

# **THE MARCH OF THE 18TH**

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&  
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Based on the Novel  
"The March of the 18th,  
A Story of Crippled Heroes  
in the Civil War"

By  
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*This is a work of historical fiction inspired by  
the valor of the 18th Regiment, Veteran Reserve Corps,  
United States Army, 1864-1865.*

*Dedicated to those who have served, now serve,  
and who will someday join the ranks  
of proud citizens who defend our nation  
at home and on distant shores.*

"The March of the 18th"

FADE IN:

EXT. DUNNS POND - DAWN

YOUNG ANDERSON, 8, jacket buttoned up tight, and ANDERSON'S FATHER paddle a small fishing boat toward the center of the pond.

ANDERSON'S FATHER

Here's good.

INSERT: "DUNNS POND, LOGAN COUNTY, OHIO, 1849"

They bring their paddles in. Total calm. A shiny carp breaks the water's surface, then disappears.

YOUNG ANDERSON

See that?! And us with no fishin' poles. They're jumping up good this mornin'.

ANDERSON'S FATHER

Let'm jump.

Anderson's Father fires up his pipe, sucks down smoke, blows it out over the still water, eyes the sun cracking through white and black oaks.

YOUNG ANDERSON

We paddle out to just sit here, sir?

ANDERSON'S FATHER

Time to wait and a time to do, son. Sun'll tell me when.

The boy crosses his arms and watches another fish leap acrobatically.

EXT. OUTSIDE FREDERICKSBURG - FOREST - DAY

WE MOVE ALONG AS IF CARRIED ON THE WIND that blows gently through the forest of red cedar, pines and hickory and chase radiant but dying sunlight, splaying odd yet wondrous shadows about.

INSERT: "OUTSIDE FREDERICKSBURG, VIRGINIA, SUMMER 1863"

Beyond the forest's edge an open meadow, beyond that a copse of Loblolly pines and scrubs.

Moving quietly and steadily through the woods, two columns of union soldiers, fifteen men per.

At the head of the left column, LT. WILLIAM TECUMSEH ANDERSON, 22. Anderson reaches the edge of the wood, looks out across the field, then up to the sun, still too high.

Anderson gestures to the Sergeant across from him, a rosy-cheeked boy himself. Anderson points to the sun.

ANDERSON

Rest quiet. Ready on my command.  
One hour and the sun will be at  
our advantage, shield us to them.

ROSY-CHEEKED SERGEANT

(whispers)  
Sir. Lieutenant, sir.

The word is whispered back man by man along each line of the platoon.

Soldiers sit where they are, rifles on their laps.

Anderson pulls out his binoculars, aims them at the copse of trees beyond the open field.

AT THE COPSE

A ragged platoon of rebel soldiers, some asleep against Loblolly pines, some eating, hold their position in the woods, several staring over their crudely-constructed breastworks, others cleaning weapons.

This crew is without command or heavy weaponry, save for one old cannon and a small stack of artillery canisters.

REB #1 glasses the patch of trees across the open meadow. REB #2 taps him on the shoulder, kneels behind him. Both are barely out of their teens.

REB #2

See anything?

REB #1

Something, but I don't know what.

REB #2

Be back in a minute.

Reb #1 nods. Reb #2 sets his weapon down by #1's leg.

REB #2 (CONT'D)

Keep an eye on it. Don't let  
Dinks near her. Don't trust him.

REB #1

Do my best.

Reb #2 heads off deeper into the thickness of woods,  
stops at what is obviously a well-used latrine area.  
The smell makes his eyes water, so he moves past that  
area of flies and foul odor, grabbing flat leaves along  
the way.

He finds a spot beyond the slit trench latrine, unties  
his trousers, squats, and is about to get to his  
business, when he takes a WHACK to the back of his head,  
sending him flying facedown.

He rolls over and looks up: two hulking figures in long  
coats and wide-brimmed hats stand over him -- one with a  
flaming RED BEARD, and the other mangled-face with just  
a single snarl of a tooth, DOGTOOTH.

Red Beard offers a hand, but when the Reb reaches for  
it, Red Beard twists it near off, while Dogtooth stomps  
on his mouth to stifle any sound, and runs a long knife  
into his chest, turning it as he does.

DOGTOOTH

Well, let's see what he's got on  
him.

They dig through his pockets, find some tobacco, a few  
coins and a letter, folded half over twice. They take  
everything but the letter, which they toss on top of  
him.

RED BEARD

Poor son of a bitch. Fightin' to  
keep his negras, nothin' to show  
for it.

DOGTOOTH

(off the booty)  
We don't neither.

Dogtooth yanks open the Reb's mouth with his thumbs,  
checks inside. Disgusted, he lets go.

They hear VOICES and take off to the other side of the  
copse, where three more Marauders are waiting on  
horseback near a creek. They both hop up onto horses.  
MARAUDER #1 sidles up to them.

MARAUDER #1

Well.

Red Beard shakes his head.

MARAUDER #1 (CONT'D)  
Nothin'? What about weapons?

DOGTTOOTH  
Bunch more of 'em'll be dead soon  
enough. Both sides. We'll  
circle back.

With that the Marauders head out.

Back at Reb #2. He lies dead, the letter stuck to his chest in blood.

AS WE PUSH IN ON THE LETTER, we can barely make out the words, "Come home soon. Your loving Mother."

INT. OUTSIDE FREDERICKSBURG - FOREST - DAY

Anderson's men wait for the sun. He licks his pencil and continues a letter, his Sergeant on watch.

AS WE MOVE OVER THE OTHER MEN...

ANDERSON (V.O.)  
Father, your letters give me  
purpose and strength. I will  
always struggle with courage, and  
I still quake before I speak to  
men in my charge. I hope I can  
acquit myself uprightly and live  
up to the name you bestowed on me  
to honor your fine friend. I  
still do not know if I will shake  
off my fears and stand boldly as  
you would when the situation  
rises up against me. I pray for  
the Lord to strengthen me in that  
regard. I fear for my men. Your  
obedient son, Lt W. Tecumseh  
Anderson. With love to Mother,  
Will.

Anderson folds up the letter, tucks it into his breast pocket and gazes out across the meadow to the copse.

EXT. ON THE ROAD TO FREDERICKSBURG - DAY

A company under the command of MAJOR BARROW, 42, on horseback, stern of face and posture, marches behind the Major and SERGEANT ABRAM KURIGER, 44, lanky, sinewy, dark, riveting eyes, his voice a force in itself, walking in Barrow's wake.

PRIVATE CAL STRAW, 18, strides close behind, beside  
CORPORAL PERKS, 28.

Barrow raises his arm, and the company slows to a stop.  
A fork in the road lay out ahead of them, one side  
shaded tree-lined and narrow, the other open.

BARROW

Private!

Cal rushes to attention beside Barrow's golden mare.

CAL

Sir?

BARROW

Is this place familiar to you?

CAL

Yessir, Major Barrow. I grew up  
not far. Used to swim that  
creek.

Barrow removes his map, shows the Private a mark on it.

BARROW

Which will get us there sooner?

Cal looks back at the men behind him.

BARROW (CONT'D)

I'm asking you, Private.

CAL

Same either way, Sir. This way  
you come around up to a ridge  
near some woods. That way you  
miss the ridge and woods. Creek  
runs a ways.

Kuriger speaks with a hint of a brogue.

KURIGER

This point may be a strategic  
placement for the company, sir.  
We might send out pickets along  
sides of both roads, deep, and if  
the lieutenant's platoon can't  
hold the ridge they may follow  
either one to draw them rebels  
back to us here.

BARROW

I'm not convinced this Lieutenant  
can hold the ridge or find his  
way back, Sergeant.

(MORE)

BARROW (CONT'D)

He was an appointment, not a military man. We'll move to the narrow and secure the ridge ourselves, if need be.

KURIGER

Yes, sir.

Kuriger waves them left and they move on.

LATER

Barrow's company travels along the narrow road toward a ridge. Soldiers, though shaded, sweaty and weary from their long walk.

Barrow leads his men to the ridge in waning golden sunlight.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Shall I order scouts, Sir?

Barrow stops, pulls out his glasses, which sparkle in that sun. He jogs his horse to the top of the ridge, sights in on the forest to his right and the copse of Loblolly pines across the meadow. Kuriger climbs to him.

BARROW

I don't see our Lieutenant. It's quiet.

KURIGER

Maybe he's taken cover, waiting for an advantage.

BARROW

He's on the side of right, Sergeant Kuriger. That's his advantage.

Barrow lowers his glasses. The BUZZ of a bullet sounds before the RIFLE CRACK is heard, and Barrow's head splits open. He falls from his horse, which tumbles off the ridge.

A twenty-foot wide wave of heat and iron hits the ridge, what little cover trees are there begin to buckle, splinter, and split.

Kuriger, now in command, barks orders.

KURIGER

Spread out. They can't hit us all!



He stops at Barrow's body and pulls it back into the brush.

Kuriger leads half his men to the left, motions Perks and his men to the right.

Both groups, running in separate lines no more than two abreast, race to the opposite tree line.

A canister blows right between the lines, explodes violently. No one hit, but some are knocked off their feet by the concussion.

One of Perks' men is shot squarely in the neck, nearly severing his head.

PERKS

Get down, stay down.

Kuriger spies the copse of trees flashing with gun and canister fire. He shouts to his group.

KURIGER

On me, crawl for cover at the  
tree line, stay low, keep moving.

Both teams down and crawling. The copse goes quiet.

PERKS

(to his men)  
They could be spent or reloading.  
Hold fire and wait.

But a ROAR of men, Anderson's squad, charge from the right directly into the open field, stepping over Perks' prone squad, charging at a quick step, directly into the line of fire.

Anderson seems at a loss, as his men advance past him.

KURIGER

Get down! Rebel fire!

A canister flies in against Anderson's men, EXPLODES. The men scatter. Rifle fire commences again.

Anderson watches three of his Soldiers get picked off, stunned by the canister.

Kuriger works his men to the flank of the copse, motions for Anderson's men to hit the deck.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Down!!

ANDERSON

You heard him, get down!

Anderson hits the ground, rolls over, looks up at the darkening sky, his pistol at his chest, his face stricken with fear.

AT THE COPSE

Reb #1 watches his men at their breastworks. Some cease firing, out of ammo. He calls out...

REB #1

If you have it, fire one more  
round each, then hightail it to  
the bend in the creek. Cannon,  
now!

Moments of scattered gunfire, then a BLAST FROM THE CANNON.

The Rebels run for the creek.

AT THE FOREST EDGE

A CANNONBALL ON ITS WAY.

KURIGER

Down, down!

The ball skips and bounces, as men leap and scatter. The firing from the copse ceases.

Kuriger signals scruffy, bearded, wily PRIVATE RYE, 33.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Follow me, Rye!

Kuriger and Rye, weapons at the ready sprint for the copse.

AT THE COPSE

Kuriger and Rye step cautiously into the thicket. They kick over empty breastworks, train their weapons about.

PRIVATE RYE

Wait.

He points at some dense brush that looks out of place on the floor of these woods.

Kuriger approaches it cautiously, weapon trained, kicks over the brush. The cannon, tipped over on its side.

KURIGER

Listen.

They both remain quiet. In the distance, FOOTFALL, receding and splashing through the creek.

PRIVATE RYE

I'll get some men, we'll go after 'em. Make 'em pay.

Kuriger finds abandoned weapons, empty tin cans.

KURIGER

No. They're out of ammo, provisions. Most likely headed home.

MOMENTS LATER

Kuriger and Rye walk out from the copse, waving their arms.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Hold your fire. It's over.

Rye walks on ahead, as Kuriger stops to survey the site: walking wounded, men tending to dead bodies, the aftermath of battle.

Kuriger stops over one Soldier, kneels, notes a boot print on the fallen man's chest. He glances over at Anderson

who sits among five dead men, running his hands over his head. Kuriger walks up to him.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

All right, Lieutenant?

ANDERSON

I was told to secure this ridge, maybe draw them out and back. No one mentioned a cannon. I thought my men had time during their reload.

KURIGER

You thought right, about the timing, sir, you didn't know. Where's your non-com?

Anderson points to his fallen Sergeant. Kuriger surveys Anderson's demeanor. The boy's out of his league.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
Let's secure that ridge, eh,  
Lieutenant...

ANDERSON  
What's your name, soldier?

KURIGER  
Sergeant Abram Kuriger, sir,  
regular army, H Corps.

Anderson offers his hand for a shake. Kuriger notices the uncontrollable tremble in it, grabs it quickly, squeezes it between both of his brawny, rock-solid hands.

ANDERSON  
Lieutenant Anderson, Ohio  
militia.

Anderson stares over at the dead bodies.

KURIGER  
The ridge, sir?

ANDERSON  
Yes. Sergeant. Thank you.

Kuriger, all business now, rolls out the commands.

KURIGER  
Rye, take six men and set up an  
outbound perimeter. Any company,  
give us a shout. Perks, tally  
our number, account for the  
wounded. Get them away quickly,  
if need be.  
(to the other men)  
Ready your weapons. Bayonets  
fixed, all.

PERKS  
What about the Major?

KURIGER  
Assemble all not on guard. Bury  
him with the rest. The earth is  
soft here. When they're ready to  
take their rest, the Lieutenant  
will say some words over them.

Kuriger looks over at Anderson, who's staring in shock at the dead.

Kuriger walks over to a break in the woods where his platoon's wounded have been taken.

Kuriger spots the boy, Cal, both legs badly mangled. He kneels by the boy, surveys the legs. Cal seems near delirium.

CAL

Perks said he's seen worse. Said they'll patch me right up.

Kuriger knows better.

KURIGER

Good, son. I'm countin' on it. We'll be needin' you.

He moves on to the next wounded soldier.

EXT. BEYOND THE CREEK - DAY

The Rebel soldiers have been rounded up by the Marauders, who've stripped them down to their underclothes.

Dogtooth, pliers out, and Red Beard go through them one-by-one checking mouths, while Marauder #1 steadies a rifle on them. The rest pilfer provisions and clothing.

INT. OUTSIDE FREDERICKSBURG - DAY

Anderson paces the perimeter of the meadow, as the grim work of grave digging is completed.

He walks into the copse and kicks at the spent cannon.

Kuriger finds Anderson.

KURIGER

Lieutenant, we're ready for a proper burial.

Kuriger turns to walk back.

ANDERSON

Sergeant?

KURIGER

(stops)  
Sir?

ANDERSON

Twenty men died here today at the hands of a few rebels and a broken cannon. I led my men into a massacre.

(beat)

(MORE)

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

But led is the wrong word, isn't it?

KURIGER

You did what you thought you should, sir. This is war. All the schooling in the world won't capture it.

A long moment. Anderson walks off toward the burial, Kuriger trails.

LATER - AT THE BURIAL SITE

Dead soldiers lie uncovered side by side in a mass grave.

The surviving men, uneven, tired, bleary and broken, have gathered, kepi caps at their chest, as the last rays of earthly light touch the faces of the fallen.

Anderson stands before them, head bowed, eyes closed.

ANDERSON

Lord, we consign these brave soldiers to Your heavenly arms, in the cradle of Your sweet earth. We pray all this was not in vain. We beg Your forgiveness and ask that You welcome these men to sit by Your side through eternity.

(chokes up)

I cannot...

Anderson's obviously overcome. Kuriger bails him out.

KURIGER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name...

The others join in as Anderson turns away. They finish the prayer.

Soldiers offer personal goodbyes to their comrades.

After the last goodbye, long seconds of silence. The wind WHISTLES through the pines.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Detail, cover the grave. Remember these men and their families in your prayers.

Kuriger blesses himself, strides off.

EXT. REGIMENTAL BIVOUAC - NIGHT

A confluence of several platoons have gathered. Horses bray, men talk, eat, shave in the firelight. From a distant mouth harp WE HEAR "HOME SWEET HOME."

Other men sit around a campfire. A couple of CAMPFIRE SOLDIERS watch Anderson who sits alone against a tree, scratching words on a page.

CAMPFIRE SOLDIER

Look at Lieutenant Teacup over there, would ya. Writing home. Well, daddy can't help him now, can he?

CAMPFIRE SOLDIER #2

God save anyone under his command.

Campfire Soldier #2 tosses the last of his coffee in the fire with a SIZZLE.

Anderson stops writing, looks down at his boots, blood all over the top of the right one.

A recollection JOLTS HIM.

INSERT IMAGE: Anderson running out into the meadow, directly over a fallen body, his right foot on the young soldier's chest. The fallen soldier, his own rosy-cheeked Sergeant, stares up at him blankly.

BACK TO SCENE:

Anderson sets his paper aside, wipes sweat from his brow, his hand still trembling.

EXT. OUTSIDE FREDERICKSBURG - NIGHT

The Marauders, horses roped-off nearby, dig by lamp light, at the gravesite where Kuriger and Anderson had prayed just hours before.

RED BEARD

Anything you can find. Rings. Belts. Boots. Anything.

DOGTTOOTH

And don't be afraid to dig in their mouths. Shovel works nice.

He BELLOWS out a laugh.

EXT. REGIMENTAL BIVOUAC - DAY

Kuriger finds Anderson, who sits on a rock alone.

KURIGER

Well, I'll be rejoining H Company  
now. You keep a steady eye,  
Lieutenant.

ANDERSON

Which way you going, Sergeant  
Kuriger?

KURIGER

We have to hold the plateau.  
You?

ANDERSON

Falmouth.

KURIGER

Do your best, Sir. That's all  
you've got.

Anderson nods, watches Kuriger walk away.

EXT. PLATEAU BATTLEGROUND - DAY

Mid-day sun scorches as a platoon of Union Soldiers,  
Kuriger in the first line, rush headlong into a clearing  
to escape the branches, vines, thorns, and pockets of  
mud from which they'd traveled through.

Barely fifty yards away, Rebel Soldiers, nearly twenty  
abreast, emerge into the same clearing, escaping their  
climb up a steep cliff into the marshes, then the open.

Both charges freeze, dumbstruck, sensing the impending  
disaster.

KURIGER

First squad, take a knee and  
prepare to fire. Second squad,  
remain standing and fire at will.

The Rebel Soldiers hit the dirt, arms aimed and ready.

The Union Second Squad commence firing, intermittently,  
as another company of rebels, charging due south into  
the cleared area, joins the battle.

The first rebel volley takes five Yankees off their  
feet.



KURIGER (CONT'D)

Third squad, stay in the tree line where you can! First and second, you will hold your position and maintain fire on that company movement coming south! Third, do not hit our men! Aim with care. Second, take a knee and continue fire!

More union riflemen from the first and second squads are dropping from wounds or kill shots.

Third squad, 15 strong, are in the west tree line, affording cover but little maneuverability. The Rebels are now all exposed, except for the tall sticks of grass.

LIEUTENANT BILLINGS, 33, runs hard up to Kuriger, who's still firing.

BILLINGS

Sergeant Kuriger, north culvert is impassable. We'll need to move west and circle.

Billings dashes off.

KURIGER

Sergeant Rearden.

SERGEANT REARDEN, 33, firing, falls to his knees beside Kuriger.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Take your squad west and north, and come up behind them. Hurry now, double time, fix bayonets, show no quarter.

REARDEN

Never have, Abram, and you know it.

Rearden leads a group of men off toward the west.

Union Soldiers continue their barrage of rifle fire, sending sparks flying off metal and stone into the dry brush. Wisps of smoke become a rush of raw heat and fire where the Rebel lie.

Screams of: "Fire! Brush fire!"

The Rebels are trapped by the sheer precipice behind and fire all around. Ahead, the enemy awaits.

A few Rebels dive into the wet marsh, only to be set upon by a ball of copperhead snakes.

Rebels are scattering, rising, and becoming easy targets, too easy. They'll either be picked off or consumed by flames. Their guns go quiet.

Kuriger watches in horror...

KURIGER

Cease fire!

Billings, from the trees, also sees the building tragedy.

BILLINGS

Cease fire!

While some Rebels scatter to the swamp and the snakes, others to a certain fall, twenty-five or so Rebels move toward the Union troops, weapons raised but not firing.

KURIGER

Put your weapons down. Sit. Do not move. Your fight is done.

The Confederate soldiers comply, except for one, a very young, ONE STRIPE Lieutenant, who clears his throat before speaking.

ONE STRIPE

May I speak with your commander?  
I have men on that field who may survive. I, we, must attend to them immediately.

Billings makes his way to Kuriger and One Stripe.

BILLINGS

You may keep your sword, sir, but all other weapons must be placed here.

(pointing before  
him)

You and I will survey the field once the fire has died.

ONE STRIPE

I won't watch my men burn to --

His eyes follow Kuriger's who is raising his pistol and turning to the left. Two Rebel Soldiers walk out of the marsh, their long rifles leveled.

ONE STRIPE (CONT'D)  
 (waves to his men)  
 Stand down!

Too late. Gunfire from Third Squad. One Rebel falls hard on top of his rifle, the other to his knees, grasping his shoulder.

KURIGER  
 CEASE FIRE!  
 (to One Stripe)  
 Forgive this, Lieutenant.

But as he turns back to the two Rebels, the fallen Rebel is taking aim down the barrel of his Enfield, and squeezes off a

.577-CALIBER BALL FLYING TRUE AND FAST FOR ITS TARGET,

Kuriger's left forearm, shattering the wrist and both bones. Kuriger drops to his knees.

EXT. BIVOUAC, SOUTH OF BRANDY STATION - NIGHT

INSERT: "SOUTH OF BRANDY STATION, VIRGINIA, 1863"

PRIVATE GEORGE "THUNDER" HUNTRED, 28, 6'6", 250 lbs., paces outside an officer's tent, his rifle at his side. He's muttering to himself, practicing excuses.

SERGEANT COLE, 38, pushes open a tent flap, holds it and lifts it for Huntred, who ducks inside.

INT. JAKES' TENT - CONTINUOUS

Thunder salutes. CAPTAIN JAKES', 40, hair slicked down, twisty end moustache, sits at a makeshift desk. Cole takes his position to one side. Thunder shifts from side to side uncomfortably.

JAKES  
 Private, how long have you been  
 in my command?

THUNDER  
 Six months, sir. Right after  
 Christmas.

JAKES  
 And in that time, Sergeant Cole  
 here tells me he's never seen you  
 fire your rifle. Though we've  
 been through several engagements.  
 Is that true, Private?

Thunder eyes Cole, who tips his head encouragingly.

THUNDER

I've tried, Captain. But it's jammed. I think.

JAKES

Have you tried to unjam it?

THUNDER

Yes, sir. I've taken her apart several times, put her back together and...

JAKES

Still jammed?

(Thunder nods)

Why do you think that is?

THUNDER

God, sir.

Cole covers his face with his hand.

JAKES

God?

THUNDER

God knows I never even shot a bunny rabbit, and it be against my true nature to shoot another man, so He jams me up.

JAKES

What if you were to engage the enemy at a distance, where you wouldn't necessarily see who you were firing against? What would God think of that?

THUNDER

Can't speak for God, but I guess I could try, sir.

Jakes blows out a long breath, gets back to his paperwork.

JAKES

Sergeant, is there something we can find for Private Huntred with the forward battery?

COLE

Yes, sir. And if a horse or mule team gives out, the Private can take its place.

JAKES

I have no doubt. Dismissed,  
Private.

Thunder salutes, and pushes open the tent flap, catching his head at the apex and nearly bringing the place down.

MONTAGE:

Thunder works with the Men of Battery Gun 2, a Howitzer Model 1857. He totes shell rounds, while others clear, load, check, aim, fire, sight effect on target, adjust azimuth, repeat.

The gun explodes violently across battlefields.

And with each departure from the cannon's barrel, Thunder covers his ears before getting right back to work.

At night, Thunder sleeps right beside the limber carrying Gun Two.

And when time comes to move the gun through mud or uphill and horse or mule teams slip or give out, Thunder unleashes his gargantuan strength, pushing or pulling, and Battery Gun 2 moves on.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. JAKES' REGIMENT BIVOUAC - NIGHT

Horses are watered. Guns are cleaned. Men finish their hard tack and salt pork.

Around a fire, a group of Soldiers share smokes, pipes, walk about, tossing butts, tapping out tobacco debris, and tormenting one another with jokes.

Thunder leans back against the wheel of the caisson behind gun 2's limber, entertaining some men with his stories of back home. His thunderous laugh bellowing out with each pause.

THUNDER

Well, they couldn't get that saw through 'er without breaking it in half. They come to me, and I says, well, I can sure give'r a try. So, I head on over, size her up...

He stands, demonstrates, does his impression of an angry bull. Sergeant Cole walks up to hear the end of the story.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

An' run at her full out. Three times.

He shows them, then laughing, retreats to position against the caisson.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

Popped right out, roots an' all.  
(a volley of  
guffaws)  
Sure do miss my Pocahontas  
County, though.

With that the men all go quiet, left to their own recollections of home.

A FIZZLING sound, like the dance of flame along a stick of dynamite begins turning heads.

A thread of black smoke rises from the wagon behind Thunder's precious gun.

COLE

Get out of here!

Thunder, instinctively, grabs his canteen, and moves quickly to investigate the munitions wagon, while others dive for cover.

A fire, then a FLASH of white hot light.

COLE (CONT'D)

Jesus, get something on it now,  
save what powder you can. And  
put out those damn pipes.

Men hustle to it. The flames are doused with handfuls of dirt and blankets, and a cloud of misty smoke hangs over the wagon.

Cole surveys the damage.

COLE (CONT'D)

That was close. No explosion, no  
carriage damage we can't fix.  
Everyone okay?

Thunder's flat on his back, his knees bent, his arms crossed on his chest. He touches his face. Blood oozes out from behind his eyes.

THUNDER

Think I'm bleeding, Sergeant.

Cole runs to him, kneels, dabs at the blood around his scorched eyes, the whites charred, the pupils black.

COLE

Huntred, Thunder, can you hear me?

THUNDER

I can, but it sounds like you're far off. Where are you, Sergeant Cole? I can't see anything. Just that black sky. Where'd all the stars go?

Cole looks up at the others.

EXT. TREMAINE HORSE RANCH - DAY

A beautiful home on sprawling acreage, horses of all variety in the corrals behind the house.

Union military stationed outside, men, wagons, horses.

INT. TREMAINE HOUSE - DAY

PARLOR

DR. TREMAINE, 42, sad-eyed and slow of foot, limps wearily through the converted parlor, now without furniture, only a field of blankets occupied by the severely wounded, those least likely to recover.

Tremaine moves from bed to bed, working, as light streams through the grand bay windows, checking pulse, listening, shooing away flies, all under the watchful eye of, DELANEY, 14, a sparrow of a girl, in size only.

This room is mostly quiet except for low MOANS.

Tremaine steps toward a section of his home with louder WAILINGS, sometimes SCREAMS, the

DINING ROOM

Mostly amputees in this section, lying around the wall.

On the grand table, six soldiers lie side by side, breathing heavily through gaping mouths, staring in shock at the wood-beamed ceiling. Stumps where arms or legs once were, wrapped in white sheet.

One of the Soldiers reaches out his hand, and Delaney takes it and rubs it. His eyes, pleading.

DELANEY

Rest now. You're going to live.

Tremaine glances over to the kitchen where two Union blue carry in a blanket bearing yet another severely wounded comrade.

KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Dr. Tremaine stands at the kitchen table, unwraps the blanket. It is Cal, though he is barely recognizable, his face porcelain white, jackets criss-crossed around him from neck down, bulging his size.

Tremaine feels for a pulse, eyes the soldiers, now back by the door, leans closer to Delaney, speaks quietly...

TREMAINE

This boy might be better off  
dead. Perhaps into the parlor  
with him.

Delaney squeezes Cal's cheek. It flushes pink.

DELANEY

We can save him, father.

She rushes over to the soldiers, hands the BRAUNY SOLDIER old uniforms taken from a stack near the door.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

You, tear these quickly.

Brawny sets to tearing. Delaney darts to the sink pump, cranks it three times, reaches out and grabs the SMALLER SOLDIER by his sleeve.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

Pump these two buckets, then fill  
any dish you can.

The Smaller Soldier moves awkwardly, bumps into Delaney.

SMALLER SOLDIER

Sorry, ma'am, missy.

DELANEY

Shush. Just do it now. Wash  
your hands first, make sure the  
dishes you use are clean.

While the Brawny Soldier tears buttonless shirt after shirt into strips, the Smaller one pumps and fills, occasionally grabbing a gulp for himself.



As Tremaine cuts away what's left of Cal's trousers, he finds both the boy's legs mangled below the knees.

Tremaine looks over at Delaney.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

You, bring water over here and  
pour it slowly over his... here.

She shows the Smaller Soldier, who chokes off his disgust as he pours.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

You, I need clean rags on my  
shoulder. Fast as you can.

The Brawny Soldier lays several rags on her shoulder, steps back. She wipes, chucks away a rag, eyes Brawny...

DELANEY (CONT'D)

Pick it up and rip some more  
fresh.

BRAWNY SOLDIER

Yes'm.

Delaney snatches a rag from her shoulder and winds it around a straight large handled spoon from an open drawer behind her.

TREMAINE

(to the soldiers)

Were you with him when this  
happened?

(they both nod)

What was it?

SMALLER SOLDIER

Cannonball.

Delaney motions for more water, so the doctor can better find his target. The Smaller Soldier pours.

SMALLER SOLDIER (CONT'D)

Come bounding along a dry patch,  
too late to do anything but jump.  
Cal jumped, too, only the ball  
struck a stone and hit him on the  
rise. Just bad luck. Took us  
most of two days to get 'im down  
here. Did the best we could.

TREMAINE

Wrapping him as you did most  
likely saved his life. But he's  
lost so much blood...

Delaney places the wrapped spoon as a bite block in  
Cal's mouth. Tremaine uses a long knife, cuts back skin  
to save for flaps. Cal's waking. Low moans.

SMALLER SOLDIER

Ain't you got nothin' to give  
him?

DELANEY

Been out for weeks now.

Delaney hands her father the capital saw, but he doesn't  
take it, as he examines the wounds further.

TREMAINE

Nothing left to saw...

The Brawny Soldier drops to his knees and is prevented  
from hitting the floor face-first when he's grabbed at  
the collar by the Smaller Soldier.

TREMAINE (CONT'D)

(sotto)

I'll cut it as clean as I can,  
tie off, fishmouth him closed,  
and pray for a miracle.

(then, louder)

Help him, Delaney.

Tremaine sets to work with the long blade.

Delaney holds Cal's head top and bottom to keep him down  
and his mouth closed, calls to the Smaller Soldier,  
who's propping his friend up against a wall.

DELANEY

Pour!

LATER

Tremaine and Delaney alone at the sink, Delaney pumping  
water over her father's bloodied hands. She gazes out  
the window.

DELANEY (CONT'D)

Papa, the flies are such a bother  
to the sick. They much prefer  
the dead, though. Can't we have  
them move their horse carcasses  
downwind from the house? Perhaps  
draw 'em off that way?

TREMAINE

Delaney, the army decides where they put their dead animals, not us. Flies are a nuisance, I know, but this'll all end someday and we'll get back to how it was before.

DELANEY

I almost forget what before was like.

Tremaine sighs, finishes up, towels off, and heads out of the kitchen.

DINING ROOM - LATER

Tremaine checks on the table of recent amputees. The boy, Cal, is last on one end, resting fitfully. Delaney whispers to him, runs her fingers across his forehead, moving matted hair off.

DELANEY

(softly)

No more war for you, sweetie.

She steps away as Tremaine moves to the man beside Cal. As he leans over, a huge, dirty hand reaches up and grabs his forearm. Kuriger, lying two down from Cal.

KURIGER

(nearly delirious)

Don't cut my arm off. Swear it.

Tremaine loosens Kuriger's grip.

TREMAINE

Do you want to live, Sergeant?

KURIGER

Not-with-out-my-arm. Swear.

TREMAINE

Yes, yes. I swear.

KURIGER

There...

With that, Kuriger passes out. A clump of blood-caked cloth is tied to the stump of his left arm, knotted off at the elbow, half his arm already taken.

Tremaine moves on to the beds around the perimeter.

## BEDROOM - NIGHT

Recovering soldiers lie on padded blankets. Most are asleep. Cal pushes up on his arm and leans to watch Kuriger wrestle through a terrible dream, ranting, calling out orders.

Others shush him.

CAL  
Sergeant Kuriger? Wake up.

Kuriger rolls, wrestles, opens his eyes, spots the boy through the blur of sleep and nightmare.

CAL (CONT'D)  
You wuz pitchin' a fit.

KURIGER  
(gravel-throated)  
I was? Straw, is that you?

CAL  
Half of me. My legs are clean gone, mor'in half down.

KURIGER  
No?  
(Cal nods)  
Let's have a look.

Kuriger leans on his right arm, sits up, surveys the damage. Cal winces in pain.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
Hurt bad?

CAL  
Only when I'm awake.

KURIGER  
Damn, boy. Damn. I should kill that doctor for both of us.  
(looks around)  
All of us!

He shows Cal his half left arm.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
Swore he wouldn't take it.

CAL  
At least we're alive.

KURIGER  
 (grumbles)  
 Alive...

CAL  
 Whatta we gonna do now, Sergeant  
 Kuriger?

Kuriger lies back, stares up at the ceiling.

KURIGER  
 I don't know. The war will go  
 on.  
 (then to himself)  
 Doesn't seem right me not bein'  
 in it.

Cal lies back.

EXT. GRANT ENCAMPMENT - DAY (SUNSET)

A virtual city of tents, Union Soldiers, horses, wagons  
 and munitions. Soldiers guard the camp's perimeter,  
 while others tend to horses and still others queue for  
 food.

INSERT: "NEAR WASHINGTON, DC, MARCH 1864"

INT. GENERAL'S GRANT'S TENT - NIGHT

A spacious but spartan lodging. GENERAL GRANT sits at a  
 table, pen in hand dripping ink, blank paper before him.  
 He hesitates, begins writing. No sooner does pen touch  
 paper than...

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS (O.S.)  
 General Grant?

Grant looks relieved to set the pen aside. He aims an  
 eye toward the entry flap, where CAPTAIN HENDRICKS, 35,  
 intense, handsome, now stands, holding the flap back.

GRANT  
 Yes, Captain Hendricks?

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS  
 General, Colonel Time is here.  
 You wished to speak with him.

GRANT  
 Yes. Bring him in, Captain.

Hendricks holds the flap open for COLONEL JON TIME, 42, patch over his left eye, missing fingers on his left hand.

He hands Hendricks his hickory cane and walks with a noticeable limp right up to Grant's desk and salutes, his hand revealing a noticeable tremor.

Grant smiles broadly, rises and extends his hand.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Good to see you, Jon. No formalities in this tent.

(they shake hands)

Please sit.

COLONEL TIME

May I stand, sir? I am more comfortable standing.

GRANT

You may. But I'll sit, Colonel, if that's okay with you. I have to rest these bones whenever the opportunity rises.

(Time nods)

Would you indulge with me in a bit of refreshment?

Grant sits, reaches back and grabs a bottle of whiskey and two glasses from the shelf behind him. He pours, filling both glasses halfway.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Thank you for joining me in my evening respite, Jon. I would have hated throwing you the hell out of here.

Hendricks laughs, and Time allows himself a grin.

COLONEL TIME

Thank you, general, it has been a while.

GRANT

(lifts his glass)

To the United States.

Colonel Time reaches with some difficulty for his glass, lifts it, right hand trembling.

COLONEL TIME

To the United States and its fine army and leadership.

Grant nods, and they both drink. Time sets his glass back on Grant's desk, half its whiskey remaining.

Grant lowers his drink and stares up at Time.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Am I to be relieved, sir?

He begins to shake, trying to stifle a mounting rage.

GRANT

No, Jon. But I do have a reassignment for you.

COLONEL TIME

Reassignment. Begging your pardon, General, but that's the same damn thing, sir, and you know it. My regiment has seen much, fought bravely, and I cannot leave the field now to sit at some desk, with victory so near.

GRANT

No desk, Colonel. This is a crucial assignment.

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS

Very crucial.

Time takes a step toward Hendricks, who arches back.

GRANT

(with a laugh)

Now, now, Colonel, beating the hell out of a staff captain will not change what I have in mind for you, which is command of a newly formed regiment.

Time cocks his head as though he's heard it wrong.

COLONEL TIME

General, did you say a new regiment?

GRANT

Yes, Colonel, this is a new concept on a current regulation. Captain Hendricks has the details.

Hendricks steps closer to Grant's desk.

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS

Colonel, the Invalid Corps was created last year as a way to keep the wounded but able-bodied in the service, chiefly in defense of Washington. After some fits and starts, it was renamed the Veteran Reserve Corps, complete with standard issue uniforms. Three miles from this location there are over a thousand unassigned and injured soldiers who can provide further service, freeing up the fully capable for field duty. All are volunteers, of course. Any man missing a limb is not required to stay in service. But these men want to be of use.

GRANT

They also stay on the payroll. They maintain their sense of brotherhood and usefulness. Who knows what would face some of them at home...

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS

Right now the able-bodied, whether conscript, bounty or volunteer, are being used to guard supply trains, warehouses, prisoners, and newly-mustered recruits. These cripples can do the job. They want to do the job.

COLONEL TIME

Veterans. They know they're cripples. They don't need to hear it from an officer who's not on the front line.

GRANT

Of course, Colonel Time.  
(shoots Hendricks a  
look)  
You are absolutely right.

CAPTAIN HENDRICKS

We have enough men in the vicinity to make up two battalions. The first will be those with injuries of limited  
amp --

(eyes Time's hand)

(MORE)



## CAPTAIN HENDRICKS (CONT'D)

Limited amputations. Mostly healing broken bones, some with wrenched backs or bad legs. All in the first battalion are ambulatory, effectively ambulatory. The second battalion has more grievous injuries. They would be assigned less rigorous duty, perhaps standing watch while seated, riding gun on a supply wagon through suspected marauder territory. There are many possibilities.

Time sits, as the weight of this proposal falls on him. A long moment of silence.

Grant lights up a cigar, holds it for Time, who shakes his head. Grant draws in a long pull of smoke, eyes Hendricks, who's ready with more but Grant's eyes stop him.

## COLONEL TIME

Thank you, sir. I believe that motivated men can do anything, and the motivation of injured men can be very compelling, indeed. I do request to meet each man, sir. If such a regiment is to remain on the march, it will have to do more than stand guard. It will drill. Soldiers with all their faculties sleep restlessly enough, and are quick to anger. The wounded man is prone to lash out in the absence of orders, by whatever means he finds at his disposal.

(after a beat)

I must be given wide authority to accept or deny any man in this regiment.

## GRANT

Of course, Colonel.

(after a moment)

I spoke with President Lincoln two days ago and laid out our plan to end this war, to employ all our forces against the rebels in the south offering no rest from attack. Your regiment will aid me in that plan, putting more, as Captain Hendricks called them, able-bodied troops in our arsenal.

Time reaches out, grabs his whiskey, and kills it. He sets the glass back down, rises...

COLONEL TIME

Thank you for the opportunity,  
General.

He salutes smartly. Grant rises, returns the gesture.

GRANT

Tomorrow you'll ride out and  
select your regiment.  
(to Hendricks)  
Thank you, Captain.

Hendricks hands the hickory cane back to Time, salutes, exits.

COLONEL TIME

Quite the politician, that one.

GRANT

A little loose of lip at times.  
But he's a competent  
administrator.

Time laughs.

GRANT (CONT'D)

What about a hand or two of  
poker, Jon, before turning in?  
Like old times.

COLONEL TIME

Sir, if you don't mind, I'd like  
to visit with my men this evening  
before I...

GRANT

Of course. Mind if I tag along  
for a bit?

COLONEL TIME (O.S.)

I'd be honored, sir.

Grant grabs his cap, lays his arm around the Colonel's shoulder, and leads Time out.

INT. A TENT - NIGHT

CLOSE ON Anderson, wrestling with a nightmare.

## EXT. THE OPEN SEAS - NIGHT - ANDERSON'S NIGHTMARE

Anderson is adrift in an endless pool of undulating water, speckled with hard rain, sky a slack grey without a shoreline in sight. Half-moon breaking occasionally through racing cloud cover reveal rocky cliffs.

Water carries him up and down, waves lift and lower him into deep grey pitch. He dog-paddles, his arms seemingly useless.

On a rocky cliff, he spies his FATHER, and calls out.

ANDERSON

Father, what should I do?

Anderson's Father yells through cupped hands.

ANDERSON'S FATHER

Stand your ground in the face of  
fear, Will, and never kneel to  
it.

Anderson is swept up by a wave. He fights to turn to the cliff and his father but the cliffs are dark again.

ANDERSON

Father!!

## EXT. VETERAN RESERVE CORPS ENCAMPMENT - DAY

Damaged Soldiers of all description have mustered in a series of lines. Many sit or lean on crutches. Others are badly scarred. Others seem physically well, but stare blankly forward. Some scramble to get into place.

All in line wear a handmade nametag, rank, then last name.

Kuriger, hand and stump on hips, stands legs wide on a rations supply wagon.

KURIGER

Stay in position, keep a  
formation, columns of twos,  
remain seated if you must... and  
leave room for officer and  
physician inspection of persons.  
I need names visible.

Silence, except for those repeating the instructions for the hard of hearing. A CRUTCHED SOLDIER calls out...

## CRUTCHED SOLDIER

How long do we stand here in this heat, Sergeant?

## KURIGER

Until you can no longer stand or your commanding officer tells you to no longer stand. We are all soldiers still. Are we not?

A rousing "Yes" returns.

Kuriger looks left and spots Colonel Time riding up on a dark, stately Morgan who brays as Time reins him to a stop. Another Officer assists Time as he dismounts and walks with his cane toward Kuriger, who climbs down.

Kuriger salutes. Time stops, reciprocates.

## COLONEL TIME

Abram.

## KURIGER

Yes, sir, Colonel Time. In the flesh. Partially.

Time studies him.

## COLONEL TIME

You look healthy, otherwise.

## KURIGER

As do you, sir. Not otherwise... but --

Time smiles, raises his hand to help Kuriger out of it.

## COLONEL TIME

When was it last?

## KURIGER

Chancellorsville, sir.

Time shows Kuriger his hand.

## COLONEL TIME

Where I left these.

## KURIGER

Aye, sir. But you took a might, too.

## COLONEL TIME

As did you.

A bespectacled, frail, military PHYSICIAN strides up, his satchel in tow.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
Reinforcements.

The Physician salutes Colonel Time and they huddle with Kuriger, who gestures toward the men as he speaks.

LATER

Colonel Time walks down the ranks, the Physician ahead, checking vitals, and Kuriger trailing with a pad and pencil. Time sizes up each man with a grandfather's warmth and often a hand on a shoulder.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
First. Second. Second. First.  
Second. Third.

Kuriger leans close.

KURIGER  
Third, sir?

Time leans close to him now.

COLONEL TIME  
No place in either battalion.  
They'll be mustered out.

Kuriger sighs. Time continues through the lines.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
First. First. Second.

OLD IRISH, 44, a private, gray beard, who's missing a foot and uses his rifle as a cane, stands before them. Time looks at Irish's nametag.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
Your last name's "Irish" and your first is "Old"?

OLD IRISH  
That's what I'm called... Sir.

COLONEL TIME  
Is it? And you're of Irish descent?

OLD IRISH  
So I've been told, Sir.

COLONEL TIME

So you've been told? You're not certain?

OLD IRISH

Certain of nothing more than I'm loved by my dear mother, Colonel. As you might well understand.

COLONEL TIME

Yes. Other than... are you well, Private? Fit?

OLD IRISH

Fit enough. You, Sir?

COLONEL TIME

Fit enough, Private Irish.  
(to Kuriger)  
Second.

Colonel Time follows the Physician, stops at Private Cal Straw, who sits on a padded box.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

How are you, Private Straw?

CAL

I'm fine, Colonel, sir. Fine.

Time leans closer to Cal.

COLONEL TIME

You are a brave young man.  
(then to Kuriger)  
Third.

He moves on. Kuriger intervenes, quietly.

KURIGER

Colonel, might I vouch for the young private? He is keen on armory repair and maintenance. Small hands, a good fit for it, and his temperament is exemplary.

COLONEL TIME

(thinks, then)  
We'll return to him.

They move on through the lines, the Doctor checking heartbeat and pulse one man ahead, quickly and either nodding or shaking his head. The head shakes would earn...

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Third. Go with God, son.

Time moves along until he stands in front of the giant tree that is Thunder.

The Physician nods, emphatically. Time sizes up Thunder, who is not his jovial self, his gaze fixed on a distant place above Time's head.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

You look fit enough, Private  
Huntred. Why are you here?

Thunder has no answer.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Private, are you deaf?

THUNDER

No, sir. Blind.

Time thinks a moment.

COLONEL TIME

But beyond that, fit?

THUNDER

Don't know what I am beyond that,  
Colonel. God's put me in a right  
dark place.

COLONEL TIME

Come with me, Private.

He lifts Thunder's hand and lays it on his own right shoulder, as unsteady as he is, not an easy maneuver.

Time leads Thunder back to Cal. They stop there.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Private Huntred, sitting directly  
in front of you is a young  
soldier without legs. I would  
like you to lift him onto your  
shoulders, so that he may be your  
eyes, and you may be his legs.  
Will you do, that, Private?

THUNDER

Is it an order, Colonel?

COLONEL TIME

It is.

Time steps aside. Thunder reaches about until he feels Cal's sides. Cal pats Thunder's brawny arm, and Thunder lifts, raising and turning Cal until the boy is settled around his neck and atop his shoulders.

Thunder tips slightly. Cal wears a huge smile.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
 (for all to hear)  
 Alone we may be invalid, but  
 together we are an army.  
 (to Kuriger)  
 Both second.

Kuriger grins, writes, and Time moves on.

LATER, DARKNESS FALLING

Time walks back up through the corridors of men, Kuriger's beside him.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
 That all of them, First Sergeant  
 Kuriger?

Kuriger's look reveals his surprise.

KURIGER  
 One last one, Sir.

INT. A TENT - DAY, LATER

Colonel Time leans on his hickory cane, watching Lt. Anderson sleep. He lifts the cane and gently prods Anderson's side.

ANDERSON  
 (muttering)  
 Father?

Anderson sits upright, notices Time's rank. He struggles to stand, wipes at his eyes, with his left hand, but it's gone. He quickly stands upright, salutes.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
 Begging your pardon, Colonel, I  
 dozed off.

Time gestures for him to sit. Anderson does.

COLONEL TIME  
 (re the missing  
 hand)  
 (MORE)



COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

How long ago, Lieutenant  
Anderson?

ANDERSON

Two months, Sir. Dandridge.  
Still not used to it not being  
there.

COLONEL TIME

I knew your father at the Point.  
Tom?

ANDERSON

Yes, Sir.

COLONEL TIME

Good man. Shame he had to leave  
it. Typhoid at home?

(Anderson nods once)

How is he?

ANDERSON

Well, I hope. Haven't  
corresponded in awhile, Sir.

Time sizes him up, cuts right to it.

COLONEL TIME

Are you staying on, Lieutenant?

ANDERSON

Not sure, Sir. Not yet. They  
said I could go --

COLONEL TIME

I think your father would want  
you to stay. Don't you?

ANDERSON

Oh. Yes, sir.

Anderson's eye level with Time's trembling hand, two  
fingers on the knob of his cane.

COLONEL TIME

I've taken command of the 18th  
regiment of the Veteran Reserve  
Corps. First Battalion will  
eventually merge back into the  
fight as need be. Second will  
prepare here and I will stay  
attached to it as we're  
outfitted, re-acclimated and made  
ready. Then our orders take us  
down the Potomac for Belle Plain  
and...

ANDERSON

On the water, Sir?

COLONEL TIME

Yes. On the water. With you as one of my officers, Lieutenant. If you are staying. Are you, Lieutenant Anderson?

A long moment. Anderson casts his eyes downward.

ANDERSON

I lack courage, Sir.

COLONEL TIME

No, you don't. You're here.

ANDERSON

Because I lacked the courage to go home.

COLONEL TIME

(caught off-guard)

Then it's settled. You're staying.

Anderson rises. A long moment, Anderson's eyes finding HIS OWN IMAGE in Time's remaining eye.

ANDERSON

Yes, sir. Thank you, Colonel, Sir.

COLONEL TIME

We've got work to do, Lieutenant Anderson. War to win.

Anderson salutes. Time returns it, hobbles out. Anderson falls back to his bunk, throws out a long breath.

MONTAGE:

Second Battalion prepares. Soldiers clean rifles, guard supply depots, tend to horses, drill, change watches, a soldier on crutches relieved by another with a cane.

The Physician attends to soldiers, checking the pained areas, helping with a stiff leg's flexion, re-bandaging a leaky stump.

Kuriger interacts with the men of Second Battalion, oversees, wakes up a sleeping sentry.

Anderson and three more Lieutenants, one-handed RHOADS, STINNET, toothless, with a wretched bend to his spine, and SWANSON, one-footed and one-eyed, walk with Time, as they chat. They pause to watch...

Cal, his stumps wrapped around Thunder's neck, one hand on the giant's shirt for balance, as Cal barks orders (MOS) and Thunder turns this way and that, grumbling all the while.

WE PULL BACK to reveal this sprawling tent city among others in the distance all the way to Washington, DC. Serenity, as twisted columns of campfire smoke lifts toward darkening skies.

END MONTAGE:

EXT. ON THE POTOMAC - NIGHT

A raging rain storm, roils the great transport river.

Eight boats of dubious integrity bounce along in a loose column, including a short-sailed low draft schooner.

EXT. THE SCHOONER - NIGHT

The deck is awash as rain pelts and waves churn and splash. Able-bodied Seamen, tackle the faltering sails and manage the forward wheelhouse.

Toward the aft, Anderson staggers for the main hold, the last of his charge disappearing with assistance down the hatch.

The Schooner lurches, sending Anderson skidding away as the hatch pulls closed. He slides on his back.

Anderson FLASHES ON HIS NIGHTMARE, ANGRY SEAS TOSSING HIM.

He grabs a gunwale with his good arm and pulls himself up, looks out into the dark and angry waters, then down to his stump. He eyes the moon, racing beneath brooding clouds.

ANDERSON'S FATHER (V.O.)

...sink or swim, son, it's up to you.

Anderson BELLOWS "GOD" into the night, but CRASHES OF THUNDER drown out the sound of his voice.

INT. THE SCHOONER - BELOW DECK - NIGHT

Soldiers of the 18th are squeezed shoulder to shoulder, chest to knee to stump, sitting anywhere they can find, on provision crates, rotting wood masts, feed bags. Others stand and shift with each rise and fall.

A smallish Soldier pukes into his own cap.

Another, round-faced, one-armed amputee, PRIVATE MUSGROVE, shifts away from him.

There's a grumbling. A SOLDIER ON A BARREL sniffs.

SOLDIER ON A BARREL  
The stench will kill us before  
any reb will!

Some laugh. A STANDING SOLDIER, leans on his crutch, half a leg gone, holding a rag to his face.

STANDING SOLDIER  
Piss in your snotter. Sniff that  
instead! Working for me.

A SOLDIER'S VOICE  
Maybe I'll just crap in my cap!

More laughs, until...

PRIVATE MUSGROVE  
The able-bodied ride like kings  
on ferry boats. This is what we  
get!

Silence, just the GROANS of the old wooden ship, as the men are tossed about.

A pounding on the hatch door. BOOM, BOOM, BOOM.

Cal leads Thunder toward the hatch, both crouching low, for head room.

CAL  
Push straight up now.

Thunder pushes. The hatch opens. Anderson looks in.

CAL (CONT'D)  
Keep 'er open, George.

Rain pours in, splashing onto Thunder.

THUNDER  
Yeah, yeah.

Anderson climbs down the ladder, pats Cal on the stump. He, in turn, pats Thunder on his chest, and Thunder lowers the hatch.

Anderson looks around. Men are puking, tossing, falling off perches.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE

This is hell on water, sir. How much longer?

ANDERSON

(voice cracking)  
We'll be in Belle Plain by sunup.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE

Unless we're swallowed up by a giant whale first.

That allows for a real laugh, as Anderson finds somewhere to sit.

Musgrove hits the arm of a Soldier beside him, leans close.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE (CONT'D)

His men used to call him Teacup.

The Soldier looks over at Anderson, whose face is white, his hair dripping rain.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE (CONT'D)

Fragile one. Scared of his own shadow.

(gestures daintily)  
William Teacup Anderson.

Musgrove gazes over at Anderson, who's closing his eyes.

EXT. RIVER BANK, BELLE PLAIN - SUNRISE

The boats in the flotilla are docked, and the long process of disembarking begun.

Some soldiers, anxious to escape the stench and closeness, fall into the cold embrace of the Potomac, and wash off.

Ramps are dropped, and others are assisted onto dry land.

Thunder carries Cal up the bank and toward a clearing.

CAL

Just head up, George, I'll keep us off stumps and out of gopher holes.

THUNDER

I know. What's it look like?

CAL

What?

THUNDER

This Belle Plain place.

CAL

Right now it looks like some real pretty woods clearin' into a nice ravine, with sun just shining right smart and gold as she comes up behind us.

THUNDER

Don't make it sound so pretty.

CAL

Why not?

THUNDER

God doesn't want us warrin', so he punishes us with blindness or cut off arms and legs. Nothing pretty about any of it. End of the world for all we know.

Cal pats Thunder on his chest right over his heart and holds his small hand there. Not a direction signal, rather a gesture of compassion.

CAL

It's okay, big man. It's okay. God still loves us.

THUNDER

Wish I knew that was true.

CAL

I'd be gone by now, weren't for you, George. I thank God for that.

Cal pats the right side of Thunder's chest, and George marches uphill right.

## EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - NIGHT

The 2nd Battalion has set up camp along a ridge that looks down on a horseshoe shaped ravine, a tall prison wall and wood/wire gate constructed on the deep, closed end.

Beyond the prison wall and gate is a city of tents and rickety wood structures.

Opposite the prison, on the open end of the basin, a series of interlocking ramparts, and breastworks.

Campfires and tents that shelter hundreds spread around the ravine's perimeter.

More tents, including the command tent, dot the basin, the command tent behind two rows of breastworks.

## INT. COMMAND TENT, HORSESHOE GARRISON - NIGHT

Colonel Time, his four Lieutenants, and First Sergeant Kuriger sit on ration crates in the makeshift command center.

Time has drawn a map which he shows the others, who pass it around then back.

## COLONEL TIME

Engineers and nature have provided us a site which allows no easy escape route. We'll station three companies up top, here...

(points on the map)  
... sentries, ready, every fifty feet.

## KURIGER

Got some crack shots in this group.

## COLONEL TIME

Hoping we won't need them, but to keep them fresh and safe, we'll rotate out every hour. We have enough manpower.

## KURIGER

Yes, Colonel. And ready.

Time shows the map again, points to the mouth of the ravine.

COLONEL TIME

This area will be more vulnerable. If rebel prisoners breach the fence, this will be their only escape route, past our rows of breastworks and ramparts. We'll station three companies there, our fittest men. I want sentries patrolling the fence, rotating in and out, keep them fresh. We'll show our men drilling daily from the ramparts.

(shows them)

Simulated volleys, no ammunition wasted, fifty guns at most, then another within seconds, then another, and another, all without commands, until they think we have so many men and weapons at the ready any escape attempt would be futile.

KURIGER

Even against invalids.

COLONEL TIME

Yes. Lieutenant Anderson, you will oversee D, E and F companies in the ravine. Lieutenant Swanson will be your X-O.

ANDERSON

(surprised)

Yes, Colonel.

COLONEL TIME

Lieutenants Stinnet and Rhoads, you'll share the 3 ridge companies.

SWANSON

Yes, thank you, Colonel.

COLONEL TIME

Sergeant Kuriger, you'll be in charge of the volley drills. I want those prisoners to believe we need never reload.

KURIGER

The Lieutenant and I will develop a good plan, sir.



EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAY

Kuriger walks his guards through position changes. A few rebel prisoners watch curiously from near the gate.

REBEL PRISONER #1 comes closer.

REBEL PRISONER #1  
Well, we must be winnin' this  
here war by the looks of this sad  
bunch.  
(calls behind him)  
Ya'll come take a look.

Other Prisoners gather at the gate.

REBEL PRISONER #1 (CONT'D)  
We got put in a prison and ended  
up in a danged hospital.

Kuriger walks right up to him.

KURIGER  
That's right, lad. And I'm the  
doctor. How 'bout I shove  
this...  
(off his stump)  
... right up your arse. What  
you're lookin' at are the most  
highly skilled and prized  
soldiers in all the union army.  
Wounded like they are, your high  
rankers might've sent them on  
their merry way home, but General  
Grant reckoned we wouldn't win  
this war without 'em. So here  
they are, watchin' you, ready to  
share their fine honed skills  
whenever called upon.

The Rebel Prisoner waves his hand and walks away.  
Kuriger adjusts his uniform and rejoins his guards.

AT THE RAMPARTS

Anderson musters his men, a ragged group, mostly men on crutches or with canes, or a leg or an arm missing.

ANDERSON  
(cracking voice)  
I am Lieutenant William Tecumseh  
Anderson.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE  
(calls out)  
Teacup.

Which sends a charge of laughs through the formation.

Anderson stares through the ranks, eyes challenging Musgrove.

ANDERSON

William. Tecumseh. Anderson.

(beat)

I may not have your respect now,  
but I will earn it.

Another voice calls out, "Good luck."

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Corporal.

A Corporal leads the formation to the ramparts.

LATER

Under Kuriger's command, men rotate from rampart to rampart to breastworks to earthen mound toting weapon, water, or ammunition.

The volleys begin, with each soldier dry-firing, passing his weapon back, grabbing another. Sequences miss a few links at first, but soldiers begin catching up and catching on.

Anderson offers his weak-throated but insistent encouragement.

Musgrove mocks him, turns around and finds Kuriger right in his face, which is enough to stop him.

ON THE RIDGE

Cal sits on Thunder's shoulders as he carries water from sentry to sentry.

THUNDER

Seem like we could be doin' more  
than totin' water. Feel like a  
mule.

CAL

I know. That's why I asked  
Sergeant Kuriger if we could  
scout around some.

THUNDER

Yeah, what he say?

CAL

Said he'd check with the Colonel  
but thought it might be a big  
help to see what else is around  
here, big as we are together, we  
can see way off, report back.  
S'long as we don't get too far  
off the river.

THUNDER

Well, that's something.

CAL

So, you best start closing them  
eyes and taking some sleep at  
night.

THUNDER

Don't much care for sleep no  
more.

They move along.

EXT. HOSPITAL CHURCH - DAY - ESTABLISHING

An abandoned house of worship at the end of a dirt road,  
in a patch of overgrown trees. Heavy forest to the east  
behind the church.

Down the road, a single-story home, a few horses at the  
rail. A Union Sentry on the porch.

EXT. FOREST - DUSK

A family of runaway slaves, all they own tied up in  
kerchiefs, eye the church. MARY, 29, BABY MAY, 2,  
HENRY, 33, watch and wait.

Two Nurses walk out of the church, chatting, and head  
for the house. Henry catches sight of them as they near  
the front porch.

HENRY

They might could help us.

MARY

Or turn us in for the reward.

HENRY TWO, 8, comes running low through the tall grass  
back to his family.

HENRY TWO

There's soup and blankets. Lots  
of sick soldiers, too.

HENRY

(to Mary)

We'll take you and baby back to  
the water, come dark, me an' the  
boy'll sneak in an' snatch us  
some blankets.

INT. HOSPITAL CHURCH - DUSK

Rows of cots filled with wounded and infirm. Two more  
Nurses. NURSE BETSY, 30, shoulders draped with clean  
rags, carries a pan to

a WOUNDED SOLDIER, 25, half his head bandaged. He  
stares up at the ceiling beams with his exposed eye.

NURSE BETSY

May I bathe you quickly, sir?

WOUNDED SOLDIER

What is this place?

NURSE BETSY

(kneels beside him)

Once a church.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Good place to die.

NURSE BETSY

Now a hospital.

She pulls back his sheet and gently presses warm water  
against his bare chest.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Thank you.

Another NURSE gathers up her bag and stops by Betsy.

NURSE

Heading up to the house, Betsy.  
I'll send Alice back.

NURSE BETSY

All right. Enjoy your evening.

The Nurse pushes through the solid oak doors.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

Where are we?

NURSE BETSY

Belle Plain.

WOUNDED SOLDIER

How long have I been here?

NURSE BETSY

Two days.

Betsy continues to wash him.

The front door pushes open just enough for a large MAN WITH A BANDANA covering his lower face to squeeze in.

Betsy sets her pan of water down, calls to him.

NURSE BETSY (CONT'D)

There is no money here. We are a hospital.

The Man, who wears a long coat, points to his head.

MAN WITH A BANDANA

(horse-throated)

I have a face wound. I require nothing more than soap and bandage.

Betsy pulls the blanket back up over the Wounded Soldier and hustles to the Man with a Bandana.

NURSE BETSY

I'll have a look.

MAN WITH A BANDANA

No.

NURSE BETSY

But I can help. I'm a nurse. Does it bleed?

She approaches him, reaches up...

MAN WITH A BANDANA

No, but it weeps...

With that, he smashes a backhand to her head and sends her flying. Betsy crashes against the hard oak door and is knocked unconscious.

Several infirm soldiers rise from their cots.

Dogtooth yanks down his bandana and draws two LeMat revolvers from under his long coat and aims them around wildly.

DOGTTOOTH

I will not harm you further. If you stay down.

The Wounded Soldier struggles to sit up, and Dogtooth aims the revolver at him, steps briskly toward him, gun still trained, and whacks the Wounded Soldier across his bandages.

The Wounded Soldier falls back.

Dogtooth meanders among the rows of cots, taking great joy in threatening.

He rummages through clothing piled in one corner, pocketing what he wants, tossing the rest onto an empty cot blanket.

DOGTOOTH (CONT'D)

It'll save me time, if you parlor  
boys what's awake tell me which  
of you has gold or silver in yer  
mouth.

He pulls a rusted pair of pliers from his pocket, waves it for all to see.

EXT. FOREST, NEAR RIVER - NIGHT

Mary and May sit by a small fire. Mary huddles sleeping May close to keep her warm, HUMS to her. Henry grabs Mary by the right shoulder and points to the river.

HENRY

(softly)  
We don't come back, you follow  
this river, keep the morning sun  
on this here shoulder.

Mary pats his hand.

MARY

You come back, Henry Parker.

He kisses the top of her head and heads off with his boy.

INT. HOSPITAL CHURCH - NIGHT

No lights, except for the one lamp Dogtooth carries as he moves from bed to bed, like a vulture at carrion. He steps closer to Nurse Betsy, who lies beside the Union Sentry and Nurse Alice -- all three necks snapped.

EXT. FOREST, NEAR RIVER - NIGHT

Mary cradles May, rocks the child in her arms, turns when she hears a RUSTLING behind her.

MARY

Henry?

Red Beard and two more Marauders step into the firelight, cudgels tipped against their shoulders.

INT. HOSPITAL CHURCH - NIGHT

Dogtooth kneels over Betsy, reaches down for her blouse...

Henry drops in the rear window.

The THUD interrupts Dogtooth. He hides his light, draws his LeMat, steps toward the sound.

Henry rises up, silhouetted in the window.

Dogtooth aims, squeezes off a shot, and the window glass explodes behind Henry's head. Henry hightails it right back out the window.

Dogtooth hears sounds of MEN'S VOICES and BARKING DOGS, coming toward the church.

He grabs his bundle and makes for the window.

EXT. HOSPITAL CHURCH - NIGHT

Henry and Henry Two run for the woods, Dogtooth close behind.

HENRY

Get to where we left your mama.

HENRY TWO

Where you goin'?

HENRY

T'other way. Go, boy.

They split up.

EXT. THE FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Dogtooth follows Henry, smashing through scrub and pine.

Henry Two races for the river.

Dogtooth slows, looks behind him. Lights coming on inside the church.

DOGTTOOTH

Too late, fellas. Damage done...

Dogtooth hoists his bundle up and turns back to the woods. Henry steps out and clubs him with a fallen branch, and takes off.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)

(rubs his head)

Now you done it.

ON HENRY TWO as he nears the water. He creeps quietly toward the sound of horses braying. A GUNSHOT stops him in his tracks.

EXT. FOREST, NEAR RIVER - NIGHT

The Marauders are gathered around the campfire. Dogtooth walks up, toting his bundle. Horses nearby.

Dogtooth sits by the fire, rubs the back of his head, unfolds the blanket.

RED BEARD

How'd you do?

Belts, shoes, rings, watches.

DOGTTOOTH

Almost got found out. Wasted two bullets on a negra.

MARAUDER #1

We heard.

RED BEARD

Troublemaker runaways. Got us a couple, too.

(displays his  
cudgel)

Wasn't so hunted ourselves,  
could'a had us some reward money.

Dogtooth GRUNTS.

OFF IN THE DARKNESS

Henry Two watches, his dark eyes dancing with firelight.



EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAY

Rebel Commander COLONEL BERGEN, 45, worn to a gristle by war, missing teeth, marches far behind Kuriger toward the Command Tent, through a phalanx of company E, armed and ready. Bergen eyes the invalids.

Prisoners stand behind the gate, watching. Colonel Time waits by the Command tent.

Kuriger arrives, and Time bends close to him.

COLONEL TIME  
The men look sharp today.

KURIGER  
They're ready, sir.

Old Irish, his rifle as a cane, strides closer. Kuriger acknowledges him.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
Private here is a keen shot...  
for an Irishman.  
(with a wink)  
Just in case.

COLONEL TIME  
Irishman, eh? Well done, First  
Sergeant.

Old Irish moves off to a position by the breastworks, and readies his weapon.

Kuriger steps aside as Bergen is now upon them. The commanding officers exchange salutes, Bergen first.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
Colonel Bergen, as you can see  
your men are under new guard.

COLONEL BERGEN  
Yes. My compliments, Colonel  
Time. I suspect that at this  
stage of the war, our side is  
doing the same with the able and  
willing.

COLONEL TIME  
I caution you not to take  
advantage of the situation,  
Colonel Bergen.

COLONEL BERGEN  
And I caution you not to threaten  
me, sir.

Colonel Time holds open his tent flap and both Colonels step inside.

Kuriger blocks the entrance, and offers his company a thumbs up.

INT. COMMAND TENT, HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAY

Bergen has removed his hat and it is on the table between them. Colonel Time sits as upright as possible.

COLONEL BERGEN

I need better access to fresh water. Our latrine is inadequate, and without tools to dig and the heat coming we will all be sick or worse soon. To be open and honest, there is a constant call to escape.

COLONEL TIME

What might silence this call, Colonel?

COLONEL BERGEN

(with a sly grin)  
Beyond your impressive drills?

COLONEL TIME

Yes.

COLONEL BERGEN

You can't dig our holes, Colonel, I understand that. Let us take care of ourselves, and we will respect your position. We could use clothing, linens, rags, anything. As you can see, our uniforms are in tatters.

He eyes Time's damaged hand, as it taps on the table uncontrollably.

COLONEL TIME

And for this you will discourage proposals of escape when brought to you?

COLONEL BERGEN

I will.

COLONEL TIME

Agreed then. First Sergeant!

Kuriger steps inside the tent.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Have some men deliver tools to  
the prisoners for digging...

KURIGER

Shovels, sir?

COLONEL TIME

Yes, shovels. To be counted and  
returned daily before dusk. And  
they will also require linens,  
rags, whatever we can muster  
along with needle and thread.

KURIGER

Aye, sir.

COLONEL BERGEN

And might I ask for bathing  
privileges for my men, sir?

Time eyes Kuriger, who frowns.

COLONEL BERGEN (CONT'D)

A few at a time, under guard, of  
course, in the river. In a  
couple of weeks the stench may  
diminish.

COLONEL TIME

(hides a smile)

Yes, Colonel. We will  
accommodate you.

Kuriger scratches his chin.

COLONEL BERGEN

Very generous, Sir. Thank you.

He rises, extends his hand.

COLONEL TIME

You're welcome, Daniel. I hope  
your family is well.

COLONEL BERGEN

Thank you, Jon. Martha and the  
boys, too. And give your brother  
my regards if he is still with  
us.

COLONEL TIME

He is, and I will. First  
Sergeant, have Private, em, Irish  
escort Colonel Bergen back to...  
his men.

COLONEL BERGEN

Not necessary. I'll find my way.

Time nods. Bergen departs. Kuriger watches him go.

KURIGER

You've known him, Colonel?

COLONEL TIME

From the Plains wars. Solid officer.

KURIGER

A solid officer might be planning an escape.

COLONEL TIME

Yes.

KURIGER'S POV, as Bergen, head erect, walks through the company of armed, invalid guards back to the prison gate.

EXT. FOREST, NEAR RIVER - DAY

Henry Two drags his father's body to the river's edge.

Henry Two lashes his father's arm with vines and ties him to Mary's arm. Mary's already lashed to her mother, both half in the water.

All secure, he tugs them all out into the water, and sends them off.

Henry Two trudges back up onto the river bank, sits, and buries his chin on his sopping knees and watches his family drift away.

EXT. RIVER BANK, BELLE PLAIN - DAY

Under Armed Guard, including Old Irish, three Confederate Prisoners bathe in the cool waters of the Potomac.

Old Irish shoves two fingers in his mouth and WHISTLES. The bathing Prisoners head for shore. They towel off, pick up their clothes, and march back into the ravine.

EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAY

The Three Confederate Prisoners stand at the prison gate, the Armed Guard surrounding them, Irish WHISTLES, and the gate is pulled open.

Prisoners carry their clothes inside, and the gate is pushed closed and locked. Old Irish marches off.

Colonel Bergen meets his men, turns and nods to...

Colonel Time, who watches from outside his command tent.

EXT. A FOREST EDGE - DAY

Thunder and Cal walk along. Thunder carries a short rifle and wears a handgun at his hip.

Cal, canteen and binoculars hanging from his neck, directs Thunder left or right with a simple tug of the tunic on either side or a pat on the shoulder, chest or top of the head.

They move as one, Thunder seemingly sighted, though totally blind.

THUNDER

Well, I ain't scouted nothin' out here.

CAL

(with a laugh)

If you had, you wouldn't know it.

THUNDER

Well, I ain't heard nary a word and you're supposed to be my eyes.

Cal likes the sounds of that. He pats. They walk on. Cal's stomach GROWLS loudly.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

Best be headin' back, 'less we lose out on dinner.

CAL

George?

THUNDER

Uh-huh?

CAL

Tote me closer to the water. I got business to do.

THUNDER

Well, don't be leaving none of it in that river we swim in.

CAL  
 I ain't no animal, George. It's  
 soft down there, so I can cover  
 up whatever I do leave pretty  
 easy.

Cal tugs, and Thunder turns. They walk into the forest.

EXT. FOREST, NEAR RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Cal tugs Thunder to a stop before a steep downslope.

CAL  
 Too steep. We won't make it.  
 Set me down and I'll hop off a  
 ways and hop on back when I'm  
 done. Set me here, then lean  
 against this tree and wait.

Cal lifts Thunder's arm until he feels the tree.  
 Thunder raises Cal up, then lowers him to the earth.

Cal uses his hands as legs and begins hopping into the  
 brush, but slips on a damp patch, tumbles and spins down  
 the slope toward the river.

CAL (CONT'D)  
 AAAAYYYYYY!

THUNDER  
 Cal?!

Cal tries to gain purchase but he's halfway to the  
 water, spinning out of control, until a small, black  
 hand reaches out and grabs him by the tunic.

Henry Two pulls Cal out of harm's way, momentarily,  
 before Cal and the boy as one slide closer to the  
 water's edge. Both boys wail.

THUNDER (CONT'D)  
 Cal, you all right?

Cal finally latches onto a bush and stops their skid.

CAL  
 Yes, George, a negro boy saved  
 me.

THUNDER  
 He did, did he? Can you make it  
 back up here?

CAL  
After I do my business, with...  
(to Henry Two)  
...what's your name, boy?

HENRY TWO  
Henry Parker, sir.

CAL  
(to Henry Two)  
I sure ain't no "sir."

HENRY TWO  
My daddy was Henry Parker, so my  
momma called me as Henry Two.

CAL  
(to Thunder)  
With Henry Two's help I can.

EXT. FOREST EDGE - DAY, LATER

Thunder, Cal and Henry Two sit on pine scrub as Henry Two eagerly chews on a hunk of hardtack.

CAL  
You let'm float off down the  
river?

HENRY TWO  
(barely stopping)  
Had to. Nothin' to dig'm no  
grave with.

Cal hands Henry Two his uncapped canteen. The boy hesitates before taking it. Cal's nod assures him it's okay. Henry Two takes a long pull of water, BURPS.

HENRY TWO (CONT'D)  
Sorry.

Thunder digs into his cloth pouch and pulls out another hunk of hardtack.

THUNDER  
Don't have the appetite I used  
to. I save 'em up. Here you are.

The boy reaches for the food.

CAL  
When'd you eat last?

HENRY TWO

Two, three days.

(eats again)

Been following the river with the morning sun on my right. My daddy said that'd head us north.

THUNDER

You a runaway?

HENRY TWO

(stops eating)

From North Carolina. You gonna turn me in?

THUNDER

Shucks, no. You're safe now, boy.

CAL

We can help you, if you want.

HENRY TWO

Okay.

(to Thunder)

You can't see nothin'?

He waves his hand in front of Thunder's face.

THUNDER

Nope. But I can feel the breeze off your hand.

He quickly snatches Henry Two's hand, bluffs anger, then laughs. Henry Two grins wide, gets back to his hardtack.

EXT. COMMAND TENT, HORSESHOE GARRISON - NIGHT

Colonel Time and First Sergeant Kuriger stare into a small but efficient fire near the tent.

COLONEL TIME

Said his father's name was Henry, but his mother wouldn't let him go by "junior" because their master's boy was called that. So, he's Henry Two.

KURIGER

Sir, let's keep him close by. He can tend to your horse.



COLONEL TIME

These marauders he described.  
You've had dealings with them?

KURIGER

They're vultures, Sir. Dogtooth,  
they call one. And Red Beard.  
No humanity or heart. Evil  
incarnate. No tellin' how many  
are runnin' with them. They'll  
see us as easy pickings. I know  
that much. We need to be on  
constant watch.

Colonel Time prods some wood back into the fire with his  
cane.

COLONEL TIME

A weak response to the threat of  
men such as these is no response  
at all. They must be killed; no  
capture, no trial.

(spits into the  
fire)

When necessary, evil must be  
crushed without pity.

KURIGER

They come this way, they'll get  
their crushin'.

Colonel Time offers Kuriger a cigar. Kuriger takes it,  
grabs a flaming stick from the fire and lights up. They  
watch Lieutenant Anderson enter his tent.

COLONEL TIME

What do you make of Anderson?

KURIGER

It's tough to command when your  
men see you as weak, Sir.  
They're a good unit. They'll do  
what he tells them.

COLONEL TIME

But they don't respect him.

KURIGER

No, sir. They do not.

INT. ANDERSON'S TENT - NIGHT

Anderson sits on his cot and puts pen to paper.

ANDERSON (V.O.)  
I apologize for not writing  
sooner. There have been  
circumstances which prevented it.

MONTAGE, AS ANDERSON CONTINUES:

Rebel Soldiers bathe in the Potomac.

ANDERSON (V.O.)  
We are south of Washington near  
the Potomac in a place called  
Belle Plain. Two months now.

Old Irish WHISTLES and the men swim to the bank.

ANDERSON (V.O.)  
I serve under the command of  
Colonel Jonathan Time, who  
remembers you with fondness from  
your days at West Point. He is a  
strong and able commander,  
something I still aspire to be.

Anderson oversees his men as Kuriger drills them on the  
ramparts. They move like clockwork now, without a  
hitch.

ANDERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I do not know how long we will  
remain here, as there is rumor we  
will soon be on the move again.  
We engage hundreds of enemy  
soldiers daily and give no  
quarter.

Prisoners return to the gate and re-enter.

Soldiers on the high perimeter, change guard, and settle  
in, rifles in their laps. A few kick back and relax,  
caps pulled down low.

ANDERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I think of my home at Four Mile  
and you and mother and my four  
dear sisters every day...

Henry Two brushes down Colonel Time's horse. Time chats  
with him and laughs as Henry spins a tale  
histrionically.

ANDERSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 ... and recall our rides out into  
 the woods and your tales of  
 bravery with the Ohio militia and  
 your encouraging and  
 inspirational words meant to  
 steer me into manhood. They live  
 within me and...

END MONTAGE:

INT. ANDERSON'S TENT - NIGHT - RETURN TO SCENE

Anderson stops writing, folds up the letter and sticks  
 it inside a small, leather satchel, amidst several  
 others.

EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAWN

Three short in stature Prisoners stand behind the gate.  
 They carry folded-up rags. Ten or so more Prisoners lie  
 asleep nearby on blankets.

A ONE-ARMED SENTRY, a 25 year-old Corporal, approaches.

ONE-ARMED SENTRY  
 Too early. Go back. Sun's  
 barely up.

A GRIMY PRISONER, 22, steps up and peers through the  
 wooden slats and wire.

GRIMY PRISONER  
 C'mon. We ain't had our chance  
 yet. Them others push us back  
 cuz we're puny. We don't get in  
 that water while they're all  
 asleep, we never will.

The One-Armed Sentry aims a look back at another Guard,  
 who shrugs. Several more Soldiers of the 18th sit  
 nearby yawning and stretching.

ONE-ARMED SENTRY  
 Step back.

The Grimy Prisoner complies. The Sentry turns to his  
 comrades.

ONE-ARMED SENTRY (CONT'D)  
 Who'll take'em for a washup?

A HALF-ARMED PRIVATE stands up.

## HALF-ARMED PRIVATE

I'll go get the Lieutenant's  
permission.

NEAR RIVER'S EDGE, LAST FIRE AT LAST BREASTWORKS, Old  
Irish, shirt unbuttoned, nurses a cup of coffee and  
watches, as he stands by a tee-pee of rifles between  
tents and a campfire.

BACK AT THE PRISON GATE:

## ONE-ARMED SENTRY

You're gonna wake up an officer  
for three runts like them?

The Private sits back down. The Sentry points to four  
men who sit together over a fire can.

## ONE-ARMED SENTRY (CONT'D)

You four. Grab your weapons and  
take these three down for a bath.

The Four rise and pick up their rifles. The One-Armed  
Sentry sets his weapon aside and, with the help of the  
other Guard, lifts away the latch beam that secures the  
gate. They begin to pull open one side... as

the puny Prisoners step meekly toward the gate.

## GRIMY PRISONER

NOW!!

His cohorts pull wooden blades from under their rags and  
the sleeping Prisoners rise up to storm the gate. They  
quickly dispatch of the two Guards, grab their weapons  
and make a mad dash for the first layer of breastworks.

Two Prisoners with union weapons lead the escape.

Invalid soldiers chase after but can't shoot as their  
own men are running for the first row of breastworks in  
front of them.

ON THE RAMPARTS, confusion, as men scramble to their  
posts.

A dozen or so Prisoners are out and on the run now. The  
walls on either side allow for only a dash for the water  
on the other side of the walls of ramparts.

The duped Guards secure the gate before others can  
breach.

BACK AT IRISH

Old Irish sets his coffee tin aside, WHISTLES an alarm, reaches down and grabs a tee-peed rifle. He sights down on it.

OLD IRISH  
Be true now, dear girl.

He squeezes off a round, and the Grimy Prisoner falls with a thud, the union rifle flying away from him. Another bends to pick it up, just as

Old Irish grabs another loaded rifle, sights and shoots him.

Swanson, not in full uniform, rushes up behind him, quick as his maladies allow.

Kuriger sizes up the situation, barks commands.

KURIGER  
Full alert, all hands, man those breastworks.

By now the men of the ramparts have engaged, and begin to fire.

Surrounded, with rifle fire coming from three sides now, and escapees falling, the remaining Prisoners throw up their arms in surrender.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
On your knees, the lot of you!

The escaped Prisoners comply.

Kuriger looks over at Old Irish, who sips his coffee again, lifts his cup to the Sergeant.

Kuriger walks quickly to the prison gate, checks out his men, who are picking themselves up and offering apologies. The field Medic rushes up to tend to stab wounds. Kuriger lifts a wooden knife from the dirt.

Colonel Time hobbles up to Kuriger.

COLONEL TIME  
Did we lose any, First Sergeant?

KURIGER  
No, Sir. They never got a shot off. Some stab wounds and the like.

COLONEL TIME  
Stab wounds?

KURIGER  
(shows the blade)  
Must've used the shovel edges to  
whittle wood points.

Colonel Time paces agitatedly in a tight circle, stops.

COLONEL TIME  
How did the men on the ramparts  
respond?

KURIGER  
Caught unawares, Sir.

COLONEL TIME  
Where's Anderson?

KURIGER  
Don't know, Sir.

Colonel Time eyes the prison and Colonel Bergen who  
stands on the other side of the gate.

COLONEL TIME  
(to Kuriger)  
Suspend all bathing and shovel  
privileges. Find out how this  
happened and never let it happen  
again.

KURIGER  
Yes, Colonel.

Time walks away as quickly as he can.

EXT. COMMAND TENT - NIGHT

Henry Two strokes the Colonel's horse while he watches  
Kuriger, Stinnet, Rhoads and Anderson sitting by the  
fire, while Colonel Time hobbles about looking for  
something.

ANDERSON  
I thought my men were ready.  
They drilled well. I take full  
responsibility, Sir.

KURIGER  
As do I. I should have prepared -  
-

COLONEL TIME  
I allowed privilege when I knew  
better. It falls on me.  
(MORE)

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

We muster in the morning and tell the men.

KURIGER

Yes, sir.

COLONEL TIME

Where'd I leave the damned thing?

Henry spots the Colonel's favorite wooden cup fallen behind a nearby log and runs to it. He wipes it off, and hands it to Colonel Time.

HENRY TWO

Here it is, Colonel, sir.

COLONEL TIME

Thank you, Henry Two.

HENRY TWO

Why didn't you ask them men to find it for you?

COLONEL TIME

I don't ask my men to find my things for me, son. It's my job to keep track of what's mine.

HENRY TWO

You their master, ain't ya? And them your servants?

Kuriger eyes the Colonel, who still looks flustered.

COLONEL TIME

Henry, these men serve, but they are not servants. They are fighting this war so others who do not choose to be servants don't have to be.

Time sits, pours himself coffee. Henry sits beside him.

HENRY TWO

You mean slaves like me?

COLONEL TIME

Yes. But you're not a slave. Not anymore. No man has the right to keep another man like livestock. We were all created by God to have what's called "free will." Do you know what that is?

Henry Two shakes his head.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

Free will means that you can make of your life whatever you decide you want it to be. If you want to be a farmer and aren't afraid of hard work, you can be a farmer. If you want to be a doctor and study long and well, you can be a doctor.

HENRY TWO

What I want to be is a soldier, like all ya'll.

COLONEL TIME

Well, when you grow up, you can join the Army like we did.

HENRY TWO

No, sir. I wants to be a soldier right now, so's I can fight them men what kilt my folks and my baby sister May. I want to be part of this here army, sir.

Colonel Time glances over at Kuriger, who smiles.

COLONEL TIME

Well, Henry Two, we could use a good man like you.

(thinks a beat)

Will you take an oath to serve the United States Army?

HENRY TWO

I will, sir.

Time raises his good hand, palm facing Henry. He rises. As does Henry. He gestures for Henry to raise his right hand.

COLONEL TIME

Now say after me, "I do solemnly swear that I will support, protect and defend the United States against all enemies. So help me God."

HENRY TWO

I do solemnly swear... that I will defend these here United States against anyones. So help me God.



KURIGER

(stands)

Close enough. Now is a good time  
to salute your commanding  
officer, Private Parker.

Private Henry Two stands stiffly and knocks off a  
perfect salute for Colonel Time, who returns the  
gesture. Henry then salutes the others, one at a time.

INT. THUNDER'S TENT - NIGHT

Cal and Thunder sleep side by side, Thunder lying awake.

He pokes at Cal, who stirs.

THUNDER

You think it's true?

Cal GROANS.

CAL

What?

THUNDER

I'm worried they'll split us up.

CAL

Go to sleep.

THUNDER

You're my eyes, Cal.

(rolls over, sotto)

I can't lose'm again. God took  
'em from me, but he sent me an  
angel to make up. You're my  
angel, Cal.

Cal pats Thunder on his chest.

EXT. HORSESHOE GARRISON - DAY, MORNING

An early fog shrouds the encampment. Many of the  
invalid Soldiers are gathered in formation. Colonel  
Time stands before them with Kuriger, Anderson, Rhoads,  
Stinnet, Swanson, and the Regiment Medic.

COLONEL TIME

These will be our last days as  
prison guards. Friday a company  
of able-bodied men will relieve  
us. We've received orders to  
march 25 miles to Port Royal.

ON THUNDER AND CAL, as they listen, Thunder's head shaking slowly from side to side.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

There will be no wagon train and  
no additional horses or mules.  
Men must be capable of walking...  
marching those 25 miles and the  
doctor will muster out those he  
deems unfit for such a trek.

Old Irish spits out some tobacco.

OLD IRISH

Do we have an assignment in Port  
Royal, Sir?

Kuriger shoots a look at Old Irish.

KURIGER

Don't interrupt your --

Colonel Time gestures for Kuriger to stop.

COLONEL TIME

We do have an assignment,  
Private. We are charged with  
guarding supply stocks there.

A GROAN rises from the men. Colonel Time begins to  
tremble badly.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

These supplies are crucial to the  
war effort and the 18th,  
whatever's left of us, will do  
our damndest to make sure they  
are placed safely onto our union  
ships bound for the brave  
soldiers in need of them. That  
is our mission, men. Please pass  
this information on to those who  
are infirm or now stand guard.

(to the Medic)

Doctor, I leave you to it.

Colonel Time hobbles off. Kuriger eyes him, as does Old  
Irish. The Medic begins evaluating the men.

INT. COMMAND TENT, HORSESHOE GARRISON - NIGHT

Colonel Time sits on his cot. Kuriger stands. They  
both hold cups. Time's eyes are cast down at the cup  
twisting in his mangled hands.

COLONEL TIME

I've let these men down,  
Sergeant.

KURIGER

Begging your pardon, but I don't  
think so, Sir. This march will  
show them what they're still  
capable of, light them back up.  
Make them feel like soldiers  
again. It's what they need. The  
ones who can't go are better off  
to head home to their loved ones  
and get on with their lives.  
This is good, Sir, for all of us.

Time looks up at Kuriger, still a rough and tumble  
soldier even with half an arm gone.

COLONEL TIME

If I had just one company of men  
like you, Abram, I could end this  
war.

KURIGER

(grins)  
And we'd be happy to do it for  
you, Colonel.

Time rises off the cot, lifts his cup in a toast.

COLONEL TIME

To the march of the 18th.

KURIGER

To the march. And fair weather.

COLONEL TIME

And fair weather.

They both drink.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE BELLE PLAIN - DAY

A light but steady rain. A wooded trail. Second  
Battalion whittled down to just over 150 men, slosh  
behind Colonel Time, who leads on horseback, four  
platoons trailing, each led by their hobbled Lieutenant.

The men carry as much as they are able, some less than  
others, as wielding a crutch or cane allows for little  
more than a bedroll, weapon, limited ammunition and a  
ration/tobacco satchel.

Kuriger slogs along within earshot of Time, with Henry Two behind him.

COLONEL TIME

(muttering)

Dear God, what made me think we could do this in one day?

KURIGER

Sir?

COLONEL TIME

Yes?

KURIGER

Sir, I can hear you.

He checks his pocket watch, wipes rain off its face.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

That's nearly twenty minutes, sir. You said to let you know.

His troops murmur, grumble.

COLONEL TIME

How far along do you reckon?

KURIGER

Maybe five miles, sir. In over four hours.

COLONEL TIME

Keeping the tents off their backs will seem a foolish indulgence in the pouring rain tonight. No one will sleep.

KURIGER

Sir, it takes twice as long to pitch the damn tents. And their weight in this rain. Men would be dropping by the side of the road.

Colonel Time raises his arm and the regiment splashes to a halt.

COLONEL TIME

Let's break them again.

Time climbs down. Kuriger stands close to the Colonel but out of the soldiers' earshot. Henry grabs the horse's reins from the Colonel, stands under the Morgan's huge head for shelter from the wet.

KURIGER

A lot of grumbling, Sir. I think the men would prefer to push on than stop every twenty minutes for rest.

COLONEL TIME

Gather the officers.

KURIGER

Aye, sir.

(to the men)

Sit where you are. Or stand. Up to you. Take a load off.

Kuriger heads for 1st Platoon.

MOMENTS LATER

Colonel Time huddles with Kuriger and his four Lieutenants: Stinnet, Anderson, Rhoads and Swanson.

COLONEL TIME

Gentlemen, at our current pace we make Port Royal in two days, not one.

Anderson speaks, and the others lean closer to hear his soft voice.

ANDERSON

The men seem to be slowing. Marching in the rain, Colonel, when marching on dry land is a chore for most of them. They need some kind of motivation, Sir.

Time eyes Anderson.

COLONEL TIME

Agreed, Lieutenant Anderson. Could have been said with more volume, but the idea is a solid one. Motivation. These men are soldiers, afterall, not beasts of burden. The woods provide us little cover. Standard rules of engagement may not apply. Let's drill them for an unknown attack. With our limited ammunition, fire discipline will be crucial.

KURIGER

Conserve powder for close in engagement. Bayonets fixed and ready.

ANDERSON

No chases into the woods. Do not give up the line.

KURIGER

Colonel?

COLONEL TIME

Yes. You all know what to do. Return to your platoons, brief your men. We move out in five minutes. We will drill them before our next break.

The ragtag Lieutenants return to their men, go over the drill routine. The men receive the plan with nods and smiles.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

(to Kuriger)

Anderson.

KURIGER

Yes, Sir. Anderson.

EXT. WOODS BETWEEN BELLE PLAIN AND PORT ROYAL - DAY

Three Rebel Cavalry, each armed with a rifle, plod through the damp thicket, their horses old, stout, weary. They wear hoods to keep the rain off.

They form a nearly motionless column, with LOCKE, 25, at the lead, followed by LISTON, 22, seeming the most able of the three, and a teen, CASWELL.

Locke holds up his arm. The others stop.

LOCKE

Hear that? A column, slow moving. No wagons or caissons.

LISTON

Could be civilians.

CASWELL

Maybe they'll have food.

Locke climbs down from his steed.

LOCKE

Caswell, stay with the horses.

LISTON

Locke, wait.

He plods closer to Locke.

LISTON (CONT'D)

Could be soldiers. My horse still has legs left. They're moving south. I'll circle back and determine their rear. You two flank 'em. All of us mounted.

CASWELL

If they have a flanking guard, they'll find us first. We get taken out, we can't get word back. Agree we stay mounted but together.

LOCKE

Maybe we should just wait out this rain.

Liston eyes him hard.

LISTON

I know you're tired, Locke, but we gotta do something.

CASWELL

I'm 'bout to starve.

After a long moment, Locke climbs back up on his horse.

EXT. ROAD TO PORT ROYAL - DAY

The rain continues. The 4th Platoon finishes their mock drills, falls back into place, and the march resumes.

Kuriger drops back through the ranks and passes word along.

KURIGER

Excellent drills, men. We're losing daylight, so we'll skip the next break and make some time before we bivouac. All in?

The men bark agreement, and Kuriger hustles along.

Thunder carries Cal, who holds his jacket open over the big man to keep the rain off.

CAL  
Staying dry, George?

THUNDER  
Dry enough. Dark or light out?

CAL  
In between. Can't really tell  
with the rain.  
(eyes the West tree  
line)  
Looks like sun's about done for  
the day, though.

THUNDER  
Gloaming. That's what they call  
that in between. Best time to  
hunt you some squirrel back home.

CAL  
When the war's over, could you  
take me squirrel hunting, George?

THUNDER  
I don't hunt 'em myself. But  
I'll sure carry ya, if you want.  
Don't guess a squirrel cares  
who's firing at 'em.

Cal laughs.

Back at 3rd Platoon,

Anderson strides along, but something's caught his eyes,  
and he slows as he looks off to the West where a splash  
of blue sky invades the dark clouds. THREE DARK,  
HULKING FIGURES CROSS THROUGH THE BLUE.

Lightning FLASHES.

Anderson moves out of formation, stops, stares...

Kuriger notices, jogs back to Anderson.

KURIGER  
Lieutenant?

ANDERSON  
Thought I saw horses.

The rain comes harder.



KURIGER

Where, sir?

Anderson points.

ANDERSON

Passed through that one patch of blue.

KURIGER

Riders, too?

ANDERSON

Not sure. Gone now. If they ever were there. Cows... or ghosts, maybe.

KURIGER

Ghosts. That's all we need.

Kuriger heads back to the front of the column. Anderson falls back in line.

They march on.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER

The march continues. Lieutenants urge their weary troops on.

A SOUND OF HOOVES at the rear. Anderson turns to see the three, hooded Rebel Horsemen, charging through 4th Platoon, men falling, scattering out of the way.

Stinnet turns to the ruckus, reacts quickly.

STINNET

Rebels!! Defend yourselves!

4th Platoon complies. Men begin swinging their weapons wildly at the riders, who reach down for satchels, whatever they can grab.

But the Union soldiers win control, beating at the Rebs with rifles/bayonets, canes, and crutches.

The Rebel horses whinny and rear, and the Rebel Riders kick their steeds and charge through 3rd Platoon, where they get more of the same.

Caswell's horse is heading right for Private Musgrove. Anderson knocks Musgrove out of harm's way, and falls on top of him.

PRIVATE MUSGROVE

Thank you, Sir.

Anderson pulls him up. A moment between them, then it's back to the battle, with Musgrove swinging his one good arm at Caswell, yanking his bayonet from his belt, and planting it in the boy's thigh.

Old Irish, hopping on one leg, nearly pulls Locke's horse down, singlehandedly.

LOCKE

Retreat!

The Rebel riders retreat through the center of the column and into the woods.

Anderson runs out of the line, speaks to his men with conviction.

ANDERSON

Stay where you are, fix bayonets.  
Could be an advance party.

But the rain has drowned out his soft voice. Old Irish WHISTLES, then booms out...

OLD IRISH

Lieutenant Anderson says fix  
bayonets and be ready! Might be  
more where they came from.

Men snap to the order. Bayonets fixed and ready. All who are able, kneeling, weapons aimed to the forest where the riders went in.

Stinnet checks on his fallen men in 4th Platoon.

Kuriger confers with the Lieutenants, one by one.

Moments pass. Only the sound of RAINFALL and THUNDER.

Colonel Time canters through the formation. He eyes Kuriger, who steps closer and talks quietly.

KURIGER

Looks like they were just  
scavenging, Sir. Grabbed some  
satchels, knocked some men off  
their feet.

COLONEL TIME

Rebels?

KURIGER

Yes, Sir. Not much fight left in 'em. Got more than they gave.

COLONEL TIME

Wearing down, Sergeant.

(loudly, to his men)

You have done well, sent the enemy running. We're halfway to Port Royal. You've earned your rest. We'll bivouac here.

The Men of the 18th cheer. Time canters back to the front. Kuriger passes Anderson, pats him on the back.

KURIGER

Not ghosts, Lieutenant. Keen eye.

Anderson walks into step beside 3rd Platoon, eyes Old Irish, who nods.

EXT. A ROCKY RIDGE, HEADING SOUTHWEST - DAY, LATER

The three Rebel Calvary walk their horses. Caswell, his thigh tied up with a bandana, tosses a satchel away.

CASWELL

Nothing for our troubles. Beat back by a bunch of cripples.

LOCKE

Listen to me, we're lucky to be alive.

LISTON

Most likely a rear echelon. We've done our job. When we get back, we'll report a loose formation of a hundred to a hundred fifty armed soldiers.

CASWELL

(with a laugh)

Some of 'em didn't have arms.

LOCKE

Shut it up, would ya, kid!

They lead their sorry steeds off.

A HUNDRED YARDS BACK

The pack of six Marauders, led by Red Beard and Dogtooth, stop in a line.

RED BEARD  
Horse for dinner.

He kicks his horse hard, and they gallop off after the Rebels.

EXT. BIVOUAC BETWEEN BELLE PLAIN AND PORT ROYAL - NIGHT

Camp consists of bedrolls as lean-tos, fading campfires, and a continuing but light rain. Some soldiers sleep, leaning against trees, branches or bedrolls draped over them. A dank smoke hovers over the loose bivouac.

Lieutenants Rhoads, Anderson, Stinnet and Swanson sit around a small, smoky fire, near the side of the road.

Anderson looks back toward the encampment of soldiers.

ANDERSON  
I pity those men.

SWANSON  
They don't want your pity,  
Anderson. They're survivors,  
just like us.

RHOADS  
Yeah, we're all in the same club.  
(taps his gold bars)  
Only difference, we've got the  
pumpkin rinds, and they don't.

ANDERSON  
They deserve better than the  
likes of me to lead them. I fear  
for them.

Colonel Time steps up into the firelight. The Lieutenants start to rise, but Time quickly gestures them back down.

COLONEL TIME  
At ease. Stay seated.

The hobbled Colonel stares wearily into the fire. He jabs his cane into a branch and pokes it closer to the flame.

COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)  
We all have fears.

They look around at each other, no one wanting to speak.

ANDERSON  
I do, sir. Yes, I do.

## COLONEL TIME

Of course you do. Pain,  
dishonor, failure, loss, death.  
No one wants to suffer through  
any of these, but fear can be  
quiet, understood, controlled.  
Fear is ugly... but doubt is far  
uglier. When a soldier witnesses  
doubt he questions every order,  
every decision, every tactic. He  
questions right and wrong. How  
can a soldier fight when he  
doubts? How can he close his  
eyes for rest at night? How can  
he go on another day?

He eyes each Lieutenant.

## COLONEL TIME (CONT'D)

He cannot. As leaders of men,  
you must believe in your command,  
in yourselves, and in the  
rightness of your mission.

(to Anderson)

When you believe, your soldiers  
believe. When soldiers believe,  
wars are won. Right, Lieutenant  
Anderson?

## ANDERSON

Yes, Sir.

## COLONEL TIME

Do what is required when it comes  
time to act. That's your duty.  
I have every confidence and faith  
in each of you. I have no  
doubts. Not one. Good night,  
gentlemen.

Time walks back into the woods. The Lieutenants look  
around at each other, then stare distantly into the  
fire.

## EXT. ROAD TO PORT ROYAL - DAWN

The 18th Regiment marches on in growing sunlight.  
Colonel Time leads on his horse.

Thunder and Cal rise up above the line, 2nd Platoon.

## CAL

It's a right fine march, George.  
Right fine.

THUNDER

I see that, Cal.

At the tail of Second Platoon, Old Irish dances about, his rifle as his cane, as if mocking a jig.

Anderson, front of 3rd Platoon, orders him back in line with a lift of his chin.

OLD IRISH

You won't join me, then,  
Lieutenant?

ANDERSON

No, thank you, Private.

OLD IRISH

It's wonderful to be on dry land,  
isn't it, sir?

ANDERSON

Yes, it is. Now return to your  
formation, Private Irish.

OLD IRISH

I know an order when I hear one.

Old Irish jigs back into formation.

OLD IRISH (CONT'D)

Done and dusted.

Kuriger, winged off right of 2nd Platoon, rifle at the ready, walks with Henry Two. He taps the boy's shoulder and sends him off toward his Colonel.

Henry catches up to Time's steed, and clops along with him. Time gestures the boy up, and Henry Two nods eagerly.

Time reaches his gloved hand down, grabs Henry Two by the armpit and hoists him up onto his saddle in front.

COLONEL TIME

Well done, Private Parker.

HENRY TWO

(all smiles)  
Thank you, Sir!

COLONEL TIME

Today will be a grand day,  
Private Henry Parker Two. You  
will speak of the spirit of these  
men marching behind you for many  
years to come. God willing.

Old Irish breaks out in song, and others join in.

OLD IRISH

"Oh, Sally, Oh, Sally we's  
marching my dear. The 18th is  
coming, the rebels will fear. We  
slide and we shuffle, we hobble  
and hop. Tell Richmond we're  
coming and right up their rear!"

Colonel Time looks back at Kuriger and smiles.

Anderson can't help but grin as he watches Old Irish  
carry on.

ANDERSON

What part of Ireland are you  
from, Private?

OLD IRISH

Who said I was, Sir?  
(starts it up again)  
"Oh, Sally, Oh, Sally..."

EXT. MARAUDER ENCAMPMENT IN THE WOODS - DAY

Four Marauders poke at their fading fire and finish  
their meal.

Dogtooth sits nearby, pours gun powder into the last  
chamber of his LeMat cylinder and stuffs a ball inside.  
The powder runs out. He crumples up the bag, stuffs it  
in his coat.

DOGTTOOTH

(sotto)  
One'll have to do.

He jams the cylinder back into the pistol, stands and  
stretches.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)

All right, let's break up this  
little party. He'll be back  
soon, and we'll have business to  
tend to.

The WEASELY MARAUDER takes too long, and Dogtooth tucks  
his pistol back into his holster, pulls a long knife out  
from behind his belt, and spins it at him.

The Weasely Marauder falls out of its way, and the knife  
sticks in the brim of his hat that rests on the log he  
was parked on.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)

You move when I tell you to, not  
a tick later.

The Weasely Marauder pulls the blade out and hands it  
back to Dogtooth, who GROWLS. The Weasely Marauder  
cowers, pulls on his hat, as Red Beard walks his horse  
in among the pines, ropes him to a tree.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)

Well?

RED BEARD

Well, what?

DOGTTOOTH

I don't know. Think of  
something. Sheesh.

Red Beard sits by the fire.

RED BEARD

Remember how my kid brother was  
kilt?

Dogtooth stands across from him.

DOGTTOOTH

Wasn't me. I know that much.

Marauder #1 tosses away his tin of coffee.

MARAUDER #1

Hanged, weren't it?

Red Beard nods slowly.

RED BEARD

By a yank Colonel what found him  
picking over the battlefield  
dead.

DOGTTOOTH

Lucky it wasn't you.

RED BEARD

No, I got away, but not 'fore I  
watched Billy Boyd swinging from  
a hickory branch. Sixteen year  
old. Sat 'em on a union horse,  
then walked it right out from  
under him. Boy kicked and  
twisted bigger part of ten  
minutes.



DOGTTOOTH

What other fond memories you got  
for us this morning?

Red Beard throws a hot stick at Dogtooth, who ducks.

RED BEARD

Maybe I'll string you up, Dog.  
See how you like it.

DOGTTOOTH

Sure my time'll come soon enough.  
What's your point is all I'm  
askin'.

RED BEARD

My point is that worthless column  
of cripples we been trackin'...  
has one rider out front. And  
that rider is the very same  
Colonel what kilt my little  
brother.

MARAUDER #1

You sure?

RED BEARD

Yup. Worse for the wear, but  
him.

DOGTTOOTH

What you gonna do about it?

Red Beard stews, wheels turning.

EXT. ROAD TO PORT ROYAL - DAY

The day wears on, and the men of the 18th are tiring.

Old Irish tries his song again, but no one joins in.

Anderson moves through his 3rd Platoon, offering  
encouraging words, even though his voice cracks.

ANDERSON

Good, men. Keep it up. Close  
ranks. Steady on.

A couple of the men GRUMBLE. One nearby GRUMBLING  
SOLDIER speaks out...

GRUMBLING SOLDIER

What's that, Sir? Can't hear ya.

Old Irish, three soldiers away, chides him.

OLD IRISH

If I heard your Lieutenant, you  
heard him. Now close ranks.  
March like you mean it.

ANDERSON

Thank you, Private.

OLD IRISH

Pleasure, sir.

AT THE FRONT, Henry Two now handles the reins as Colonel Time speaks to him in his ear, pointing out trees and items of interest. They share a laugh.

Time looks back at Kuriger who shows Time his pocket watch. Time nods.

KURIGER

(for all to hear)  
Fall out, men. We'll rest here,  
then drill before we move on.

The March comes to a slow halt.

Swanson and Rhoads pass the information back through the chain of troops.

The Men sit where they stop.

The slow tide of relaxing troops moves into Anderson's Platoon.

But a CRASH and a SNORT to the left in the woods, grabs Anderson's attention.

UP AHEAD, Cal, still sitting on Thunder's shoulder points left.

Anderson's eyes rivet to that area. He spots four Marauders on horseback, and bellows out with all he's got...

ANDERSON

ALARM! ALARM! Bandits at our  
left flank! Assume fighting  
positions! RIGHT NOW.

The Men immediately ready their weapons.

AT THE FRONT, Colonel Time turns to the sound of Anderson's alarm, and climbs down off his horse, leaving Henry Two atop the steed.

Time aims a look at Kuriger, who's running toward him, waving his arms.

KURIGER

Bandits, Sir! Left flank!

All eyes and weapons are trained to the left. First and Second Battalions assume kneeling and standing line positions.

Time turns back to Henry Two and his horse.

There sits Red Beard on his own horse, nose to nose with Time's, his rifle pointed directly at Colonel Time.

RED BEARD

Billy Boyd sends his regards.

Red Beard squeezes off one shot. THE BALL SCREAMS TRUE, hits Time in the left side of his chest, and exits just above his hip on the opposite side, leaving a gaping hole.

Time rivets a look at Henry Two, motions with a falling hand. Time's horse rears, nearly unseating Henry Two, but the boy stiffens his grip on the reins, and hugs the horse's neck, as it speeds off down the road.

Red Beard watches as Colonel Time drops to his knees, his hand now over his chest and the entry wound.

Red Beard pulls out a pistol and shoots Time again, knocking him backward, his eyes open and staring up at RAIN CLOUDS.

Kuriger strides directly toward Red Beard, pistol drawn.

Red Beard takes off along the left flank, heading for the woods.

Kuriger walks briskly behind the kneeling members of 1st Platoon.

KURIGER

Hold fire. Mine.

His pistol leveled chest high, Kuriger's arm swivels. He squeezes off a shot, knocking the Marauder off his horse.

Red Beard rolls along, lies motionless, face down. His horse gallops off.

Kuriger holsters his weapon, runs back toward his fallen Colonel.

The men of 1st and 2nd Platoons turn to watch Kuriger, who kneels at Time's side.

Kuriger leans into the Colonel's line of sight, CROSSING THROUGH THE RAIN CLOUDS, WHICH GO BLACK.

DOWN THE ROAD

Henry Two, sobbing, hangs on as Time's horse gallops away at breakneck speed.

BACK AT THE BATTLE

Kuriger walks toward the rear Platoons. Thunder runs up to him, carrying Cal.

CAL  
The Marauder crawled off,  
Sergeant.

Kuriger looks up at Cal, his pistol across his chest.

KURIGER  
Did you see where he went?

CAL  
General direction, Sergeant.

KURIGER  
Go after him.

Cal taps Thunder on the right side, and they hustle off.

Kuriger jogs now toward the rear, where

3rd and 4th Platoon kneel and stand, as drilled, bayonets fixed.

A small group kneel closer to the road's edge, rifles aimed directly for the woods. They fire.

Horses whinny in the woods, as trees explode.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
Anderson!!

Anderson turns to Kuriger, his weapon still in his hand.

KURIGER (CONT'D)  
You have command, Sir. Colonel  
Time's gone. The red marauder.  
He's on the loose.  
(after a beat)  
Are they returning fire, sir?

Anderson looks to the woods, turns to his men.

ANDERSON  
Cease fire!

## IN THE WOODS

Dogtooth runs on foot, aiming his LeMat through the trees toward the men of the 18th, but not firing.

He spots Red Beard making his way through the brush, motions to him. Red Beard, clutching his side, weakly points to the ridge beyond the trees. He stumbles as he walks.

Dogtooth catches up to him, tries to assist him, but Red Beard whacks his arm away.

RED BEARD

Where's your horse?

DOGTTOOTH

Shot out from under me.

RED BEARD

That ridge. Cripples can't follow us up there. Gimme one of your LeMats. C'mon!

Dogtooth starts to hand him the one in his right hand, changes his mind and hands over the one tucked behind his belt.

DOGTTOOTH

I'll want it back.

They head for the light beyond the woods and the slope that leads to toward the ridge. THUNDER CLAPS HARD, CLOSE.

## BACK AT THE BATTLE

The four remaining Marauders on horseback charge out of the woods, pistols flashing at the rear platoons.

ANDERSON

(strong-voiced)

Maintain your position, do not break your line, take no shot unless point blank. Steady.

The Men of the 18th stand ready. Anderson aims a glance at Kuriger, his weapon leveled at arm's length.

The Marauders gallop closer, weapons blazing.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)

Fire!

The Men of the 3rd and 4th Platoon fire, the sequence like a well-oiled machine, angled, front down, second line standing.

Two of the Marauders fall hard, their steeds tumbling and galloping off in fright.

A one-armed Soldier takes a bullet in the gut, falls to one side near Anderson, who drags him, face down, out of the fray toward the woods, leaves him there, runs back.

The remaining Marauders attack the rear platoon, firing recklessly.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
(calls out loudly)  
How'd we stop those rebels?

The 4th Platoon BELLOW OUT and close quarters on the two Marauders, #1 and Weasely, who begin taking a beating of crutches, canes and rifles, just as the rebels had. They can't get off a shot.

Stinnet fights along with his men, hand to hand...

STINNET  
Show them who we are!!

Marauder #1 and the Weasely Marauder battle the Union Veterans off as best they can before they gallop out with their lives, scrambling North, scattered gunfire following after them.

ANDERSON  
Cease fire! Save your  
ammunition.

Anderson looks to Kuriger, who's holstering his weapon. Kuriger dashes back to the front.

AT THE WOODS

Anderson tends to the fallen soldier, flips him over -- Private Musgrove. He puts pressure on Musgrove's stomach, which is rapidly pooling in blood.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
You're gonna make it, Private.  
Press your hand here...  
(shows him)  
I'll get you help.

Musgrove grabs Anderson's stump arm to keep him close.

## PRIVATE MUSGROVE

Don't think so. Got me good this time, Lieutenant...

(forces a last smile)

Teacup.

Musgrove's eyes close. Anderson sucks back his emotion and blows out a breath. When he turns East, he spots TWO FIGURES MAKING FOR THE RIDGE.

Anderson feels for his sidearm and breaks for the ridge. He's crashing through shrubs and woods, until he clears them and heads for the incline. As he runs...

## ANDERSON (V.O.)

(nearly inaudible, building to full)

I recall our rides out into the woods and your tales of bravery with the Ohio militia and your encouraging and inspirational words meant to steer me into manhood. They live within me... and today propel me to capture the enemy and make them pay for their ill deeds. I do this not for myself, though, father, or for you, but for the brave men of the 18th Regiment of this Union Army's Veteran Reserve Corps, of which I am proud to call myself part.

## FOREST EDGE

Cal and Thunder on the move, break through the pines, into a clearing. Cal points, instinctively.

## CAL

Two of them. Heading for the ridge. The Lieutenant is chasing.

## THUNDER

Who?

## CAL

Teacup.

## THUNDER

Let's get moving, then.

Cal leans close to Thunder's ear, draws Thunder's pistol.

CAL  
Straight and hard, George.

THUNDER  
Hang on!

Thunder runs for the ridge, under threatening skies, which finally explode in a downpour.

ON THE RIDGE

Red Beard leads as the two Marauders ascend the knoll that rises to a ridgeline.

Anderson clips quickly along, weapon still holstered.

RED BEARD  
C'mon, let's go!

Dogtooth stumbles, slides back, spots Anderson, nearly on him.

RED BEARD (CONT'D)  
I ain't waitin'.

DOGTTOOTH  
Damn you, Red.

Dogtooth's boots can't get traction, so he crawls off into some nearby brush to lie in wait, as Anderson trudges up the slope.

He takes aim at Anderson, who's only yards away, thumbs back the hammer and lets it fall.

A ball whizzes by Anderson, which spins him sideways. He falls, slides back.

When he rises, Dogtooth's standing, sighting in on Anderson again. He THUMBS BACK THE HAMMER.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)  
Try this one!

But before he can fire, a shot skims by his face, twisting him around.

Dogtooth wheels to see Cal, lowering his pistol, Thunder under him.

Anderson takes off back up the slope after Red Beard.

Dogtooth's drawing a bead on Cal and Thunder now.

DOGTTOOTH (CONT'D)  
Big target...



He aims, but a shot EXPLODES IN HIS SIDE and sends him crashing to the earth.

WE REVERSE AND FOLLOW THE BALL BACK TOWARD THE WOODS WHERE OLD IRISH, SOME FIFTY YARDS AWAY, LOWERS HIS RIFLE.

AT CAL/THUNDER

CAL

He went down, Thunder.

THUNDER

Where?

CAL

Can't see him. We got a steep grade ahead. Think we can make it?

THUNDER

If you can hang on.

Thunder walks briskly up the slope, kicking his toes into the mud for traction. A RUSTLING nearby.

Cal turns to the sound, as Dogtooth staggers up from the brush, his LeMat still cocked.

His right side near useless from Irish's round, he switches the gun to his other hand, pulls the trigger and FIRES. The gun flies out of his hand.

Cal falls off Thunder and rolls.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

Cal?

Cal checks himself. His arm bleeds.

CAL

Just bleedin', is all.

Thunder turns to the sound of Cal's voice. Dogtooth ROARS and rushes at him, cudgel raised and ready.

CAL (CONT'D)

Three taps right shoulder, George. Comin' hard!

Thunder turns right, takes one step, and SLAMS into Dogtooth, his cudgel thrusting into Thunder's side, which only angers him. Thunder GROWLS, reaches out and yanks Dogtooth down by the coat and sits on top of him.

THUNDER

You shot Cal.

DOGTTOOTH

Did I? Good for me, you big,  
blind mule!

Thunder pushes Dogtooth's face sideways into the mud.  
Dogtooth's reaching for his long knife.

CAL (O.S.)

He's got a knife, George!

Thunder presses down harder, knees on Dog's arms,  
squeezing the knife from his grip.

The rain pummels them. Dogtooth squirms under Thunder's  
hold, spitting mud, trying to speak, but he can't.

Thunder looks up to the sky and his God.

THUNDER

Lord, forgive me...

With that he leans his head into the back of Dogtooth's  
neck pushing the Marauder's face into the mud.  
Dogtooth's body kicks and lurches, then goes quiet.

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE/POND - CONTINUOUS

Red Beard stands on the ridge and looks down. Water. A  
roiling pond.

ANDERSON

Surrender, or I'll shoot you  
where you stand.

Anderson, weapon drawn, crawls along the ridge.

RED BEARD

How 'bout I blow off your other  
hand for you, nancy boy?

Red Beard takes aim, squeezes. CLICK. Draws back the  
hammer, goes again, CLICK.

RED BEARD (CONT'D)

(sotto)  
Toothless bastard...

He throws the gun off the ridge into the water, reaches  
for the cudgel tucked inside his coat.

ANDERSON

Surrender yourself.

RED BEARD

Don't think so.

Anderson gathers his resolve, holsters his weapon and charges after Red Beard.

When Anderson hits him, they both roll along the ridge, then down the slope and separate at the pond's edge. Red Beard staggers backward into the pond, his heavy coat filling with water.

Red Beard leans back and pushes water away in a floating posture.

Anderson picks himself up, stands on the rocky water's edge.

RED BEARD (CONT'D)

What's 'a matter, yank? Can't you swim?

Red Beard's swimming has slowed to a near stop as his coat and boots are weighing him down.

He wrestles frantically to remove his coat, but can't.

Anderson steps out into the water.

Lightning CRACKLES OVERHEAD, and the downpour continues. Anderson moves cautiously, deeper into the water.

EXT. DUNNS POND - DAWN - FLASHBACK TO OPEN

Young Anderson and Anderson's Father sit in their small fishing boat. Anderson's Father works his pipe.

The Boy stares across at his father, light bouncing off the man's face, as the finally sun breaks atop the pines.

ANDERSON'S FATHER

Take off your jacket and your boots, Will.

The Boy looks confused, but his father's stern expression does not waver, and he complies.

Anderson's Father moves his paddle aside, reaches across, lifts the boy up and throws him out into the water. Young Anderson thrashes about.

ANDERSON'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Sink or swim, son, it's up to you.

Young Anderson struggles and flaps his arms wildly up and down, barely keeping his head above water.

ANDERSON'S FATHER (CONT'D)

Ha, ha!! That's it!

EXT. THE OTHER SIDE OF THE RIDGE/POND - RETURN TO SCENE

His Father's LAUGH still in his ears, Anderson swims, using his right arm to propel him, and his shortened left to steer.

Red Beard paddles hard now just to stay above water, while Anderson moves closer, circles.

ON THE SHORE

Thunder and Cal arrive at the top of the ridge.

CAL

It's steep down, George, but I gotta get closer. Can you slide?

THUNDER

If you help me.

They sit and slide down the ridge, tumbling apart at the bottom.

Thunder stands, finds Cal and hoists him up.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

What's going on, Cal?

CAL

The Lieutenant's gone in after him.

THUNDER

Oh, Lord.

Cal wipes blood from his shoulder.

IN THE WATER

Anderson continues swimming closer to Red Beard, the Marauder whipping at him with his cudgel, Anderson ducking under then popping back up.

From behind, Anderson lunges for Red Beard, and wraps his arms around the Marauder's neck, twisting with his one hand.

Red Beard reaches back and pulls Anderson's head with both hands hard and bangs the Lieutenant's forehead into the back of his head.

Anderson seems momentarily dazed, tries to shake it off.

They twist and turn and struggle, until they're both swallowing too much water. But neither will let go.

Anderson spits and coughs, as he tightens his arm hook on the marauder's neck, pushing Red Beard down again and again, the marauder taking on more and more water...

Red Beard offers three short GRUNTS, then stops, his arms relaxing. His face goes blue and, when Anderson lets go, he drifts off with the wind.

Exhausted, Anderson's eyes roll back. He passes out, and his head falls forward, face down in the water, arms splayed out.

ON THE SHORE

Cal strains to see.

CAL

Oh, Jesus, no.

THUNDER

What is it, Cal?

CAL

The Lieutenant, George. Can you swim?

THUNDER

Like a muskie.

CAL

There's a boulder about five right shoulder taps. Walk slow, George, it's real rocky.

Cal taps and Thunder steps cautiously, his long arms reaching out along the rocky path. Cal anxiously eyes...

ANDERSON FLOATING FACEDOWN.

CAL (CONT'D)

Now set me down, George. Quick.

THUNDER

Here? You sure you're okay?

CAL

Yes!

Thunder sets him down. Cal turns him to the water.

CAL (CONT'D)

Now, walk straight over them  
rocks, feel with your hands, 'til  
you hit water, then swim hard.  
I'll call out to you.

Thunder follows the instructions, finds the water, dives in and swims with long, loping strokes toward the center of the pond.

CAL (CONT'D)

George, two left chest taps!

Thunder corrects.

CAL (CONT'D)

Top of your head. Straight!  
Hurry!

Thunder swims right into Anderson, flips him over, bearhugs his chest hard. Anderson spits water out, comes to life, and whispers weakly...

ANDERSON

Tell my father...

THUNDER

I ain't lettin' you die,  
Lieutenant. Tell him yourself.

Thunder hooks an arm under Anderson's armpit, and tows him toward shore, where Cal and Kuriger now wait.

EXT. ROAD NEAR PORT ROYAL - DAY

Six Union Officers ride two abreast at a gentle canter.

COLONEL GORDON EVERHARDT, a doctor, and CAPTAIN MORRIS ride, sandwiched ahead and behind by four more Officers on powerful-looking horses.

CAPTAIN MORRIS

Our horses are enjoying the  
exercise, it seems, Doctor.

COLONEL EVERHARDT

They are, Captain. As am I. I'm  
also looking forward to meeting  
this company of irregulars.

(MORE)

COLONEL EVERHARDT (CONT'D)

I know General Grant has great  
faith in their commander.

CAPTAIN MORRIS

Yes. He and Colonel Time go back  
many years.

COLONEL EVERHARDT

I trust their march here will be  
a safe one.

Morris eyes the darkening skies ahead.

CAPTAIN MORRIS

And I hope a dry one. Perhaps we  
should turn back before that rain  
spoils our ride.

The Officers in front of Morris stop. MAJOR OWENS,  
turns back to the others.

MAJOR OWENS

Listen. Coming for us.

From the north, the rumble of a horse's hooves pepper  
the hard road.

CAPTAIN MORRIS

Sounds like only one, Major.

MAJOR OWENS

Maybe, Morris, but hell-bent on  
getting here. Dismount, draw a  
bead on the rider and prepare to  
fire if need be.

They all dismount, and aim their weapons at the bend in  
the road ahead.

Time's horse runs at full gallop around the bend, with  
the Henry Two holding on, a death grip around the  
steed's neck.

COLONEL EVERHARDT

My God, there's a child on it.

Time's horse rears, seeing the other horses, spins.

HENRY TWO

We're under attack!!

Major Owens wrangles the boy's horse to a stop.

MAJOR OWENS

Who, boy?

HENRY TWO

The 18th!

Owens looks back at the others.

EXT. ROAD TO PORT ROYAL - DAY

The Men of the 18th are stopped on and alongside the road. A perimeter has formed and the wounded are being tended to, under guard.

Kuriger kneels with Anderson, as he struggles to sit up and speak.

ANDERSON

Did we get them, Sergeant?

KURIGER

Yes, sir. We sure did.

Anderson lies back down.

ON THUNDER, who sits nearby, toweling off with a shirt.

Two Soldiers tote Cal by, his arm wrapped in a makeshift bandage.

Cal spots Thunder, calls out...

CAL

Hey, George. See you down the road.

Thunder's face turns to the sound of Cal's voice.

THUNDER

Cal? What? Where you goin'?

CAL

Takin' me to get fixed up.  
You're sure enough a hero,  
George.

They carry Cal off.

Thunder tosses the shirt aside, mutters under his breath...

THUNDER

A killer, too.

DOWN THE ROAD

Private Musgrove lies off the road under a tree, his hands folded across his chest, holding his Kepi cap.



Old Irish carries Colonel Time to a shady spot nearby and sets him there carefully, as Lieutenant Swanson watches.

OLD IRISH

There you are, Jon, a fine place  
for ya.

LIEUTENANT SWANSON

That's your commanding officer,  
Private. Show some respect.

Old Irish adjusts Time's uniform, lays his Hardee hat on him just so, squeezes his hand, before bringing it across to meet the other. He pats him, speaks softly.

LIEUTENANT SWANSON (CONT'D)

Private. Enough.

Old Irish looks back at him, tears in his eyes.

OLD IRISH

I was supposed to look after him,  
Lieutenant and I didn't. I  
promised our mother.

LIEUTENANT SWANSON

What?

Kuriger walks up, pats Old Irish on the back.

KURIGER

(to Old Irish)

I'm sorry, James. He was a true  
leader and my great friend.

Old Irish rises, still looking down at his brother.

OLD IRISH

As you were to him, Abram.

Old Irish blesses himself.

OLD IRISH (CONT'D)

(mutters)

This damned war.

He walks off.

Kuriger stands over his Colonel and offers a silent  
farewell.

A SHOUT breaks him from his reverie.

A SHOUT (O.S.)

Halt! Who goes there?

Kuriger hustles to the sound of the voice, a Rifleman, rifle trained down the road.

Time's horse CLOPS out of the cloud of rain and fog and into view.

HENRY TWO

Private Parker, sir. Henry Two, sir.

Four more horses behind him.

HENRY TWO (CONT'D)

And I brought us some help.  
One's a doctor. More on the way,  
Sergeant Kuriger, sir.

KURIGER

(meets the boy's  
horse)

Well, I'll be damned. God is  
good, Private Parker.

Kuriger salutes the Officers on horseback.

EXT. PORT ROYAL ENCAMPMENT - NIGHT

A busy flux of incoming and outgoing units and material.

INSERT: "Port Royal Encampment"

Several buildings amid the city of tents and campfires.

Kuriger strides purposefully from a command tent to a hospital ward in another converted church.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - CONTINUOUS

Kuriger walks among the beds where most men are asleep. He stops beside one bed where Thunder lies, his feet hanging over the edge.

His eyes closed, Thunder cocks his head.

THUNDER

Who goes there?

KURIGER

Sergeant Kuriger, Huntred. Are  
you ill or injured?

THUNDER

No. I just don't want to get up,  
is all.

A petite but roundish and pretty nurse, SHEILA, stops at the giant's side.

SHEILA

He drinks little, eats less, and  
I don't think he sleeps. Been  
like this for days on end.

THUNDER

I don't want nothing. I'll stay  
right here where I am. My eyes  
are gone. Might as well the rest  
of me.

SHEILA

(to Kuriger)

His friend's in another ward.  
Once he's well enough, they're  
sending him home.

KURIGER

Private Straw.

THUNDER

That's right, Private Cal Straw.  
Best eyes a man could ask for.

KURIGER

What's your name, young lady?

SHEILA

Sheila.

THUNDER

She fusses over me all the time.  
Like to drive me a little crazy.

SHEILA

Well, maybe I don't like seein' a  
big ol' strappin' man like you  
laying around in bed all day.  
Maybe that drives me crazy.

Thunder rolls over with a GROAN.

KURIGER

Sheila, would you do me a favor?

SHEILA

If I can.

KURIGER

First light tomorrow, would you  
take Private Huntred out for a  
walk. Will you do that for me?

SHEILA  
I will, if he will.

KURIGER  
He has to. It's an order,  
Private.

Thunder GROANS again. Kuriger winks at Sheila.

INT. ANDERSON'S TENT - NIGHT

Anderson, stocking feet, sits on a cot and finishes a letter. Kuriger peeks inside.

KURIGER  
A word, sir?

ANDERSON  
Please, Sergeant.

Kuriger enters, salutes. Anderson returns the courtesy.

ANDERSON (CONT'D)  
Please, sit, Sergeant. I have  
nothing to offer you.

KURIGER  
Don't expect anything, sir.

ANDERSON  
Heading out tomorrow.

KURIGER  
Home, sir?

Anderson nods. Kuriger sits on a crate.

ANDERSON  
For a period, anyway.  
Recuperative.

KURIGER  
Good.

ANDERSON  
Is it?

KURIGER  
(a long moment)  
Doesn't look like the 18th'll be  
together much longer. They're  
putting pressure on General Grant  
to disband us, send us all on our  
merry way.

(MORE)

KURIGER (CONT'D)

And the General has other, more pressing matters to attend to.

ANDERSON

Like ending this war.

KURIGER

He'll push hard these next few months. Lee's troops are decimated, used up. It'll end soon enough.

ANDERSON

What will you do then, Sergeant?

KURIGER

This is my life, Lieutenant. I'll do whatever they let me for as long as they'll let me. Then, I guess, I'll have to find something else. Which scares me some.

ANDERSON

Scares you? I was sure that nothing ever scared you.

KURIGER

Those Marauders scared me, sir, until I watched you finish off the red one. A true act of bravery. I'll always remember that, sir. Always.

Anderson doesn't know quite how to respond. Kuriger rises, extends his hand. Anderson rises.

KURIGER (CONT'D)

Good luck to you.

ANDERSON

It was an honor, Sergeant.

KURIGER

Yes, it was. Mine, Sir.

They shake hands, and Kuriger exits quickly. Anderson sits back down, allows himself the smallest of smiles.

EXT. COLONEL EVERHARDT'S TENT - NIGHT

Kuriger paces outside. A young, FIT LIEUTENANT steps outside.

FIT LIEUTENANT  
The Colonel will see you now,  
Sergeant.

He holds the flap open, and Kuriger steps inside.

INT. BARRACKS TENT - NIGHT

Several of the 18th soldiers share this large barracks tent. Old Irish sits on his cot, pen in hand. Henry Two beside him, holding a paper.

HENRY TWO  
That's my name?

OLD IRISH  
(shows him)  
H-E-N-R-Y P-A-R-K-E-R and the  
number 2. Study it hard and  
learn how to do it for yourself.  
You hear?

HENRY TWO  
Yes. I hear.

OLD IRISH  
Once you got a hold of that,  
we'll start on the rest of the  
letters. Down the road, we'll  
tackle some ciphering.

HENRY TWO  
What's that?

OLD IRISH  
No need to worry about it, 'til  
the time comes. It'll serve you  
well, though, when you go lookin'  
for real work. The kind where  
you get paid cash money.

HENRY TWO  
When will that be?

OLD IRISH  
Before you know it, Henry Two.

Henry Two looks at the sheet of paper again.

HENRY TWO  
And that's my name?

OLD IRISH  
It is, little brother. It is.

EXT. PORT ROYAL ENCAMPMENT - DAY, DAWN

Sheila holds Thunder's hand as they walk through the camp toward the sunrise.

Thunder is reluctant, tries to stop again and again, but Sheila tugs him on.

Sheila spots Kuriger sitting on a limber with Cal, shoulder bandaged, beside him. She waves.

SHEILA  
Bright and early.

THUNDER  
What?

SHEILA  
I was merely greeting your  
Sergeant... and his friend.

KURIGER  
Morning, Private Huntred.

THUNDER  
Sergeant. Don't know what's good  
about it.

KURIGER  
You're lucky to have such a fine  
and handsome young lady on your  
arm this morning. That's a good  
thing.

THUNDER  
You say so.

KURIGER  
I do.

CAL  
So do I, George.

Thunder turns quickly to Cal.

THUNDER  
Cal, that you?

CAL  
In the flesh.

Thunder reaches out for him, finds him, feels him like it's the first time.

THUNDER  
You going home on me?

CAL

Well, I was, but the good  
Sergeant here had a conversation  
with Colonel Everhardt.

KURIGER

Don't think Colonel Time would  
want his best team broken up, do  
you, Private Huntred?

THUNDER

No, sir. I sure don't. You fit  
to be picked up, Cal?

CAL

I am, George. My directions  
might be off a scratch 'til this  
shoulder takes the full mend.

THUNDER

Well, let's get to it, then.

He scoops up Cal like he's weightless and spins him into  
place. Thunder breathes a long sigh or relief.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

All right, where to, Cal?

SHEILA

Gonna be a wonderful sunrise.

THUNDER

Well, let's go see it.

Cal uses his good arm to tap Thunder in the right  
direction, and they walk off toward the sunrise.

THUNDER (CONT'D)

Comin', missy?

SHEILA

Well, I guess I could.

Kuriger nods her on, and she hustles off after them.

THUNDER

Well, Cal, how's she looking this  
morning?

CAL

Comin' into view, George.

BIRDS SCATTER skyward from the treeline. Thunder, Cal  
and Sheila all stop at the sound.



SHEILA

My, how can there be war on such  
a day as this?

Anderson, carrying a tote, walks over to Kuriger, who  
salutes, then points his thumb toward Cal and Thunder.

Anderson smiles.

CAL

She's up, George.

THUNDER

Go on, tell me.

CAL

Well, it's like a giant round  
ball of fire scorching those  
treetops, George, gold and red  
and bold and brilliant with the  
sky all yellow and shimmery. And  
there's rays too, George, all  
around it, shooting straight up  
to heaven. In all my life, I've  
never seen such a glorious  
sunrise. Never.

THUNDER

Sure is beautiful.

As they stand and admire the sunrise, WE PULL BACK.

REVEILLE bugles the camp to life.

Soldiers criss-cross the open areas between tents.  
Kuriger climbs down off the wagon and walks with  
Anderson through the ever-growing sea of disabled  
service men...

FADE OUT.

*Card 1:*

*"After two days of marching at speeds no greater than one mile per hour, only 42 of the 166 officers and men who arrived at Port Royal were able to stand and answer roll call the next morning."*

*Card 2:*

*"Nearly sixty thousand men served in the 24 regiments of the Veteran Reserve Corps during the Civil War. All VRC regiments were formally mustered out of service by November of 1865, some seven months after General Lee's surrender to General Grant at Appomattox Courthouse."*