front of the line of troops. They are surprised at the number and aggressiveness of the Indians.

MOYLAN  
Major Reno, the damned redskins are  
getting in behind us.

MOYLAN levels his revolver and fires at the Indians. The sound of Sioux war cries is everywhere as is the firing of Army carbine.

RENO  
(upset)  
We can't sweep into that damn  
place. They'll swallow us up, must  
be a thousand of the red devils.

RENO reins his horse to a stop.

RENO (CONT'D)

Trumpeter, sound dismount. Moylan  
have your men form into a skirmish  
line and back into the trees by the  
river if we must.

(pause)

Damn it, move quickly, NOW!

EXT. RENO'S COMMAND, VALLEY FLOOR - DAY

A thin line of cavalymen stand dismounted and slowly firing  
at hordes of Indians on ponies out to their front. Indians  
fall when hit as the line backs away from the fight.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER followed by Sgt. MARTIN, ARMSTRONG REED, DR. LORD and  
BOUYER gallop out and away from the rest of the 7th Cavalry  
Regiment to meet COOKE.

COOKE

(excited)

Reno is attacking the village. The  
Sioux are coming out in great  
numbers to meet him.

CUSTER

Damn fine, Cooke. We are riding to  
the rise to get a better look at  
the village.

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH BLUFF - DAY

CUSTER and his group gallop up to the top of a bluff and rein  
their mounts quickly in. The horses are excited and hard to  
control.

BOUYER

There you are, Colonel. Biggest  
damn village I ever seen.

CUSTER  
My God!  
(astonished)  
Will you look at that.

EXT. INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY (CUSTER'S P.O.V)

Perhaps a mile or two away and stretching the entire length of the valley is the biggest Indian village ever found in North America.

EXT. HIGH BLUFF, CUSTER'S GROUP - DAY

CUSTER's horse is taking small prancing steps as they all gaze at the village.

ARMSTRONG REED  
(amazed)  
Damn it all, I can't believe this.  
There are a lot of them aren't  
there?

BOUYER gets his horse under control as CUSTER surveys the village with his binoculars.

BOUYER  
(concerned)  
Enough cussed Indians to keep us  
fighting for six days.

There is the distinct sound of gunfire in the distance.

COOKE  
Sounds like Reno is into them hot  
and heavy.

CUSTER  
Oh, I think we'll get through them  
in a day.  
(pause)  
Damned big affair but I can't see  
any braves, not a single warrior.

BOUYER twists around and squints toward the village.

BOUYER  
They be there, Colonel, either  
going after Reno and Benteen or  
worse still moving around in these

here damn ravines and thickets  
waiting for us.

(pause)

Believe me sir, I knowd they are  
down there.

CUSTER becomes very excited and starts to laugh at this.

CUSTER

Silliness, Bouyer, we've caught  
them napping down there.

CUSTER removes his wide brimmed hat and waves it over his  
head. He swings across the bluff and waves wildly to his  
Regiment waiting in the valley below.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

(excited, yelling)

Come along, lads. We've got them  
off guard. We'll finish them off  
and return to our home station.

EXT. PLAINS, 7TH CAVALRY FORMATION - DAY

TOM CUSTER, YATES, DR. LORD and SMITH are sitting together on  
their horses and hear CUSTER's shouts.

SMITH

Colonel is excited about something.

TOM CUSTER

Trust we'll be in on the attack  
soon enough.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY POSITION - DAY

BOSTON CUSTER gallops his horse up the line of troops.

YATES

Speaking about in on the attack,  
look who just arrived?

TOM CUSTER

(laughing)

Suspected as much. Can't keep the  
family out of the action can we,  
Boston?

BOSTON CUSTER walks his horse over to them.

BOSTON CUSTER

Hell, you don't expect me to stay back with the packs when you are fixing to beat the entire Sioux Nation.

(pause)

Couldn't do it without me anyway. What's the Colonel so excited about?

CUT TO:

EXT. HIGH BLUFF - DAY

CUSTER settles back with the others.

CUSTER

Orderly, I want you to ride quickly and take a message to Captain Benteen.

MARTIN

I do it, sir.

CUSTER

Now tell him to hurry we have found a big village. I want him to move quickly and bring all the ammunition packs.

MARTIN

Very fine, Colonel, I understand.

Sgt. MARTIN salutes and turns his horse.

COOKE

To be on the safe side, orderly, I'll write it down for you.

He scribbles for a moment in a small pad and hands the page to MARTIN.

COOKE (CONT'D)

Ride as fast as you can, Sergeant Martin. Take the same trail we took and come back if you can.

MARTIN spurs his horse away down the bluff.

CUSTER

Bouyer, you'll have to find us a  
ford where we can cross the river.  
(pause)

The ground on the side won't do for  
cavalry.

BOUYER

Guess I can try, but you gonna find  
more hostiles then you bargained  
for.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENO'S COMMAND - DAY

RENO's troops have taken cover in the woods and are returning  
a quick fire at hundreds of mounted Indians to their front.  
RENO has lost his hat and is cantering through the trees  
trying to control his unit. BLOODY KNIFE rides up to him.

RENO

(yelling, excited)

Captain French get your company  
mounted, get the command to horse.

EXT. RENO'S AREA - DAY

BLOODY KNIFE reins his horse in near RENO just as a group of  
Sioux come charging into the woods. RENO takes long sip from  
flask.

FRENCH

Damn, men, keep up a hot fire will  
you.

RENO

Here they are, mount, mount!

The Sioux fire at RENO, BLOODY KNIFE and a group of soldiers  
trying to hold the timber. BLOODY KNIFE gets hit in the face,  
splattering blood over RENO.

RENO (CONT'D)

(horrified)

Good Lord, oh help us. Dismount.

EXT. FIRING LINE - DAY

Several of the troops get off their horses. Others remain  
mounted. Everyone seems confused.

EXT. FIELD NEAR RENO'S COMMAND - DAY

A scattered group of soldiers are firing while others are mounted. Hundreds of Indians ride past and fire at the soldiers.

EXT. WOODS, RENO'S AREA - DAY

RENO, face covered with blood, seems out of control as he swings back into his saddle.

RENO  
(very excited)  
We must get out of this position.  
(pause)  
Get to horse. Mount up, mount up.

All who want to survive follow me.

EXT. WOODS, RENO'S COMMAND - DAY

GIRARD, REYNOLDS and VARNUM are firing from the trees at the Sioux when they notice the command fleeing.

REYNOLDS  
What the devil is going on?

GIRARD  
Damnation, the major is taking em  
outta here.

REYNOLDS  
Hell.

VARNUM quickly mounts up.

VARNUM  
They'll get wiped out trying to  
cross that open ground.

VARNUM spurs his horse on while the other two men mount up and follow.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR - DAY

RENO is galloping out front of about 80 men with Indians directly after them. Soldiers are falling from their saddles.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR, RETREAT - DAY

VARNUM is racing through the dust and battle after the command.

VARNUM  
(screaming)  
Don't run boys. Don't let them beat us.

EXT. VALLEY FLOOR - DAY

REYNOLDS is galloping his horse in front of the attacking Indians. Several bullets strike it and horse and rider fall. A wounded REYNOLDS props himself up on the dead animal and fires at the approaching Sioux. An arrow strikes him in the side.

CUT TO:

729. EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION, 7TH CAVALRY MARCH - DAY

A determined CUSTER rides out in front of his regiment down towards the Indian village. BOUYER is a little to his right, COOKE, AUTIE REED, YATES, BOSTON CUSTER and KELLOGG as well as Sergeant HUGHES with CUSTER's flag are just ahead of the rest of the 7th Regiment.

ARMSTRONG REED  
What weapon are you going to use,  
Boston?

BOSTON CUSTER  
If we have the distance my rifle.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER canters towards BOUYER and draws his pistol.

CUSTER  
Bouyer, find us a place to cross.  
Whatever happens we must get  
quickly across and into the  
village.

BOUYER  
(screaming)



Bout a mile up here, Colonel, we'll  
be at em.

CUSTER turns in the saddle, waves his pistol in the air and  
yells to the Regiment.

CUSTER  
Column of twos, forward at the  
Gallop, Ho!

EXT. HEADQUARTER'S ELEMENT - DAY

COOKE removes his pistol as does YATES as the pace of the  
advance to attack picks up.

COOKE  
This is the ticket, George. At this  
pace we will ride directly through  
the beggars.

YATES  
It will be a rough and tumble  
affair, good luck Cooke.  
Shoot straight.

CUT TO:

EXT. COTTONWOOD TREES ON RIVER BANK, NEAR VILLAGE - DAY

Dozens of Indians are running silently on foot into the trees  
and taking up firing positions.

SIOUX BRAVE  
(The whites attack, wait for them,  
my brothers. Wait for them.)

More Indians scurry into position, rifles and bows ready to  
fire.

SIOUX BRAVE (CONT'D)  
(Stop the white horse soldiers now  
or they will burn our homes, kill  
our people.)

EXT. VALLEY OF LITTLE BIG HORN - DAY (INDIAN P.O.V)

Peering through the leafy trees and across a wide stretch of  
hilly plains the troops of the 7th Cavalry Regiment are  
visible. Flags fluttering, buckskin officers out front and  
lines of cavalrymen following. The Sioux glance at one

another and back at the mounted soldiers. They raise and aim their weapons.

EXT. VALLEY, 7TH CAVALRY LINE OF ATTACK - DAY

CUSTER holds one of his revolvers at shoulder level as the command thunders toward the wooded river bank. BOUYER is out front to his left, several troopers are having trouble holding back excited horses and speed past him.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Hold on to those horses, men. We'll  
find plenty of Indians for all of  
us.

EXT. FRONT OF COMMAND - DAY

BOUYER spots something and starts to veer to the right. At that moment the entire river bank erupts with rifle fire and arrows. With a savage war cry the Indians move out and across the river.

BOUYER  
Damn them devils.

BOUYER gets hit several times and tumbles from his horse, several troopers also fall. Some horses are killed. CUSTER holds up his pistol as COOKE and YATES, both firing at the woods, ride up to him.

CUSTER  
Yates, cover our flank with your  
Company. I must take the Regiment  
up river. Can't cross here. George  
sweep them up and hold the flank.

The steady firing continues. BOSTON CUSTER and REED are firing into the woods.

TOM CUSTER  
Forward, Boston keep close watch on  
Autie.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY - DAY

The entire command gallops up and back towards the hills.

EXT. HILLS ABOVE VALLEY - DAY

Hundreds of mounted Sioux and Cheyenne warriors stream over the rise and down into the valley towards the 7th Cavalry Regiments line of attack. There is the thunderous roar of horses and savage screams.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER leads his command away from the charging Indians, back into the small hills from where he started. Soldiers fall from their horses as they are hit. There is dust and shooting everywhere.

CALHOUN

(surprised)

My God, look at the devils.

CUSTER

Courage boys, hold the companies together.

(pause)

Cooke we must take the high ground.

CUSTER spurs his horse up into the hills, followed by BOSTON CUSTER, REED, COOKE Sergeant HUGHES and the line of cavalry.

CUT TO:

EXT. BENTEEN'S COMMAND - DAY

BENTEEN, WEIR and Sergeant MARTIN are trotting in front of the command, up a small incline towards firing. As they approach the sound of firing RENO rides out from a small hill. He is covered with blood and excited.

BENTEEN

(concerned)

What the hell is this?

RENO

(exhausted)

Oh my, oh. For God's sake Benteen, halt your command and help me.

The firing has died down behind them.

RENO (CONT'D)

My surgeon is dead, so is McIntosh.  
I've lost half my command.

BENTEEN  
Where is Colonel Custer?

RENO  
Nobody knows. He went off  
downstream and I have not seen him  
since.  
(pause)  
We've got to dig in here. I tell  
you there must be a thousand Sioux  
fighting us in that valley.

BENTEEN swings down from his horse and walks over to RENO.

BENTEEN  
Now calm down, Marcus.  
(pause)  
Captain Weir, move the command  
quickly on to the hill and send  
somebody back to move the packs  
along.

EXT. RENO'S HILL TOP - DAY

RENO and BENTEEN, VARNUM and WEIR are gathered behind some  
saddles as soldiers form a firing line and fire at the  
Indians.

BENTEEN  
Seem to have pulled back a bit.  
Custer sent up this note to bring  
up the packs but I'll be damned if  
I'll hunt for him. Damn it, where  
are the packs? Not going to wander  
around Indian filled country  
without that ammunition. Damn it,  
where are the packs?

WEIR  
I can make out the pack train about  
two miles south, sir.

RENO  
About time. Now where is Custer?

BENTEEN takes careful aim with his rifle and fires at an  
Indian.

BENTEEN  
(slowly)

Gentlemen, get used to the idea.  
Custer has left us here, like he  
did to Elliot at the Washita.

(pause)

Them Sioux will come back. We may  
be wiped out before sundown and  
he'll get all the glory.

VARNUM takes aim and fires several times at the Indians.  
Suddenly they hear the distant sound of very heavy firing.

RENO

Listen, listen to that.

VARNUM

What the hell does it mean?

BENTEEN

Somebody's in it nice and heavy.  
Custer cutting through the village,  
I suspect.

CUT TO:

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY REGIMENT - DAY

The cavalry are firing from their horses as they canter up  
the slopes Indians are riding all around their flanks.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER is firing from the saddle, as his horse struggles up  
the rise. BOSTON CUSTER, KELLOGG and COOKE are riding beside  
him.

CUSTER

(yelling)

Boston, ride back and tell Miles  
Keogh and Jimmy Calhoun to dismount  
and keep the hostiles back.

(pause)

Have their companies open the  
approach for Benteen. Cooke, have  
the trumpeters sound the dismount.

CUSTER takes some more shots.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Mr. Kellogg, I suggest you grab a  
weapon, we'll need every rifle we  
can get.

Firing, Indian war whoops, screaming and bugles are everywhere. CUSTER rears his horse up. KELLOGG seems bewildered by it all.

KELLOGG  
(worried)  
Colonel, are we in trouble. What is happening?

CUSTER  
We're in the defensive, Mr.

KELLOGG.  
(pause)  
Get those troops down, Tom, have your command hold the foot of the hill. Dismount the command, prepare to fight on foot.

KELLOGG  
My God, they are everywhere.

CUSTER swings off his horse, slowly walking across the ridge. Sergeant HUGHES and several troopers run up with the Regimental flags. ARMSTRONG REED is kneeling and firing.

CUSTER  
That gives us plenty of targets.

EXT. CALHOUN AND KEOGH'S COMMANDS - DAY

BOSTON CUSTER rears his horse in near CALHOUN and KEOGH'S companies. The men are firing from their standing horses.

BOSTON CUSTER  
The Colonel wants you to form dismounted skirmish lines and prepare for Benteen's command.

KEOGH  
Good lad, watch how Company I makes short work of our excited friends.  
(pause)  
Jimmy, cover my flank and I'll protect yours. Be careful now will you.

CALHOUN  
Tell the Colonel that Company L will hold its line, Boston.

The firing has increased.

CALHOUN (CONT'D)

First Sergeant Butler, dismount the command, form into skirmish lines, forward on the double. Have the horse holders fall back.

EXT. CALHOUN'S COMPANY - DAY

A rugged looking First Sergeant Butler slowly gives the men their commands as they move in perfect formation up on line.

1ST SERGEANT BUTLER

(deliberately)

Now, make sure them weapons is loaded proper.

(pause)

Company, volley fire, front, ready, aim, fire!

A thunder of carbine fire roars across the line.

EXT. INDIAN ATTACK - DAY

Thousands of Indians, mostly on foot are running and firing across the plains towards CALHOUN's position. Groups drop as the volley fire sweeps over them.

INDIANS

(collectively)

Heya, heya, heya, heya, heya.

EXT. CALHOUN'S COMPANY - DAY

CALHOUN walks slowly behind his soldiers as BUTLER makes sure the line is in order.

1ST SERGEANT BUTLER

(chuckling)

Now that's making it hot for Mr. Indian.

CALHOUN

Aim low, gentlemen. Make those shots count.

A batch of arrows swing overhead, one trooper gets hit in the chest and falls over.

1ST SERGEANT BUTLER

Damn them, keep your eyes to the front. Company, volley fire, to the front ready, aim, fire Sergeant Bender, take the line on the left.

(pause)

Sergeant Cashan, extend the skirmish line to our right. Be quick about it boys.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

COOKE and REED fire at the Indians, while CUSTER walks the line of the ridge. The regimental flags are in place and there is gunfire, smoke, running men everywhere. YATES and his company come running onto the ridge, some men are leading horses.

YATES

Damn it, Armstrong. They are hitting our line everywhere.

CUSTER

Have your men fill in here, George.

YATES

Keep those people down, take up the fire. Hold them back.

YATES scrambles down on one knee near COOKE, and fires at the Indians. CUSTER continues to walk upright.

YATES (CONT'D)

Armstrong, Smith's company has gone under near the river. The red devils are shooting the horse holders and spooking the animals.

In almost perfect parade ground form CUSTER lowers one of his pistols, takes careful aim and fires.

CUSTER

We can't leave this position until Benteen gets through to us. Then we'll sweep down on the village.

(pause)

Tom will hold them with C Company. How are things on our flank?

BOSTON CUSTER

More Sioux than you can count. Jimmy and Keogh are keeping their heads down.



CUSTER strolls over to the end of the firing line and looks off to the southeast.

CUSTER  
Damn it, where is Benteen?  
(pause)  
Aim carefully, gentlemen. They'll  
not gain on us if you aim those  
weapons.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY POSITION - DAY

Mounted Sioux warriors spur their horses over into the companies scaring away many of the cavalry horses. There is dust and firing everywhere. BOSTON CUSTER runs towards the commotion and a Sioux shoots him with an arrow.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER doesn't notice BOSTON's death but realizes things are getting desperate. COOKE and YATES continue to supervise and help in the defense. Arrow storm flies overhead.

YATES  
(yelling, excited)  
Colonel, I suggest we shoot the  
rest of the mounts for our own  
protection.

CUSTER kneels down and reloads his pistols.

CUSTER  
Yes, good idea, get Lieutenant  
Reily with a detail to kill our  
animals.  
(pause)  
Can you see what is happening on  
our flank, Cooke?

COOKE  
Too dusty, wait, I think their  
holding the demons off.

YATES is running in a half crouch among the soldiers. He gets hit in the arm.

COOKE (CONT'D)  
George!

YATES stumbles up holding a bleeding arm, he is grinning.

YATES

Fourteen years of soldiering and  
never a scratch until now.

CUSTER

God's sake, George, are you  
alright?

The firing seems to intensify and CUSTER fires at the  
Indians.

YATES

(painfully)

I'll mend in no time. Let me see to  
Reily.

EXT. CALHOUN'S COMPANY - DAY

CALHOUN'S Company is greatly reduced and several more men  
fall as the firing continues. Sgt. CASHAN is firing in front  
of him.

CALHOUN

Keep up a volume, men, steady now,  
(pause)  
fire at the devils.

An arrow hits Sergeant CASHAN and he falls down.

CASHAN

(dying)

Be good lads and hold this  
position.

(pause)

I knowed you could.... try...

EXT. INDIANS IN FRONT OF COMPANY L - DAY

Hundreds of Indians rise out of the plains grass and brush,  
fire and run towards CALHOUN'S company.

SIOUX INDIANS

Hi-yi, hi-yi, hi-yi, hi-yi.

EXT. CALHOUN'S COMPANY - DAY

CALHOUN is taking quick aim as the dozen or so men left out  
of Company L load and fire as fast as possible. The Indians  
charge in on them and there is a brief moment of hand to hand  
combat.

COMPANY L, CORPORAL  
(angry)  
Damn you critters. Stop em boys.

CALHOUN  
Hold this line, there's no place to  
go from here.

CALHOUN shoots two warriors and then gets hit in the stomach and doubles up. A Sioux warrior rushes up and drives a feathered lance into CALHOUN who falls dead. Hundreds of Sioux surge over the bodies of L Company. BUTLER and several soldiers flee up the ridge.

EXT. BARRICADE, CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

Lt. COOKE, DR. LORD, ARMSTRONG REED and several soldiers are firing from behind the dead horse barricade. They move out of the way as L Company's 1st Sgt. BUTLER and several men dash over the barricade.

COOKE  
Make way, Reed. It's the last of L  
Company, damned if it is not.

BUTLER stumbles down beside them.

BUTLER  
Good Doctor Lord can you take care  
of my boys?

COOKE  
God Butler, is there anything  
remaining?

BUTLER  
My company has had it, Lieutenant.  
I don't think Keogh will be able to  
hold the demons back.

COOKE  
Come along, boys. Be good about it  
and double your fire.

REED gets up and fires wildly at the Indians.

REED  
(yelling)  
I get you. Damn you, here you go.  
Here you have it.

COOKE  
Careful Reed, now. They'll put an  
arrow through you for certain.

CUT TO:

EXT. KEOGH'S I COMPANY - DAY

Lt. PORTER and Capt. KEOGH stand side by side behind a badly  
depleted I Company.

PORTER  
(excited)  
I think, there's a number of Sioux  
coming at us from the flank,  
Captain Keogh.  
(pause)  
Where's Calhoun?

KEOGH realizes CALHOUN's Company has been destroyed and moves  
to protect their flank.

KEOGH  
(calmly)  
Visitors on our left, laddies.  
(pause)

(MORE)

KEOGH (CONT'D)  
Listen up now, every other takes  
one step back, fall out man and  
form skirmish line on the left  
flank.

EXT. KEOGH'S POSITION - DAY

The troopers step out and double time into another skirmish  
line on the left flank. As they do this the horses behind the  
company are frightened and pull away from their horse  
holders, several of whom have been hit by Indian fire. The  
horses stampede through the ranks.

PORTER  
(excited)  
Watch out there. Damnation hold the  
mounts.

I COMPANY, 1ST SGT.  
(excited, angry)

Keep up your fire men. The bucks is moving in on us, Captain Keogh.

KEOGH is very steady and takes careful aim with his pistol, fires at the approaching Indians.

KEOGH

Laddies, looks like we'll have to walk back to Fort Lincoln. There goes our government transportation.

Several more I Company troops get hit and fall.

SOLDIER

(worried, dying)

God, I've got it, help me, oh, please.

KEOGH

Let's start moving back, gentlemen. Can you hear me on the firing line? We move back ten feet, ten feet only. And keep up that firing at our screaming friends out there. Lieutenant Porter, we move to join Captain Yates command on that ridge behind us.

PORTER

Very good, sir.

(pause)

The line is prepared to move.

KEOGH

Alright, lads, fire away, pick up the wounded and walk back. Damn it fire as you go. Face them, don't turn your backs.

EXT. I COMPANY ON BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The entire Company moves slowly back continuing to face the Indians and fire through the dust, smoke and turmoil. Soldiers continue to fall.

CUT TO:

757. EXT. HILLSIDE JUST ABOVE INDIAN VILLAGE - DAY

MONAHSETAH and YELLOW SWALLOW stand among hundreds of other women and children and watch the distant battle. Some squaws carry their possessions, others are with their children.

SIOUX SQUAW

So many white soldiers. So many.

MONAHSETAH

There will be much sadness in the village of Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull tonight.

YELLOW SWALLOW

Mother, why do the whites come here to the Sioux's land?

SIOUX SQUAW

To stop the old traditions that are the spirit of the Sioux, young one.

YELLOW SWALLOW

Then I want to fight them also.

MONAHSETAH

Be still brave warrior. We may need all our energy to flee the whites.

SIOUX SQUAW

Oh, maybe not, Monahsetah, see there are the many braves of Gall and Low Dog riding to join the others. Perhaps they have killed all whites down at the river?

MONAHSETAH

Perhaps, today our warriors are more plentiful than grass on the plains.

CUT TO:

EXT. RENO'S COMMAND - DAY

Groups of soldiers are digging into the ground while some are listening to the distant sound of firing. They look tired and beaten and afraid.

EXT. RENO'S GROUP - DAY

Capt. WEIR and Maj. RENO crouch a little distance from Capt. BENTEEN and several other officers.

RENO  
The answer is still no, Captain.

WEIR  
(angry)  
Damn it, Major Reno, we can't just stand around here and wait for developments.

RENO  
(angry)  
I don't plan on doing that, I am going to lead a burial detail and I, sir, suggest you supervise your company in our defense.

WEIR tosses his hat to the ground.

WEIR  
(very upset)  
At least send a small force out towards the sound of the guns. For God's sake.

RENO  
I intend to keep this command together, at least until the packs come up. And that is the end of it, Captain. Custer can certainly take care of his end of the bargain.

WEIR  
Foolishness, Custer is down there and God only knows what his condition it.

RENO  
Your behavior borders on insubordination, damn it.

WEIR  
Why, of all the nerve. And yours, Major, borders on cowardice.

RENO gets up and stalks off, he turns to get the last words in.

RENO  
(yelling)

I'll have no more of this behavior,  
Captain Weir. I'll have you in  
front of a review board over this.

EXT. WEIR'S COMPANY AREA - DAY

Capt. WEIR walks quickly up to his second in command, Lt.  
EDGERLY.

WEIR

I am riding towards the sound of  
the firing. Are you with me?

EDGERLY

Good Lord, of course I am. There is  
nothing for it.

(pause)

I'll mount the command and follow  
you.

WEIR

Good, let's get on then. God only  
knows what has happened to Colonel  
Custer.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

Perhaps 80 men from YATES' F Company with CUSTER and COOKE  
are holding the ridge. Sioux and Cheyenne are all around, the  
fighting is intense as CUSTER walks near his flag directing  
the defense.

CUSTER

(yelling)

Aim low boys and make those shots  
count.

(pause)

Cooke, do you see anything from  
Keogh and Jimmy Calhoun?

COOKE has receive a bad wound in his shoulder and can barely  
stand up.

COOKE

(painfully)

Only smoke, Colonel. They've gone  
under, I fear.

CUSTER seems to notice COOKE's injury for the first time, he  
moves back toward the flag as arrows sail over. At his feet  
is the body of KELLOGG.



CUSTER  
George, can you get somebody to see  
to Cooke? Where is Doctor Lord?

YATES, also hurt, crouches over, two enlisted men follow him.

COOKE  
(fading)  
Damn lucky shot, George.

YATES  
Cookey, you'll be fine.  
(pause)  
Just need some rest.

COOKE  
Damned if I'll find it around here.  
How are things on your side of the  
line?

COOKE starts to cough in pain.

YATES  
The Company's busy but Reily's got  
em holding the line.

EXT. TOM CUSTER'S C COMPANY POSITION - DAY

TOM CUSTER is pushing his men along up the slope. First  
Sergeant BIBO is firing as the men, many badly hurt, flee  
from their firing line and dash up the slope.

TOM CUSTER  
Fall back to the ridge. Move along  
now.  
(pause)  
Third squad stand fast and give us  
some covering fire.

BIBO  
(yelling)  
Nothing left of em, Captain. We  
best skedaddle right out of here.  
(pause)  
C Company can't last much longer.

TOM CUSTER fires several shots and then he and BIBO and two  
other soldiers are hit by a volley of arrows. TOM CUSTER  
stumbles back up and breaks part of an arrow from his arm.

TOM CUSTER

(screaming)  
Fall back quickly.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION, F. COMPANY LINE - DAY

The soldiers see the remains of TOM CUSTER's C Company retreating up the slope towards them.

PRIVATE  
Looks like Cap'n Custer's men  
coming in at a run.

CUSTER moves down from the flag and fires several times in their direction.

EXT. F. COMPANY SKIRMISH LINE - DAY

Injured, dirty and near panic 10 men plus TOM CUSTER from C Company plunge over the barricade. TOM CUSTER has a broken arrow through his arm, another trooper gets an arrow in the back as he runs up to the dead horse barricade.

CUSTER  
(yelling)  
Give them covering fire. Damn it.  
(pause)  
Get down, Tom. Jesus, are you  
alright boy?

TOM CUSTER pulls himself up to the skirmish line, all of whom are kneeling and firing as quickly as possible at the Indians.

TOM CUSTER  
My damn arm has turned useless.  
(pause)  
Look at that wound, lost most of my  
men, Armstrong. First Sergeant Bibo  
is dead, most of the men with him.  
We must make contact with Reno,  
somebody.

YATES pulls himself up to the firing line.

YATES  
Will be Hell to get through.

CUSTER continues to walk the line of men with heavy firing hits all around.

TOM CUSTER

Armstrong, get down. Where are Reed  
and Boston?

CUSTER  
I'm sorry Tom, but Boston is dead.  
(pause)  
Reed is fighting at the far end of  
the line.

TOM CUSTER leans against the body of a horse and thinks for a  
moment.

TOM CUSTER  
(tired, sad)  
I will miss that boy.

CUSTER  
No time for any of that now, let's  
hope Benteen gets through to us.

YATES  
Armstrong, they're all over, all  
around the command.

TOM CUSTER  
Everywhere, I must have had a  
thousand in front of me.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER kneels down to reload both his pistols. He looks  
around at what remains of the command.

CUSTER  
(tired laugh)  
Eh, I don't think we have over  
fifty men up here.  
(pause)  
We need Benteen with the  
ammunition. Damn him!

YATES is hit in the head by an Indian bullet. CUSTER dusty,  
And tired looks up in horror.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
Great God, George Yates, red  
demons.

EXT. KEOGH'S I COMPANY - DAY

KEOGH supports a badly wounded PORTER as the half dozen remaining soldiers from his company fire and fight for their lives.

1ST SGT. VARDEN  
(tired)  
The command is spent, Captain.

KEOGH  
First Sergeant Varden, we are all  
in for it.

He gently lowers PORTER to the ground. The firing continues.

KEOGH (CONT'D)  
Porter? Porter? Lieutenant, can you  
hear me?

PORTER merely lies there, he is very badly wounded.

KEOGH (CONT'D)  
Porter take this pistol. There are  
three bullets in it. Use the last  
as you see fit when the Sioux get  
close. By that time we'll not be in  
a condition to criticize ya. 766.

1st Sgt. VARDEN stumbles over.

1ST SGT. VARDEN  
Sir, I think the young Lieutenant  
is gone. I got five men remaining,  
and the devils is getting too close  
for us. Orders, sir?

KEOGH is sad and looks up at VARDEN.

KEOGH  
Sorry about the conditions, First  
Sergeant, but it's Garry Owen and  
Glory for this company. We'll not  
retreat another step. Fight it out  
with the Sioux right here.

CUT TO:

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

CUSTER and TOM CUSTER and Lt. REILY kneel beside 1st Sgt.  
BUTLER. The wounded COOKE is writing out a message.

TOM CUSTER  
Not much ammunition left but the  
horse is a fast one.

CUSTER hands a message to BUTLER.

CUSTER  
Ride back the way we came,  
Sergeant. Don't stop for anything.  
You are our only hope.  
(pause)  
I fear Reno's command has gone  
under, so bring Benteen and his men  
to our support.

BUTLER  
(calm)  
Don't worry Colonel, if there's a  
way to Benteen's position I'll find  
it.

CUSTER  
Good for you, Sergeant Hughes is  
holding your mount. Best of luck  
to you, Butler.

BUTLER gets into a half crouch, checks his revolver over.

BUTLER  
(calm)  
Thankee, Colonel. Ain't a damn  
Sioux alive that can out shoot or  
out ride a sergeant from the 7th US  
Cavalry.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION, BARRICADE - DAY

1st Sgt. BUTLER jumps his horse over the barricade of dead  
horses and saddles. He gallops full speed into the dust of  
the battlefield.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

COOKE fires his carbine from behind a dead horse while CUSTER  
waits for a target. Sgt. HUGHES ties a field bandage on TOM  
CUSTER's arm. The firing continues.

HUGHES  
Oughta do for now, Captain. Don't  
suggest any serious arm wrestling.

CUSTER  
(laughing)  
Hell, it may come to that. Butler  
must get through.  
(pause)  
Damn it, where is Benteen?

COOKE throws down the carbine.

COOKE  
Damn bloody carbines are jamming.

CUSTER  
I'll make a report of it when we  
get back to Fort Lincoln, Bill.

TOM CUSTER pulls himself up and fires several times with his  
pistol.

TOM CUSTER  
(tired, concerned)  
What a foul situation, Armstrong.  
Must be five thousand Sioux out  
there.  
(pause)  
And the Regiment is a dirty  
shambles.

The brothers look at one another.

TOM CUSTER (CONT'D)  
I'm sorry, Armstrong. I just don't  
think Benteen will make it to us.  
He has always hated you.

CUSTER  
Benteen will come through. Maybe he  
does feel that but he won't let  
the regiment die because of it.  
(pause)  
Thomas, we'll charge through that  
village before the day is out.

Charge right through them.

CUSTER moves over to his flag and fires at several Indians  
who ride quickly by on horseback. One falls off his mount. He  
wipes his hand across a sweat and dust streaked face.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
And then into the White House.  
(pause)

Butler will get through.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

1st Sgt. BUTLER races his horse across the flats below the hill, several Indians ride after him. One fires, BUTLER and his horse fall. BUTLER struggles to his feet with pistol in hand.

BUTLER  
(angry)  
Come on you damn red savages.

BUTLER fires and hits one then gets hit in the side and falls to his knees. He fires several more times before several arrows strike him.

CUT TO:

EXT. D COMPANY, WEIR'S COMMAND, PLAINS - DAY

Capt. WEIR is riding out front of his company which follows him. He calls back to the troops.

WEIR  
Lieutenant, bring the company  
along. I'm going to scout the high  
ground ahead with the bugler and  
guideon bearer.

EDGERLY  
Very good, captain.

WEIR  
My God, do you hear that firing?

CUT TO:

EXT. INDIAN'S POSITION - DAY CUSTER HILL

Hundreds of armed warriors crouch and fire at the 7th Cavalry positions. Slowly they start to move towards the survivor's barricade.

EXT. 7TH CAVALRY BARRICADE - DAY (INDIAN'S P.O.V)

Smoke and dust rise over the collection of dead horses at the top of the hill. CUSTER's flag moves slightly in the light wind.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY

Sgt. HUGHES, DR. LORD and five soldiers drag and crawl over near where CUSTER, TOM CUSTER, COOKE and about nine enlisted men continue to fight.

CUSTER

Make some room, you men get on the barricade. Doctor can you see to our wounded?

LORD

Colonel, Lieutenant Reily has been killed. I'm sorry to say young Mr. Reed got himself killed by an arrow in the heart.

TOM CUSTER slams his fist on the ground.

TOM CUSTER

(angry)

Damn it, Armstrong.

CUSTER, still standing, bows almost in silent prayer.

CUSTER

Tom, what will I tell the folks.  
(pause)

I am sorry for them, but it has been a glorious adventure, Thomas.  
(MORE)

CUSTER (CONT'D)

A glorious adventure and I don't regret a minute of it.

A wind blows over their position, CUSTER's battle flag leans a little and HUGHES scrambles to catch it. He holds it in the ground, kneeling with his pistol at the ready. CUSTER walks among the crouching men.

CUSTER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, you will hold this line until relieved. Aim low and use your ammunition wisely.



EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION - DAY (SOLDIER'S P.O.V)

There is very little firing going on but the area around the barricade is obscured by dust and gun smoke. Indian figures can be seen here and there. TOM CUSTER fires at one.

TOM CUSTER

Damn, think I missed that buck.  
Why is it so quiet?

EXT. INDIAN POSITIONS - DAY

Numerous warriors move through the field grass towards CUSTER's barricade.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION, BARRICADE - DAY

CUSTER is peering out at the surrounding dust and smoke. The others are aiming out and ready.

COOKE

(whisper)

Huh, perhaps they have all gone  
home for their evening meal.

CUSTER

That's the spirit. They have  
realized that nobody beats the 7th  
Cavalry.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD AROUND BARRICADE - DAY (CUSTER'S P.O.V)

The grass blows in a slight wind, dust and smoke cover much of it. Bodies of Indians, soldiers and horses are lying everywhere. Suddenly out of the dust come the figures of Indians.

EXT. CUSTER'S POSITION AT BARRICADE - DAY

An arrow zips along and strikes Sgt. HUGHES, he falls still holding up the flag. The men start shooting. CUSTER takes a steady aim and fires.

COOKE

I've got a dozen of the brutes over  
here.

TROOPER

Here they come, screaming and  
yelling.

CORPORAL  
(pain)  
Oh, God, I'm hit.

Shooting breaks out all along the position almost outdone by the screams of the Indians.

CUSTER  
Hold them back, fellows. Good shooting, splendid, that's firing Cookey. They'll not get in on us.

Several of the enlisted men are hit, an arrow strikes TOM CUSTER who leans back and falls. COOKE is killed by rifle fire.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(determined, screaming)  
They'll not beat us, boys.

CUSTER is hit in the left side, just below the heart. He steps slightly back and fires at Sioux braves rushing towards the barricade. Both Indians fall.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(choking, in pain)  
Grand shooting.  
(pause)  
Hold the line.

Indian war whoops increase as the fire from the soldiers slackens. There are only a dozen soldiers, most wounded, remaining.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(angry)  
No, by God, this Regiment will not surrender.

He falls down on his knees amid the firing. He struggles to get up. There is blood on the front of his buckskin jacket and blue shirt.

CUSTER (CONT'D)  
(dying)  
By God, we won't.

One of the enlisted men looks over at CUSTER.

PRIVATE  
(concerned)  
Sir, Colonel are you alright?

CUSTER waves him away with his blood stained hand.

CUSTER

It's nothing, maintain your position.

(pause)

Nothing. Can you seem them, boys?

CUSTER tries to struggle up, cannot and leans forward holding his wound while supporting himself on his knees and other hand. He looks out at the Indians closing in on them.

780	MONTAGE -	(CUSTER'S P.O.V)
613	Capturing	Rebel flag in Peninsula Campaign.

614. Best man at Gimlet Lea's wedding.

615. Lincoln smiling at him during photo session after Antietam.

616. McClellan showing him New York City.

617. Leading a charge at Gettysburg.

618. Winter sleight ride with Libbie.

619. Monahsetah's face and child.

620	Sheridan	smiling.
621	Libbie's	face.

The images of his life swirl through his mind.

781. EXT. BARRICADE, THE LAST STAND - DAY

Dozens of Indians trot and dodge in on and over the dead horse barricade. The few soldiers remaining fire at them and get up to fight hand to hand. In seconds mounted braves by the hundreds ride through and the firing stops. Indians are everywhere. CUSTER and the few fighting soldiers are lost from view.

CUT TO:

782. INT. CUSTER QUARTERS, FORT LINCOLN - DAY

LIBBIE CUSTER is folding wash and cleaning the bedroom. A small item falls from the jacket she is putting away. ELIZA walks in with another load of folded blankets. LIBBIE bends down to pick up the item.

LIBBIE  
What is this?  
(pause)  
Oh, Armstrong.

She picks up the small worn metal figure of a mounted cavalry man.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)  
How precious, must have been  
Armstrong's when he was a child.

LIBBIE sits down on the bed and looks at the little metal cavalryman.

CUT TO:

783. EXT. HILL NEAR BATTLEFIELD, WEIR'S POSITION - DAY

WEIR and the enlisted men sit their horse on a wind swept hill. WEIR looks across the plain with his telescope.

WEIR  
(confused)  
Damned strange,  
(pause)  
Looks like some type of hunt,  
buffalos perhaps?

SGT. FLANAGAN Whadda ya spy, Captain?

WEIR (CONT'D)  
Lots of Indians and they are all  
firing at the ground. At something  
on the ground.

The three men watch for a moment. Lieutenant HARE canters his horse up to join them.

SGT. FLANAGAN  
I can make out some heading this  
way.

WEIR

That's on the money. A great many  
are riding towards us.

(pause)

I don't think Edgerly can see them.

WEIR looks quickly about as HARE canters up to them.

WEIR (CONT'D)

We'll have to signal Edgerly to  
bring the company to higher  
ground. They are coming like the  
very devil.

EXT. INDIAN POSITIONS - DAY (WEIR'S P.O.V)

In the distance mounted Indians are riding in large groups  
toward them.

EXT. HILLTOP, WEIR'S POSITION - DAY

They continue to watch the Indians approach.

WEIR

I can't see Custer's command  
anywhere.

(pause)

Could they be shooting our wounded?

HARE

Hello, Captain. Major Reno asks for  
any news on Custer and informs you  
to halt your advance. Captain  
Benteen reports the Indians  
approaching in force.

WEIR

That is very obvious, but thank  
you, Lieutenant.

HARE

The commander also instructs you to  
fall back to Benteen and French's  
companies.

WEIR

Where are they?

HARE

Forming skirmish lines the next  
ridge behind us. Captain Benteen  
thinks the Colonel has withdrawn

from the field to link up with  
Colonel Gibbon and General Terry.  
785. CONTINUED

WEIR and the others look back across the plain for a moment.

WEIR  
(perplexed)  
Very well, good chance of it.  
(pause)  
What in God's name are they  
shooting at?  
(pause)  
Let's move back to the command,  
gentlemen.

WEIR continues to look back as the four of them spur their  
horses down the slope and away.

CUT TO:

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, HILLSIDE - DAY

The gentle slope is covered with dead soldiers, horses,  
Indians and equipment. Women, children and old men are  
pulling uniforms off the bodies. Warriors are still riding  
around firing both in the air and at the dead cavalrymen.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD, HILLSIDE - DAY

MONAHSETAH leads little YELLOW SWALLOW across the  
battlefield.

MONAHSETAH  
Hurry slow one.

EXT. HILLTOP BARRICADE - DAY

There are women and warriors crowded around the horse  
barricade. MONAHSETAH and YELLOW SWALLOW push through.  
Several braves have pulled off CUSTER's buckskin jacket, his  
shirt is blood stained. He is in a sitting position against  
several other dead soldiers. MONAHSETAH stares sadly at him,  
the braves know of their relationship and move back.

MONAHSETAH  
Here child is your father. A great  
warrior of the whites, a chief who  
could lead bravely. Even to death

against the Sioux and Cheyenne. The most handsome and greatest of their chiefs. Now he lies dead.

MONAHSETAH moves near CUSTER and wipes the dust and blood from his face. YELLOW SWALLOW moves with her and looks at his father. MONAHSETAH takes a bone from her pouch and gently presses it into both of CUSTER's ears. Those around watch quietly.

MONAHSETAH (CONT'D)

(somber)

Yellow hair must not have heard the warning our chiefs gave him about attacking the Cheyenne and their brothers. The Everywhere Spirit has killed him and his soldiers. Now my great chief will hear better on the other side.

She stands up and steps away from CUSTER's body. The wind and dust blow up around them. She takes the toy cavalryman from her son and puts it in CUSTER's hand.

MONAHSETAH (CONT'D)

What is given is now given back.  
Yellow hair is now no more.

FADE IN:

EXT. WEST POINT, ROAD FROM CHAPEL TO CEMETERY - DAY  
OCTOBER 10, 1877

The somber beat of a lone drum echoes over a cobblestone path. A flag covered cassion is escorted by six cadets and followed by a horse, boots pointed backward, led by another cadet. LIBBIE, MAGGIE CALHOUN and the CUSTER family follow.

GENERAL SHERIDAN and his wife, LAWRENCE BARRETT an his wife, AL WAUD and numerous others follow the procession. McCLELLAN is there.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

The crowd of mourners gather around the coffin as the sound of a rifle volley can be heard. There is silence and the sound of a bugle. LIBBIE looks sad and reflective. She leans toward PHIL SHERIDAN and whispers to him.

LIBBIE

(gently smiling)  
Armstrong would have preferred  
Garry Owen.

SHERIDAN  
Yes, I believe he would have.

EXT. NEAR CEMETERY - DAY

The crowd is leaving, several people gather around LIBBIE and talk to her. Actor BARRETT walks beside journalist WAUD.

BARRETT  
I still can't believe it. We'll  
never see the likes of him again.

WAUD  
No, Lawrence, I am afraid not.  
(pause)  
Strange about the fight on the  
Little Big Horn.

BARRETT  
Oh, what's that?

WAUD  
A couple of things really. I had  
the opportunity of talking at great  
lengths with an officer from  
General Crook's column. You  
remember the Indians gave them a  
good beating a week before they  
beat Custer. Sent them back to  
their supply camp to wait things  
out.

BARRETT  
Yes, I recall.

WAUD  
Well he mentioned that almost to  
the exact hour that the 7th Cavalry  
was massacred Crook's Crow Scouts  
knew of Custer's death.  
(pause)  
Believe me. They carried on and  
went into mourning. The entire  
command did not get the official  
news for almost a week.

BARRETT



Very odd, I'll never doubt  
the power of the Indian for  
such a thing.

WAUD reaches into his pocket.

WAUD  
You know the officer and his  
command campaigned the rest of the  
summer against the Sioux. And he  
gave me this.

WAUD holds out the other small metal cavalryman toy.

BARRETT  
What is it? A toy?

WAUD  
It is. A small metal child's  
cavalry figure.

BARRETT Rather beaten.

WAUD (CONT'D)  
Understandable, Lawrence.  
(pause)  
The officer told me he had gotten  
it from another lieutenant who  
belonged to the 7th Cavalry.  
(pause)  
One of the survivors who had gone  
back to the Custer battlefield and  
found it in Armstrong's grip.

BARRETT stops at this and takes the little figure from WAUD.

BARRETT  
(amazed)  
Are you joking, Alfred.

WAUD  
Not a bit. I brought it with me to  
return to Libbie Custer.

BARRETT  
I don't know what to say. What to  
think about it?

WAUD  
Look, I'll see you back at the  
station for the ride to New York.

WAUD pivots and walks toward the crowd. BARRETT watches him go.

EXT. PATH NEAR CEMETERY - DAY

WAUD walks up to LIBBIE CUSTER and her family as they are being escorted to a waiting horse cab. LIBBIE recognizes WAUD. He greets her with a gentle hug.

LIBBIE

Mr. Waud, Armstrong's artist.

WAUD

Hello, will you ever call me Alfred?

LIBBIE

Thank you for being here today, Alfred.

WAUD

I am so sorry. I miss the General a great deal.

LIBBIE

How very kind, but he is back with his fellow soldiers now.

(pause)

And I have all my memories. Not even the Sioux can take those away from me.

WAUD hesitates for a moment, reaches into his pocket and takes out the toy.

WAUD

I have something. This was taken from your husband.

(MORE)

WAUD (CONT'D)

At the end I mean, when the survivors visited the field, I mean, the Colonel was holding this in his hand. I thought you should have it.

He slowly reaches out and places the toy in her hand.

WAUD (CONT'D)

Very much a part of him.

FATHER CUSTER

Libbie, I remember this. Some of  
Armstrong's things when he was a  
child.

LIBBIE looks it over and smiles back a tear.

LIBBIE

Yes, Oh, yes. I have the other.

She gently reaches up and kisses WAUD.

LIBBIE (CONT'D)

Now they can be together again.  
Thank you Mr. Waud . Now the  
General can rest.

THE END

George Custer was only 36 when killed at the Little Big Horn. Had he represented the Democratic Party in the 1876 election he might have become the 19th president. Democratic candidate, Samuel Tilden won more popular votes than Republican Hayes but had one less electoral vote. Tilden was not the colorful hero that Custer was and did not take Ohio and Michigan like Custer probably would have. Libbie Custer died in 1933. Keeping her husband's memory and myth alive for over 57 years. James Gordon Bennett's, New York Herald broke the news of the "Custer Massacre". "Ghosts will always rise up in my recollection of Custer - 'Golden Haired Boy' as his friends called him. He was a good friend of mine, he used to tell me the most wonderful, thrilling stories about the war and his earliest fights with the Indians.. when on horseback, riding hard with his long yellow hair blowing back in the wind, he was a marvelously striking figure.

"Soprano, Clara Louise Kellogg.

The Little Big Horn battlefield is thought to be haunted.